

Terrorism Open Source Intelligence Report (TOSIR) No. 407 29 October 2009

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[Article 1](#) **“Flow of Terrorist Recruits Increasing: Westerners Attending Camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan Despite Successful U.S. Strikes,”** by Craig Whitlock, [Washington Post](#), **19 October 2009**. *U.S. and European counterterrorism officials say a rising number of Western recruits—including Americans—are traveling to Afghanistan and Pakistan to attend paramilitary training camps. The flow of recruits has continued unabated in spite of an intensified campaign over the past year by the CIA to eliminate Al-Qaeda and Taliban commanders in drone missile attacks. Since January, at least 30 recruits from Germany have traveled to Pakistan for training. Terrorism analysts said the CIA campaign to kill Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders had been generally effective, but warned that the strategy had its limitations and that missile attacks alone would not put an end to the training camps.*

[Article 2](#) **“How a French Physicist Became a Terrorism Suspect,”** by Bruce Crumley, [Time](#), **14 October 2009**. *French security officials have long regarded the Algerian jihadist movement Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) as the most immediate terrorism threat to Europe. Those fears appeared to have been substantiated last week with the arrest of a French physicist who is suspected of plotting terrorist attacks in Europe on AQIM’s behalf. However, in an indication of the many options now open to aspiring radicals who want to put their extremism into action, investigators say the scientist linked up with AQIM only after police cracked down on another terrorist group he had been in contact with first.*

[Article 3](#) **“Setbacks Weaken Al-Qaeda’s Ability to Mount Attacks, Terrorism Officials Say,”** [Los Angeles Times](#), by Sebastian Rotella, **17 October 2009**. *As Al-Qaeda is weakened by the loss of leaders, fighters, funds, and ideological appeal, the extremist network’s ability to attack targets in the United States and Western Europe has diminished, anti-terrorism officials say. Nonetheless, Al-Qaeda and allied groups based primarily in Pakistan remain a threat, particularly because of an increasing ability to attract recruits from Central Asia and Turkey to offset the decline in the number of militants from the Arab world and the West.*

[Article 4](#) **“Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Undergoing Dangerous Transformation,”** by Deirdre Tynan, [Eurasia Insight](#), **20 October 2009**. *The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is undergoing a metamorphosis that could transform the Islamic militant group into a far more dynamic foe for Central Asian governments, as well as for the U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan. There has been a surge of IMU-related activity in recent weeks, both in Afghanistan and in former Soviet Central Asian states. The apparent death of the group’s long-time leader by U.S. missile attacks in August has allowed more daring and innovative leaders to assert themselves within the movement.*

[Article 5](#) **“Pakistani Taliban Commander Describes Countermeasures against UAV Attacks,”** [Terrorism Monitor](#), Vol. 7, No. 31, **23 October 2009**. *A commander of the Pakistan Taliban, Sahimullah Mahsud, recently provided a description of the measures taken by the Taliban forces and leadership to lower the impact of the American unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) missile attacks which have claimed the lives of scores of Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders in*

northwestern Pakistan. Sahimullah described the UAV countermeasures as being based on “mobility, secrecy, and anonymity.”

[Article 6](#) “**The Pentagon’s New Africa Push: Counterterrorism Is Now a Major Focus of the Year-Old U.S. Africa Command,**” by Sean J. Miller, [National Journal](#), 24 October 2009. *Counterterrorism is now a major focus of the nascent U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). But the command, which is celebrating its one-year anniversary this month, won’t always rely on American troops to neutralize the threat posed by extremist groups, at least not directly. Rather than hunting and killing terrorists, AFRICOM focuses on “professionalizing” African militaries so that they can better confront local security challenges on their own, while at the same time teaching soldiers to respect human rights and civilian rule. These efforts, however, have possible downsides. In an area of the world still scarred by colonialism, the U.S. military risks being associated with a rogues’ gallery of African military leaders, and it remains to be seen whether an indirect approach can improve the security situation in a country such as Somalia.*

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1. “**Flow of Terrorist Recruits Increasing: Westerners Attending Camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan Despite Successful U.S. Strikes,**” by Craig Whitlock, [Washington Post](#), 19 October 2009. [KBTZOrigins, KBTREurope, KBTSGermany] We *quote* from this item from <http://www.washingtonpost.com>:

Berlin, Germany—Midway through a propaganda video released last month by a group calling itself the German Taliban, a surprise guest made an appearance: a clean-shaven, muscular gunman sporting the alias Abu Ibrahim the American.

The gunman did not speak but wore military fatigues and waved his rifle as subtitles identified him as an American. **The video contained a stream of threats against Germany if it did not withdraw its troops from the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan. Although the American’s part in the film lasted only a few seconds, it has alarmed German and U.S. intelligence officials, who are still puzzling over his background, his real identity, and how he became involved with the terrorist group.**

[Taliban, Al-Qaeda trying to exploit domestic opposition to German troops in Afghanistan]

U.S. and European counterterrorism officials say a rising number of Western recruits—including Americans—are traveling to Afghanistan and Pakistan to attend paramilitary training camps. The flow of recruits has continued unabated, officials said, in spite of an intensified campaign over the past year by the CIA to eliminate Al-Qaeda and Taliban commanders in drone missile attacks.

Since January, at least 30 recruits from Germany have traveled to Pakistan for training, according to German security sources. **About ten people**—not necessarily the same individuals—**have returned to Germany this year, fueling concerns that fresh plots are in the works against European targets.** “We think this is sufficient to show how serious the threat is,” said a senior German counterterrorism official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

German security services have been on high alert since last month, when groups affiliated with the Taliban and Al-Qaeda issued several videos warning that an attack on German targets was imminent if the government did not bring home its forces from Afghanistan. There are about 3,800 German troops in the country, the third-largest NATO contingent after those of the United States and Britain. **German officials say Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders are trying to exploit domestic opposition in Germany to the war; surveys show that a majority of German voters favor a withdrawal of their soldiers.**

The videos all featured German speakers who urged Muslims to travel to Afghanistan and Pakistan to join their cause. “They’re doing such good business that they are dropping a new video every week or so,” said Ronald Sandee, a former Dutch military intelligence officer who serves as research director of the NEFA Foundation, a U.S. group that monitors terrorist networks. **“If I were a young Muslim, I’d find them very convincing.”**

Last week, German officials disclosed that **a ten-member cell from Hamburg had left for Pakistan earlier this year. The cell is allegedly led by a German of Syrian descent but also includes ethnic Turks, German converts to Islam, and one member with Afghan roots.**

[German officials: Multiple recruitment networks work for various terrorist groups]

Other European countries are also struggling to keep their citizens from going to Pakistan for paramilitary training. In August, Pakistani officials arrested a group of 12 foreigners headed to North Waziristan, a tribal region near the Afghan border where many of the camps are located. **Among those arrested were four Swedes, including Mehdi Ghezali, a former inmate of the U.S. military prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.**

Meanwhile, **three Belgians and a French citizen are facing trial in their respective home countries after they were arrested upon their return from Pakistani camps last year.** The suspects deny they were part of a terrorist conspiracy or plotting attacks in Europe. But one defendant has admitted to French investigators that the group received explosives training while in Waziristan. **Three other Belgian and French members of the alleged cell are still believed to be at large in Pakistan or Afghanistan.**

European security officials have warned for many years of the threat posed by homegrown radicals who have gone to Afghanistan and Pakistan to wage jihad. **Officials in some countries, such as Britain, said they have successfully cracked down on the number of would-be fighters going to South Asia. But others, such as Germany, are seeing a significant increase and struggling to contain it.**

In the past, such volunteers were largely self-motivated and had to find their own way to South Asia. Today, however, Al-Qaeda and its affiliates have developed extensive recruiting networks with agents on the ground in Europe, counterterrorism officials said. **The agents provide guidance, money, travel routes, and even letters of recommendation** so the recruits can join up more easily. In a recent report, the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service said there were a “growing number of indications” that more Europeans were attending camps in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Obama administration has said that Al-Qaeda’s command structure and operations wing have become weaker in the past year because many of its leaders have been killed in drone missile attacks. But in its report, **the Dutch intelligence agency offered a different assessment, saying that Al-Qaeda’s ability to carry out attacks has generally improved in recent years largely because it has successfully bolstered its alliances with other terrorist groups.** “With the jihadist agenda of those allies becoming more international, at least at the propaganda level, the threat to the West and its interests has intensified,” the Dutch report found.

German officials said they have discovered multiple recruitment networks that work for Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and other groups, such as the Islamic Jihad Union, which has been issuing many of the online threats against the German government. But they said **the recruiting networks often operate independently, making it difficult for the security services to detect or disrupt them.** “In Germany, we don’t have a uniform structure that recruits people,” another senior German counterterrorism official said in an interview. “We have a wide variety of structures.”

[Missile attacks on terror camps effective but ultimately won’t stop small, mobile camps]

Another sign of the internationalization of the recruitment networks is the small but growing participation of U.S. residents. Abu Ibrahim the American, the gunman in last month’s German Taliban video, **is also being touted as a poster boy for jihadi recruitment on a Turkish-language Website.** The site, [Sehadet Zamani](#), issues propaganda on behalf of the Islamic Jihad Union, an offshoot of an Uzbek terrorist group that now counts Turks, Germans, Arabs, and Chechens among its members.

In July, U.S. officials announced that they had apprehended Bryant Neal Vinas, 25, a resident of Long Island, New York, who has confessed to traveling to Al-Qaeda camps in Pakistan and firing rockets at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan. Vinas, the son of immigrants from Peru and Argentina, is cooperating with U.S. and European authorities. **He has testified about his interaction with the six-member cell of recruits from Belgium and France.** Vinas has also told the FBI that he spent time in Pakistan with another New York resident, whose identity and whereabouts are unknown.

Last month, the FBI arrested yet another U.S. resident, Najibullah Zazi, and accused him of plotting a bombing in New York. Zazi, 24, an Afghan national who has lived in New York since he was a child, traveled to Pakistan last year. **U.S. intelligence officials have said that he made contact with a senior deputy to Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and learned how to make homemade bombs.** Zazi said he went to Pakistan to visit his wife but **has denied going to a training camp.**

Terrorism analysts said the CIA campaign to kill Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders had been generally effective, but warned that the strategy had its limitations and that missile attacks alone would not put an end to the training camps. “The drone attacks seriously weaken these organizations, but you can’t rely on that alone,” said Guido Steinberg, a researcher at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs. “They obviously have no problem recruiting new members. **In the long run, they won’t have any problem replacing the leaders who have been killed.**”

On Saturday, the Pakistani military deployed 30,000 troops into South Waziristan as part of a broad offensive against the Taliban and other militant groups. U.S. and European officials have said they hope the mission will force many of the training camps to shut down.

But analysts said the camps, which offer basic lessons in homemade explosives and countersurveillance as well as weapons training, could easily relocate elsewhere in Pakistan or even back across the border in Afghanistan, where they operated before the U.S. invasion in 2001. “**We’re talking about much smaller, much more mobile camps that don’t train by the hundreds, but by the handful,**” said Bruce Hoffman, a terrorism expert at Georgetown University. “They can be repacked and set up again fairly easily and quickly.”

The foregoing is Article No. 1 (TR407A01) in the [Terrorism Open Source Intelligence Report \(TOSIR\)](#), No. 407, 29 October 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isinreports@mindspring.com).

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2. “**How a French Physicist Became a Terrorism Suspect,**” by Bruce Crumley, [Time](#), 14 October 2009 (<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1930118,00.html>). [KBTSFrance, KBTREurope, KBTTNuclear, KBTMAQIM, KBTZOrigins] We *quote*:

Paris, France—French security officials have long regarded the Algerian jihadist movement **Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) as the most immediate terrorism threat to Europe.** Those fears appeared to have been substantiated last week with **the arrest of a French physicist who is suspected of plotting terrorist attacks in Europe on AQIM’s behalf.** However, **in an indication of the many options now open to aspiring radicals who want to put their extremism into action, investigators say the scientist linked up with AQIM only after police cracked down on another terrorist group he had been in contact with first.**

[**Hicheur boldest example of highly trained, talented individual reaching out to extremists**]

Revelations in the case have slowly emerged following **the 8 October arrest of 32-year-old French-Algerian Adlène Hicheur, who holds a doctorate in particle physics.** Hicheur was nabbed after intelligence officials intercepted encoded e-mails he sent to AQIM members offering to plan terrorist strikes in France. Reports in the French and British **media initially focused on Hicheur’s scientific work at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN), which has a gigantic particle collider straddling the France-Switzerland border.**

Many reports suggested that Hicheur had either planned an attack on the installation or had sought to pass information or material to AQIM so that jihadis could construct a nuclear weapon. Neither was true: **CERN says it has nothing on its property that could be used to build a nuclear bomb, and Hicheur's limited security access didn't allow him close enough to the main collider to launch an attack on it.**

“The fact that he was employed by CERN is not particularly significant compared to the more general fact he's an extremely well-educated scientist whose knowledge would have been useful to anyone planning terror strikes,” a French counterterrorism official told Time on condition of anonymity. “We've had several cases of highly educated, disciplined, and focused people turning up in terror cases where you'd least expect them, but **this is by far the boldest example of someone with so much training and talent reaching out to extremists and saying, ‘Use me.’**”

There is conflicting information on just how far Hicheur's plans had progressed. The London Daily Mail reported on Tuesday that Hicheur had targeted an oil refinery owned by the French company Total and wanted to create an explosion capable of destroying a “city the size of London,” according to unidentified sources. The French official would not comment on the Daily Mail report but did say that **Hicheur “had some written projects and drawings concerning certain targets in France.”** The official added, however, that **Hicheur “had not gotten close to defining a plot.”**

[Hicheur sought other extremists in online forums after police crackdown on initial group]

The official said that **Hicheur's name first arose in earlier Franco-Belgian investigations into a network that is suspected of finding recruits in the two countries and sending them to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area to undergo training to eventually launch attacks in Europe. Among the group's members was Malika el Aroud,** the widow of an Al-Qaeda suicide bomber who killed the anti-Taliban militia leader Ahmed Shah Massoud in northern Afghanistan two days before the 11 September 2001 attacks. **El Aroud, a Belgian national, wrote a radical blog and participated in online forums urging Muslims to join the jihad against the West.**

The network was broken up last December when Belgian police rounded up 14 suspected members ahead of what authorities feared was a planned suicide bombing of a Brussels meeting of European Union leaders. Then, in May, two French extremists from the group were arrested entering Italy with five Palestinian and Syrian aliens whom French authorities said were to be used as suicide bombers in European strikes.

It's unclear exactly when Hicheur began communicating with el Aroud's group or whether he was interested in going to Afghanistan or just looking for other terrorist-group contacts. Either way, **the busts in December and May left el Aroud's group weakened, apparently causing Hicheur to seek out other extremists in online forums.** “[Hicheur] eventually found AQIM people ready to discuss and encourage his jihadist ambition,” the French official said. **“These forums allow extremists from different countries to strike up partnerships and even plan together. . . . But that gives police and intelligence services very useful places to keep under close watch.”**

With the Taliban now resurgent in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, **el Aroud's group has managed to remain active despite the raids that have sapped its membership. Hicheur's ability to move from that group directly into AQIM circles, meanwhile, is**

a reminder of how many places the terrorism threat now resides in Europe. Hicheur's case also marks **the first instance of AQIM using a French recruit as an active terrorist operative in Europe, rather than solely for logistical assistance** as the group has in the past. All the more reason for Europe's counterterrorism authorities to continue their online vigil—and check out even the seemingly least likely candidates for jihadist activity.

The foregoing is Article No. 2 (TR407A02) in the [Terrorism Open Source Intelligence Report](#) (TOSIR), No. 407, 29 October 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isincreports@mindspring.com).

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3. “Setbacks Weaken Al-Qaeda’s Ability to Mount Attacks, Terrorism Officials Say,” Los Angeles Times, by Sebastian Rotella, 17 October 2009. [KBTQOverview, KBTQNetwork, KBTREurope, KBTSPakWT] From this item at <http://www.latimes.com> we *quote*:

Washington, D.C.—**As Al-Qaeda is weakened by the loss of leaders, fighters, funds, and ideological appeal, the extremist network’s ability to attack targets in the United States and Western Europe has diminished,** anti-terrorism officials say. **Nonetheless, Al-Qaeda and allied groups based primarily in Pakistan remain a threat, particularly because of an increasing ability to attract recruits from Central Asia and Turkey to offset the decline in the number of militants from the Arab world and the West.**

[**Numbers of Arabs, Westerners trekking to training compounds in Waziristan has shrunk**]

Al-Qaeda’s relative strength these days is of crucial importance in the complex debate in Washington over future U.S. troop levels and tactics in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although factions within the Obama administration differ on how best to deal with the Taliban in Afghanistan, all agree that **the paramount priority is defeating Al-Qaeda.**

Unlike the Afghan Taliban, the terrorist network **Al-Qaeda remains committed to a holy war against the West** with a goal of matching or surpassing its devastating attacks in 2001. Western intelligence officials say that **the group, already under pressure from U.S. drone strikes and facing a likely Pakistani army assault on its sanctuary, has been further racked by internal division and rifts with tribal groups.**

“Some pretty experienced individuals have been taken out of the equation,” a senior British anti-terrorism official said in a recent interview. **“There is fear, insecurity, and paranoia about individuals arriving from outside, worries about spies and infiltration,”** said the official, who requested anonymity because of the sensitive topic. **“There is a sense that it has become a less romantic experience. Which is important because of the impact on Al-Qaeda the brand, the myth, the idea of the glorious jihadist.”**

Al-Qaeda last spilled blood in the West in July 2005 when bombing attacks on the London transportation system killed 52 people. **Global cooperation and aggressive infiltration by Western spy services have thwarted subsequent plots, and a stepped-**

up campaign of drone strikes has killed many Al-Qaeda leaders and intensified divisions among extremist groups. “There are tensions about Al-Qaeda as an entity,” the British official said. “It has embedded itself in [northwestern Pakistan] over the course of years with marriages, links to tribes. **The drone strikes appear to be straining those bonds with the locals.**”

Some Arabs and Westerners still trek to the training compounds of Waziristan, though the numbers have shrunk as intelligence services get better at tracking and capturing trainees. British militants thought to have trained in Pakistan during the last year and a half **number in the tens, not the hundreds,** the official said. French authorities say only small numbers of militants from France are going to Pakistan.

Italian anti-terrorism officials have not detected any recruits from their country traveling to Pakistan since 2005 or 2006, said Armando Spataro, a top terrorism prosecutor in Milan. **The dwindling supply of foreign recruits results partly from an ideological backlash in the Muslim world,** experts say.

[Al-Qaeda, allies are totally dependent on self-selected volunteers]

President Obama cited the debilitated condition of the terrorist network last week during a visit with U.S. counterterrorism officials. **“Because of our efforts, Al-Qaeda and its allies have not only lost operational capacity, they’ve lost legitimacy and credibility,”** he said.

The number of failed plots in the West, whether directed or inspired by Al-Qaeda, also shows that the quality of operatives has declined, scholar Marc Sageman testified at a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week. “Counterterrorism is working,” said Sageman, a former CIA officer and New York Police Department expert. **“Terrorist organizations can no longer cherry-pick the best candidates as they did in the 1990s. There is no Al-Qaeda recruitment program: Al-Qaeda and its allies are totally dependent on self-selected volunteers.”**

In several recent cases, **Western trainees in Pakistan allegedly had contact with Mustafa Abu Yazid,** also known as Said Sheik, a longtime Egyptian financial boss. **Abu Yazid acts as the day-to-day chief of the network while Osama bin Laden and his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, spend their time eluding capture,** said the British official.

The training and direction of Westerners had largely been coordinated by one individual: Rashid Rauf, a Pakistani Briton who died in a missile strike in November. Investigators believe Rauf was the handler of British operatives in plots dating back to a failed 2004 bombing in London.

A French trainee who confessed this year detailed to French police the relatively small size of the network. Walid Othmani, who is of Tunisian descent, **said he trained in the Waziristan region with a mostly Arab contingent of 300 to 500 fighters,** according to a French police report provided by a defense lawyer. “The chief of the Arabs is . . . of Egyptian origin,” Othmani told interrogators. **“The Arab group is mostly people of Saudi origin. You find people from the Middle East, North Africans, blacks, Turks, and a majority of Arabs.”** Anti-terrorism officials said Othmani’s estimate largely matches previous intelligence.

[Turkic extremist groups produce Internet propaganda in amounts that rival Al-Qaeda]

The French militant also described a trend that may signal a new threat: the rise of Turks and Central Asians. “There’s a big Turkish group, the Arab group [the smallest of the groups], two rather large Uzbek groups, a group of Uighurs from Turkestan [the region in China officially known as Xinjiang] . . . the largest of the groups,” he said under questioning. “There are also two Kurdish groups and finally a mixed group led by an Uzbek.”

Western investigators worry about the Uzbek-led Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). The IJU broke off in 2002 from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, a longtime Al-Qaeda ally. The IJU has made a name for itself as a Turkic-speaking alternative to Al-Qaeda for Turks and Central Asians.

The Turkic groups produce Internet propaganda in amounts that rival those of Al-Qaeda, and have threatened Germany because of its military presence in Afghanistan. **“For the Turkic groups, Germany is America,”** said Evan Kohlmann, a terrorism expert who works with law enforcement around the world.

The IJU also directed a group of converts and Turks from Germany who were convicted of plotting to bomb U.S. military targets in Germany in 2007. An IJU video recently obtained by Kohlmann shows Germans training in Pakistani badlands along with a muscular man with a shaved head who brandishes an automatic rifle. The video identifies him as an American. **“Law enforcement is deathly afraid of these groups,”** Kohlmann said.

[Pakistani, Afghani Taliban rarely surface in plots against the West—but potential exists]

Recent attacks in Pakistan highlight other threats to the West. The bold strikes on military and government targets were **blamed on joint teams of Pakistani Taliban and Punjabi militant groups, both allies of Al-Qaeda that could protect or rejuvenate the network.**

“The ties between Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban are closer and closer,” Jean-Louis Bruguiere, a veteran French anti-terrorism magistrate, said in an interview. **“Then you have the danger of other Pakistani networks like Lashkar-e-Taiba that have had complicity in the past with elements of the state. Al-Qaeda might be diluted, but it could become part of a larger threat.”** Two Americans with links to Lashkar were convicted this summer in Atlanta of conspiring with militants in Canada and Europe and filming prospective targets in Washington.

In contrast, **the Pakistani Taliban, like its Afghani counterpart, rarely surfaces in plots against the West. One murky case hints at the potential:** the arrests last year of a group of Pakistanis in Barcelona, Spain. **Then Pakistani Taliban chief Baitullah Mahsud allegedly sent would-be suicide bombers to Barcelona, shadowed by a Pakistani informant working for French intelligence.**

The informant called in a police raid when the suspects allegedly said they were about to commit a suicide attack on the Barcelona subway. **No explosives were found,** however. Some French and Spanish officials said the imminence of the attack was

exaggerated and the links to Mahsud, who died in an airstrike this year, were unclear. Nonetheless, **the alliance between Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani Taliban raises concern**, Bruguier said. “Such ambitions by the Pakistani Taliban cannot be excluded, because they want to join in the global jihad,” Bruguier said.

The foregoing is Article No. 3 (TR407A03) in the **Terrorism Open Source Intelligence Report (TOSIR)**, No. 407, 29 October 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isinreports@mindspring.com).

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4. “Central Asia: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Undergoing Dangerous Transformation,” by Deirdre Tynan, ***Eurasia Insight***, 20 October 2009. [KBTSUzbekistan, KBTSAfghanGW] Deirdre Tynan is a freelance journalist who specializes in Central Asian affairs. From <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav102009b.shtml> we quote:

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is undergoing a metamorphosis that could transform the Islamic militant group into a far more dynamic foe for Central Asian governments, as well as for the U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan.

[IMU’s bolder tactics suggest younger, more aggressive group of commanders in charge]

There has been a surge of IMU-related activity in recent weeks, both in Afghanistan and in former Soviet Central Asian states. On 19 October, for example, the Kyrgyz Border Service announced that four armed militants surrendered to Tajik security forces in the enclave of Vorukh, a Tajik entity surrounded by Kyrgyzstan’s Batken province.

A day earlier, Tajik police killed four suspected IMU members in a shootout in Isfara, a Ferghana Valley town situated near the Kyrgyz and Uzbek borders. The dead militants were suspects in the September assassination of the Tajik interior ministry’s top criminal investigator in Isfara.

In Afghanistan, local officials say that 15 militants captured by U.S. forces on 11 October in Kunduz Province were affiliated with the IMU. The Afghan ministry of defense estimates that there are at least 4,000 IMU-aligned “foreign mercenaries” in northern Afghanistan.

The increase in IMU activity is occurring amid changes in the movement’s composition. According to some reports, **the death of the group’s long-time leader, Tahir Yuldashev, has allowed more daring and innovative leaders to assert themselves within the movement.**

Specifically, **an ethnic Tartar named Abdur Rahman is believed to have assumed the helm of the IMU, replacing Yuldashev, who reportedly died from wounds suffered in a U.S. missile attack in August.**

Far from crippling the IMU’s operational capabilities, Yuldashev’s passing from the scene seems to have energized the group, experts on the region contend. “It’s hard to imagine [Yuldashev’s death] having much impact on the IMU. Yuldashev’s reputation,

as far as we have heard of one, was of an uncharismatic and rather dogmatic person,” said Paul Quinn-Judge, the Central Asia project director for the International Crisis Group.

Although Yuldashev’s death has not been definitively confirmed, what is beyond question is the fact that the IMU is now employing bolder tactics. This would suggest at the very least that the old guard has given way to a younger, more aggressive group of commanders. “I think Yuldashev was quite content operating as an armed wing for the Taliban in Pakistan, working as a supporting group, as opposed to doing what [the IMU] was initially set up to do, which was overthrow the Uzbek government and set up a caliphate in Central Asia,” said Bill Roggio, a expert on the region who edits the Long War Journal, a blog covering the Af-Pak conflict.

“Yuldashev was very conservative about his role in Central Asia. But we’ve seen over the last couple of months that the IMU is stepping up efforts to secure northern Afghanistan and attack Tajikistan. Maybe they [militants] are just waiting for the right moment,” he said.

[IMU fighters may opt to return to Central Asia rather than take on Pakistani military]

From the vantage point of Andrei Grozin, director of the Central Asia department at the CIS Institute in Moscow, conditions in Central Asia are presently ripe for an IMU comeback. **“The IMU’s influence could grow because of the worsening social and economic situation in Central Asia,”** Grozin said in an interview with EurasiaNet on 19 October. **“These countries are getting less and less money for aluminum and cotton and for other resources. Consequently, the opportunity for the IMU to influence the population is expanding.”**

If reports that Rahman has assumed the leadership of the IMU are accurate, it would signal a significant expansion of the IMU’s base. “If true, this would underline the way IMU has become a transnational, not just an Uzbek jihadist movement,” Quinn-Judge told EurasiaNet. **A transnational identity could cause a corresponding expansion of its strategic aims. Already, the IMU is reportedly attracting militants from Chechnya and Dagestan,** two unsettled regions of Russia, into its ranks, Quinn-Judge added.

A Pakistani government offensive in Waziristan could well stir up more IMU activity in Afghanistan and other Central Asian states. **Some estimates say as many as 5,000 IMU fighters have been using Waziristan as a safe haven. It’s very possible that rather than take on the Pakistani military, IMU fighters will opt to return to Central Asia,** said Grozin.

“If that happens, one of two scenarios will develop,” Grozin continued. **“More radical IMU factions might start active operations [in Central Asia], or they might try not to attract attention. The first scenario is more likely** because they don’t have rules and the security forces in the Central Asian republics are not very professional, to put it mildly.”

The foregoing is Article No. 4 (TR407A04) in the Terrorism Open Source Intelligence Report (TOSIR), No. 407, 29 October 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isincreports@mindspring.com).

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5. “Pakistani Taliban Commander Describes Countermeasures against UAV Attacks,”
Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 7, No. 31, 23 October 2009 (<http://www.jamestown.org>).
[KBTTUAV, KBTSPakWT, KBTZTactics] We quote:

A commander of the Pakistan Taliban, Sahimullah Mahsud, recently provided a description of the measures taken by the Taliban forces and leadership to lower the impact of the American unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) missile attacks which have claimed the lives of scores of Taliban and Al-Qaeda leaders in northwestern Pakistan, including the late leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Baitullah Mahsud. Based in South Waziristan, where he is a deputy to new Taliban leader Hakimullah Mahsud, Sahimullah provided the details in an interview with the Brussels-based Le Soir daily (12 October).

[Sahimullah Mahsud: UAV countermeasures based on mobility, secrecy, and anonymity]

Sahimullah described the UAV countermeasures as being based on “mobility, secrecy, and anonymity”:

- **If a drone is heard, fighters must disperse into small groups of no more than four people. The Taliban has weapons capable of shooting down the drones, but lacks the technology to detect their approach.**
- **Satellite or SMS [a form of text messaging on mobile phones] forms of communication are no longer used.** All communications are done orally or by code.
- **Meetings are announced only at the last minute, with nothing planned in advance in order to avoid leaks. Even senior commanders do not know the precise location of regional commanders.**
- **Taliban leaders have reduced the size of their security escorts to one or two men “in whom they have complete confidence.”**
- **Taliban security agents are constantly checking the identity and credentials of those active within the movement.**

[Sahimullah Mahsud claimed Taliban ready for Pakistani offensive in South Waziristan]

The Taliban commander added that the movement has many sympathizers within the Pakistan army and the security forces in Afghanistan who provide useful intelligence on infiltration efforts, the progress of NATO convoys, and the timing and location of American or Pakistani military operations. American weapons are bought from the personnel of the Afghan National Army or seized in raids on NATO convoys.

Sahimullah claimed the Taliban were ready for the Pakistani offensive in South Waziristan: “We have about 20,000 fighters and we can move from one side of the border to the other as needed. We are very mobile. In eight years the United States and

NATO have not managed to defeat the Taliban. **How do you expect a few Pakistani soldiers, tanks, and planes to get the better of us! It is impossible!**"

The foregoing is Article No. 5 (TR407A05) in the [Terrorism Open Source Intelligence Report](#) (TOSIR), No. 407, 29 October 2009, prepared by Interaction Systems Incorporated (isincreports@mindspring.com).

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6. "The Pentagon's New Africa Push: Counterterrorism Is Now a Major Focus of the Year-Old U.S. Africa Command," by Sean J. Miller, [National Journal](#), 24 October 2009.

[KBTGAFRICOM, KBTGDOS, KBTRAfrica, KBTSSomalia, KBTWPeaceOps] We quote from this item at <http://www.nationaljournal.com/njonline/>:

Once the forgotten continent, **Africa has growing strategic importance in America's fight against terrorism.** A recent commando operation that killed a top organizer for Al-Qaeda in Somalia is one part of **the U.S. military's new multifaceted approach to regional security, which includes deepening ties between the Pentagon and African armies and putting American soldiers in the role of nation builders.**

[Al-Shabab killed 15 soldiers in Mogadishu suicide bombing of U.S.-backed peacekeepers]

The absence of stable governments has led to the Horn of Africa becoming a haven for Al-Qaeda operatives. It's here that U.S. intelligence recently tracked Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan, a Kenyan wanted by the FBI for his involvement in attacks against a hotel in Mombasa in 2002 and in the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. On 14 September, U.S. Special Forces troops ambushed and killed Nabhan as his convoy stopped for breakfast in southern Somalia.

U.S. officials didn't waste any time trumpeting the strike. In a speech to the Center for American Progress in Washington the next day, Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, **hailed Nabhan's death as a blow to Al-Qaeda and its Somali ally Al-Shabab.** "We think that his departure from the scene probably makes us all who work in and around East Africa a little bit safer, a little bit more secure," he said.

But two days later, Al-Shabab offered its own reply. It launched a successful suicide attack against U.S.-backed African Union peacekeepers in Mogadishu. The twin suicide bombing killed some 15 soldiers, including Major General Juvenal Niyoyunguruza, the Burundian deputy commander of the African Union force. It was the deadliest attack to date against the multinational peacekeepers—Al-Shabab called it revenge for Nabhan's killing.

[U.S. military training with African militaries, partnering with civilian agencies on projects]

Counterterrorism is now a major focus of the nascent U.S. Africa Command—AFRICOM for short. But the command, which is celebrating its one-year anniversary this month, **won't always rely on American troops to neutralize the threat posed by extremist groups, at least not directly.**

Rather than hunting and killing terrorists, **AFRICOM focuses on “professionalizing” African militaries so that they can better confront local security challenges on their own**, U.S. commanders say, **while at the same time teaching soldiers to respect human rights and civilian rule**. These efforts, however, have possible downsides. In an area of the world still scarred by colonialism, **the U.S. military risks being associated with a rogues’ gallery of African military leaders, and it remains to be seen whether an indirect approach can improve the security situation in a country such as Somalia**, where the U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government is almost powerless.

At its most basic level, AFRICOM represents a bureaucratic reshuffling: The U.S. Central, European, and Pacific commands had divided responsibility for the continent. Building relationships with America’s African partners, commanders said, was difficult when they didn’t know whether to call Honolulu or Tampa, Florida, to get a desk officer on the phone. “We were not nearly as responsive as we needed to be to the priorities, perspectives, and needs of our African partners,” said Navy Vice Admiral Robert Moeller, in a phone interview from the command’s headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany. **Creating AFRICOM was “a clear recognition on the [Pentagon’s] part that we need to be organized in a way to much more effectively deal with those things that matter to our African partners.”**

The U.S. military had been conducting a variety of exchange programs and training exercises with African militaries. AFRICOM simply placed these programs under one roof. **It also put a new focus on partnering with civilian agencies and African militaries on aid projects**, such as, say, funding the construction of Ugandan schools.

Moeller maintains that **AFRICOM’s goal is to ward off conflict “by not only better preparing their security forces but, through our support for other government agencies that work with these nations, to create the overall conditions” that would make violent extremism a less attractive option.** Still, Moeller added, **this mission doesn’t mean that the U.S. military has forsaken the use of force.** “If we are directed to take some action as a result of a U.S. policy decision, we’re obviously prepared to do that.”

[Dealing with African governments can create negative impressions among the populace]

Moeller and others stress that **AFRICOM hasn’t superseded the Department of State’s role in U.S.-African relations.** “None of these types of training activities or programs or exchanges are done without the full concurrence of the chief of mission in that particular country,” said Louis Mazel, State’s director of regional and security affairs for Africa.

But many observers still have reservations about the new command. “In Africa, uniforms are feared, even hated,” says Berouk Mesfin, an Ethiopian-based researcher with the Institute for Security Studies. **“When you have other armies trying to come in, telling people they are coming to help them build schools, clinics, etc.—people are obviously suspicious.”**

Having **AFRICOM’s chief, Army General William Ward**, appear publicly with African leaders is also problematic, Mesfin warned. **“There’s a feeling that . . . the roots of the problem in Africa are [actually] the governments in place**, the rulers who never want to relinquish power [or] not even to share power,” he said. **“Whenever you are**

dealing with those guys, that creates a negative impression among the populace. There is no middle ground in Africa.”

State’s Mazel recognizes that AFRICOM’s profile can influence public perception of the United States. **“Do we have a concern about a perception? Yes,” he said, “but do we have a concern that there will be a militarization of American foreign policy? No.** Foreign policy formation, foreign policy implementation on the African continent will be **led by civilian elements.”**

[State Department also has program for training African militaries on peacekeeping]

Somalia poses a different policy challenge. “The problem in Somalia is, you don’t have a partner. You have a Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which isn’t a government—there is no indirect method,” said J. Peter Pham, a fellow at the National Committee on American Foreign Policy who studies the Horn of Africa.

There’s also the risk that the U.S. military is training, and in some cases equipping, African armies for their next war. This summer, the State Department said, it was **providing “arms and munitions and training” to the TFG’s modest forces.** Meanwhile, **in Ethiopia next door, AFRICOM maintains a relationship with that country’s National Defense Forces,** providing some “limited equipment support.” And AFRICOM helps train that country’s noncommissioned officer corps, said Rear Admiral Anthony Kurta, who commands Camp Lemonier, **the U.S. military base in Djibouti. Ethiopia recently occupied parts of Somalia at the “invitation” of the country’s transitional government, reigniting old tensions between the neighbors.**

Policymakers are aware of the risks, Mazel said. “By making a military more proficient, are we creating a more professional army that will pose a risk either to its neighbors or to people in the region? Or are we creating a sort of praetorian guard for the leadership of the country? That’s certainly not the hope that we have.”

While AFRICOM is expanding its military-to-military cooperation, the State Department is also maintaining a program for training African militaries, albeit with a focus on peacekeeping. “Most, if not virtually all, of the African peacekeepers’ training is being done through the State Department,” Mazel said.

In West Africa, for instance, “we’ve trained, through State Department-funded programs, the new armed forces” in Liberia, he said. **“But we’ve also had mentors and trainers come from the military** to support what we’ve been doing. Yes, there’s been an overlap there, but it’s continuous. It’s not as if our civilian trainers are teaching one thing and the AFRICOM [trainers] are teaching another.”

[U.S. policy in Africa will have to be quick to adapt to a fluid situation]

The indirect approach being touted by AFRICOM is punctuated with demonstrations of U.S. force, such as the precision strike against Nabhan. Some analysts, however, worry that such attacks may be counterproductive. In the Horn of Africa, Mesfin said, “what people see is actually who had the last laugh.”

Still, Mesfin said that **countries in the region are nervous after Al-Shabab demonstrated its ability to carry out an organized attack.** The suicide bombing in

Mogadishu seemed to embolden the group, Mesfin said. **Al-Shabab warned Djibouti not to send troops to help the African Union mission, and it even threatened Nairobi-based Ugandan and Burundian diplomats.** The ambassadors “actually received text messages on their mobiles saying that their embassies in Nairobi will be attacked,” Mesfin said. “People are nervous in Nairobi.”

American observers warn against giving Al-Shabab too much credit. “Even if Nabhan hadn’t been terminated, [the suicide attack] probably would have happened anyways,” Pham said. “It was attempted earlier in the summer and they failed.”

One thing is clear: U.S. policy in Africa will have to be quick to adapt to a fluid situation. “When you get involved in the Horn, you’re either supporting one of the parties or changing the balance of power,” Mesfin said. “**Acting as a neutral observer doesn’t work.**”

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