

# Terrorism Monitor

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Ansar al-Islam member in the mountains of Kurdistan

## Soft Power and the Psychology of Suicide Bombing

By Scott Atran

The soldiers believed they came that spring to free a part of the Middle East from the tyranny of terrorists and evil men. What amazed them was the warm welcome from Shi'ite Muslims in the south and the Capital. The victors confidently sent in their experts to replace the ousted leadership with locals they considered more "reliable." This soon led to anger and distrust at the "invaders" and their "collaborators." Within a year, a new "terrorist" organization arose from the Shi'ite core to expel the occupiers. It armed itself with a novel type of "smart weapon" that would radically alter the nature of political warfare across the planet – the suicide bomber. That was 1982, when Israel entered Lebanon and Hezbollah (The Party of God) was spawned.

In recent months, Iraqi Shi'ites have joined Sunni insurgents calling for worldwide suicide actions against Americans and their allies. Will history repeat itself on a grander and deadlier scale? The risk increases daily.

Like pounding mercury with a hammer, top-heavy use of massive military force to counter Islamic terrorism only seems to generate more varied and insidious forms of terrorism and broaden support. The London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies reports in its recently released "Strategic Survey 2003/4" that the Iraq conflict has "focused the energies and resources of al-Qaeda and its followers while diluting those of the global counterterrorism coalition." The survey also indicates that massive and direct assault on jihadist networks and their supporters, although effective against traditional armies, has actually benefited al-Qaeda and its associates. Dispersing to many countries, their networks have become more "virtual" and elusive, and much harder to identify and fight. Membership has also become more varied and difficult to profile.

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4516 43rd Street NW  
Washington, DC • 20016  
Tel: (202) 483-8888  
Fax: (202) 483-8337  
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In the first four months of 2004, 60 suicide attackers killed nearly 800 people and wounded thousands. There were first-time suicide attacks in Uzbekistan (by at least 5 female bombers) and in Western Europe (the “no-surrender” suicide explosion by 6 cornered plotters of the Madrid train bombings). In Iraq alone, 30 suicide bombers killed nearly 600 people — a greater number by far than in any single country for any comparable period since the attacks of September 11. Even a casual glance at media outlets and websites sympathetic to al-Qaeda reveals a proliferating jihadist fraternity that takes heart from the fall of Saddam, Iraq’s secularist tyrant. [1]

Yet many U.S. and allied leaders continue to persist in their portrayals of Islamic militants as evil misfits and homicidal thugs who hate freedom and thrive only in a moral desert swept by poverty and ignorance. “These killers don’t have values,” President Bush declared in response to the spreading insurgency in Iraq, “these people hate freedom. [2] And we love freedom. And that’s where the clash is.” Secretary of State Colin Powell previously told a World Economic Forum that “terrorism really flourishes in areas of poverty, despair and hopelessness.”

In fact, study after study finds suicide terrorists and supporters to be more educated and economically well off than surrounding populations. They also tend to be well-adjusted in their families, liked by peers, and – according to interrogators – sincerely compassionate to those they see themselves helping. A report on *The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism* used by the Central and Defense Intelligence Agencies (CIA and DIA) finds “no psychological attribute or personality distinctive of terrorists.” [3] They do not act despairingly out of neediness or hopelessness, as many ordinary suicides do. If they did, they would be denounced as blasphemers and criminals. “He who commits suicide kills himself for his own benefit,” warned Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qardawi (a spiritual leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and perhaps the most important religious authority on “martyr actions” for Sunni Islamists around the world), but “he who commits martyrdom sacrifices himself for the sake of his religion and his nation... the Mujahid is full of hope.” [4] Like the educated and motivated Japanese Kamikaze who romantically described their impending deaths as “cherry petals that fall before bearing fruit,” so, too, for the Palestinian shaheed (martyr): “They are youth at the peak of their blooming, who at a certain moment decide to turn their bodies into body parts... flowers.” [5]

Researchers Basel Saleh and Claude Berrebi independently find that the majority of Palestinian suicide bombers have a college education (versus 15 percent of the population of

comparable age) and that less than 15 percent come from poor families (although about one-third of the population lives in poverty). [6] DIA sources who have interrogated al-Qaeda detainees at Guantanamo note that Saudi-born operatives, especially those in leadership positions, are often “educated above reasonable employment level, a surprising number have graduate degrees and come from high-status families.” The general pattern was captured in a Singapore Parliamentary report on prisoners from Jemaah Islamiyah, an ally of al-Qaeda: “These men were not ignorant, destitute or disenfranchised. Like many of their counterparts in militant Islamic organizations in the region, they held normal, respectable jobs. Most detainees regarded religion as their most important personal value.” [7]

As in nearly all instances of revolutionary terror in history, rising aspirations followed by dwindling expectations – especially regarding personal security and civil liberties – are critical to generating support for terrorism, no matter how rich or educated a person is to begin with. Studies by Princeton economist Alan Krueger and others find no correlation between a nation’s per capita income and terrorism, but do find a correlation between a lack of civil liberties, defined by Freedom House, and terrorism. [8] In Iraq, the aspirations that the U.S. invasion initially incited have rapidly dwindled into fearful expectations about the future.

Polls show that Muslims who have expressed support for martyr actions and trust in Bin Laden or the late Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yasin do not as a rule hate democratic freedoms or even Western culture, though many despise American foreign policy, especially in the Middle East. After the 1996 suicide attack against U.S. military housing at Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, a Defense Department Science Board report found that: “Historical data show a strong correlation between U.S. involvement in international situations and an increase in terrorist attacks against the United States.” [9]

According to the 2004 Freedom House survey of democracy in 47 nations with an Islamic majority, Morocco and Jordan are the Arab states making the most progress towards representative government. [10] But majorities of their people now support suicide bombings as a way of countering the application of military might by America in Iraq and by Israel in Palestine. [11] Survey data from the Pew Research Center reliably show these people favor participation in elected government and decision-making, personal liberty and freedom of expression, educational opportunity and economic choice. [12] Polls by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies indicate that Iraqi opponents of U.S.

occupation, now almost 9 out of every 10 Iraqis (including nearly 6 out of 10 who support radical Shi'ite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr), espouse similar sentiments. [13]

Preempting and preventing terrorism requires that U.S. policymakers make a concerted effort to understand the background conditions as well as the recruitment processes that inspire people to take their own lives in the name of a greater cause. Current political and economic conditions that policymakers are monitoring remain important although not necessarily determinant. Rather, what likely matters more is the promise of redeeming real or imagined historical grievances through a religious (or transcendent ideological) mission that empowers the militarily weak with unexpected force against enemies materially much stronger. This was as true for Jewish Zealots who sacrificed themselves to kill Romans two millennia ago as it is for modern Jihadists.

This doesn't mean negotiating over goals such as al-Qaeda's quest to replace the Western-inspired system of nation-states with a global caliphate. Osama bin Laden and others affiliated with the mission of the World Islamic Front for the Jihad against the Jews and Crusaders seek no compromise, and will probably fight with hard power to the death. For these already committed group members, using hard power is necessary. The tens of millions of people who sympathize with bin Laden, however, are likely open to the promise of soft-power alternatives that most Muslims seem to favor—participatory government, freedom of expression, educational advancement, and economic choice. [14]

Shows of military strength are not the way to end the growing menace of suicide terrorism: witness the failure of Israel's and Russia's coercive efforts to end strings of Palestinian and Chechen suicide bombings. Rather, nations most threatened by suicide terrorism should promote democracy, but be ready to accept "democracy's paradox": representatives who America and its democratic allies don't like, who have different values or ways of doing things, must be accepted as long as this does not generate violence. Democratic self-determination in Palestine, Kashmir and Iraq – or for that matter, Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Saudi Arabia – will more likely reduce terrorism than military and counterinsurgency aid. At the same time, America and its allies need to establish an intense dialogue with Muslim religious and community leaders to reconcile Islamic custom and religious law (*Shari'ah*) with internationally recognized standards for crime and punishment and human rights.

The precondition for such undertaking is to ensure that potential recruits in the Arab and Muslim world feel secure about their personal safety, cultural heritage and participation in political decisions that affect their lives. Although such soft-power efforts may demand more patience than governments under

attack or pressure to reform typically tolerate, forbearance is necessary to avoid catastrophic devastation to Iraq, the United States, democracies worldwide, and the future hopes of peoples who aspire to soft empowerment from a free world.

#### NOTES:

1. For example: "Saddam Hussein was an evil tyrant who wreaked havoc and abused his people for many decades. As Muslims we believe wholeheartedly in the miserable ending of all tyrants, including the one who parade today as triumphant victors." From: "What after the Capture of Saddam," December 16, 2003, [www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Browse.asp?hGuestID=mYDRef](http://www.islamonline.net/livedialogue/english/Browse.asp?hGuestID=mYDRef).
2. Cited in Louis Frazza, "Bush Committed to Iraq Handover in June," USA Today, April 4, 2004, p.1.
3. "The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism," Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., September 1999, p. 40, [www.loc.gov/tr/frd/pdf-files/Soc\\_Psych\\_of\\_Terrorism.pdf](http://www.loc.gov/tr/frd/pdf-files/Soc_Psych_of_Terrorism.pdf).
4. *Al-Ahram Al-Arabi* (Cairo), February 3, 2001.
5. Editorial, *Al-Risala (Hamas weekly)*, June 7, 2001.
6. Basel Saleh, "Palestinian Violence and the Second Intifada," Paper presented to NATO AWR, "Suicide Terrorism: Strategic Threat and Counterstrategies," Lisbon, Portugal, June 10-14, 2004.
7. "White Paper—The Jemaah Islamiyah Arrests," Ministry of Home Affairs, Singapore, January 9, 2003, <http://www2.mha.gov.sg/mha/detailed.jsp?artid=667&type=4&root=0&parent=0&cat=0&mode=arc>.
8. Alan Krueger, Jitka Malecková, "Seeking the roots of terror," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 6, 2003, <http://chronicle.com/free/v49/i39/39b01001.htm>
9. "DoD Responses to Transnational Threats, Vol. 2: DSB Force Protection Panel Report to DSB," U.S. Department of Defense, Washington, D.C., December 1997, p. 8, [www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/trans2.pdf](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/trans2.pdf).
10. See Martin Walker, "The Democratic Mosaic," *The Wilson Quarterly*, 38(2), Spring 2004.
11. "A Year After Iraq War: Mistrust of America in Europe Ever Higher, Muslim Anger Persists," Pew Research Center Survey Report, March 16, 2004, <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=206>.
12. "Views of a Changing World 2003," Pew Research Center Survey Report, June 3, 2003, <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=185>.
13. Rouala Khalaf, "Iraq Rebel Cleric Gains Surge in Popularity," *Financial Times*, May, 19, 2004 (reporting on a poll by the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies; - interviews with 1,640 Iraqi adults in Baghdad, Babylon, Diyala, Ramadi, Mousel, Basra and Sulaimaniya, conducted from April 20 to April 27, 2004.).
14. Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (Public Affairs, New York, 2004).

*Scott Atran is a director of research at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris and Professor of anthropology and psychology at the University of Michigan.*

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## Analyzing Ansar al-Islam

By Mahan Abedin

Ansar al-Islam is often touted as the Kurdish constituency of al-Qaeda. It has been grabbing the headlines from its inception in September 2001. Reports have traced its influence from Afghanistan to Italy. How much of the exploits attributed to Ansar al-Islam is fact or fiction is anyone's guess. There have been at least two in-depth analyses of Ansar al-Islam and the broader currents of Islamic militancy in Iraqi Kurdistan from which it originates. [1] Readers are strongly advised to study these research pieces and then refer back to this article.

### Origins

The Kurdish peoples of the Middle East entered the modern age as a set of warring tribal fiefdoms straddling the fringes of two once mighty — but towards the end of the 19th century — rapidly declining Islamic empires. Indeed the origins of modern Kurdish nationalism may be traced to the decline of the Persian and Ottoman empires towards the end of the 19th century. The Kurdish tribal leader Sheikh Ubaidullah of Shamdinan, in his famous letter to the British consul at Bashkal, justified his revolt against the Ottomans in 1880 on the basis that:

“...We want to take matters into our own hands. We can no longer put up with the oppression which the governments (of Persia and the Ottoman empire) impose upon us.” [2]

Kurdish nationalism has on the whole been militantly secular (and often communist inspired, as in the case of the PKK in Turkey), and usually led by tribal leaders who have had no qualms to strike opportunistic deals with the national governments which they have purported to fight. Yet Iraqi Kurdistan diverges from this secular framework insofar as it has been host to several Kurdish Islamic organizations in the past two decades.

Analysts have often pointed to the influence of the Iranian revolution of 1979 in “Islamising” Iraqi Kurdistan, and this may well have been a factor. But the rise of Sunni supremacist Islam in Iraqi Kurdistan cannot be attributed to the Iranian revolution, which, on the whole, has valorized Shi'a communities around the world as the foreign vanguards of a resurgent Iranian state.

Jonathan Schanzer traces the roots of Ansar al-Islam back to the mid-1990's and the divisions which splintered the Islamic

Movement of Kurdistan (IMK). Michael Rubin identifies these renegade forces as the HAMAS, Tawhid, the Second Soran Unit and the Islamic Unity Movement. Moreover, Rubin observes that the latter two organizations merged to form the Jund al-Islam (Army of Islam) in September 2001. Jund al-Islam immediately metamorphosed into Ansar al-Islam (Partisans of Islam). The founder and leader of Ansar al-Islam is Abdullah al-Shafi'i, an Iraqi Kurd from a village near Irbil. It is also believed that Assad Mohammad Hassan (also known as Aso Hawleri), formerly the leader of the Second Soran Unit, initially served as Shafi'i's deputy.

The chief factors behind the rise of Ansar al-Islam and Taliban-style supremacist Sunni Islam in Iraqi Kurdistan are the local political and economic dynamics of that region of Iraq. After the ejection of Iraqi forces from Iraqi Kurdistan in 1991, the two main Kurdish factions, the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) quickly established their hegemony over much of that region. The KDP dominated the western and northern parts of Iraqi Kurdistan, whereas the PUK held away in the southern and eastern regions. However both factions failed to seize the historic opportunity presented by the near complete absence of the Iraqi government from the Kurdish regions (enforced by the no-fly zone), and soon reverted to their traditional rivalry. This rivalry escalated into a full scale civil war in 1994 that — apart from its human and material costs — seriously undermined the confidence of the outside world in the competence and integrity of the Iraqi Kurdish political elites.

While moderate Kurdish Islamic parties, like the IMK benefited from the bloodletting, it was the more radical Islamists who proved to be the real winners. Indeed Ansar al-Islam soon carved out a geographic sphere of influence in the eastern fringes of Iraqi Kurdistan — formerly territory controlled by the IMK as part of its agreement with the PUK.

### Ansar al-Islam & al-Qaeda

Ansar al-Islam is widely assumed to have extensive links with Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda network. Michael Rubin asserts that Ansar's precursor (the Jund al-Islam) became operational with a \$300,000 grant provided by al-Qaeda. While Schanzer quotes three journalistic sources who claim that Ansar received money from the London-based cleric Abu Qatada. It is alleged that 30 al-Qaeda members streamed into Ansar's camps immediately after the group's formation. [3] Moreover, the *Financial Times* cites a U.S. official who claims that Ansar is affiliated with al-Qaeda. [4] Al-Qaeda operatives in Italy are alleged to have run a network whose

core mission was to send radicalized Muslims to Ansar's camps in Iraqi Kurdistan. [5] The objective, it is alleged, was to turn Ansar's camps in eastern Iraqi Kurdistan into a miniature version of al-Qaeda's notorious Afghan camps.

While these allegations may well be credible, it is important not to overstate Ansar's al-Qaeda connection. The emergence of the group certainly had little to do with al-Qaeda and the wider international Islamist network. Ansar al-Islam is the product of local dynamics and circumstances. Nevertheless it is entirely plausible that al-Qaeda and the broader networks of Islamic terrorism affiliated to it may have tried to gain leverage over this sympathetic organization. There are many reasons why they should have wanted to this. Firstly, Iraqi Kurdistan, due to the instability and insecurity fostered by the warring Kurdish factions, was a natural location for al-Qaeda, who has proved adept at exploiting the logistical and operational opportunities presented by war torn and lawless regions around the world. Secondly, al-Qaeda and its allies needed a presence in Iraq ahead of the anticipated U.S. invasion in March 2003. Seen in this context, it is entirely plausible that the al-Qaeda presence in Iraq (which is now widely judged to be substantial) grew from the cells it established in the camps of Ansar al-Islam from early 2002 onwards.

#### Ansar al-Islam & the former Iraqi regime

Certain U.S. officials have struggled to link the former Iraqi regime to al-Qaeda. At one stage it was suggested that Ansar al-Islam could be the "missing link" between the Baathists in Baghdad and Osama Bin Laden's network. Iraqi intelligence officers are alleged to have used encryption in their communication with agents inside Ansar's enclave in Iraqi Kurdistan. Moreover the Iraqi intelligence services are alleged to have recruited an al-Qaeda operative called "Abu Wa'il" inside the Ansar enclave. These allegations are extremely difficult to verify.

When discussing Ansar's possible links with the Baathists, there are basically two schools of thought. One is the notion that Saddam Hussein's regime, because of its enmity towards Islamists of any sectarian or ideological persuasion, would have found it difficult to cooperate at a tactical level with Ansar al-Islam, let alone al-Qaeda proper. [6] Another school of thought is that the former Iraqi regime would have found it expedient to cooperate with Ansar al-Islam, not least because it would have enabled it to constrain the political and military space of the PUK. [7] However, even if such a link existed, it is unlikely to have been significant in the wider scheme of events.

#### Ansar al-Islam & Iran

Allegations that Iran has had links with Ansar al-Islam essentially revolve around the geographic location of Ansar's former enclave near Halabja, a short distance away from the Iranian border. There have also been suggestions that one of Ansar's purported leaders, Mullah Krekar, had been cultivated by the Iranians during his stay in the country.

While Iran is likely to have sponsored Iraqi Kurdish Islamic groups for the past two decades, the extent of this patronage is difficult to assess. Part of the problem is that information regarding Iranian involvement in Kurdistan has often hailed from sources that are widely believed to act as disinformation outlets against Iran. For example, radio Israel reported in 1996 that Iran is trying to deepen its influence in Iraqi Kurdistan through the "Iraqi Kurdish Hezbollah". [8] Moreover, Iran generally sponsors Islamic organizations that, at the very least, respect its own brand of political Islam. Therefore, there is very little scope for tactical cooperation between Iran and a Sunni supremacist organization like Ansar al-Islam.

Furthermore, Ansar al-Islam holds little tactical or strategic value to the Islamic Republic. Iran is unlikely to sponsor an organization that is effectively at war with the PUK, its main ally in Iraqi Kurdistan. Indeed, the PUK, despite its occasional employment of anti-Iranian rhetoric, has received substantial military and financial help from Iran over the past 2 decades.

#### Ansar al-Islam Today

U.S. and PUK forces attacked Ansar al-Islam's enclave on March 23, 2003 and within five days Ansar forces had been completely driven out of the areas that they had occupied for the past 18 months. There was little doubt that the United States would target Ansar al-Islam immediately after launching military operations against the Baathist regime. A month before the war, the U.S. Department of Treasury had branded Ansar al-Islam a Specially Designated Terrorist Group (SDTG).

Given the likelihood of a massive U.S. led assault, Ansar members were likely prepared for the onslaught, and it is entirely plausible that a substantial number of them evaded death or capture. There are many indications that Ansar continues to be active in Iraqi Kurdistan. Ansar was likely behind the devastating bombing of the PUK and KDP headquarters in February 2004. Moreover, many of the attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan over the past 12 months may well have been the work of Ansar and its allies. The only thing that can be said with any certainty is that Ansar does not

seem to be active in the non-Kurdish areas of Iraq.

In the final analysis, Ansar al-Islam does not, at this stage at least, pose a serious threat to the transition process in Iraq. However, it may yet re-emerge as a serious disruptive force in Iraqi Kurdistan and may well be exploited by al-Qaeda or its successors in the years to come. The key to neutralizing Ansar al-Islam lies in restoring the authority of the central government in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Kurdish factions, left to their own devices, are likely to revert to the old conspiratorial, opportunistic and back-stabbing politics that gave rise to Ansar al-Islam in the first place.

#### NOTES:

1. Refer to Jonathan Schanzer's article "Ansar al-Islam: Back in Iraq" (*The Middle East Quarterly*: Vol. XI, Number 1) & Michael Rubin's "The Islamist Threat in Iraqi Kurdistan" (*Middle East Intelligence Bulletin*: Vol. 3, No. 12).
2. J Bulloch & H Morris, *No Friends but the Mountains: The Tragic History of the Kurds*, London 1993, p. 73.
3. Agence France-Presse, December 4, 2002.
4. *Financial Times*, February 12, 2004.
5. *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 2003.
6. Refer to author's interview with Dr. Mustafa Alani, *Spotlight on Terror*: Vol. 2, Issue 6.
7. Author's interview with Dr. Hamid Bayati, the deputy foreign minister of Iraq, May 26, 2004.
8. Radio Israel, March 1, 1996.

*Mahan Abedin is a financial consultant and analyst of Middle East politics.*

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## Trojan Horse or Genuine Schism? The Hezb-e-Islami Split

By David C. Isby

The Islamist campaign in Afghanistan may be undercut by the announcement of a split in the leadership of the radical Hezb-e-Islami party. Ten members of the group's senior leadership met in May with Afghanistan's interim President Hamid Karzai in Kabul and publicly announced their rejection of Hezb-e-Islami's alliance with al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Since 2001, Hezb-e-Islami's leader, former Afghan prime minister and long-time political operative Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, had aligned the group with remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda against the current Afghan government. Their aim has been to limit Kabul's legitimacy and to block

reconstruction in the south and east.

While only a limited success for Karzai's administration, if this split is sustained, it could deal a serious blow to terrorists' capabilities in Afghanistan, in large part because of Hezb-e-Islami's connections to religious radical parties in Pakistan's North West Frontier province. If the example of the Hezb-e-Islami leadership – all ethnic Pushtuns – is taken as a model by their ethnic compatriots on the Pakistani side of the Durand Line, it may limit the backing for terrorism, something which has been imbedded in the "Taliban culture" of Pushtu-speaking Pakistan. However, there is concern that while this action may result in some elements of the party returning to Afghan politics, the "hard men" will remain committed to using the Kalashnikov.

"Decision Making Council" in Kabul

The breakaway Hezb-e-Islami leadership was introduced in Kabul as the Hezb-e-Islami "Decision Making Council." Mohammed Khalid Faruqi, a guerrilla commander in southern Afghanistan during the 1980s, led the group, which consisted of eleven individuals, many of whom had also been active in the party since the war against the Soviets. They issued a strong denunciation of terrorism, claiming to have split from Hekmatyar and to have the support of some 90 percent of Hezb-e-Islami membership. [1]

Yet, many of the Decision Making Council appeared to be third-tier leadership figures, connected primarily to Nangarhar province, where Kabul's influence is stronger than in the southern and eastern borderlands. It did not include men known to be close to Hekmatyar. Some members of the new body, while splitting with Hekmatyar, declined to go to Kabul; these reportedly included Hodayun Jarir and Abdul Sardar Farid, long-time Hezb-e-Islami members believed to be residing in Pakistan. [2] Otherwise, however, the action of the Decision Making Council was strongly condemned by Pakistan-based Hezb-e-Islami figures. [3] Even Hekmatyar's old rival, Younis Khales, long reckoned to be past active politics, resurfaced to urge continued armed violence in Afghanistan. [4]

Hekmatyar's Response

Prior to the delegation's visit, Hekmatyar faxed statements decrying the action and urging continued warfare, though he has not appeared in public to denounce the Council. [5] Rather, he has supplied statements to the Pakistani press, repeating his previous condemnations of U.S. actions in Afghanistan and Iraq. [6]

Hekmatyar's two deputies, Qotboddin Helal and Dr. Ghayrat Bahir, remain in Pakistan, but there has been speculation that they too may split from Hekmatyar and take part in Afghan politics. [7] No other second-tier leadership figures have turned against Hekmatyar. Qazi Waqar Amin and Wahidullah Sahawan, remain, like Hekmatyar, under cover. Kashmir Khan, Haji Eshanollah, Abdul Salam Hashemi, Engineer Obaidollah, and Munshi Abdul Majid form the core of the "hard men," committed to violence in Afghanistan and elsewhere even before the emergence of the Taliban and Al-Qaeda; there appears to be no indication that they have changed. [8] However, concerns have been raised regarding possible cooperation between overt and covert members to help the party regain political power. [9]

### The Political Context

The Decision Making Council's move underlines the slow but steady nature of Kabul's successes in bringing the Taliban's core constituency, Pushtun mullahs of the south and east, especially non-Syeds, into the government's camp. [10] It could well be significant that several of the breakaway leaders were from this background.

The process has been aided by a number of recent setbacks for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar's aide Abdul Hadi was arrested in an ISAF raid on an arms cache in a Hezb-e-Islami safe house in the Wazir Akbar Khan area of Kabul on April 8. The previous week U.S. troops had arrested another Hezb-e-Islami leader, Amanullah Koghman, in Wardak province. [11] And on April 19, a Hezb-e-Islami arms cache was captured in the Ghazi Stadium area of Kabul. [12] More recently, U.S. forces reportedly captured Hazrat Mir, a Hekmatyar commander in Laghman province. [13]

The motivation for the break-away leadership apparently included a desire to take part in the upcoming parliamentary elections. Hekmatyar has remained strong in several areas, including parts of Logar province and the city of Konduz, and it is conceivable that the party could have a strong electoral position there. In the televised May 2 press conference, the Decision Making Council claimed 65 of the participants in the initial Loya Jirga had been Hezb-e-Islami members. There have even been rumors that Hekmatyar himself was going to switch sides and take part in the election. [14]

### Return From the Margins?

In the near-term, the split in the Hezb-e-Islami leadership is of only limited impact because of the party's marginalized position in the Taliban-al-Qaeda coalition. Hezb-e-Islami had, in the 1990s, clashed with both forces, but remained

the chosen instrument of the Pakistani security services in Afghanistan until 1994-96, when it was supplanted by the Taliban. This shift signaled the military defeat of Hezb-e-Islami forces, which largely joined the Taliban after the collapse of Hezb's stronghold in Logar in 1996. Hekmatyar's supporters also waged a little-known but brutal local conflict against an al-Qaeda-supported Wahhabi "kingdom" in the Kunar valley in the 1990s. The conflict precipitated Hekmatyar's exile to Iran during the years of Taliban-al-Qaeda ascendancy in Afghanistan.

An Islamist student leader in the 1970s, Hekmatyar was trained by Pakistan in guerrilla warfare. He rose to prominence in 1978-79, at a time when Maulavi Younis Khales split from Hezb-e-Islami, taking much of the party's support in Nangarhar province and among the non-Syed mullahs in the south and east. Introduced to Leninist ideas during his years at Kabul University, he made the use of vanguard party tactics to advance Hezb-e-Islami's radical agenda his explicit goal. Though the Pakistani Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) ensured that he was unable to consolidate absolute power within the party between 1979-87 (wanting Hekmatyar to know he was not irreplaceable) Pakistan's national security policy required an ethnic Pushtun Islamist as head of state in Kabul. Hekmatyar, favored by the ISI above six other Peshawar-based Afghan resistance leaders, emerged as the undisputed head of Hezb-e-Islami after 1987 and by 1989 was allowed to overcome his rivals.

In 1992-96, Hezb-e-Islami was a major combatant in Afghanistan's civil wars – even while Hekmatyar was Afghanistan's nominal prime minister. Functioning as a Pakistani proxy, Hezb-e-Islami fought the forces of Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Northern Alliance. Between 1994-96, however, the Taliban won over its ethnic Pushtun base and Pakistani supporters. Hekmatyar was, and is, once of the most politically skilled Afghans of his generation. But the withdrawal of the Pakistani support that propelled him to prominence between 1978-96 left him largely sidelined.

He attempted to redress this marginalization after the battle of Kabul in 2001 by making common cause with his former enemies. He has sought support among Pushtuns, (especially de-tribalized and northern individuals), modernizing radical Islamist and Pakistani security services veterans of the 1980s and 90s. All have, so far, been unable to restore either Hekmatyar or Hezb-e-Islami to a central role in Afghanistan's armed opposition. Whether the party will re-enter legitimate Afghan politics remains to be seen. However, there is a real concern that the recent defections by members of the Decision Making Council simply constitute a "Trojan horse," ultimately aimed at bringing either the



party or its leader to power in Kabul.

NOTES:

1. *Kabul Weekly*, May 5, 2004.
2. Kabul Television broadcast, May 2, 2004.
3. Afghan Islamic Press release, May 6, 2004.
4. *Kabul Times*, May 2, 2004.
5. Voice of the Islamic Republic (Tehran) broadcast, April 12, 2004.
6. *Islam* (Karachi), May 23, 2004.
7. *Kabul Weekly*, May 5, 2004.
8. *Mojahed* (Kabul), May 6, 2004.
9. Panjara (Kabul) broadcast, May 6, 2004.
10. Syeds are those who claim direct descent from the Prophet Mohammed.
11. *Wahdat* (Peshawar), April 9, 2004.
12. Hindukush news agency report, April 19, 2004.
13. Voice of the Islamic Republic (Tehran) broadcast, May 7, 2004.
14. *Kabul Weekly*, April 7, 2004.

*David Isby is a Washington-based author and defense and foreign policy expert.*

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Translator’s note: *In light of the recent attacks in the Saudi city of Khobar, the Jamestown Foundation presents the following letter entitled “To All Desiring Jihad in the Lands of the Arab Peninsula.”* Attributed to Abdul Aziz al-Muqrin, the text appeared in issue 10 of the online magazine *al-Battar*, a publication affiliated with *al-Qaeda*. Reputed to be *al-Qaeda’s* chief operative in the Arabian Peninsula, *al-Muqrin* allegedly took responsibility for the May 1 attack in Yanbu, an important Saudi oil port along the Red Sea. He is first on Saudi Arabia’s list of 26 most-wanted terror suspects.

## To All Desiring Jihad in the Lands of the Arab Peninsula

By Abu Hajir Abd al-Aziz bin Isa al-Muqrin

Translated by Christopher Heffelfinger and Stephen Ulph

Praise be to God, and Peace and Blessings on His Messenger, our Prophet Muhammad and on his family and companions.

Certainly among the most important [things] for the Mujahideen youth and those desiring Jihad for God’s sake in the Arab Peninsula is for them to have a clear idea of the

nature of the act of Jihad and how they can take part in it and for which they will find forgiveness before Allah Almighty. The previous era was full of lessons and trials which we must take benefit from in order to advance our operations and elevate our Jihad against the enemies of the faith.

This is only confirmed by the plethora of questions, requests and messages from our true brothers – for by God this is the depth of our esteem for them – yearning for the field of action to open for them in the service of Islam and Jihad for God’s sake. They are calling for direction and longing to join the columns of Mujahideen. A number of others are asking permission to act, [while other] groups have given proposals, critiques, or observations on the Jihad activity during the past era. Therefore, it is appropriate to explain the following.

It is necessary that Muslims be aware of the Jihad in this country [Saudi Arabia] to establish the Shari’ah and expel the occupying crusaders and apostates. This is incumbent upon every legal aged adult including the scholars and public, the righteous and the immoral, the rich and poor, men and women; for it is absolutely necessary that people understand that this obligation isn’t restricted to the wanted 19 or 26 [on the Saudi most wanted list]. Even if the Saudi regime is determined to secure [the idea that the Jihadi resistance is not more widespread], we must not be deceived, for those brothers – God fortify the Faith through them – were none other than the vanguard for the Muslim community and I consider them to have played a great and historic role in inciting mankind and informing [mankind] of the truth and of their just cause. They broke through the obstacle of awe and fear which the regime has been intent on maintaining for decades, and those Mujahid youth rooted it out in those few months – by the grace and mercy of God – and played a great role in providing live, tangible and real examples [to follow] on the principle of trust in God, in what is right, and of patience and other prerequisites of the [noble] heart’s labors. All that remained for them to do was to stick to that path. And I consider that even if they become martyrs one and all, the record [of their deed] stands, as does that of those brothers who aided them. The role of the Muslims after them will therefore be to take up the banner and complete the journey. Therefore it is only from lack of intelligence and judgment that one would think that this major legal obligation is confined to a few individuals, while others fail to see that the responsibility and burden incumbent upon those [the Mujahideen] are incumbent upon them too.

One’s duty, then, is the undertaking, endeavor and pioneering, of the obligation of Jihad for God’s sake. The Muslim should not seek to rely on a few Mujahideen, but rather direct his



efforts toward this [obligation]. Such an obligation is also certainly upon whomsoever God has granted knowledge in the arts of war and military technology, or anyone who has had previous training anywhere. [These people's obligation] is greater, while those who do not share their military capabilities should aid them as far as they can, and provide them what they need or cannot do without, of this there is no doubt.

It is not a praiseworthy thing that brothers desiring Jihad should wait to receive permission from one of those engaged in Jihad in the Arabian Peninsula, since [there is no need for a further command] after a command from God (*It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.* 33:36). For God has ordered Jihad and there is nothing left but to obey and act. So let the Mujahid seek help from those among his brothers he can trust and remain exceedingly cautious. [The law requires this obedience to action], so let them [together] set up a cell that will get itself ready and select legitimate targets, which God permits to be so targeted, and carry out its operations, seeking succor from God and placing reliance upon Him. However, they should see to it that their work is uninterrupted, and continues as far as their ability and strength allows – until they are enabled to join their Mujahideen brothers in the land of the Two Holy Mosques [Saudi Arabia].

Certainly the Mujahideen of al-Qaeda are keen on guiding the Muslim community towards realizing such acts by way of Jihadist publications, booklets, and jihadist reference works which have in them much good, in particular if the Mujahid comes across an expert to help him and instruct him. The *Mu'askar al-Battar* and the book *Hakadha nara al-jihad wa nureeduh* ["This is how we see the Jihad and how we wish it", by Hazim al-Madani] are two useful examples for anyone who seeks [the way of Jihad], for through these books he can discover the way to operate and study the best ways and policies listed there for the purpose of achieving our objective and realizing our goals. [These publications] give us a summary of the method and provide us with the experiences of those prior to us.

Those in the know are aware that al-Qaeda is an organization which utilizes a system of cells in which every cell relies on God first, then on its own abilities and for the most part it does not follow traditional organizational connections. For *Qaedat al-Jihad* [the Jihad of al-Qaeda] pursues the publication of the concept [of Jihad] and spreads the word to the greatest extent possible while the various, disparate

cells guarantee – God willing – the greater continuity of [carrying out the Jihad]. The Yanbu cell, which carried out the heroic and successful operation this month, is one of the finest and most eloquent examples of this, illustrating what is required [in the way of Jihad]. Our brother Abu Ammar Mustafa al-Ansari – God have mercy on him – was among the best of the young Mujahideen, honed by the theatres of Jihad such as Afghanistan and Somalia, in the same way that they honed our brother Abd al-Muhsin (Hasan al-Makki) who fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia and tried to enter the Peninsula but was unable. He [Abd al-Muhsin] was restless, but bore his trials and tribulations until he managed to enter the territory of Ogaden, where he became a martyr as a result of an ambush set up by the enemies.

Our brother Mustafa returned to the Arabian Peninsula but the opulent life of its people didn't suit him, so he determined not to become one of the group of 'Those That Sit Still' – God saved him from that. When he saw the tragic state in which the Muslim community lives, there was communication and correspondence between us, and he made a fine promise to us and it was not long before he fulfilled his promise; he struck the enemy at an important economic point, which had a great impact on the international petroleum markets, and the impact of that is still felt today. I ask God to accept him and his brothers as martyrs and bless them with his infinite grace and beneficence. This blessed act is an excellent model and example for all who ask about the Way or seek permission to join the Mujahideen at a time when security precautions require that we guard against any behavior that may be to the detriment of or result in the defeat of the Mujahideen.

A particularly important matter is spreading the enemy thin and dispersing his forces; [also important is] ensuring that the brothers are made aware of the need to be able to [carry out continuous] operations and have ample resources for preparation – which will ensure the continuation of the cell – through donations and the performance of duties, without exaggeration or excess.

When I say this, I do not mean [giving donations or the performance of duties] is a way to avoid the obligation [of Jihad] or as some means of lightening this responsibility; for we are still beholden to the pact – we ask God for endurance, and for moral and financial support – and we say to one and all: blood is blood, and destruction is destruction; and you shall see from us what will gladden and soothe hearts, God permitting, not only in the land of the Two Holy Mosques but in the other Islamic countries as well. (*There is no help except from Allah. The Exalted, the Wise* 3:126)

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