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About the CTC Sentinel

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

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AQAP's Growing Security Threat to Saudi Arabia

By Caryle Murphy



Prince Nayif reviews security units after AQAP's threat to kidnap Saudi princes and Christians. - Photo by Hamad Olayan/AFP/Getty Images

IN MARCH 2010, a Saudi security sweep netted 113 alleged al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) sympathizers. Among them was Hayla al-Qusayir, an AQAP operative held in high esteem by her fellow militants due to her knowledge of Islam, enthusiasm for fighting Saudi security forces, and for allegedly sending more than \$293,000 to AQAP.¹ Her importance to AQAP was highlighted when the terrorist group's deputy leader, former Guantanamo Bay detainee Said al-Shihri, threatened to kidnap Saudi princes and Christian residents of Saudi Arabia to use in a prisoner swap for al-Qusayir's release.²

1 Personal interview, Saudi security official, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

2 Said al-Shihri issued the threat on an audiotape aired on al-Arabiya television on June 3, 2010.

The episode is a useful indicator of where the battle between Saudi Arabia and its extremist opposition stands. During the past seven years, the government has largely uprooted the clandestine al-Qa`ida network that burst into public view with spectacular suicide bombings at three residential Riyadh compounds in May 2003. Al-Qa`ida's subsequent defeat in Saudi Arabia was due to several factors, including public disgust at its violence. Just as important to its defeat, however, was the government's double-pronged response to the threat. Riyadh launched a tough, well-funded security and police offensive against the al-Qa`ida network in the country, and at the same time developed a multifaceted, long-term ideological campaign against what Saudi officials identified as "deviant" Islamic ideas.³

3 Personal interview, Saudi security official, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

Despite al-Qa`ida's failure in Saudi Arabia, other al-Qa`ida operatives formed AQAP in neighboring Yemen. AQAP has now developed into a serious threat to Saudi Arabia, plotting attacks and infiltrating militants into the kingdom. In August 2009, an AQAP operative nearly succeeded in assassinating Saudi Prince Muhammad bin Nayif, the country's counterterrorism chief and a deputy interior minister.⁴ In October 2009, two AQAP members wearing explosive vests were killed in a shootout with Saudi police at a traffic stop.⁵ Two months later, an AQAP recruit, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, attempted to blow up a Northwest Airlines flight over Detroit. Most recently, in April 2010 the British ambassador to Yemen escaped injury when a suicide bomber threw himself in front of the diplomat's convoy in Sana`a; AQAP claimed responsibility, describing Britain as "America's closest ally in its war on Islam."⁶

This article examines AQAP's growing threat to Saudi Arabia. It first explains the importance of Hayla al-Qusayir's arrest before reviewing how the Saudi government has responded to the al-Qa`ida challenge.

A Widow's Revenge

Until her arrest in Burayda, the heartland of the kingdom's ultraconservative strain of Islam, Hayla al-Qusayir was a bridge between the old, decimated al-

Qa`ida network and its contemporary namesake, AQAP. Raised by her brother after the death of her father, al-Qusayir's first marriage was to Shaykh Abdul Karim al-Humaid, an eccentric cleric opposed to modern amenities such as electricity and cars.⁷

Al-Qusayir, who is approximately 40-years-old, divorced al-Humaid and then "got the man who filled her life" when she married al-Qa`ida militant Mohammed Sulaiman al-Wakil.⁸ After al-Wakil was killed in a Riyadh shootout with police in December 2004,

"Hayla al-Qusayir was a bridge between the old, decimated al-Qa`ida network and its contemporary namesake, AQAP."

his widow "hated every policeman from that moment," a Saudi security official explained. "She wanted revenge... so any work that hurt the police, she was satisfied to do."⁹ Al-Qusayir, who has one daughter, "took advantage of her situation as a woman," the official added, to hide al-Qa`ida militants. "Because she was knowledgeable about religion," he explained, "she could convince women to give money."¹⁰

At informal gatherings, al-Qusayir was able to persuade women to part with cash and jewelry after telling them that their donations would be used to help poor children in other Muslim countries. In all, the official charged, she sent 1.1 million Saudi riyals (approximately \$293,000) to AQAP contacts in Yemen and Afghanistan.¹¹ Al-Qusayir's

7 Shaykh Abdul Karim al-Humaid has been jailed for several years because of his extremist sympathies. Details were derived from al-Arabiya television on June 3, 2010, in addition to personal interview, Saudi security official, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

8 This information was derived from a Saudi security official who described al-Qusayir's background on condition he was not named.

9 Personal interview, Saudi security official, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.; Al-Oraifj, "Haila Al Qusayyer Funded Al-Qae-

fundraising on behalf of AQAP is not disputed by the group, which noted her contribution in this regard when responding to her detention.

At the time of her arrest, al-Qusayir was allegedly involved in supporting two, six-man cells of suicide bombers supplied and directed by AQAP.¹² Her precise role is unclear, but "she was part of the plot."¹³ Today, AQAP is threatening to kidnap Saudi princes and Christians in the kingdom to effect al-Qusayir's release. To assess whether AQAP can deliver on its threats, it is necessary to examine al-Qa`ida's recent history in Saudi Arabia.

Success, then Defeat

Al-Qa`ida stormed onto the Saudi landscape with high-profile attacks in 2003 and 2004 at a time when Saudi security was totally unprepared. As stated by analyst Thomas Hegghammer in February 2010, al-Qa`ida's early successes stemmed from

a momentary discrepancy between the very high organizational capability of returnees from Afghanistan, and the weakness of the Saudi intelligence apparatus. That gap has since been closed. Today, country-wide, organized political activism of any kind is more difficult than ever before.¹⁴

While it is clearly more difficult, it is not impossible. Continued al-Qa`ida activity in Saudi Arabia is illustrated by al-Qusayir's support to al-Qa`ida—which went undetected for years—and by Interior Minister Prince Nayif bin Abdul Aziz's recent announcement that his security forces had foiled 220 "criminal attempts" by alleged

da, Recruited Women."

12 Personal interview, Saudi security official, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

13 Ibid. *Asharq al-Awsat* reported that two suicide vests found in a car transporting two AQAP members, who were killed in a shootout with Saudi police in October 2009, "were destined for" al-Qusayir and that she had "reportedly recruited two suicide bombers for an attack." It also said that she had sheltered two youths in an abandoned house for at least 20 days. For details, see "90 Minutes with Mrs. Al Qaeda," *Asharq al-Awsat*, June 7, 2010.

14 Thomas Hegghammer, *The Failure of Jihad in Saudi Arabia* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2010).

4 Asma Alsharif, "Saudi Royal Survives Attack Claimed by Qaeda," Reuters, August 28, 2009.

5 One of the men killed was Yousef Mohammed al-Shihri, a former Guantanamo Bay detainee whose sister, Wafa, is married to AQAP deputy, Said al-Shihri. Wafa was married twice before, once to an al-Qa`ida extremist killed by police in 2005. She has joined her current husband in Yemen, where she reportedly is appealing to Saudi females to join AQAP's ranks, according to Saudi press reports. There have also been reports that al-Qusayir helped Wafa flee Saudi Arabia with her three children so she could join her husband, who went to Yemen in 2008. For details, see Abdullah al-Oraifj, "Wanted Saudi Militants Seen in Marib Region," *Saudi Gazette*, June 15, 2010; Mshari al-Zaydi, "Al Qaeda's Women in Saudi Arabia," *Asharq al-Awsat*, June 6, 2010; Abdullah al-Oraifj, "Haila Al-Qusayyer Funded Al-Qaeda, Recruited Women," *Saudi Gazette*, June 5, 2010; "Distraught Saudi Father Disowns 'Stupid Son,'" *Arab News*, June 8, 2010.

6 Mohammed Sudam, "Suicide Bomber Targets British Ambassador in Yemen," Reuters, April 26, 2010; "Al-Qaida Group Claims April Attack in Yemen," Associated Press, May 12, 2010.

extremists.¹⁵ Moreover, thousands of suspected sympathizers and militants have been arrested since 2003, and the number still in detention has not been disclosed. In 2008, the government announced that it would put on trial around 1,000 suspects for terrorism-related charges. The only follow-up to that announcement was in mid-2009

“AQAP will attempt to deliver on its kidnapping threat to demonstrate its effectiveness. Targets are abundant. There are thousands of Saudi princes, and with 50,000 American and 30,000 British residents in the kingdom, there are also many Christians.”

when the government stated that 323 defendants had been convicted in secret proceedings and given prison sentences ranging from a few months to 30 years.¹⁶

Alongside the security hammer, the government launched a wide-ranging ideological campaign to delegitimize al-Qa`ida's ideology, often called Salafijihadism by those outside the kingdom but regarded by Saudi officials simply as “deviant.” According to Interior Ministry spokesman General Mansur al-Turki, “That is the real solution: to counter the ideology. If we do not succeed in [this], we will not succeed in defeating terrorism.”¹⁷

¹⁵ Muhammad Humaidan, “Saudi Arabia Foils 220 Terror Acts,” *Arab News*, June 7, 2010. The prince was referring to a time period of several years, dating to 2003. In October 2008, Prince Nayif asserted that 160 “terrorist operations” had been foiled, which means that plots continue. It is not known if the aborted incidents were planned by resident remnants of al-Qa`ida's old network, or by AQAP infiltrators from Yemen.

¹⁶ “Saudi Arabia Convicts 323 Terror Suspects,” press release, Saudi Arabian Embassy, Washington, D.C., July 14, 2009.

¹⁷ Personal interview, General Mansur al-Turki, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

The best-known component of this campaign is the prisoner rehabilitation program run by the Interior Ministry for detained extremists. It has drawn praise from foreign counterterrorism officials for its innovative approach to confronting a problematic ideology, or in this case theology. Using religious reeducation and financial incentives, the program appears to have persuaded scores of former militants to give up their old ways and start a new life. There have, however, been relapses—one of the most significant “graduates” who returned to violence is Said al-Shihri himself. Even Saudi officials caution that the program's long-term effectiveness remains to be seen.¹⁸

Outside prison walls, the government has attempted to mobilize all aspects of Saudi society—schools, mosques, media and family—in a nationwide vigil against extremist thinking. Parents are repeatedly reminded by clerics, security officials and social workers to supervise what their children read on the internet and with whom they associate.

Additionally, the *Saudi Gazette* reported in April 2010 that the Ministry of Education is planning seminars for high school students to discuss “intellectual security” and the “dangers of deviant thought.”¹⁹ Universities have been provided large budgets to hold academic conferences on terrorism and “deviant” trends. In September

¹⁸ In a June 19 press briefing on the ministry's rehabilitation program, Interior Ministry officials said that of the 120 Saudis returned from Guantanamo, 109 completed the program. Eight returned before the program was set up, while three are still in the program. Of the 109 graduates, 11 went to Yemen and rejoined al-Qa`ida. Of those 11, one returned and surrendered to Saudi authorities, while two others were killed in the October 2009 shootout with Saudi police. Nine other graduates were re-arrested for breaking conditions of their release, not for rejoining al-Qa`ida. Of those nine, some are still jailed and others released under tighter conditions. These figures amount to a relapse rate of 18% for Guantanamo returnees. The rehabilitation program has had 180 other graduates, mostly Saudis caught trying to join the Iraqi insurgency and militants who have completed prison sentences. When all 300 graduates are considered, the program's overall relapse rate is 9.5%, the officials said. Hardcore jailed militants who hold fast to extremist views during prison counseling sessions are not eligible for the program.

¹⁹ Saeed al-Bahis, “Program to Save Pupils from Deviant Ideology,” *Saudi Gazette*, April 10, 2010.

2010, Muslim scholars from around the world will gather in Medina to discuss *takfir*, the practice of declaring a Muslim an apostate, which extremists use to justify killing their foes.²⁰ The Ministry of Education has also deleted some controversial passages from religious textbooks seen as promoting intolerance toward non-Muslims.²¹

The government has established stricter banking regulations on money transfers and warned people to give their charitable donations only to officially-sanctioned organizations, moves aimed at preventing the kind of informal money collecting done by al-Qusayir.²² In late April, the country's most senior religious clerics issued a *fatwa* explicitly denouncing terrorism funding.²³

In Saudi Arabia's battle against militants, counterterrorism officials have also used psychological weapons. A few days after al-Shihri declared AQAP's recent kidnapping plans, his father gave interviews to the local press in which he disowned his son for “shaming and humiliating my family, tribe and nation.”²⁴ He added: “I wished I could kill him with my own hands.”²⁵ Saudi columnists have contributed as well, calling attention to the fact that it was AQAP, not security officials, that broadcast al-Qusayir's name and thus brought shame on her family—a significant issue in Saudi society.

The ideological campaign has had an impact. Saudis appear more willing to openly criticize extremist ideas.²⁶ It is certainly true that the burst of enthusiasm for al-Qa`ida among some Saudis after 9/11 has evaporated,

²⁰ Personal interview, Ibrahim al-Maiman, assistant professor in Islamic prudence, Al Imam Mohammed bin Saud University and principal organizer of Takfir Conference, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, May 3, 2010.

²¹ This has been widely reported. See, for example, Kelly McEvers, “Angry Teachers and Empty Libraries,” *Slate*, September 9, 2009.

²² Caryle Murphy, “Saudi Slows Terrorism's Money Taps,” *The National* [Abu Dhabi], November 2, 2009.

²³ Turki al-Saheil, “Asharq al-Awsat Talks to Senior Ulama Council Secretary General Dr. Fahd al-Majid,” *Asharq al-Awsat*, May 23, 2010.

²⁴ “Distraught Saudi Father Disowns ‘Stupid Son.’”

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ This is an observation made by many Saudis and evident in personal conversations with them over two years, as well as from reading the Saudi press.

although this is more a result of al-Qa`ida's extreme violence than the government's assault on its ideology.²⁷

Yet not everyone is complying as wholeheartedly as the government would like. Interior Minister Prince Nayif has occasionally complained that some imams at the country's 50,000 mosques are not doing enough to counter extremist thinking.²⁸ Most importantly, there is still the internet, where one can easily find violent Islamist thought. Although many extremist forums and websites are blocked by the government, most technologically-savvy Saudi teenagers can find a way around the censors.

Present Danger

AQAP is now a major security threat to Saudi Arabia, having proved its determination to continue its jihad against the kingdom and its allies, principally the United States and the United Kingdom. The group's latest threat came in al-Shihri's audio recording aired by the Saudi-owned satellite television channel, al-Arabiya. In it, al-Shihri called for "kidnapping princes, senior officials, and ministers to exchange them for this Al Qaeda lady who had been assuming the task of recruiting women and collecting funds."²⁹ Addressing al-Qusayir directly, al-Shihri added that "your mujahidin brothers... were hurt by what has happened to you."³⁰ He then urged AQAP's followers in the kingdom to "persist in gathering information, inciting the Muslims, collecting money, and forming practical cells to kidnap the Christians and the princes of Al Saud."³¹

AQAP will attempt to deliver on its kidnapping threat to demonstrate its effectiveness. Targets are abundant. There are thousands of Saudi princes, and with 50,000 American and 30,000 British residents in the kingdom, there are also many Christians.

AQAP's "ambition is evident," said one Saudi-based diplomat. "It's immensely serious. The challenge for the Saudis now is to ensure that its capability to operate inside the kingdom is very low."³² That will not be easy considering the porous nature of the remote, mountainous Saudi-Yemen border and the inability of the Yemeni government, distracted by other concerns such as the southern secessionist movement and a failing economy, to engage AQAP more aggressively.

Interior Ministry spokesman al-Turki said that while al-Qa`ida is no longer "capable of waging a war" as it was in 2003, "the threat now is that it could be capable of planning and carrying out any atrocity—targeting oil facilities, residential compounds or targeting an official as they are threatening... This is their danger."

"We never say we've destroyed Al Qaeda and that we're okay," al-Turki added. "We say we have good control on our security situation. But this doesn't mean that anything [won't] happen. We're fully prepared for that."³³

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²⁷ This assessment is the author's personal observation, which is consistent with the research of Hegghammer.

²⁸ Prince Nayif was quoted as saying in 2008, "Frankly speaking, I would like to say that the imams of mosques, with the exception of the two holy mosques, have not played their desired role (in the fight against extremism)." For details, see "Imams Fail in Their Desired Role: Naif," *Arab News*, October 17, 2008. In the months since then, Nayif has repeatedly stressed the important role of mosque imams in combating deviant thinking. See "Intellectual Security: Naif briefed on Role of Khateeb," *Saudi Gazette*, May 10, 2010.

²⁹ Said al-Shihri issued the threat on an audiotape aired on al-Arabiya television on June 3, 2010.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Personal interview, Saudi diplomat, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

³³ Personal interview, General Mansur al-Turki, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, June 2010.

Assessing AQI's Resilience After April's Leadership Decapitations

By Myriam Benraad

IN APRIL 2010, the leaders of al-Qa`ida in Iraq (AQI) and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) were killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi raid. Abu Ayyub al-Masri (also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajir) and Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi died in Tharthar, Salah al-Din Province, marking a major setback for al-Qa`ida.¹ On June 2, U.S. Admiral Michael Mullen declared that AQI had been "devastated" by the killings.² In a related statement, the U.S. commander in Iraq, General Ray Odierno, announced that Iraqi and U.S. forces had captured or killed 34 of the 42 known AQI leaders, in what he described as "the most significant blow to Al-Qaeda in Iraq since the beginning of the insurgency."³

In recent years, AQI's capacities have been considerably weakened. The death of its founding leader Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi in June 2006 was the first crucial blow to the jihadist organization, followed by the U.S. "surge" in 2007 and the mobilization of armed Sunni Arab tribes against its fighters. All of these successes deprived AQI from its main bases of support. According to official Multinational Force-Iraq (MNF-I) statistics, high-profile attacks are now at their lowest levels since the conflict began in 2003, and there has been a significant decrease in casualties among U.S. troops, Iraqi security forces (ISF) and civilians.⁴

Yet despite its recent setbacks, AQI will remain a viable organization for the foreseeable future. In a process that continued under the leadership of Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the terrorist group

¹ Abu Ayyub al-Masri was an Egyptian and the head of al-Qa`ida in Iraq. Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, an Iraqi, was the head of the Islamic State of Iraq, largely considered an AQI front group.

² Robert Burns, "Top US Officer: Al-Qaida in Iraq 'Devastated,'" Associated Press, June 6, 2010.

³ "Al Qaeda in Iraq 'Broken,' Odierno Says," United Press International, June 7, 2010; "Odierno: Iraq Moves Toward Stability, US Drawdown on Track," Voice of America, June 4, 2010.

⁴ "Attacks in Iraq Down, Al-Qaeda Arrests Up: US General," Agence France-Presse, June 4, 2010.

has become increasingly indigenous, and thus more able to incorporate and exploit local grievances. Indeed, the latest parliamentary elections held on March 7, 2010 and the ensuing political deadlock seem to have given new impetus to the radical group and hardened its resolve to disrupt Iraq's transition to peace and stability. The recent wave of AQI-claimed terrorist attacks and the group's appointment of new leaders⁵ are ugly reminders of the network's resilience.⁶

This article addresses the factors likely explaining AQI's continued ability to renew and reinvigorate its ranks despite important human losses and key operational setbacks. First, it shows how the jihadist organization has built on the U.S. military drawdown of 2009, Iraq's current political crisis, and the country's overall fragile economic context. Second, it explores the impact of Iraq's indigenous Salafist legacy on AQI's ability to regenerate cadre. Finally, it argues that while the leadership losses will not end AQI's attacks, there are a number of policy actions that could more effectively counter the group.

Present Factors Behind AQI's Resilience

The loss of AQI's top high-ranking leaders was triumphantly announced by Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki on April 19, 2010, in an attempt to affirm his ability to restore security to Iraq and establish his legitimacy to form

5 Iraqi-born "Abu Suleiman" replaced Abu Ayyub al-Masri as the ISI's "war minister," yet was not formally identified as AQI's new head. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qurashi was appointed as the ISI's new *amir*. Abu Abdallah al-Husseini al-Qurashi was appointed as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's deputy. For details, see Michael Christie, "Iraq's Qaeda Names New 'War Minister,' Vows Attacks," Reuters, May 14, 2010; "Al Qaeda's Iraq Network Replaces Slain Leaders," Reuters, May 16, 2010. Also see AQI's successive communiqués featured on www.alfalaja1.info and www.muslim.net.

6 Since the May 10, 2010 coordinated bombings and shootings launched by AQI in reaction to the loss of its senior leadership, other terrorist operations have occurred. One of the more recent and spectacular attacks occurred in June against Iraq's Central Bank in Baghdad that killed 18 and wounded 55 and was formally claimed by AQI. For details, see "Qaeda in Iraq Claims Deadly Central Bank Raid," Associated Press, June 17, 2010; "Al-Qaeda's Iraq Network Says Behind Bank Attack," Reuters, June 17, 2010.

the next government.⁷ In a subsequent declaration, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden echoed al-Maliki's announcement by calling the leaders' deaths a "potentially devastating blow" to AQI, adding that the operation demonstrated "the improved security strength and capacity of Iraqi security forces."⁸

In addition to the security progress achieved in recent years and a decrease in violence, the deaths of Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, along with the elimination and capture of many other ISI figures,⁹ are obvious signs of enhanced intelligence and cooperation between Iraqi and U.S. forces. More importantly, it highlights their better understanding of AQI's strategy, network and recruitment methods. Yet it is not the first time that AQI has been nearly "destroyed."¹⁰ As illustrated by the spectacular attacks that killed hundreds of Iraqi civilians in May and early June 2010, in particular the series of bombings and shootings that left 119 dead and more than 350 injured on May 10, AQI retains resolve and confidence in its ability to operate in Iraq and roll-back

7 Tim Arango, "Top Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Reported Killed in Raid," *New York Times*, April 19, 2010; Aamer Madhani, "Leader Deaths in Iraq Seen as a Huge Blow to al-Qaeda," *USA Today*, April 20, 2010.

8 "Deaths of Top Al Qaeda Leaders a 'Potentially Devastating Blow,'" Associated Press, April 19, 2010.

9 Other recently killed or captured ISI leaders include: Abu Ahmad al-Afri, AQI's "economic security *amir*" killed on March 23; Khedr Abd Ghanem Khedr Dawan, the ISI's "finance minister" killed on March 25; Bashar Khalaf Husyan Ali al-Jubburi, Mosul's *amir* killed on March 24; Abbas Najem Abdallah al-Jawari (also known as Abu Abdallah) and Muhammad Nuri Matar Yassin al-Abadi, two top leaders of the ISI in Baghdad who were arrested in May; and Ahmad Ali Abbas Dahir al-Ubayd, known as Abu Suhaib and responsible for military, kidnapping and bribery operations in the northern provinces. For details, see Ernesto Londoño, "Iraq Reports Arrest of al-Qaeda Mastermind of '09 Bombings," *Washington Post*, April 23, 2010; Bill Roggio, "Iraqi Forces Kill al-Qaeda's Top Military Commander in the North," *The Long War Journal*, April 20, 2010; "Iraqi Forces Capture Two Senior al-Qaeda Leaders in Mosul," *The Long War Journal*, April 7, 2010; "Iraqi Forces Strike Blow to al-Qaeda in Iraq's Northern Leadership Cadre," *The Long War Journal*, April 2, 2010; "Iraqi Forces Kill al-Qaeda Leader in Mosul," *Aswat al-Iraq*, March 25, 2010.

10 For example, similar confidence was displayed by the United States and Iraq after the killing of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, AQI's former leader, in 2006.

security gains.¹¹ AQI's activities raise questions about the actual effects of the recent leadership decapitations and the durability of Iraq's stabilization process after the March 2010 elections that were supposed to reintegrate Sunni Arabs into the political scene and contribute to rebuilding a national pact.¹²

A number of factors account for AQI's resilience to date. First, the dramatic drawdown of U.S. combat troops from Iraqi cities in June 2009 increased AQI's ability to maneuver by creating security voids. With the scheduled withdrawal of all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by September 1, 2010, this trend could escalate.¹³ The ISF have received training and assistance and can be credited with key security achievements in recent months, but they remain exposed to the complex dynamics of violence that characterize the Iraqi conflict. In addition, the U.S. withdrawal will not fundamentally alter AQI's "occupation narrative," as the Iraqi government has already become the group's primary target with online propaganda depicting Iraqi armed forces as the new "occupiers."¹⁴ Illustrative of this shift was the series of attacks that AQI carried out at the beginning of June against Iraqi police patrols and soldiers in different Sunni areas.¹⁵ Leaders of

11 Alexander Mayer, "Al Qaeda in Iraq: Last Stand, or Sign of Resilience?" *The Long War Journal*, May 12, 2010.

12 Since 2003, the exclusion of Sunni Arabs from Iraq's political scene has been a key point of contention. Despite their high participation in the March 7, 2010 elections, many Sunni Arabs are angry by al-Maliki's willingness to use the Justice and Accountability Commission and the Iraqi judiciary to marginalize his opponents and disqualify elected Sunni Arab backers from Iyad Allawi's coalition, in particular by accusing them of ties to the Ba`ath Party. See "Iraq Panel Bars 52 Election Candidates, May Alter Results," Associated Press, April 27, 2010.

13 Approximately 50,000 military personnel will remain in Iraq after September 1 for training and other non-combat roles. For details, see David Alexander, "Qaeda in Iraq Struggling After Leadership Blow: U.S.," Reuters, June 4, 2010.

14 AQI's radical narrative has inspired smaller insurgent groups such as the Salafist "Abu Bakr al-Siddiq Army," led by Abu Muhammad al-Iraqi and which has carried out suicide attacks against the Iraqi government. According to some, the most radical factions of the al-Siddiq Army have already merged with the ISI. See Rafid Fadhil Ali, "The Succession Question: The Islamic State of Iraq Searches for New Leaders," *Terrorism Monitor* 8:18 (2010).

15 "Five Killed in Iraq Attacks," Agence France-Presse,

the “awakening” movement as well as moderate Sunni imams have also been targeted lately, such as in Anbar Province where security incidents have multiplied.¹⁶

Second, Iraq’s current political crisis serves AQI’s agenda. Al-Maliki’s repeated attempts to marginalize his opponent Iyad Allawi and disqualify Sunni Arab candidates from his cross-ethnic and cross-confessional “Iraqiyya” list have revived sectarian tensions.¹⁷ Sunni Arabs, who massively supported secular Shi’a candidate Allawi during the last electoral campaign, feel relatively deprived of their victory.¹⁸ While most reject AQI’s radical message, some could radicalize (or re-radicalize) if their grievances and requests for greater political participation are not addressed. Moreover, statements by Shi’a leader Moqtada al-Sadr that he may revive his feared Mahdi Army could drive sections of the Sunni Arab population into the arms of AQI or other related groups.¹⁹ Sunni Arab youth remain particularly exposed to the radical group’s narrative.

Other factors accounting for AQI’s resilience include the release of thousands of Iraqi detainees since 2009, some of whom are acknowledged to have made contact with AQI during their incarceration.²⁰ Until recently, U.S. and Iraqi security forces contended that previous releases were conducted in an orderly manner and that recidivism rates were low.²¹ Reliable sources from Iraqi ministries, however, suggest the opposite.²² A number of released detainees have returned to the armed struggle and have been involved in

June 15, 2010.

16 Waleed Ibrahim, “Police Targeted in Iraq Attacks, 11 People Dead,” Reuters, June 7, 2010; Sinan Salaheddin, “Iraq: Bomb Kills Sunni Militia Leader Near Baghdad,” Associated Press, June 16, 2010.

17 Ned Parker, “Iraq’s Election Adds to Sectarian Divide,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 2010.

18 Lara Jakes, “Iraq Court Disqualifies Dozens of Candidates, Could Change Vote Outcome,” *Huffington Post*, April 26, 2010.

19 “Al-Sadr Call for Reviving Mahdi Army to Keep Security, Official Maliki Advisor Rejects,” AK News, April 25, 2010.

20 Myriam Benraad, “Prisons in Iraq: A New Generation of Jihadists?” *CTC Sentinel* 2:12 (2009).

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

AQI-led operations.²³ For instance, following his arrest by Iraqi and U.S. forces on March 11, 2010, AQI’s former top military commander in Baghdad, Manaf Abd al-Rahim al-Rawi, explained in an interview how despite being held in U.S. detention between 2004 and 2007, he joined AQI only one year after

“Many of the young Sunni Arab men who took up arms in 2003 to fight U.S. troops and later joined the ranks of AQI are known as indigenous Salafists who radicalized before the United States even entered Iraq.”

his release and became one of the main protagonists in the two deadly bombings against Iraq’s ministries of Foreign Affairs and Finance on August 19, 2009.²⁴

Present economic hardship further worsens matters. In 2009, the Iraqi government reduced its defense budget considerably due to declining oil revenues, with important freezes in the hiring of police and military officers. While Iraq’s new budget, approved in February, allocates \$380 million to the security sector compared to \$270 million in 2009, a broader breakdown of the projected spending in 2010 shows how Iraqi security forces, despite improvements in the capability to lead counterterrorism operations, still suffer from relatively insufficient resources and facilities, which constrains their expansion.²⁵ The Iraqi National Counter-Terrorism Force (INCTF), for instance, continues to lack adequate financial means necessary to hire qualified personnel.²⁶

23 Ibid.

24 Jomana Karadsheh, “Al Qaeda Commander: How I Planned Iraq Attacks,” CNN, May 20, 2010.

25 “Breakdown of Iraq’s 2010 Budget,” Iraq Business News, April 5, 2010.

26 According to the U.S. Defense Department’s report to Congress in December 2009, “The INCTF is a highly capable force that contributes significantly to the COIN effort. Manning, however, remains low. INCTF has a projected steady-state end strength of 9,200 but, due to

Moreover, by nourishing widespread corruption and bribery, a stumbling Iraqi economy could boost AQI’s additional recruitment of unemployed young men or mere opportunists to undertake paid attacks. In this respect, reported shortages of foreign funds and increasing financial difficulties have caused AQI to increasingly rely on mafia tactics such as racketeering of local populations, oil theft and smuggling or other illegal enterprises as alternative sources of income.²⁷ This has been the case in Mosul where persistent insecurity and political feuds have created a perfect environment for AQI to ransom local merchants and civilians to purchase arms and pay bribes to recruit operatives, facilitators and accomplices at various levels.²⁸ Other Iraqi official reports also shed light on regular instances of bribes paid to Iraqi police, security officers and prison guards to release AQI members, thereby allowing them to operate again.²⁹

Iraq’s Deeper Salafist Legacy

Besides these current factors, AQI’s resilience can also be understood in reference to more structural developments that have marked pre-2003 Iraqi history. The development of the local Iraqi Salafist trend, along with other socio-political dynamics inherited from the 1990s, explain the continuing violence in Iraq and the resiliency of AQI. Many of the young Sunni Arab men who took up arms in 2003 to fight U.S. troops and later joined the ranks of AQI are known as indigenous Salafists who radicalized before the United States even entered Iraq.³⁰ With the number of

budget shortfalls, a hiring freeze, and a need for specialized training, currently has just over half the personnel it is authorized. INCTF also lacks sufficient means for resourcing the organization.” For more details, see “Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq,” U.S. Department of Defense Official Report to Congress, December 2009, p. 43.

27 Greg Bruno, “Al-Qaeda’s Financial Pressures,” Council on Foreign Relations, February 1, 2010.

28 See the extremely informative article by Saad al-Mosuli, “Al-Qaeda Turns to Mafia Tactics,” Institute for War and Peace Reporting, June 11, 2010.

29 Myriam Benraad, “Down But Not Out: Al-Qaeda’s Iraq Comeback,” *Foreign Policy*, December 2, 2009; Myriam Benraad, “Iraq’s Enduring al-Qaeda Challenge,” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 18, 2009.

30 Some local Iraqi Salafists are said to have participated in the anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s, such as late Iraqi in-

foreign fighters in the country dropping and AQI gradually “Iraqifying,” these local radicals appear to have become the bulk of the organization.³¹

The rise and spread of politicized Salafism throughout the final decades of the Ba`ath regime, especially among Iraq’s Sunni Arab youth—the “embargo generation”—had several causes, such as the Iran-Iraq war, the collapse of the Iraqi state following its military defeat in Kuwait and the overall impoverishment and destruction of Iraqi society during those years.³² To date, little analysis has been dedicated to this phenomenon, partly because of the belief that the Ba`ath Party had succeeded in eradicating Sunni Islamism, but also due to Iraq’s long closure to foreign observers.

After a relatively clandestine existence due to Saddam Hussein’s harsh repression, the fall of the Ba`ath regime removed all the constraints to the free expression of this local Salafist trend.³³ Other developments reinforced its spread, such as the presence of Western forces after 2003 and the related promotion of Western political and cultural values that exacerbated radical views. On the other end, the empowerment of the Shi`a

insurgent and Falluja native `Umar Hadid, whose Salafist fervor brought him to combat U.S. forces, and potentially al-Baghdadi himself, who is reported to have left Iraq between 1985 and 1991. This information is based on an interview conducted by the author with a security official in 2008. See also “Two Locals Were Core of Fallujah Insurgency,” Associated Press, November 24, 2004; Hannah Allam, “Fallujah’s Real Boss: Omar the Electrician,” Knight Ridder Newspapers, November 22, 2004.

31 AQI’s May 16, 2010 communiqué announcing the appointment of the two new ISI leaders, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and Abu Abdallah al-Baghdadi, depicts them as “pious Muslims” with “deep knowledge of theology and jihad.”

32 The author researched this phenomenon in the framework of her doctoral dissertation and conducted interviews with several Iraqi Salafists, some of whom with close ties to radical insurgent groups and familiar with AQI’s structure and methods. These subjects confirmed the pre-2003 radicalization process and the current preponderance of Iraqi fighters and facilitators within AQI.

33 For instance, well-known Salafist imam Mahdi Ahmad al-Sumaydai took exile in the 1990s under growing pressure of Saddam Hussein and returned to Iraq in 2003. He then became one of the most influential figures supporting the insurgency and was arrested several times by U.S. forces.

community at the expense of Sunni Arabs helped Salafists advocate their ideology and led angered individuals to join AQI, including soldiers and officials disenfranchised by the de-Ba`athification process and the Iraqi Army’s dismantlement.³⁴

It is believed that prior to 2003, Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, the ISI’s late *amir* and allegedly a pseudonym for Hamid Dawud Muhammad Khalil al-Zawi, was an Iraqi security officer from Haditha who joined the hard line Salafist movement during the 1990s.³⁵ Following the U.S.-led intervention, he quickly became convinced that offensive jihad would be the ultimate solution to end foreign occupation and that an Islamic government should be established in Iraq. Before his death, al-Baghdadi had become a key component of AQI’s broad “Iraqification.”

Required Policy Steps

Developments in the past three months have shown that AQI is weakened and that the ISF is benefiting from increased training and experience. Previous security gains and the elimination of AQI’s top leaders in April, however, have not prevented new attacks. The recent deadly wave of violence against Iraqi financial institutions—a double suicide bombing outside a government bank that killed 27 people on June 20 and the attack against Iraq’s Central Bank in Baghdad on June 14—shows how AQI uses the security void created by the U.S. withdrawal and the ongoing political crisis to stage new attacks.³⁶

34 Not all Iraqi Salafists were attracted to AQI, as evidenced by the tense ideological and operational divides that opposed the radical organization to other Iraqi insurgent groups in 2007, such as the Islamic Army in Iraq. Those who joined AQI were often among the most disenfranchised and either appealed to its irredentist rejection of the foreign presence—in the case of suicide bombers, for instance—or searching for a source of income in the case of purely opportunistic operatives.

35 According to Iraqi Defense Ministry spokesman Muhammad al-Askari, Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi was a police brigadier general in the 1990s and became an active Salafist at that time. He was first captured and detained by U.S. forces in 2006 and apparently managed to conceal his role in insurgent attacks to be released only after seven months. On the issue of detainee releases and their connection with AQI’s comeback, see Benraad, “Prisons in Iraq: A New Generation of Jihadists?”

36 “Al-Qaida in Iraq Claims Deadly Central Bank At-

It is clear that AQI will continue to launch operations in Iraq despite its serious cadre losses. Most of the latest arrests of ISI members tend to confirm that the group has now primarily become a local phenomenon. Although a minority among the armed opposition, AQI has already shown striking ability to adapt to evolving environments and could be a more durable obstacle to Iraq’s reconstruction than many predict.³⁷ There is no longer a distinct hierarchy within the group, which operates mainly through independent cells.³⁸

Perpetuating its stated priorities, the ISI’s new leadership has announced the launch of new terrorist campaigns against Iraq’s military and police forces. An ISI statement warned that the group will deliver “a long gloomy night and dark days colored in blood” to Iraq.³⁹ It is likely that AQI/ISI will target Shi`a communities to re-ignite sectarian violence, which is all the more credible in light of Iraq’s current political impasse. In a four-page statement posted on an Islamist forum confirming the deaths of al-Masri and al-Baghdadi, the ISI vowed that it was continuing the fight and committing to “what [its] two leaders stood for” and will “transform their blood into light and fire.”⁴⁰

tack,” Reuters, June 17, 2010; Liz Sly and Usama Redha, “Twin Suicide Bombs Outside Baghdad Bank Kill 27,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 2010.

37 Iraqi and U.S. officials estimate that AQI now only represents a few thousand fighters. This figure, however, does not include facilitators, who are much more difficult to identify, as well as accomplices and other sympathizers who are likely to become more active if Iraq’s political and economic situation deteriorates in the coming months. See Yochi J. Dreazen, “Allies Kill Two Chiefs of Iraqi al Qaeda,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 20, 2010; “Petraeus: Al-Qaeda’s Iraq Tactics Shifting,” Reuters, December 13, 2009.

38 Several intelligence officials interviewed by the author suggest that AQI primarily operates as a loose network composed of decentralized cells, some of which cooperate with one another while others act independently. For concurring analysis, see “Top Two Leaders of Al Qaeda in Iraq Killed,” Reuters, April 19, 2010.

39 “Bombers Attack Soccer Game in North Iraq, 8 Dead,” Reuters, May 14, 2010.

40 The communiqué stated: “After a long journey filled with sacrifices and fighting falsehood and its representatives, two knights have dismounted to join the group of martyrs... We announce that the Muslim nation has lost two of the leaders of jihad, and two of its men, who are only known as heroes on the path of jihad.”

Defeating AQI requires defining a strategy combining both targeted actions with a more systemic approach. First, the United States should continue to assist and train the ISF to improve its capacity and capability to deal with terrorism once all foreign troops depart. Indeed, the ISF will have to deal with AQI and other threats alone in 2012. A first concrete step could be the strengthening of the INCTF's functions, especially of gathering and sharing intelligence between all institutions and agencies involved in security matters. Second, because AQI has seen its popular support fall dramatically, new measures should be taken to address its ideological strengths that draw cadre to its cause. Broader counter-radicalization and deradicalization campaigns should be enforced, and moderate imams mobilized to counteract AQI's radical Salafist ideology.

Eventually, Iraq's legal and judicial framework must be further reinforced, with law provisions and enforcement reaching further. A body of highly competent and trained counterterrorism magistrates should be established who would be allowed to use preventive prosecution and detention powers whenever individuals are reported to have connections with radical insurgents such as AQI and other related groups. Within the Iraqi prison system, which has become a crucible for the spread of Salafist ideology, the monitoring of inmates should be enforced to more effectively prevent prisoners from radicalizing and potentially rejoining the insurgency once released.

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The Return of Moqtada al-Sadr and the Revival of the Mahdi Army

By Babak Rahimi

SINCE THE BEGINNING of the U.S. intervention in Iraq in 2003, one of the key Shi'a political players has been Moqtada al-Sadr. As the leader of a powerful Shi'a militia, the Jaysh al-Mahdi (the Mahdi Army, JAM), al-Sadr became one of the most important political contenders in post-Ba'athist Iraq. For the past two years, however, al-Sadr has maintained a low profile, studying at the theological seminary in the Iranian city of Qom. Yet al-Sadr recently made a dramatic re-entry into Iraq's turbulent politics, with his bloc winning 40 seats in the 325-seat parliament during the March 2010 nationwide elections.¹ This leverage has enabled al-Sadr to become a kingmaker in a Shi'a-dominated government. In Iraq's highly fractured parliamentary politics, al-Sadr emerged to play a decisive role in forging an alliance among the Shi'a bloc—led by Nuri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition and Ammar al-Hakim's Iraqi National Alliance—while gaining considerable influence over who is appointed to certain government posts.² By striking a major political deal that allowed his rival, Nuri al-Maliki, to continue as prime minister in exchange for the release of his detained militiamen, al-Sadr has proved himself a savvy political actor, capable of negotiating with his adversaries to enhance his own political authority.

In April 2010, al-Sadr exercised this increased political leverage by publicly announcing the restoration of his feared militia, the Mahdi Army.³ The militia was disbanded in 2008 after Iraqi security forces, supported by international troops, neutralized al-Sadr's fighters during the final stages of counterinsurgency operations.⁴ Al-

Sadr's recent call for the restoration of JAM is largely in response to weeks of Sunni attacks on Shi'a urban centers in Baghdad and in the southern provinces. As al-Sadr called on his militia to support Iraqi security forces, he justified the move by arguing that JAM could provide protection for Shi'a neighborhoods, especially during religious events.

This article will examine whether the revival of JAM is a mere tactical move to provide security for the Shi'a community, or whether al-Sadr is again harboring larger ambitions. It will also describe the new characteristics of JAM, which through the assistance of Iran has been reshaped to fit the new Iraqi political context.

Revisiting the Mahdi Army

Since its inception in 2003, JAM has proven capable of changing organizational and operational tactics to advance the political interests of the Sadrist movement. In its original manifestation in the early phases of the post-war period, JAM emerged as a "citizen militia" to address local security problems with retaliatory actions against sectarian (Sunni) and foreign (U.S.-UK) threats.⁵ Between 2003 and 2007—a period of insurgent violence and (intra) sectarian conflict—JAM played a critical role in fomenting sectarian tensions as Iraq entered a deadly phase of civil conflict that almost tore the country apart. Between 2006 and 2008, the militia fractured, and some members broke away from al-Sadr's political faction in response to him entering negotiations with coalition forces. This development played a decisive role in al-Sadr's decision to move to Iran in late 2007 or early 2008, as he sought Tehran's protection against his own militiamen who no longer viewed him as a spiritual and military leader, but instead as a mere politician.⁶ With diminishing clout, especially after the 2008 provincial elections, the Sadrists suffered not only

1 Adam Schreck, "2 Candidates from Iraq's Sunni-backed Party Killed," Associated Press, June 5, 2010.

2 Suadad al-Salhy, "Iraq's Shi'ite-led Groups Edge Closer to Government," Reuters, June 16, 2010.

3 "Al-Sadr Call for Reviving Mahdi Army to Keep Security, Official Maliki Advisor Rejects," AK News, April 25, 2010.

4 Sami Moubayed, "Muqtada Unleashes News, Improved Army," *Asia Times Online*, April 30, 2010. Also see "Sadr

Reforms Mehdi Army Amid Iraqi Crisis," United Press International, May 20, 2010.

5 Karim Porzabid, "Moqtada-ie Javan be Donbale Marja'at: Goftego ba Shaikh Youssef Naseri az Azay-e Jaryan-e Sadr," *Shahrvand Emrooz*, December 30, 2007.

6 Babak Rahimi, "Two Types of Splinter Groups Break from Moqtada al-Sadr," *Terrorism Focus* 4:10 (2007); Babak Rahimi, "Becoming an Ayatollah: The New Iraqi Politics of Moqtada al-Sadr," *Terrorism Monitor* 6:3 (2008).

from declining Shi`a public support, but also a lack of coherent, organized military force that earlier in 2005 gave the movement enhanced leverage in Sadrism strongholds such as Sadr City and Maysan.

In light of considerable pressure from the Najaf-Tehran-Qom nexus,⁷ al-Sadr implemented a major strategic shift by steering away from politics and instead pursuing religious activities. He transformed his militia into a religious association to enhance his leadership on a spiritual level. While residing in an affluent northern Tehrani neighborhood, al-Sadr began his studies at Qom in Shi`a jurisprudence under (an unknown) high-ranking cleric with the aim to become a *mujtahid* or a learned scholar with the recognized ability to issue religious decrees.⁸ As for JAM, al-Sadr called for the transformation of the militia into a “cultural and a religious force,” charged with the responsibility of leading an intellectual jihad.⁹ The changes primarily involved the centralization of the command structure into disciplined and small units of loyalists, vigorously training to provide public services and other community activities. The newly formed religious association became known as the “Momahidoun,” in Arabic meaning those who pave the path.¹⁰

The decision to remold JAM into a cultural body dates back to August 2007, when clashes between the Badr Organization—which is part of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (ISCI), a Shi`a rival to al-Sadr’s organization—and JAM led to the deaths of several

7 This nexus is marked by a set of relations—cultural, economic, political and, at times, familial—that connect clerics, their representatives and Iranian officials in a network association. Such complex relations play a critical role in Iraq, as many Iraqi politicians, especially from the Shi`a faction Iraqi National Alliance, are closely linked with this nexus.

8 It is widely known that al-Sadr has been in Qom. See, for example, Babak Dehghanpisheh, “The Kingmaker,” *Newsweek*, May 15, 2010.

9 Babak Rahimi, “The Future of Moqtada al-Sadr’s New Jaysh al-Mahdi,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:1 (2009).

10 The name was coined in reference to the devout followers of the Hidden Imam, the Mahdi, who prepare the way for his return, which is believed by the Shi`a to culminate in the establishment of divine justice on earth. For details, see “Faalyat-e Artesh-e Al-Mahdi be Halat-e Taliq Dar Amad,” *Fars News*, August 29, 2008.

Shi`a pilgrims in Karbala. With Najaf’s and Tehran’s intervention, al-Sadr agreed to a truce and issued a decree to freeze the activities of his militia, a decision that was renewed six months later to ensure his Shi`a critics of his commitment to bring the unruly militia under control.¹¹ The Knights Assault Campaign to disarm JAM first from Basra, and then from Sadr City, ended in another cease-fire agreement on May

“Al-Sadr may now feel he has the political capital to legitimize the full restoration of JAM as part of Iraq’s security institutions, which could be controlled by Sadrists in the next government.”

10, 2008. Despite the truce, the Iraqi security offensive expanded into other cities such as Amara and Diwanya in the summer of 2008, as supporters of al-Sadr followed their leader’s call for restraint, showing no signs of major resistance. Al-Maliki, who came to power because of al-Sadr’s support in 2006, had now become the Sadrists’ arch enemy.

Al-Sadr’s 2008 shift toward soft power signified a self-promotional strategy designed to create a restored civic force operating on par with the Badr Organization, although mainly modeled after Hizb Allah of Lebanon.¹² This development also underlined how al-Sadr made considerable efforts to extricate himself from unruly elements within his movement, a source of tension since the escalation of sectarian violence in early 2006. Although the

11 For details on this period in time, see Rahimi, “The Future of Moqtada al-Sadr’s New Jaysh al-Mahdi.” Also see Babak Rahimi, “The Mumahidun: Muqtada Al-Sadr’s New Militia,” *Terrorism Monitor* 6:17 (2008).

12 The Lebanese case of Hizb Allah and its soft, public activities served as a model for al-Sadr, especially since 2006 when the Lebanese militia’s popularity soared in the Arab world in the aftermath of a military conflict with Israel. See Bill Roggio and Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, “Sadr’s Special Groups,” *The Long War Journal*, June 10, 2008.

tactical reasons for the recalibration of JAM are several, one major force behind the changes appears to be Iran, particularly the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which has worked to remold JAM into a Hizb Allah-like Shi`a militia in Iraq.¹³

Iran and the Rise of the New JAM

Since 2003, Tehran actively sought to bring the Sadrism movement under its sphere of influence. Yet Iraqi nationalism and the decentralized nature of JAM constrained Iranian control over the movement. It was the bloody clashes between JAM and other Shi`a factions, along with the declining influence of Sadrists in Iraqi politics after the sectarian conflict, that allowed Tehran to increasingly gain a hold over Moqtada al-Sadr and his militia. With intra-Shi`a conflict and violent JAM splinter groups, al-Sadr grew dependent on Tehran’s financial and military support, further undermining his ability to emerge as an independent Shi`a leader in the post-war period. Accordingly, al-Sadr’s decision in late 2007 to move to Iran provided Iranian hardliners a major advantage to monitor the young cleric, while encouraging him to undergo religious training through Iranian seminary circles.

By and large, it is not clear the extent to which the IRGC has aided in regrouping JAM into a Hizb Allah-like militia force since al-Sadr left Iraq. Yet if Iran has been actively engaged in restructuring al-Sadr’s militia by weakening various splinter elements and training the militia into a disciplined force (especially on the leadership level), it is unlikely that the IRGC has been able to maintain focus in this restructuring process since the Iranian election unrest of 2009. As a result of Iran’s domestic problems stemming from the election, it appears that many of its intelligence resources have been refocused internally.¹⁴

Of course, it is still possible that Iran continues to provide logistical and financial support to JAM in developing the militia into a charity and religious

13 This assessment, and those that follow, are based on the author’s observations and research work in the region.

14 Apparently, between summer 2009 and winter 2010, many Iranian intelligence officers in Iraq returned to Iran for intelligence operations.

association both inside Iraq and Iran. Along with their leader, a number of JAM military officers resided in Tehran and the shrine cities of Mashhad and Qom.¹⁵ This is, in a way, reminiscent of the 1980s when Ayatollah Hakim's Badr officers resided in Iran and were trained by the IRGC for an eventual return to Iraq. Yet unlike the Badr Brigade in the 1980s and 1990s, many Iranian-based Sadrists continue to travel between Iran and Iraq, strengthening JAM's financial and network ties across both countries.

On a more significant level, the revival of al-Sadr's political fortunes are less about Iranian influence and more about his followers' ability to cleverly exploit electoral politics to their advantage. The latest parliamentary elections provided such an opportunity, placing al-Sadr in the center of the political map. The key to the Sadrists' electoral success was how they applied systematic polling methods such as databases with information on voters in all provinces and a cunning campaign strategy to win voters in the south.¹⁶ Along with anti-establishment and populist tactics, such as the staged referendum as a way to discredit al-Maliki's authority in the Shi'a urban centers, al-Sadr was able to present himself and his followers as the primary political force to defend the Shi'a population. Also, it is possible that al-Sadr exploited his close ties with General Qasim Soleimani of the IRGC, who also played a part in lobbying the Iraqi National Alliance to merge with the State of Law coalition to boost his political fortunes within the Shi'a bloc. This political move took away the chance for Iyad Allawi's secular-Sunni front to form a government, which would have considerably diminished al-Sadr's role as a key political figure.

In the aftermath of the elections, al-Sadr's public call for the return of JAM reveals a sense of confidence with the backing of not only Iran, but also a large Shi'a electorate. For now, the Sadrists also have the respect of al-Maliki, who was forced to make considerable concessions with al-Sadr to remain in power. In this light, al-Sadr may now feel he has the political capital to legitimize the full restoration of JAM

as part of Iraq's security institutions, which could be controlled by Sadrists in the next government.

Implications

The implications of JAM's revival are several. The most critical is the sectarian factor. While Sadrists are unlikely to undertake military operations against Sunnis in provinces such as Baghdad and Diyala, the resurfacing of JAM could nevertheless threaten Sunnis and motivate their insurgent elements to engage in anti-sectarian activities. A new wave of militant violence could return to Iraq and significantly undermine the country's fragile political process, stirring the country back to the sectarian killings of 2006.

The second aspect is the Iran factor. Increasing pressure by the United States on Tehran's nuclear program could encourage the IRGC, which controls Iran's Iraq policy, to use the new JAM as a proxy force to either deteriorate security conditions or challenge U.S. forces to prevent military attacks against Iran's nuclear facilities. In this scenario, the main question remains to what extent Iranian hardliners could feel threatened to turn to JAM for military support inside Iraq. This scenario is less likely, however, since, like Hizb Allah in Lebanon, al-Sadr would risk major political capital if he appears too obedient to Tehran. The perils of doing Iran's bidding could also severely weaken the new JAM, as the militia could be undermined in case of a renewed military conflict with the United States. In summary, the costs for helping Iran are considerably overwhelming for al-Sadr.

Meanwhile, the Iran factor is closely tied to the U.S. factor. Similar to Hizb Allah during Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon, Iraq too could see a rise of JAM military activities with the departure of U.S. forces in 2011. This possible outcome is contingent on Baghdad's capability to implement the U.S.-Iraq "status of forces" agreement on both legal and perceptual levels. If al-Maliki is unable to fulfill the withdrawal agreement and appears too dependent on U.S. military power, al-Sadr might shift his attention to anti-occupation activities and engage his new JAM in military operations against the United States. This scenario is also

unlikely, however, unless JAM manages to effectively bolster its asymmetrical military abilities with the support of the IRGC, a prospect that could materialize in case the United States or Israel attack Iran.

In essence, the Sadrist movement is inspired by populist nationalism and millenarian militancy. Yet the key to their success is the political shrewdness in how they survive various assaults, and ultimately return stronger than before. What could eventually limit the Sadrists' militant activities is how far they succeed in the political spectrum. As long as al-Sadr remains a major political figure, operating within the Iraqi electoral process, it is unlikely that JAM will return to its combative roots and reactivate its military program. Al-Sadr's ultimate interest is to maintain his political prestige, with the possible ambition to one day become the country's first Shi'a cleric prime minister or perhaps a major Shi'a spiritual leader like his father, Ayatollah Sadeq al-Sadr. If fulfilled, then the activities of the new JAM will primarily revolve around "cultural" pursuits, although it will always maintain a disciplined military wing in case the Sadrists feel excluded from politics.

Dr. Babak Rahimi, who earned his BA at UCSD, received a Ph.D. from the European University Institute, Florence, Italy, in October 2004. He has also studied at the University of Nottingham, where he obtained a master's degree in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy, and the London School of Economics and Political Science, where he was a Visiting Fellow at the Department of Anthropology, 2000-2001. Dr. Rahimi has written numerous articles on culture, religion and politics and regularly writes on contemporary Iraqi and Iranian politics. He was a Senior Fellow at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., where he conducted research on the institutional contribution of Shi'a political organizations in the creation of a vibrant civil society in post-Ba'athist Iraq. Dr. Rahimi's current research project is on Shi'a clerics and emerging information technology, specifically the internet.

¹⁵ This information was valid as of late 2009, when the author conducted research in the region.

¹⁶ Dehghanpisheh.

Indoctrinating Children: The Making of Pakistan's Suicide Bombers

By Kalsoom Lakhani

IN NUMEROUS ARMED CONFLICTS, children continue to be used as weapons of war. According to Human Rights Watch, the military recruitment of children under 18 years of age and their use in hostilities occurs in at least 86 countries and territories, with Amnesty International estimating that there are approximately 250,000 children fighting in conflicts worldwide.¹ In Pakistan, a significant and disturbing number of suicide bombers were between 12 and 18 years of age, with one estimate placing that number at 90%.² Although young militants are generally teenagers when asked to carry out suicide attacks, the indoctrination of children often starts at a much younger age. In the PBS documentary *Children of the Taliban*, journalist Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy interviewed Taliban commander Qari Hussain, who boasted that he also recruits children as young as five, six and seven years old, emphasizing, "Children are tools to achieve God's will. And whatever comes your way, you sacrifice it."³

In the last year alone, child suicide bombers have perpetrated a number of attacks in Pakistan. In June 2009, news agencies reported that a teenage suicide bomber detonated explosives in the office of a prominent cleric and supporter of the Pakistani offensive against the Taliban.⁴ The cleric, Sarfraz Naeemi, was killed in the attack, as well as three others.⁵ In December 2009, a teenage suicide bomber, who a police chief described as "under 20 with

pimples on his face and short," attacked a press club in Peshawar, killing three people.⁶ Another teenager "wearing a vest with as many as 15 pounds of explosives" blew himself up near a protest rally in Peshawar in April 2010, killing a prominent police officer and as many as two dozen protesters.⁷ The attack was later claimed by Lashkar-i-Jhanghvi, a group from the Punjabi Taliban nexus.

To comprehend the gravity of the child militant phenomenon in Pakistan, it is first necessary to understand the process of indoctrination, which ultimately socializes young recruits into hardened fighters. By understanding this psychology, it is possible to find productive solutions.

The Role of Madrasas in Radicalization

Sources differ on the actual number of *madrasas* (religious schools) in Pakistan. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, "Experts say there is no credible information for the number of unregistered madrasas, but estimates of registered madrasas range from ten thousand to twenty thousand."⁸ When looking at the numbers of children who attend school in the country, however, only a small percentage (1.3%) receives a *madrasa* education, versus 65% who attend public schools and 34% who go to private schools.⁹ Nevertheless, according to South Asia expert Christine Fair, *madrasas* are still concerning as they may produce students who are more likely than students in mainstream schools to support militancy.¹⁰

While not all religious schools in Pakistan are radical in nature, some estimates claim that about 15% preach violence or militancy.¹¹ In areas with a high concentration of *madrasas*, low-income families may choose this school

system because their children are provided free education and room and board. In comparison, many government schools have limited teaching materials and "an inadequate number of properly trained teachers, or in many cases absent teachers."¹² As a result, some families choose to send their children away to religious schools.

According to Chinoy, the first stage in the indoctrination process involves the severing of young children from their families.¹³ Since they receive free board and education, a sense of loyalty and obligation between the students and the *madrasa* develops. From a psychological perspective, the separation of a child from parental control subsequently leads them to look toward a father surrogate as their new authority, noted Jerrold Post, a Professor of Psychiatry, Political Psychology and International Affairs at The George Washington University.¹⁴ In the case of the *madrasa* system, this surrogate often takes the form of the school cleric or teacher, whose sermons many young boys accept without question.

Children at a young age are deeply vulnerable, malleable and impressionable, traits often manipulated by group leaders in conflicts throughout the world to indoctrinate child soldiers. According to Post, "The psychology of morality and conscience is something that is absorbed during childhood, and if that childhood is spent carrying out or viewing acts of violence, it can be a very powerful and scary phenomenon."¹⁵

In the case of Pakistan, the dependency between the student and the school is further strengthened by the *madrasa* curriculum. According to Azhar Hussain, a consultant with various international organizations on *madrasa* enhancement in Pakistan, the curriculum in these schools is focused on religion, and rarely incorporates subjects such as math or sciences, disciplines that ultimately foster critical thinking and analysis.¹⁶ In many of these *madrasas*, students are also not allowed to watch

1 "Child Soldiers Global Report 2008," Human Rights Watch, May 20, 2008. The 250,000 figure is drawn from the "Child Soldiers" section of Amnesty International's website.

2 Zahid Hussain, an expert on the Taliban who has interviewed many children trained to become suicide bombers, provided this figure to CNN journalist Anderson Cooper, which was broadcast on "Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees," on January 5, 2010.

3 Dan Edge, *Children of the Taliban*, PBS Frontline, August 14, 2009.

4 Alex Rodriguez, "Taliban Critic Slain in Pakistan Suicide Bombing," *Los Angeles Times*, June 13, 2009.

5 Ibid.

6 "Teen Suicide Bomber Kills 3 at Pakistan Press Club," *Kuwait Times*, December 23, 2009.

7 Sabrina Tavernise, "Bomber Strikes Near Pakistan Rally," *New York Times*, April 19, 2010.

8 Jayshree Bajoria, "Pakistan's Education System and Links to Extremism," Council on Foreign Relations, October 7, 2009.

9 Tahir Andrabi, Jishnu Das, C. Christine Fair, and Asim Ijaz Khwaja, "The Madrasa Myth," *Foreign Policy*, June 1, 2009.

10 Bajoria.

11 Douglas Johnston, "Madrasa Reform Key," *Washington Times*, August 7, 2009.

12 Bajoria.

13 Personal interview, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, May 10, 2010.

14 Personal interview, Jerrold Post, April 30, 2010.

15 Ibid.

16 Personal interview, Azhar Hussain, May 8, 2010.

television or read any materials not prescribed by their school and are “severely reprimanded and made an example if they do,” explained Chinoy. The use of intimidation is therefore an important tool in indoctrination. As a result, most *madrasa* students do not question or probe teachings centered on narrow and arbitrary interpretations of Islam.

The Common Narrative

Despite the numerous types of *madrasas*, as well as militant organizations, one simple and overarching narrative seems to tie these entities together. While there are variations on the enemy, more radical schools base their fundamental narrative around the notion that Islam is under attack. In his work on *madrasas*, Azhar Hussain found that numerous schools infuse teachings of religion with anti-U.S. sentiment, delivering firebrand sermons that depict the United States as the villain in the narrative, the force that threatens Islamic traditions and values.¹⁷ While perceived allies of the United States, including the Pakistani state and NATO forces, are also vilified in this scenario, the Pakistani military in particular is a rallying cry. According to Chinoy, clerics and militants frame the Pakistan Army’s operations against militancy in Pakistan as proof that they are “an enemy of Islam” since they are killing “fellow Muslims.”¹⁸ Chinoy noted, “Many don’t even consider the military to be a Muslim Army.”¹⁹

This simple but polarizing narrative is fundamental within the child militant context because it is digestible, noted Farhana Ali, a terrorism analyst who researches *madrasas*.²⁰ “The narrative doesn’t have to be true,” she emphasized. “If that’s what feeds young minds it’s irrelevant if it’s false.”²¹ Moreover, given the sense of dependency and obligation that form between the student and the *madrasa*, children absorb their teachers’ narrative as their own fairly quickly.

The Culture of Martyrdom

Not all *madrasas* are radical, and many that preach hatred and intolerance do not necessarily advocate violence. At the same time, there is a culture of martyrdom to which children become acclimated while attending these schools. According to Post, the evolution of suicide bombing in the Islamist context has involved “taking

“While adult suicide bombers may experience some ‘existential grappling,’ young children are unable to process the meaning of ending one’s life, especially if rewards are promised in the afterlife.”

something that is prohibited in the Holy Qur’an—suicide—and reframing it as martyrdom.”²² Although the “greater” jihad in Islam is the struggle within oneself, firebrand clerics and militants have shifted the emphasis to the “lesser” jihad, or jihad of the sword, “which was an obligation for Muslim men to protect Islam from invasion and its enemies.”²³ Ali and Post noted, “Over time, the terms jihad and martyrdom were misappropriated by terrorist leaders and their members to justify acts of violence in the name of Islam.”²⁴

In radical *madrasas*, the reframing of both jihad and martyrdom are instrumental in glorifying the acts of suicide bombers. These themes also further reinforce the fundamental narrative—that Islam is under threat, and suicide bombing is a tool “to teach the enemy a lesson,” a phrase often used by radical clerics and teachers and subsequently parroted by impressionable *madrasa* students. Chinoy, a journalist who spent a considerable amount of time visiting *madrasas* in Pakistan for her documentary *Children*

of the Taliban, noted that older students in the schools (teenagers 15-18-years-old) also influence the younger children (9-12-years-old), framing jihadist fighters and suicide bombers as heroes who bring value to society and should be emulated.²⁵ According to Hussain, students as young as nine years old say if there were an opportunity to harm Western interests, they would not hesitate in sacrificing themselves for “the greater good.”²⁶

Surrender to the collective or group identity is also a transformation that occurs in the indoctrination process. While adult suicide bombers may experience some “existential grappling,” young children are unable to process the meaning of ending one’s life, especially if rewards are promised in the afterlife.²⁷ Images and stories of virgins, rivers of milk and honey, and other heavenly delights in paradise, as well as propaganda videos celebrating the acts of jihadist fighters, further enforce the allure of suicide bombing.²⁸ Children are also told that by becoming suicide bombers they are securing a place in heaven for their families as well.²⁹

Children as Sacrifice

From the radical *madrasa* and militant perspective, children are seen as expendable human resources. A common term used by extremist clerics in reference to these indoctrinated students, noted Azhar Hussain, is *Qurbani ka bakra*, or sacrifice. A cleric from a Deobandi *madrasa* outside Lahore once told Hussain, “This is a gift from God that we have an unlimited number of youngsters willing to become *Qurbani ka bakra* to teach America a lesson.”³⁰ This callous framing by clerics and radical *madrasa* leaders signifies how the use of children as suicide bombers and militants is a political tactic to bolster power. In a system where religion often becomes blurred with culture, children

17 Ibid.

18 Personal interview, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, May 10, 2010.

19 Ibid.

20 Personal interview, Farhana Ali, May 10, 2010.

21 Ibid.

22 Personal interview, Jerrold Post, April 30, 2010.

23 Farhana Ali and Jerrold Post, “The History and Evolution of Martyrdom in the Service of Defensive Jihad: An Analysis of Suicide Bombers in Current Conflicts,” *Social Research* 75:2 (2008).

24 Ibid.

25 Personal interview, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, May 10, 2010.

26 Personal interview, Azhar Hussain, May 8, 2010.

27 Personal interview, Jerrold Post, April 30, 2010.

28 Arwa Damon, “Taliban Brainwashes Kids with Visions of Virgins,” CNN, January 6, 2010.

29 Personal interview, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, May 10, 2010.

30 Hussain noted similar statements by clerics from *madrasas* throughout the country, including in Karachi.

who view the world in black-and-white often have a hard time comprehending such nuanced distinctions.

By the time children go through years of indoctrination in the *madrasa* system, many are recruited or choose to join a militant organization. Again, while not all radical *madrasas* advocate the use of violence, these children have also heard the same messages repeated over and over again and have been socialized in an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance. According to Azhar Hussain, among more than 200 students he interviewed, many voiced an affiliation for at least one militant group, some noting they liked Lashkar-i-Tayyiba but not Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, or they preferred Jaysh-i-Muhammad to Lashkar-i-Jhangvi.³¹ Although some militant groups, including the TTP, recruit children as young as six years old, children do not become suicide bombers until they are teenagers.³²

Solutions

In March 2010, the Pakistan Army established a boarding school to absorb and deradicalize 86 young militants in the Swat Valley, who had either been captured by the military or brought in by their families.³³ While the efforts of this center should be lauded, more resources must be allocated to absorb the overwhelming number of child fighters, particularly as Pakistan's military gains ground against insurgents in the country.

Although many of these young recruits have experienced years of indoctrination and radicalization, rehabilitation efforts must center on providing them with an alternate and legitimate surrogate authority, such as a more moderate cleric or a member of the military. According to Hussain, although many children with whom he spoke were willing to blow themselves up, "Most were timid and very much

open to listening to other adults."³⁴ Therefore, intervention efforts must be made to train and build capacity of potential guidance counselors to bolster the rehabilitation process.

More importantly, a comprehensive approach by the government of Pakistan must be developed to address this phenomenon as a whole. If the source of the issue is the more extreme *madrasas*, then long-term efforts must be made to strengthen parallel education systems to provide more attractive choices for families. In the short-term, efforts by local and provincial authorities to engage *madrasas* in curriculum reform, conflict resolution training, and peace-building workshops must also be supported. Moreover, the state should undertake continued efforts to discredit the narrative espoused by radical *madrasas* and militant organizations. In Pakistan, the issue of radicalization is a complex process, which can only be countered through a holistic, multifaceted and nuanced strategy.

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The Third Way: A Paradigm for Influence in the Marketplace of Ideas

By Scott Helfstein

PRIOR ATTEMPTS AT crafting a sustainable long-term strategy for combating terrorism fail to appreciate the importance and power of the dichotomous choice fostered by the al-Qa`ida narrative.¹ Al-Qa`ida maintains that the Muslim way of life is under siege by the West, and that Muslims have two options: surrender or fight. Given this choice, some portion of the Islamic community will inevitably choose to fight. Long-term counterterrorism policy looks toward political and economic solutions, focusing far less on the attitudes and norms that al-Qa`ida manipulates to generate recruits and support. The key to draining this support, and improving the long-term strategic outlook, is by disrupting this choice and presenting a "third way."

Since the September 11 attacks, there are numerous examples of hard fought tactical and operational counterterrorism victories, but efforts to counter the spread of violent extremism have achieved limited success. Al-Qa`ida today is a global terrorist organization, carrying out attacks against civilians around the world, while simultaneously tied to regional and local insurgencies aimed at overthrowing specific governments. Kinetic activity, while important to security, will not provide a long-term solution. Fundamentally, this is a norm-based fight, and al-Qa`ida's leaders are adept at framing issues in a normative way to generate the dichotomous choice.

The vast majority of people will never aim to kill their neighbors or blow up a local café. Those prepared to do so go through a period of radicalization and mobilization where choices steadily disappear, and they are faced with a single path. These people develop strong attitudes and overcome the normative constraints on the use of violence. Breaking this cycle is crucial

31 Personal interview, Azhar Hussain, May 8, 2010.

32 If children are recruited at a young age, they go through a similar indoctrination process until they are teenagers. Prior to this time, they are also allowed to hold guns, or ferry items around for the militant group. Details are based on personal interview, Sharmeen Obaid Chinoy, May 10, 2010.

33 Kalsoom Lakhani, "We Neglect Child Soldiers at Our Peril," The AfPak Channel, March 29, 2010.

34 Personal interview, Azhar Hussain, May 8, 2010.

1 The author would like to thank Nassir Abdullah, Aleksander Matovski, Reid Sawyer, Bill Braniff, and Don Rassler for comments and assistance on prior drafts. All mistakes are those of the author.

to containing or eliminating terrorism, and any successful counter-narrative should aim to disrupt the dichotomous choice that al-Qa`ida propounds. An understanding of attitudes and norms suggests that this is best done by delegitimizing the source, the message, and the values put forth by violent actors, cognizant of the limitation of any one path.

Attempts to counter the al-Qa`ida narrative and contain the spread of violent extremism must disrupt the frame, proving that fighting for al-Qa`ida is not what the group promises, while also showing that the United States does not have grand designs for the destruction of Islam. Al-Qa`ida is adept at manipulating attitudes and norms, and prior U.S. strategies have not utilized all the different levers of counter-influence. Ultimately, there is no "unified" strategy that will result in success. Undermining the source and narrative may transcend borders, but developing alternative paths or fostering norms of cooperation must rely on local factors. While there are risks associated with engaging such issues, the United States must not be afraid to spur debate and help generate a more competitive marketplace of ideas.

The Dichotomous Choice

According to al-Qa`ida, the West is at war with Islam. The only acceptable response is jihad. Jihad, a term with a complex definition often referring to inner struggle, is distilled to a basic and violent definition used to condone acts of violence against any Muslim and non-Muslim deemed the enemy of "true" Islam. The limited religious justification for such action relies on a distinction between clerically-condoned offensive and obligatory defensive jihad. By declaring the current conflict a defensive jihad, al-Qa`ida has lowered the barrier of entry for those willing to fight.²

Al-Qa`ida has patiently spun this narrative over time, and one of al-Qa`ida's strengths is the universal nature of its message. The issues that al-Qa`ida prioritizes resonate broadly across the global Muslim community including the threat from the West,

2 Ayman al-Zawahiri, "Message to the Islamic Ummah," al-Jazira, November 29, 2004.

poor governance associated with apostate regimes, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the oil trade, U.S. actions, and jihad around the world from Kashmir to the Philippines.³ People from different countries and backgrounds can find a place in al-Qa`ida's jihad. The narrative stresses that all Muslims can, and are technically obligated to, participate irrespective of ethnicity, social status, or local grievance. Only a commitment to violent jihad is required. One of the ways that al-Qa`ida achieves this universalism is through audience segmentation.

Communiqués from al-Qa`ida's leaders often address a broad audience by covering the major themes above, but tailored statements to specific groups reinforce the universal appeal. A message may be segmented along support lines, speaking to fellow jihadists, those providing material

"People from different countries and backgrounds can find a place in al-Qa`ida's jihad."

support, those empathetic to goals, those indifferent, those opposed, and non-Muslims. Messages are also segmented along nationalist lines, with sections often targeting individuals in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, among other countries. The segmentation actually serves to increase the universal appeal of the narrative since people can see themselves in the message while sympathizing with the larger grievances that al-Qa`ida claims to fight.

Given the universal appeal of the grievances, the message segmentation and the low barriers to entry, core aspects of al-Qa`ida's narrative continue to resonate widely even as the organization itself struggles in places such as Algeria and Iraq.⁴ The

3 Carl J. Ciovacco, "The Contours of Al Qaeda's Media Strategy," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 32:10 (2009): pp. 853-875.

4 For difficulties in Algeria, see Jean-Pierre Filiu, "Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb: A Case Study in the Opportunism of Global Jihad," *CTC Sentinel* 3:4 (2010).

dichotomous choice, fight or surrender, acts as a powerful, emotional motivator. Building a narrative that helps to complicate or dislodge the dichotomous choice is the best hope of marginalizing al-Qa`ida and its extreme views in the long-run.

Attitudes, Norms and Terrorism

Al-Qa`ida's message plays to its strengths, harnessing tools such as emotional illustrations, common experience, and history. Any attempt to counter this message must draw on a range of mechanisms and leverage existing scientific knowledge of attitudes and behavior. Psychologists suggest that a person's attitude, their summary evaluation of an object, serves as a filter between beliefs and behavior.⁵ Attitude is central to forming behavioral intent, and the act of terrorism is like any other behavior. Any successful strategy aimed at combating terrorism by altering the behavior must rely on current understandings of attitude.

People form attitudes about objects both consciously and unconsciously, dealing with issues as diverse as politics and weather. Research on attitudes toward terrorism and anti-Americanism yield some interesting conclusions.⁶ There is little evidence linking religiosity with support for terrorism, corresponding with advice from an al-Qa`ida recruitment manual encouraging operators to target uninformed individuals.⁷ The greatest predictors of support for terrorism in Algeria and Jordan are negative feelings toward one's own government rather than economic conditions or judgments about Western culture.⁸ While al-Qa`ida cloaks political issues in a

For difficulties in Iraq, see Brian Fishman, *Dysfunction and Decline: Lessons Learned from Inside al-Qa`ida in Iraq* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2009).

5 Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, *Understanding Attitudes and Predicting Social Behavior* (Englewood-Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980).

6 Mark Tessler, "Arab and Muslim Political Attitudes: Stereotypes and Evidence from Survey Research," *International Studies Perspectives* 4:2 (2003): pp. 175-181.

7 Abu-Amr al-Qaidi, "A Course in the Art of Recruitment," undated.

8 Survey information in Mark Tessler and Michael D.H. Robbins, "What Leads Some Ordinary Arab Men and Women to Approve of Terrorist Acts Against the United States?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 51:2 (2007): pp. 305-328.

religious veneer, this research suggests that supporters are often motivated by political rather than religious cues.

Once attitudes form, the ease with which they change varies significantly. Attitude changes occur in one of two ways: logic and heuristics.⁹ Logical attitude change occurs when a person gathers new information, and reasoning

“While al-Qa`ida cloaks political issues in a religious veneer, this research suggests that supporters are often motivated by political rather than religious cues.”

leads them to a new position. People rely on heuristics, or rule-based mechanisms, when they are unwilling or unable to engage in logical analysis. Heuristic change often relies on the information source, where those trusted exert greater influence on attitude. Logical attitude change is stronger and more enduring, whereby heuristic change is less stable, more accepting of counter positions, and less likely to drive behavior.

Some argue that “moderate voices in Islam” provide the best counter to al-Qa`ida’s message. Enlisting such authoritative figures relies on heuristic change, and resulting beliefs thereby subject to counter by other sources. Any attempts at triggering such attitude change must be matched by actions aimed at delegitimizing al-Qa`ida and its message to prevent backsliding. This approach will not be as powerful or enduring as logical attitude change, but different *a priori* attitudes complicate such efforts. For example, in 2002, 78% of respondents from nine predominately Muslim countries did not believe that the 9/11 attacks were perpetrated by Arabs.¹⁰ Such asymmetry in assumptions flows

9 William D. Crano and Radmila Prislin, “Attitudes and Persuasion,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 57 (2006): pp. 345-374.

10 Matthew A. Gentzkow and Jesse M. Shapiro, “Media, Education and Anti-Americanism in the Muslim World,” *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18:3 (2004): pp. 117-133.

into logical arguments, and attempts at logical appeal must address such basic differences before moving forward.

Emotion or affect can also have a major impact on attitudes and attitude change. This is particularly important since al-Qa`ida’s narrative evokes strong emotion.¹¹ Affective associations are often triggered more rapidly than cognitive associations, meaning that a person’s first response to new information is more likely emotional than logical.¹² By extension, al-Qa`ida’s message should be most successful when used preemptively, blocking the logical appeals of others. Further, negative affect-inducing communications exert larger influence on attitudes when the source is perceived to be credible.¹³ Al-Qa`ida can benefit from this, but research also shows that illegitimate sources find it far more difficult to rely on negative affective messages. Finally, fear has a big impact on attitudes when people feel vulnerable, which is a recurrent part of the jihadist message.

While there is no single theory of behavior, most scientists believe that behavior is motivated by attitudes and social norms, so attitudes are one half of the coin and social norms the other.¹⁴ The attention proffered to political and economic explanations of terrorism are surprising when one considers that, at its core, terrorism is a normative issue. Terrorism is unique among forms of political violence, not in its aims or brutality, but in its violation of societal norms on the acceptable use of violence. Targeting of civilians for political means is eschewed across many cultures around the world. While terrorists may have political aims, terrorism itself is inextricably tied to society’s norms, and

11 Leandre R. Fabrigar and Richard E. Petty, “The Role of the Affective and Cognitive Bases of Attitudes in Susceptibility to Affectively and Cognitively Based Persuasion,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 25:3 (1999): pp. 363-381.

12 Roger Giner-Sorolla, “Affect in Attitude: Immediate and Deliberative Perspectives,” in Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope eds., *Dual-Process Theories in Social Psychology* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999).

13 Gerd Bohner and Thomas Weinerth, “Negative Affect Can Increase or Decrease Message Scrutiny: The Affect Interpretation Hypothesis,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 27:11 (2001): pp. 1417-1428.

14 Icek Ajzen, “Nature and Operation of Attitudes,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 52 (2001): pp. 27-58.

its tactical strength is the willingness to violate such norms. Strong norms prohibiting terrorism can provide a powerful check on radical attitudes, either preventing action or forcing individuals to go beyond the local community for validation.

Societal norms are generated and reinforced by patterns of social interaction, both negative and positive. Norms of cooperation emerge in societies where people have positive or cooperative interactions, and the belief that others will act cooperatively helps sustain and reinforce such behavior.¹⁵ Empirical research on terrorist groups across 190 countries from 1994 to 2006 supports this idea.¹⁶ Terrorist groups are far more likely to exist in countries with recent histories of intrastate conflict. Citizens of these countries regularly observe violent social interactions, and normative

“While terrorists may have political aims, terrorism itself is inextricably tied to society’s norms, and its tactical strength is the willingness to violate such norms.”

constraints on the use of violence are weak or non-existent. By contrast, the opportunity to interact with others in a mutually beneficial way, through certain freedoms or healthy commercial exchange, helps to generate cooperative norms that reject the use of violence against civilians. Anecdotal evidence shows that radicalized individuals often look to others for approval before carrying out violent actions.

15 Robert Axelrod, *Evolution of Cooperation* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Robert Axelrod, “An Evolutionary Approach to Norms,” *American Political Science Review* 80:4 (1986): pp. 1095-1111.

16 Scott Helfstein, “Lurking in the Shadows: The Existence of Terrorist Entities,” paper presented at the International Studies Association Annual Conference, New Orleans, LA, February 2009.

The Way Forward

To date, counter-messaging strategies suffer from four weaknesses: lack of coordination across government, homogenous approach to issues, vague articulation of goals, and lack of framing to address the dichotomous choice. Generating and implementing a strategy that overcomes these weaknesses is crucial to long-term counterterrorism success and broader national security concerns in important regions. Existing knowledge on attitudes and norms should inform policy, identifying levers of influence to generate a sound strategy.

There are four potential paths to countering al-Qa`ida's message and the violence it propounds. First, a strategy should aim to discredit the source, helping to limit al-Qa`ida's heuristic and emotional influence. Second, the strategy should discredit the message, appealing to logical aspects of attitude change by showing that the dichotomous choice is not as al-Qa`ida presents. Third, disrupting the choice by challenging the communal norms that underlie the movement will effectively raise the barrier to entry. Finally, an effective message should highlight alternatives to violent jihad. These paths are not mutually exclusive, will often be synergistic, but at times may also neutralize one another.

Delegitimizing the source, in this case al-Qa`ida and its allies, can be a valuable weapon. The legitimacy of the source is central to heuristic attitude changes, and those lacking credibility have little ability to alter the attitudes of others. This is especially true for affect-based appeals that trigger emotional responses before logical ones, and credible sources can convey negative-affect messages with great impact. Delegitimizing al-Qa`ida as a source makes heuristic attitude change more difficult, and perhaps more importantly blocks al-Qa`ida's ability to leverage negative emotional appeals.

The source of al-Qa`ida's credibility comes from actions in defense of the Muslim masses, perceived piety, and care for its fighters. The group's deeds, however, undermine these sources of legitimacy. Despite declaring itself the vanguard of the Muslim community, al-Qa`ida is far more adept at attacking

fellow Muslims than taking the fight to its Western enemies. From 2004 to 2008, 85% of al-Qa`ida's victims hailed from countries with Muslim majorities and only 15% came from Western countries.¹⁷ Its actions on and off the battlefield should also drive questions about its leaders' perceived piety. Al-Qa`ida condones the murder of disarmed hostages, which is strictly prohibited by Shari`a law.¹⁸ Coupled with allegations that al-Qa`ida's leaders paid bribes, there is ample ammunition to assail their perceived piety, driven by political expedience rather than religious doctrine.¹⁹

Delegitimizing the source helps to stifle heuristic influence and emotional appeal, but it does not foster logical attitude change. Stronger and enduring changes require logical arguments, which is difficult when people dispute basic underlying facts or assumptions. Nonetheless, al-Qa`ida's own messaging strategy offers clues for presenting logical arguments. In the dichotomous choice, individuals can choose whether to fight or surrender, presumably calculating the benefit from each course of action. Large perceived benefits to fighting, combined with a high cost for surrender, pushes people toward al-Qa`ida and terrorism. Setting this choice as a decision problem shows that disruption requires two very different counter-narratives necessary for success: reducing the benefits to fighting and increasing those to surrender.

One method for lowering the perceived value of fighting involves displaying military capabilities and the futility of rebellion. Ultimately, this may only buttress al-Qa`ida's narrative of rebellion of weak against strong. Another alternative highlights what it means to actually fight for al-Qa`ida, since perceptions are far from the truth.

17 Scott Helfstein, Nassir Abdullah, and Muhammad al-Obaidi, *Deadly Vanguard: A Study of al-Qa`ida's Violence Against Muslims* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2009).

18 Yusuf al-Qaradawi, for example, cites Qur'anic verse al-Ma'idah 32 to prohibit the killing of hostages in terrorist operations. See www.qaradawi.net/site/topics/article.asp?cu_no=2&item_no=4568&version=1&template_id=256.

19 For a discussion of Ayman al-Zawahiri paying bribes to escape Dagestan in 1996, see "The Jihadists Theorist," *Asharq al-Awsat*, November 25, 2008.

Foreigners wishing to "fight" in Iraq were stripped of their passports, money, and personal items, then forced to take part in suicide missions. Fighting for al-Qa`ida also involves breaking codes of conduct based on Shari`a law. The killing of hostages, common in places such as Algeria and Iraq, violates Shari`a law dictating that prisoners should not be harmed once disarmed.

Reducing the costs of "surrender" will also lessen the appeal of terrorism. Al-Qa`ida's narrative is strongest when surrender is associated with

“Attitudes and norms change slowly, and progress must be measured in years and decades rather than hours or days.”

the death of Islam and Muslims. That association triggers a strong affective response tied to vulnerability, making it important to expose this fallacy. This is difficult when there are two ongoing wars in Muslim countries, but it is not impossible. Leveraging actions such as the U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraq can help to discredit the idea that the United States seeks to occupy Muslim lands, while simultaneously denying al-Qa`ida the ability to claim that it drove the Americans out. Highlighting shared values, such as accountability of government, justice, and minimal corruption, is equally important.²⁰

One could also delegitimize the narrative by presenting a third way, inherently disrupting the dichotomous choice. The third way itself must take local conditions into account, since varying social, political, and economic conditions mean that alternative pathways must leverage the strengths of the particular situation. It is important to recognize, however, that alternative paths already exist. Groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Tablighi Jamaat offer an alternative to the violent message of al-Qa`ida, but there are risks to working with such groups that may have

20 Peter G. Peterson, "Public Diplomacy and the War on Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs* 81:5 (2002): p. 74.

fundamentally different interests.²¹ The question for policymakers is whether they wish to strengthen the appeal of such groups or prefer to design a third path as a competitor. Either way, the development of alternative paths does not occur in a vacuum, and there is little reason to believe that these non-violent proselytization groups will moderate their views without constructive engagement.

One can also take action to undermine the norms espoused by al-Qa`ida, which are rejected by most societies. Islam has strict rules on the use of violence, and most societies reject *takfir*, or the excommunication of fellow Muslims. Combining *takfir* with the lack of a single overseeing authority, factions that disagree with one another often find themselves labeling Muslim enemies apostates to justify infighting.²² The norm of conflict is pervasive. Undermining al-Qa`ida's support will be particularly difficult in places where civil conflict and insecurity have eroded local social norms, since communal constraints on the use of violence are already low. Normative constraints can play a key role in mitigating violent behavior.²³ Even Usama bin Ladin is said to have sought external validation for the use of nuclear weapons, given the strong normative constraints, a call that was widely condemned. Changing interaction and fostering norms need not be tied to grand societal programs and are common in reconciliation plans.

These examples do not have to be mutually exclusive, and many speak to source, message, and norms. It is important when messaging that target or targets be clearly articulated. While delegitimizing the source, message and norms are crucial to any long-term success, it is important to acknowledge the shortcomings of any "unified" strategy. Undermining al-Qa`ida as a source, or its dichotomous message, may resonate across different regions; however, attempts at establishing a

third path or undermining the group's norms must rely on a disaggregated or tailored strategy, acknowledging local conditions (such as membership in proselytization groups) and community norms (such as the Pashtunwali code).

The Third Way as a Third Policy Lever

The third way represents an approach to counter al-Qa`ida's narrative, but it also serves as a third policy lever for U.S. counterterrorism. Counterterrorism efforts usually focus on kinetic activity or large societal programs. Given the cost and difficulty associated with successfully implementing large programs, such as nation-building or regime change, kinetic activity is often the favored option. Kinetic counterterrorism efforts effectively address the symptoms without addressing its roots. It also generates discontent, reinforces al-Qa`ida's narrative and possibly contributes to future terrorism. Given the paradoxes associated with kinetics and the costly difficulties of large societal programs, policymakers should see the third way as a third policy lever. Such an approach is especially important as appetite for resource intensive counterinsurgency operations wanes, while the al-Qa`ida threat becomes a more diffuse, disaggregated alliance bloc.

Prior attempts at stimulating debate call for action from the moderate Muslim community, and the assumption is that Western sources lack capacity for influence. While waiting, the marketplace of ideas is a monopoly or oligopoly inherently antagonistic to the United States and its interests. Evidence suggests, however, that well-reasoned and empirically-supported arguments are capable of fostering debate and altering discourse in the marketplace. A short report on al-Qa`ida's violence against Muslims recently fostered discussion in venues such as Muslim.net and Ikhwanweb.com. Al-Qa`ida has no hesitations about participating in this marketplace, and Western sources should not be afraid to put forward empirical arguments to foster debate. This approach will not generate widespread Muslim support for the United States or its policies, but it will be successful if people reject al-Qa`ida and embrace a third way.

It is important to note that any progress will be slow, difficult to observe, and hard to measure. Attitudes and norms change slowly, and progress must be measured in years and decades rather than hours or days. Changing attitudes and norms will be difficult, but it is absolutely crucial given current trends around the world, such as the growing anti-American and extremist tone of pop music in Pakistan along with the growth of extremist television clerics throughout the Middle East.²⁴

It is easy to conclude that the problem is too difficult, and the third way strategy too soft or too slow. Yet 50 years ago Muslims were not using suicide attacks, and public perception of the United States in the Middle East was generally positive. Attitudes and norms change, but the process takes time. Right now al-Qa`ida is losing support, but anti-Americanism and the extremist milieu are gaining ground. It is crucial to address this issue and try to change the trajectory. Al-Qa`ida spent years developing and reinforcing their narrative, it will take time to lay it bear.

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21 Marc Lynch, "The Brotherhood's Dilemma," *Middle East Brief* 25 (2008).

22 Nelly Lahoud, *The Jihadis' Path to Self-Destruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

23 For an example in the jihadist context, see Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism Since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

24 Adam B. Ellick, "Tuning Out the Taliban," *New York Times*, video production, 2009.

Still Fighting for Revolution: Greece's New Generation of Terrorists

By George Kassimeris

ON JANUARY 12, 2007, Greece's leftist Epanastatikos Agonas (Revolutionary Struggle, RS) terrorist group fired an anti-tank grenade into the heavily fortified U.S. Embassy in Athens. In early 2009, the RS executed multiple bomb attacks against the American banking giant Citibank in the Greek capital. The RS' continued attacks on international targets led U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to declare the group a foreign terrorist organization on April 22, 2009.¹ In April 2010, however, Greek authorities achieved a major victory, arresting almost all of the group's known members in counterterrorism raids.

This article examines RS' campaign of violence, its selection of targets, ideology and operational development. It also discusses the group's chances of survival after the April 2010 arrests of six of its alleged members by Greek police. Finally, the article warns that despite the recent success against the RS, Greece's counterterrorism apparatus remains inadequately prepared for a number of threats still on the horizon.

Violent Debut

From its initial bomb attack on Athens' Evelpidon courthouse in September 2003, the RS was determined to make a bloody splash. Two bombs were timed to explode 15 minutes apart with no advance notice, designed to kill police responding to the first explosion at the courthouse. The RS attack coincided with the trial of Greece's leading left-wing urban terrorist group, the Revolutionary Organization 17 November (17N).² On March 14, 2004,

RS attempted a second bombing, at a Citibank branch in Neo Psychico, a northern Athens suburb. RS placed a call 35 minutes before the scheduled explosion, giving police barely enough time to disarm it with two controlled explosions. The next attack, on May 5, 2004, targeted a police station in the working-class suburb of Kallithea; the triple bombing came just three months before the opening of the Athens Olympic Games. The first two bombs exploded within minutes of each other and the third approximately 30 minutes later, leading police to the conclusion that the group intended to cause human casualties. The attack, somewhat inevitably, received huge press coverage and prompted security experts and the international media to openly question Greece's resolve in providing safety and security for the first post-9/11 Olympic Games.

Ten days after the Kallithea attack, the RS issued a 16-page ideological manifesto claiming responsibility for the triple bombing and publicizing the group's "revolutionary" credentials. Entitled "New World Order or the Terrorism International,"³ the text outlined RS' political positions, offering at the same time a commentary on domestic and international conditions.⁴ A mixture of ultra leftist political analysis, international relations commentary and polemical hyperbole, "New World Order or the Terrorism International" was similar in style to past 17N communiqués and explored a number of themes⁵ from which the group drew inspiration and motivation for its campaign.

As stated by a senior Greek counterterrorism officer, the RS' central ambition was to "stand alongside 17N in the Greek pantheon of great revolutionary forces."⁶ RS, like all organizations

that resort to terrorism, claimed that its cause justified extremism. The group presented itself and its violence in terms of political dissent, moral conviction and armed insurrection. Narrating its discourse through lengthy attack communiqués which, thanks to 17N, have long become an established Greek media ritual, RS elaborated the presentation of political events and expanded the dimensions of their violent

"The group's modus operandi incorporated high-profile assassination attempts, armed raids, car bombs and rocket attacks against Athens-based U.S. targets."

context in an attempt to dramatize the anomalies of the existing system, deny its legitimacy and propound alternative models. The group believed that it was a priority to create an insurrectionary mood that would awaken consciences and radicalize Grecians. Utterly convinced that the "age offers unique opportunities for anyone wishing to fight," RS sought to take the role of vanguard of the movement and persuade other groups making up the panorama of the Greek extra-parliamentary left that "conditions for an overthrow of the system by revolutionary armed struggle are ripe."⁷ In fact, as far as the group was concerned, "the conditions were never better."⁸ RS held it as axiomatic that the regime had entered a phase of destabilization and would therefore be "exceedingly vulnerable" if attacked with increasing violence.⁹ As such, the group's modus operandi incorporated high-profile assassination attempts, armed raids, car bombs and rocket attacks against Athens-based U.S. targets.

1 Ian Kelly, "Designations of Three Greek Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. State Department, May 18, 2009.

2 Comprised of a small group (approximately 12) of dedicated militants, 17N operated for 27 years with lethal effectiveness without ever being infiltrated. Between 1975 and 2000, it carried out hundreds of attacks and was responsible for assassinating 22 people before being taken down by the Greek authorities in June 2002. See George Kassimeris, "Fighting for Revolution? The Life and Death of Greece's Revolutionary Organization 17

November, 1975-2002," *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 6:2 (2004).

3 This was a clear reference to the "Communist International."

4 "New World Order or the Terrorism International," *To Pontiki*, May 13, 2004.

5 The themes included: "the Greek political establishment," "the trial of 17N," "capitalist exploitation," "globalization," "9/11," "the U.S.-led war on terror," "the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan," "the Arab-Israeli conflict" and "U.S. hegemonic plans in the Balkans," among others.

6 Personal interview, senior Greek counterterrorism of-

ficer, Athens, Greece, February 2010.

7 RS attack communiqué on Citibank, dated March 12, 2009.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

The group's relatively long run came to a halt in the early hours of March 11, 2010, when 35-year-old Lambros Foundas, an RS commando, was shot dead by police after he was caught trying to steal a car in the southeastern Athens neighborhood of Dafni.¹⁰ Next to the body of the fatally wounded Foundas, who wore double leather gloves and carried no cell phone or identification, was a Zastava gun. In his backpack were a handmade bomb (of a similar type used in previous RS operations) and a two-way radio transceiver.¹¹ Police believe that the stolen Seat Ibiza was to be used in an operation within the next 24 hours. A police examination of the contents of Foundas' mobile phone and laptop provided the authorities with a list of suspects that led to the arrests of five men and one woman, aged between 30 and 41, who were subsequently charged with multiple counts of attempted homicide, causing explosions and armed offenses linked with the RS. Police announced that during searches in the home of detainee Nikos Maziotis, who is allegedly the group's leader of operations, they found original RS communiqués, hand-drawn plans of future targets and detailed road maps for upcoming strikes.

Greek Counterterrorism Measures and Failures

Even though all terrorist groups eventually end, until that outcome is achieved more people die and the damage toll rises. It is worth remembering that for an astonishing 27 years (from the mid-1970s until 2002), the 17N pursued one of the most intransigent campaigns of terrorism in Europe, assassinating U.S. and British diplomats, Greek politicians, newspaper publishers and industrialists, detonating hundreds of bombs, and firing rockets against foreign embassies and businesses, causing hundreds of millions of dollars of property damage. It is also worth noting that in this time successive Greek governments failed to bring to justice even one member of the group and, in the end, it was only a massive blunder on the part of the terrorists that led to their arrests and the group's demise. History may well judge 17N as a failure, but this does not alter the fact that they succeeded in running rings

around the Greek authorities primarily because they took advantage of the fact that Greece's national counterterrorism effort was conducted for more than two decades against a background of half-measures, polarization, rivalry and exaggeration. Greece's state response to the 17N violence can in fact be used as an excellent case study of what not to do when dealing with terrorism.

History began to repeat itself when the RS emerged. Greece's state response to the RS amounted to nothing more substantial than the usual empty government rhetoric. The Greek state seemed to be following the same lethargic, dilatory, if not indifferent counterterrorism approach that served the country badly in the past. Dealing with experienced and heavily armed terrorists, such as members of the RS and the 17N before them, requires a combination of discipline, alertness and operational proficiency on the part of the security forces. This is the one lesson that Greek authorities should have learned after the 17N fiasco and therefore should have taken the RS terrorist threat more seriously. Put differently, the inability on the part of the authorities and the intelligence community to quickly understand the group's objectives and how dangerous it could become gave the terrorists invaluable time to organize and establish themselves.

Yet like the 17N during its early years, the RS seemed to receive the same weak, uncoordinated counterterrorism treatment. Rather than sending the terrorists an early and clear signal that violence would not be tolerated, the Greek authorities seemed to be in denial. A considerable number of senior officials at the Ministry of Public Order at the time were seriously entertaining the theory that 17N's dismantling had brought the final victory over terrorism in Greece, insisting that whatever small splinter groups still remained posed no real security threat.¹² Unsurprisingly, this inability on the part of Greece's security community to assess accurately the real danger posed by the RS gave the terrorists enough time to organize and improve operationally. The group's alleged mastermind, Nikos Maziotis,

was apparently able to act with impunity despite being known to the police since the late 1990s when he was put behind bars for attempting to detonate a bomb outside the Development Ministry.¹³ One would expect that upon his release in August 2001 he would be placed under police surveillance. Instead, after his release he allegedly coordinated more than a dozen RS attacks, including bombings, rocket attacks and armed raids.

The election of a new government in October 2009, however, improved Greece's counterterrorism policy. The return of Michalis Chrysohoidis (who was in charge during the 17N break up) to the Ministry of Public Order and the inevitable change of all top police, counterterrorism and national intelligence personnel for reasons of political patronage—regardless of the negative light it cast on Greece's political culture—meant that Chrysohoidis surrounded himself with people he trusted and whose specialized knowledge and experience was vital in rooting out 17N in the summer of 2002. As one of his senior counterterrorism officials stated, "These were extremely dangerous and violent people and they would murder a lot of people if allowed to continue. The lessons of the recent past were considered, comprehended and carefully calibrated for the particular circumstances and the particular strategy of the group in question."¹⁴

Outlook for the Future

Is this the end of the road for the RS? Could the organization regroup and make a comeback? If the six people captured are, as the Greek police insist, the core members of the RS, then the group faces an uphill battle to maintain momentum. According to sources close to the Public Order minister, the group can only count on another three, at most four members still at large, leaving the organization facing a profound period of crisis that could, and probably will,

¹³ In 1999, Maziotis was convicted and sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison for planting a bomb, which failed to explode, outside the Ministry of Development building in December 1997 to protest against the installation of a gold metallurgy by multinational company TVX Gold in the village of Strymonikos, Halkidiki in northern Greece.

¹⁴ Personal interview, senior counterterrorism officer, Athens, Greece, April 2010.

¹⁰ *Kathimerini*, March 12, 2010.

¹¹ *To Vima*, March 13, 2010.

¹² Personal interviews, Ministry of Public Order officials, Athens, Greece, June 2005.

become definitive.¹⁵ It is a mistake, however, to think that the logistical and operational dismantling of RS marks the end of revolutionary terrorism in Greece. Other post-17N groups such as the “Sect of Revolutionaries” and “Conspiracy of the Cells Fire” are almost certain to take the baton of violence from the RS.¹⁶

It is critical, therefore, that Greek security forces rely less on luck to stop future terrorists and more on a coherent counterterrorism strategy and an integrated counterterrorism capability. Whatever lies ahead, each new group and each terrorist campaign serves as a reminder that Greece has one of the most sustained problems of political violence anywhere in Europe. Indeed, only days after the arrests of Maziotis and his alleged collaborators, graffiti appeared on numerous walls in central Athens warning, “Nothing is finished, it all continues.”

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Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

May 1, 2010 (UNITED STATES): A car bomb was discovered in New York City’s Times Square after street vendors noticed smoke coming from a Nissan Pathfinder. The bomb had been ignited, but failed to explode, and authorities were able to disarm the device before it could cause any casualties. On May 2, the Pakistani Taliban purportedly took credit for the attempted attack, in a statement posted on Islamist web forums. The statement read, “The Pakistani Taliban announces its responsibility for the New York attack in revenge for the two leaders [Abu `Umar] al-Baghdadi and [Abu Hamza] al-Muhajir and Muslim martyrs.” Despite the claim of responsibility, it was not immediately clear whether the Pakistani Taliban were involved in the failed attack as a number of conflicting reports later emerged. – *Reuters, May 2*

May 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in Pakistan’s Swat Valley, killing two people. The incident occurred after security forces surrounded the bomber near Mingora’s Sohrab Khan market. The Swat faction of the Pakistani Taliban later claimed credit for the attack. – *Reuters, May 1; The News International, May 3*

May 1, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A bomb attached to a tricycle exploded in Quetta, Baluchistan Province. The remotely-detonated explosive targeted a police van, causing injuries to six people. – *AFP, April 30*

May 1, 2010 (SOMALIA): Two bombs ripped through the crowded Abdala Shideye Mosque in Mogadishu’s Bakara Market, killing at least 30 people. According to one witness interviewed by Voice of America, “a high-ranking member of al-Shabab, an Islamist insurgent group with ties to al-Qaida, was the target of the attack. Fuad Mohamed Qalaf, also known as Fuad Shongole, was reportedly inside the mosque as the bombs went off.” Shongole survived the attack, and accused U.S. security companies of organizing the blasts. – *Voice of America, May 1; Garowe Online, May 4*

May 2, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton identified the conditions required for reconciliation

with Afghan Taliban fighters. Speaking to a U.S. reporter, Afghan Taliban fighters who want to come “to the other side” need to “renounce Al-Qaeda. They have to renounce violence. They have to give up their arms. And they have to be willing to abide by the Afghan constitution.” – *AFP, May 1*

May 2, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb ripped through a minibus in Paktia Province, killing eight Afghan civilians including women and children. – *al-Jazeera, May 3*

May 3, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. authorities arrested Faisal Shahzad as he tried to flee the United States on a Dubai-bound jet. Shahzad, a Pakistani-American, is the key suspect in the May 1 failed car bombing in New York City’s Times Square. Authorities said that Shahzad, who is 30-years-old, admitted his role in the plot, and he claimed that he received explosives training in Pakistan. Reports from Pakistan after Shahzad’s arrest state that a handful of individuals were arrested for possible connections to the plot. Shahzad is the son of a retired senior Pakistani Air Force officer. – *New York Times, May 4; New York Times, May 5*

May 3, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked Forward Operating Base Chapman, a U.S. military facility in Khost Province. One civilian was killed in the blast. The Taliban claimed responsibility. Camp Chapman is the site of the December 2009 suicide bombing that killed seven CIA operatives. – *al-Jazeera, May 3; CNN, May 3*

May 3, 2010 (IRAQ): The U.S. military announced the arrest of Abu Abdullah al-Shafi’i, the alleged leader of Ansar al-Islam, a militant jihadist group. He was arrested by Iraqi security forces in Baghdad. – *CNN, May 4*

May 3, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Hakimullah Mehsud, the head of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, appeared in a new video posted on Islamist web forums. It was the first time that Hakimullah has been seen alive since reports of his death from a U.S. drone strike in January 2010. – *New York Times, May 3*

May 3, 2010 (YEMEN): Yemeni authorities announced that preemptive military strikes in recent months have killed more than 35 al-Qa`ida operatives in the

¹⁵ Personal interview, adviser to the minister of Public Order, Athens, Greece, April 26, 2010.

¹⁶ The Sect of Revolutionaries first appeared in February 2009 with an armed attack on a police station in Korydallos, southeastern Athens, a few weeks after the December 2008 killing of teenager Alexis Grigoropoulos by a police guard in central Athens.

country. Dozens of al-Qa`ida suspects were also arrested during the time period. – *UPI, May 3*

May 4, 2010 (IRAQ): Iraqi police arrested a Saudi Arabia-born al-Qa`ida leader in western Mosul. The leader was identified as Mohamed Mahmoud Salama, and authorities believe that he entered Iraq in 2004. – *RTTNews, May 4*

May 4, 2010 (LITHUANIA): Prosecutors announced that a Lithuanian woman, Egle Kusaite, has been detained since October 2009 on suspicion of ties to radical Islamist groups and plotting a suicide attack against a Russian military target. Prosecutors allege that Kusaite, who is 20-years-old, has links to terrorist groups in Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and the United Kingdom. If found guilty, she could receive a prison sentence of up to 10 years. – *AP, May 4*

May 5, 2010 (SWEDEN): According to United Press International, “Sweden’s security service says it fears more than 20 young Swedes have been recruited by an al-Qaida-linked extremist group [al-Shabab] to fight in Somalia.” The report also noted, “About 400,000 to 500,000 people in Sweden have roots in Muslim countries, security officials estimate.” – *UPI, May 5*

May 5, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Taliban suicide bombers and armed militants attacked government buildings in southern Afghanistan’s Nimroz Province. At least three Afghan police officers and one provincial council member were killed in the assault on the provincial capital. All of the nine militants, who were reportedly dressed in police uniforms, were also killed. – *New York Times, May 5*

May 6, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan Taliban ordered mobile phone operators in northern Kunduz Province to shut down their networks during the night. A Taliban spokesman explained that U.S. and NATO forces were using the networks to locate Taliban fighters. Mobile phone operators complied with the demands after the Taliban destroyed several phone towers. – *Reuters, May 6*

May 6, 2010 (INDIA): The lone surviving gunman in the November 2008 Mumbai attacks, Ajmal Kasab, was sentenced to death by an Indian court. – *NDTV, May 6*

May 6, 2010 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) demanded that imprisoned group members be set free in exchange for the release of a French national held since April. The Frenchman was kidnapped from Niger. – *AFP, May 6*

May 7, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Australian military announced that it captured the Taliban leader responsible for kidnapping *New York Times* journalist David Rohde. The leader, Mullah Atiqullah, was apprehended in April. Rohde, who was kidnapped in November 2008, managed to escape his captors in June 2009. – *AAP, May 7*

May 9, 2010 (RUSSIA): A vehicle, driven by a suicide bomber, exploded near a marine infantry checkpoint in Dagestan, located in Russia’s North Caucasus region. Only the bomber died in the blast. – *AFP, May 8*

May 9, 2010 (YEMEN): The British Embassy in Sana`a reopened. The embassy was closed after the April 26, 2010 attempt to assassinate the United Kingdom’s ambassador to Yemen. – *AFP, May 9*

May 9, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Authorities stopped a man passing through airport security in Karachi after discovering electrical wiring, two batteries and a switch in his shoes. The suspect—identified as Faiz Mohammad, a 30-year-old civil engineer reportedly from the North-West Frontier Province—was planning to board a Thai International Airways flight to Muscat, Oman. Despite the circuitry in his shoes, no explosives were found. – *Telegraph, May 10; AHN, May 10*

May 10, 2010 (BELGIUM): A court sentenced Malika el-Aroud, a widow of one of the men who assassinated Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Massoud in 2001, to eight years in prison for leading a cell that used the internet to recruit people to join terrorist training camps on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Her current husband, Moez Garsalloui, received the same sentence in absentia since he is still at large. Several other suspects in the cell were also convicted and sentenced. – *Reuters, May 10; BBC, May 10*

May 10, 2010 (IRAQ): Security checkpoints across Baghdad were attacked by gunmen in speeding vehicles, who apparently used silencers in the shootings. The wave of shootings killed a number of Iraqi soldiers and police. – *Voice of America, May 10*

May 10, 2010 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers killed at least 13 people at a market in al-Suwayra, located 30 miles southeast of Baghdad. – *Reuters, May 10*

May 10, 2010 (IRAQ): Two suicide bombers in vehicles detonated their explosives at a textile factory in Hilla, Babil Province. As police and emergency personnel arrived at the scene, a third suicide bomber detonated his explosives causing further casualties. At least 45 people died in the blasts. – *Reuters, May 10; AP, May 11*

May 10, 2010 (IRAQ): Three bombs ripped through southern Iraq’s Basra Province, killing an estimated 30 people. – *Reuters, May 10; AP, May 11*

May 11, 2010 (IRAQ): Speaking after a wave of violence tore through Iraq on May 10, U.S. Brigadier General Ralph Baker said that the attacks serve as “a wakeup call to the Iraqi security forces that they can’t rest on their laurels in terms of their recent successes.” Baker said that the string of attacks, which killed more than 100 people in one day, show “that al Qaeda still possesses a limited ability for command and control across the country.” – *Reuters, May 11*

May 11, 2010 (IRAQ): A roadside bomb killed five Iraqi police officers near a Baghdad market. According to press reports, “Police were lured to the scene by the explosion of a first roadside bomb in the Doura district of southern Baghdad and were caught in the detonation of a second.” – *Reuters, May 11; Reuters, May 12*

May 11, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Two U.S. unmanned aerial drone strikes killed at least 24 suspected militants in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Voice of America, May 11*

May 12, 2010 (IRAQ): A bomb exploded in a grocery store in a Shi`a area of Baghdad, killing three people. – *Reuters, May 12*

May 12, 2010 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded outside a café in a Shi`a area of Baghdad, killing seven people. – *Reuters, May 12*

May 12, 2010 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) reportedly claimed responsibility for the attempted assassination of Britain's ambassador to Yemen on April 26, 2010. The suicide bombing against the ambassador's convoy failed to injure the diplomat. According to the purported AQAP statement, the attack targeted "the so-called British ambassador, who leads the war against Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula on behalf of his state. Britain is America's closest ally in its war on Islam, and it is the one which called the London Conference, in which it plotted against the Arabian Peninsula." – *Reuters, May 12*

May 13, 2010 (RUSSIA): The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) announced that three suspects accused of organizing the Moscow metro suicide bombings of March 2010 were killed by authorities. "Unfortunately we were not able to detain them alive," said Alexander Bortnikov, the head of the FSB. "They offered armed resistance and were destroyed." Bortnikov did not explain when the incident occurred. – *Radio France Internationale, May 13*

May 13, 2010 (RUSSIA): A bomb killed eight people in Dagestan, located in Russia's North Caucasus region. As stated by Agence France-Presse, "The victims were workers who were sent to fix a cell phone mast that had been blown up the previous day by unidentified attackers in the district of Sergokalinsk, investigators said." – *AFP, May 13*

May 13, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A Pakistani anti-terrorism court acquitted nine men accused of involvement in the suicide bomb attacks on Lieutenant General Mushtaq Baig and an army bus in February 2008, citing insufficient evidence. Baig, the Pakistan Army's surgeon general, was killed in the attack, along with seven other people. The attack on the army bus killed six people. Both attacks occurred in Rawalpindi. – *AFP, May 13*

May 13, 2010 (SOMALIA): Ras Kamboni, the most powerful faction part of Somalia's Hisbul Islamiyya insurgent coalition, has officially cut its ties to the group. The split occurred after reports that the Ras Kamboni faction signed a secret deal with

the Somali government and neighboring Kenya. According to Voice of America, "Ras Kamboni will be led by Ahmed Madobe, who replaced hard line Islamist Hassan Turki last year as the group's military commander." The news report further explained, "After Ras Kamboni's conservative Islamist leader Hassan Turki defected to al-Shabab in February, Madobe declared that the extremist group [al-Shabab] was Somalia's greatest enemy." – *Voice of America, May 13*

May 14, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Militants killed five Afghan security guards escorting a fuel truck convoy on the main highway in Ghazni Province. – *New York Times, May 15*

May 14, 2010 (IRAQ): The Islamic State of Iraq appointed "Abu Suleiman" as its new minister of war, replacing Abu Ayyub al-Masri, who was killed during a U.S.-Iraqi military strike in April 2010. Abu Suleiman's first statement threatened "polytheistic rejecters," referring to Iraqi Shi`a, and said that "dark days soaked with blood" lie ahead. – *AP, May 14*

May 14, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber blew up an explosives-laden vehicle outside a sports stadium in the predominately Shi`a town of Tal Afar, Ninawa Province. Ten people were killed in the blast. – *BBC, May 14; AP, May 14*

May 14, 2010 (INDONESIA): Indonesia's national police chief announced that authorities foiled an assassination attempt against the country's president. Indonesian authorities allege that the plot involved Islamists with ties to al-Qa`ida-linked groups. – *CNN, May 14*

May 15, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): An Afghan Taliban spokesman claimed that the group kidnapped and killed four Afghan interpreters because they allegedly worked for the U.S. military and a Western contractor. The men, kidnapped in Khost Province, were participating in a wedding at the time of the incident. The groom was among those killed. – *New York Times, May 15*

May 15, 2010 (IRAQ): The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) purportedly announced that it has appointed new leaders to replace those lost in the U.S.-Iraqi operation on April 18, 2010 that killed Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the head of al-Qa`ida in Iraq, and Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi, the head of

the ISI. According to the statement, the new leaders are "Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qurashi, the Emir of the Believers of the Islamic State of Iraq" and "Sheikh Abu Abdullah al-Hassani al-Qurashi is his prime minister and deputy." – *AFP, May 16; Reuters, May 16*

May 15, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Armed gunmen purportedly dressed as police officers kidnapped 25 people in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Twenty-three of the hostages, however, were released by May 17, and officials were working to secure the release of the final two hostages. – *BBC, May 17*

May 15, 2010 (YEMEN): Various press reports state that Nayf Muhammad al-Qahtani, a senior leader of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), was killed in a firefight with Saudi security forces the previous month. According to the *Guardian*, "The time and place of Qahtani's death are not yet known, but a member of al-Qa`ida's leadership in Yemen has confirmed that he was killed and said the group would officially announce the loss in the coming week." In a later report, U.S. officials told Fox News that al-Qahtani accidentally blew himself up while "messing with a bomb." – *Guardian, May 15; Fox News, May 21*

May 16, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Rahman Gul, a prominent Muslim religious leader pushing for peace in Afghanistan, was assassinated in Kunar Province. His brother and a relative were also killed in the attack. – *al-Jazeera, May 17*

May 16, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Three suicide bombers launched a coordinated attack against a police headquarters in Kandahar Province. The first bomber detonated an explosives-laden motorbike outside the compound, destroying the perimeter wall. The remaining two suicide bombers then entered the compound and opened fire on policemen. The two bombers eventually exploded, possibly as a result of police gunfire. Four policemen were wounded during the attack. The night-time attack was claimed by the Afghan Taliban. – *AFP, May 16*

May 16, 2010 (YEMEN): A new audio statement from Nasir al-Wahayshi, the head of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), appeared on Islamist websites. During the speech, al-Wahayshi

defended the Yemeni-American Muslim cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi, stating that al-`Awlaqi is currently “among his supporters, crowds of Muslims who are angry at your [United States] oppressive policies and they will never hand him over. They know very well that it is hypocrisy and a betrayal to hand him over to the infidels. The sheikh is in good hands and we will protect him in every way.” – *CNN, May 16*

May 16, 2010 (SOMALIA): Militants launched mortars at a Somali parliament meeting in Mogadishu, killing at least 16 people, mostly civilians. Lawmakers were meeting in the parliament building for the first time since it was renovated. It does not appear that the parliament building itself was hit by the shelling. – *Voice of America, May 16; AFP, May 16*

May 17, 2010 (YEMEN): Qasim al-Raymi, the military chief for al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), released a new audio message stating that the United States has given the group “1,000 reasons” to attack the U.S. homeland. Al-Raymi was reacting to the death of Jamil Nasser Abdullah al-Ambari, who headed AQAP’s cell in Abyan Province. Al-Ambari was killed in March by Yemeni forces, reportedly with the help of U.S. intelligence. – *AFP, May 17*

May 18, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. President Barack Obama’s top counterterrorism adviser, John Brennan, suggested that U.S. citizens who fight alongside al-Qa`ida and the Taliban are “legitimate targets” for lethal strikes. “Individuals shouldn’t be able to hide behind their U.S. passport, their U.S. citizenship,” Brennan said. “If they present a threat and challenge to us, we need to make sure that we’re able to address that threat appropriately so that they are prevented from carrying out murderous attacks.” He further said, “If they have a rifle or a grenade or something that’s going after our troops in Afghanistan, to me, they’re a legitimate target. If they... plan to carry out attacks against the United States, against American citizens from somewhere else, they are part of that enemy that is trying to prosecute a war against us.” – *Reuters, May 19*

May 18, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A Taliban suicide bomber in a vehicle targeted a U.S. convoy in Kabul, killing five U.S. soldiers, a Canadian colonel, and

at least 12 Afghan civilians. – *Washington Post, May 20*

May 18, 2010 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle targeted a police van in Dera Ismail Khan District of the North-West Frontier Province, killing 12 people. – *Reuters, May 18; Canwest News Service, May 18*

May 19, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Khalid Ouazzani, a naturalized U.S. citizen from Morocco, pleaded guilty to providing support to al-Qa`ida by sending approximately \$23,500 to the group. Ouazzani, a used car dealer in Kansas City, swore allegiance to al-Qa`ida in 2008. He faces up to 65 years in prison without parole. – *Reuters, May 19*

May 19, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan Taliban launched a brazen pre-dawn attack against Bagram Air Base. Approximately 20-30 Taliban fighters launched rockets and grenades at the base. One U.S. contractor was killed and nine U.S. soldiers wounded. Ten Taliban fighters were killed. – *Washington Post, May 20*

May 20, 2010 (GLOBAL): Al-Qa`ida second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri released a new audiotape praising two al-Qa`ida leaders recently killed in Iraq. Al-Zawahiri said that Abu Ayyub al-Masri and Abu `Umar al-Baghdadi revived jihad in Iraq, and he compared them to early Islamic leaders. – *Reuters, May 20*

May 20, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): The Afghan government announced the arrest of the Afghan Taliban’s shadow governor for northern Samangan Province. The shadow governor was identified as Mullah Gulistan. – *Reuters, May 20*

May 20, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed three people at a checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *AFP, May 20*

May 20, 2010 (IRAQ): Gunmen killed two policemen at a checkpoint in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *Reuters, May 20*

May 20, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban fighters strapped explosives to two men accused of being U.S. spies and blew them up during a public execution in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *Reuters, May 21*

May 21, 2010 (UNITED STATES): U.S. Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair officially resigned his post. – *CBS/AP, May 20*

May 21, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Four militants attacked a police post in Paktika Province, killing at least one policeman. All of the militants were killed. – *Reuters, May 20; BBC, May 21*

May 21, 2010 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a pickup truck attacked a commercial strip in a predominately Shi`a town in Diyala Province, killing at least 21 people. – *New York Times, May 21*

May 22, 2010 (UNITED STATES): A report in the *Los Angeles Times* stated that “Pakistani and U.S. investigators cited growing evidence Saturday that a Pakistani army major had been in cellphone contact with a man [Faisal Shahzad] who allegedly attempted to bomb Times Square in New York [on May 1], including the possibility that they spoke shortly before the failed bombing.” One of the phone calls may have “occurred as the Pakistani American was allegedly parking his SUV rigged with propane tanks, fertilizer and fireworks.” – *Los Angeles Times, May 23*

May 23, 2010 (GLOBAL): Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-`Awlaqi released a video message encouraging Muslims to kill Americans, stating that “the American people, in general, are taking part in this [the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan] and they elected this administration and they are financing the war.” The video was produced by al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula’s media arm. Al-`Awlaqi is believed to be hiding in Yemen. – *AP, May 23*

May 24, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghanistan’s intelligence agency said it has arrested seven people part of a Taliban-linked “terrorist group” responsible for the deadly May 18, 2010 suicide attack in Kabul. – *Dawn, May 24*

May 24, 2010 (YEMEN): A government airstrike targeting an al-Qa`ida hide-out accidentally killed a provincial councilman and two of his bodyguards. Angry tribesmen reacted to the strike by attacking government buildings, blowing up an oil pipeline and threatening to destroy the Marib oil facility. – *AP, May 25*

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

May 25, 2010 (IRAQ): Approximately 15-20 gunmen stormed into a Baghdad street of goldsmiths, shooting customers and shopkeepers while grabbing cash and gold. A total of 15 people were killed in the daytime raid. The attack was blamed on al-Qa`ida in Iraq. – *Los Angeles Times*, May 26; *AP*, May 25

May 25, 2010 (MAURITANIA): A court sentenced three al-Qa`ida suspects to death after finding them guilty of murdering four French tourists in 2007. – *RTTNews*, May 25

May 26, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Hosam Smadi pleaded guilty in a Dallas federal court to attempted use of a weapon of mass destruction. Smadi, who is Jordanian, admitted leaving what he thought was a truck bomb underneath a Dallas skyscraper in September 2009. The truck bomb, however, was a decoy provided by FBI agents posing as al-Qa`ida members. – *AP*, May 26

May 26, 2010 (RUSSIA): A bomb ripped through a crowd gathered in Stavropol, killing seven people. According to the Associated Press, "Russia's Investigative Committee said in a website statement that the blast occurred near an outdoor cafe that served as a cultural center. A renowned Chechen dance company was scheduled to perform there 15 minutes after the blast struck." – *AP*, May 26; *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation*, May 27

May 27, 2010 (UNITED STATES): Adnan Babar Mirza was convicted in a Houston federal court of conspiring to aid the Taliban and of illegal possession of firearms. Mirza, a 33-year-old Pakistani, came to the United States as a student. He faces up to 10 years in prison. – *New York Times*, May 27

May 27, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): Maulana Fazlullah, the leader of the Pakistani Taliban faction in the Swat Valley, may have been killed during a clash with Afghan police in Nuristan Province. Taliban sources, however, insist that Fazlullah is still alive. – *New York Times*, May 27

May 27, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Taliban fighters stormed the home of a pro-government Pakistani tribal elder, killing him, his wife and his son before destroying the house. The incident occurred in Bajaur

Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. – *AFP*, May 26

May 27, 2010 (KENYA): Al-Shabab militants from Somalia launched an attack on a village in Kenya. Several people in the village were wounded, and it was not immediately clear why al-Shabab attacked the village. – *Voice of America*, April 28

May 28, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Militants attacked two mosques in the heart of Lahore, killing more than 90 members of the city's minority Ahmadi community. Police said that the militants belonged to the Pakistani Taliban and were trained in the country's northwest tribal region. A Taliban spokesman claimed responsibility for the attack. – *Time Magazine*, May 28; *Washington Post*, May 30; *Daily Times*, May 30

May 28, 2010 (YEMEN): Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula named Othman Ahmed al-Ghamdi as a new senior member of the group. Al-Ghamdi is reportedly a former detainee at Guantanamo Bay who was released from the facility in 2006. – *Reuters*, May 28

May 29, 2010 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in Kabul, but failed to cause any casualties. – *AFP*, May 29

May 31, 2010 (PAKISTAN): According to the *Washington Post*, "A U.S. official said there is 'strong reason' to believe that Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, known as Sheik Saeed al-Masri, apparently was killed by a CIA drone strike in Pakistan's tribal belt within the past two weeks." Al-Yazid was considered the "number three" in al-Qa`ida, "with a hand in everything from finances to operational planning." – *Washington Post*, June 1

May 31, 2010 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen disguised in police uniforms stormed a Pakistani hospital caring for victims of the May 28 attacks on Ahmadi mosques in Lahore. At least four people were killed during the shootout between the militants and security forces. – *AFP*, May 31