JIHAD ON YOUTUBE
by Rita Katz and Josh Devon

Al-Qaeda’s Continuing Threat to the Homeland: “Diversity is Definitely the Word”
by Dr. Bruce Hoffman

Awlaki Justifies Deaths of Millions

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This issue of inSITE comes on the heels of a series of recent arrests of Americans active within the online jihadist community. Some have relegated online jihadists to harmless armchair quarterbacks, more interested in consuming and trading jihadist multimedia than plotting an attack or seeking to travel to an active jihadist front. However, the recent arrests reaffirm that the threat these individuals pose can not be dismissed out of hand simply because they spend the largest part of their jihadist career in front of computer monitors. We must recognize that the online jihadist community is incubating a generation of jihadists willing to risk their lives and freedom for the jihadist cause.

Due to his awkwardness and prominent public profile, many wrote off Zachary Chesser, the 20-year-old convert from Virginia who gained notoriety for his threats against the South Park creators for depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Appearing, speaking, and even singing in videos himself, Chesser produced and distributed jihadist propaganda through blogs and websites, including YouTube, where he exhorting others to violent jihad. Not content to be an individual of words without action, Chesser practiced what he preached and was taken into custody following an attempt to travel to Somalia to join the Shabaab al-Mujahideen, a designated terrorist group.

In a separate case, convert Paul Rockwood of Alaska, who attempted to communicate online with the radical Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki, pled guilty to lying to authorities after having prepared a hit list of individuals to target. According to his plea agreement, while Rockwood selected his targets, he also "researched individual explosive components, construction of remote triggering devices such as cellular telephones, and the construction of improvised explosive devices for delivery by common carrier."

These arrests of American converts follow the arrest of another convert, Colleen LaRose, the online jihadist better known as “Jihad Jane,” who was indicted in a plot to kill a Swedish cartoonist. LaRose, too, was extremely active in distributing jihadist propaganda online and remained dissatisfied by simply dealing in multimedia. Coordinating with others through the internet, LaRose traveled to Europe to realize her goal of killing Lars Vilks, who had drawn satirical cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.

Chesser, Rockwood, and LaRose, were all caught and prevented from harming others, but others have successfully achieved their goals. Many ridiculed Samir Khan for being a stereotypical online jihadist living in his parents’ house in Charlotte, North Carolina. Like Chesser, Khan was extremely active in producing and distributing jihadist propaganda, including an English-language magazine, “Jihad Recollections.” Khan is now believed to have fled the United States in October 2009 for Yemen, where he helped produce al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s English-language magazine “Inspire,” which contains striking similarities to Khan’s previous magazine.

Perhaps contributing to this homegrown threat, my colleague Josh Devon and I explored the issue of how jihadists such as Chesser are using YouTube and how Google might assist in preventing the spread of jihadist propaganda on such a mainstream website.

In addition, in this issue of inSITE, SITE Senior Advisor Bruce Hoffman considers the external threat to the United States, exemplified by the failed Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad who was trained in Pakistan by the Pakistani Taliban to carry out his attack. In his article, “Al-Qaeda’s Continuing Threat to the Homeland: ‘Diversity is Definitely the Word’,” Dr. Hoffman examines the case of Shahzad and other suspects involved in plots to attack the United States, and show how these examples highlights al-Qaeda and terrorist groups diversifying their operatives.

Complementing Dr. Hoffman’s article is a focus on a segment from Anwar al-Awlaki’s interview with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s media arm, al-Malahem Foundation, in which Awlaki justified the deaths of Americans as payment for the deaths of Muslims, allegedly by the US and its allies. This article, “Awlaki Justifies Deaths of Millions,” shows that Awlaki’s justifications mirror those voiced by al-Qaeda and in particular, slain al-Qaeda ideologue and media coordinator Yusuf al-Ayiri. The entire English translation of Awlaki’s interview is also provided in this issue.

Another article, “The Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement: Local Group with an International Focus,” examines what preceded the July 11th bombings in Kampala, Uganda, of direct threats to Uganda by the Shabaab, a jihadist movement based in Somalia. The article also looks at what followed the attacks as it related to the Shabaab’s claim of responsibility and a message from its leadership warning of future attacks not only in Uganda, but Burundi and any other country that participates with its soldiers in the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Furthermore, this issue looks at how the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), one of the oldest and most respected producers of jihadist propaganda, has evolved to become a multimedia powerhouse for jihadist content.

Sincerely,
Rita Katz
Director, SITE Intelligence Group
AQAP Deputy Leader Call for Kidnappings

Abu Sufyan al-Azdi, the deputy leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), spoke in an audio released on June 2, urging support for imprisoned male and female Muslims in Saudi Arabia. He called for kidnappings of Christians, Saudi princes, and high-ranking officials as a means of such support. Azdi directed his call to Muslims in the al-Qassim province of Saudi Arabia, in particular, reminding them of the imprisonment of a female preacher, Haila al-Qassir (AKA Um al-Rabab).

Shabaab Releases Video of French Captive

The Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia released a video of its French captive, Denis Allex, on June 9. Allex, a French security advisor, addressed his message to the people of France. According to media reports, on July 14, 2009, Somalia gunmen kidnapped two French security advisors in Mogadishu. One of the captives, Marc Aubriere, escaped from his captors on August 26, 2009. The Shabaab had given demands for the release of the other advisor. They said that these advisors were sent by France to Somalia to gather intelligence about the mujahideen and to contribute to ongoing operations by AMISOM and Somali forces.

AQAP Stresses Obligation of Jihad

Ibrahim al-Rubaish, a former Guantanamo detainee and a member of AQAP, addressed Muslims in an audio released on June 9, impressing upon them the obligation of jihad. Rubaish warned Muslims against abstaining from jihad and expressed his disappointment with those who do abstain and do not support mujahideen. He told those, however: “If you want to remain still, then stay home and do not say anything which would harm the reputation of the mujahideen, and do not defame them or stab them.” His lecture then is a call to disregard those who delegiti-
mize jihad and an incitation to participate in jihad, either individually or collectively.

CIA Base Bomber Urges Suicide Attacks

Humam al-Balawi (AKA Abu Dujana al-Khorasani) appeared in a posthumous video released on June 11, inciting Muslims to carry out suicide attacks. Balawi had carried out a suicide bombing at a CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan, on December 30, 2009. Balawi explained that such attacks and their pursuit are the “nuclear weapons” of Muslims and the “apex” of jihad. A leader trains mujahideen, gives them residence, and spends money on them, but it is the bombers who are most significant, he said, because “they are the weapon itself.”

Jihadist Ideologue’s Son Slain in Iraq

Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, a prominent jihadist ideology, announced on June 13 that his son Omar was killed in a clash in Mosul, Iraq, on June 5. Maqdisi showed pride in his son’s pursuit of jihad and his activities in Iraq, and wrote that his son as close to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, to whom Maqdisi was a spiritual mentor, and was “cherished” by him. The message from Maqdisi included a copy of a handwritten letter he received from Omar, and a transcription of that letter and another from a friend of Omar who was detained with him in prison. That friend told Maqdisi that his son was well-regarded amongst the fighters in Iraq, especially those who knew Maqdisi.

Bin Laden Warns Against Executing 9/11 Planner

Al-Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden addressed an audio message to the American people, warning about the US potentially executing suspected 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Muhammad. The audio was released on

Al-Balagh Hosts Open Meeting with al-Qaeda Member

Al-Balagh Media Center published a 28-page document containing answers it received from an individual identified as Abdul Majeed Abdul Ma’ajih, a member of the Shura council of al-Qaeda in Khorasan, to an open meeting with jihadist forum members. The document was released on June 12. Abdul Ma’ajid answered 30 sets of questions covering, for example, media jihad; legacy of jihadi scholars and leaders; support for jihad; rationale behind al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) striking conscripted soldiers in Algeria; and Muslims hastening to the battlefield while potentially being ill-prepared.

Yazid Urges Support of Jihad, Claims India Attack

Mustafa Abu al-Yazid (AKA Sheikh Saeed) spoke in a posthumous audio released on June 15, calling for support of jihad and claiming for “al-Qaeda in Kashmir” the bombing in Pune, India, that occurred on February 13, 2010. He said that Ilyas Kashmiri leads that group. Yazid was killed in a drone strike in May 2010. His message focused on support by financial donations, and urged Muslims to contribute as much as they can. In addition to his call for money, Yazid exhorted Muslims to physically participate in jihad and to offer
support, be it in travelling to a battlefield or engaging in media jihad on the internet.

Adam Gadahn Gives Demands to Obama

Al-Qaeda’s American spokesman Adam Gadahn appeared in a video released on June 20, dictating demands to US President Barack Obama. Gadahn taunted and ridiculed Obama for declining approval ratings and incidents during his presidency, such as two uninvited individuals attending a White House gala and Scott Brown winning a Democrat’s Senate seat in Massachusetts. He cited Obama’s foreign and war policy, particularly the troop surge in Afghanistan, actions in Pakistan and Yemen, and placing Muslims in “Muslim-only concentration camps,” explaining that such will not help the US. The demands Gadahn gave to Obama are the same Gadahn had given to George W. Bush in May 2007.

AQAP Urges Scholars to Support Jihad

Abu Zubeir ‘Adil al-‘Abab, a Shariah Official of AQAP, spoke in an audio released on June 22, urging Muslim scholars to demonstrate loyalty to Islam by support jihad and the mujahideen. Loyalty to God and Islam, ‘Abab argued, cannot be demonstrated by supporting Muslim governments which ally with the US, or by giving fatwas that delegitimize jihad and vilify mujahideen. ‘Abab also addressed Muslims in general, encouraging them with the same, to demonstrate their loyalty to Islam and their Muslim brethren through supporting jihad.

Shabaab Video Shows Clash in Mogadishu

The Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia released an English-language video on June 27, showing a clash between Shabaab fighters and Ugandan peacekeeping forces parts of AMISOM. The clash shown was reported by the Shabaab to have occurred in Shibis district of the Somali capital, Mogadishu, on June 3. In a prior communiqué, the group boasted that the clash was “one of the greatest epics and triumphs.” The video contained excerpts from speeches by Aden Hashi Ayro, a slain Shabaab commander, for example. Ayro declared that the Ugandans are “Christian Crusaders” to invade Somalia and violated the honor of the Somalia people. He advised Shabaab fighters to make Ugandans their “top priority.”

Kuwaiti Jihadist Announced Killed in Afghanistan

A user on the al-Fallujah jihadist forum posted a message on June 23, announcing the death of Kuwaiti jihadist named Abu Jamila al-Kuwaiti, who real name was allegedly Hamid al-Ghazali. The author claimed to be a member of the Taliban. In addition to announcing Abu Jamila’s death, the author included a detailed biography of the individual, describing how he first met Abu Jamila in Afghanistan and came to know him. Abu Jamila, he said, was known to have educated numerous Taliban in making booby-traps and other incendiary devices. Abu Jamila was allegedly killed in an attack in March 2010.

Libi Offers Condolences for Slain ISI Leaders

Abu Yahya al-Libi appeared in a video, offering condolences for the deaths of top Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) officials and urging fighters in Iraq to unite. Libi praised both men and their positions at the helm of jihad in Iraq, and used their deaths to rally fighters. Libi directed his call for unity to Ansar al-Islam and its leader, Abdullah al-Shafei, in particular, and explained to them that the time has now come to join forces with the ISI.

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Jihad on YouTube

BY RITA KATZ AND JOSH DEVON

When the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) released a video taking credit for the Times Square bombing early Sunday morning following Mayor Bloomberg’s press conference, the group didn’t post its message through traditional jihadist forums or send a tape to Al Jazeera. Instead, the TTP chose to use the titan of video on the internet, Google’s YouTube. The enormous video sharing website has become a significant platform for jihadist groups and supporters, fostering a thriving subculture of jihadists who use YouTube to share propaganda, communicate with each other, and recruit new individuals to the jihadist cause.

The TTP is just one of many other terrorist groups utilizing YouTube to distribute propaganda. For example, in the run-up to the 2008 Summer Olympics, the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) selected YouTube to distribute their propaganda online threatening the sports event. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, the Afghan Taliban, and even al-Qaeda have released videos through YouTube.

Easily accessible from almost anywhere in the world, YouTube’s massive global audience ensures that jihadists can simultaneously target both potential recruits as well as those whom the movement intends to terrorize. Furthermore, rather than having to wait for an extended period of time to download videos from jihadist forums, users on YouTube can watch virtually instantaneously. YouTube also conveniently suggests related videos, enabling an individual to find and consume more media in a shorter period of time than even on jihadist forums.

As important as the videos hosted on YouTube, though, is the website’s facilitation of social networking among jihadists. Comments left on videos and user channels, as well as the capability to send private messages to other users, helps jihadists identify each other rapidly, resulting in a vibrant jihadist subculture on YouTube. This community is comprised of many of the same individuals active on jihadist forums, who create their own video channels of jihadist propaganda designed to cultivate an atmosphere that radicalizes others.

Among the more widely known jihadist members of YouTube is Colleen LaRose, known as “Jihad Jane,” who was charged in March 2009 with conspiring to provide material support to terrorists. LaRose maintained several YouTube channels replete with jihadist content. According to her indictment, LaRose posted on YouTube that she was “desperate to do something somehow to help” the plight of Muslims.

Another prominent YouTube user is Zachary Chesser, the American-born Muslim convert from Virginia known as Abu Talha al-Amriki who recently “warned” the creators of South Park from depicting the Prophet Muhammad, also operates a YouTube channel filled with scores of jihadist videos. Perhaps evidencing the large numbers of jihadist supporters on YouTube, Chesser’s channel has over 700 subscribers and more than 800 friends.

Even more troubling, jihadist groups can also find and recruit radicalized individuals through YouTube. In December 2009, five young Americans from the Virginia area were ar-

Profile of user who posted Hakimullah Mehsud video
rested in Sargodha, Pakistan, after allegedly traveling to Pakistan to join a terrorist group. An interrogation report issued by the Sargodha police revealed that at least one of the individuals, Ahmed Minni, was in contact with another user on YouTube who recruited the men and exhorted them to travel to Pakistan. The report explained that Minni “used to praise the videos which showed attacks on the US Army and Installations. This became a regular feature and Minni, a registered user of YouTube, regularly praised such attacks. Soon after, Minni was contacted by a person named ‘Saifullah.’”

To Google’s credit, the company has made flagging inappropriate content on YouTube easy, and YouTube quickly responds by reviewing and removing jihadist videos and channels, explaining in the website’s community guidelines, “We draw the line at content that’s intended to incite violence or encourage dangerous, illegal activities.” However, this process is passive, relying on the reporting of the general YouTube population and results in the reposting of jihadist propaganda to YouTube shortly thereafter.

For example, although the TTP’s video on YouTube claiming the Times Square attack was reported and taken down within hours of its posting, the TTP simply created another YouTube channel after a few hours. This channel housed not only a newly uploaded copy of the video taking credit for the attack but included two additional videos featuring TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud threatening the United States. These videos have since spread to several other YouTube channels.

Perhaps an improved way for YouTube to handle this issue is to make posting jihadist content more difficult by preventing users from uploading known jihadist propaganda. Google has already demonstrated through its “Content ID System,” which compares media uploaded to YouTube to a database of copyrighted movies, television shows, and music, that the company can immediately and automatically identify copyrighted video and audio and prevent that media from being displayed on YouTube.

By building a database of known jihadist media, Google’s same technology might be applied to stop jihadist propaganda from being uploaded and recirculated on the website. Similar to how Google treats copyrighted content, provisions might be made to allow for short clips of jihadist propaganda to remain on YouTube for purposes of reporting, parody, and other legitimate reasons.

While of course such actions would not be a panacea to rectifying the problem of jihadist activity on YouTube, let alone the internet, Google will most certainly be reminding its jihadist users of the company’s motto: “Don’t be evil.”
Al-Qaeda’s Continuing Threat to the Homeland: “Diversity Is Definitely The Word”

Dr. Bruce Hoffman
Professor, Georgetown University and Senior Advisor, SITE

“I am going to plead guilty a hundred times over.”
- Faisal Shahzad

Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, had his day in court on 21 June 2010. And, it was a remarkable performance. Spurning both a trial and any kind of plea agreement, Shahzad brazenly pleaded guilty to all ten counts of terrorism stemming from his failed attempt to detonate an improvised explosive device concealed in an SUV that he had parked in the heart of New York City’s entertainment district on the evening of 1 May 2010. Had the plot succeeded, according to a New York City Police Department (NYPD) Intelligence Division senior analyst, it would have been “our 7/7”—a reference to the 7 July 2005 London terrorist attack. Indeed, Shahzad’s defiant mien and his unrepentant justification of his actions were eerily reminiscent of similar declarative statements made five years ago by two of the four bombers responsible for the London attacks.

This Is “War” and An Ineluctably Defensive Struggle

On 1 September 2005, al-Jazeera television station broadcast a martyrdom video produced and distributed by as-Sahab (Arabic: “The Clouds”), al-Qaeda’s media arm. It featured the ringleader of the London attacks, a thirty-year-old resident of a Leeds, England suburb, named Mohammed Siddique Khan. In the video, recorded in Pakistan in expectation of the forthcoming attack—Khan, as terrorists throughout history have, framed his choice of tactic and justification of his actions in pure defensive terms. He described his struggle as an intrinsically defensive one and his act as a response to the repeated depredations and unmitigated aggression perpetrated by the West against Muslim peoples worldwide. In strident language, Khan explained how,

Until we feel security, you will be our targets. And until you stop the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people we will not stop this fight. We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste the reality of this situation . . . .

Ten months later, on the first anniversary of the London bombings, another martyrdom tape was released by as-Sahab: this one recorded by Khan’s traveling companion and fellow bomber, Shahzad Tanweer. Titled, “The Final Message of the Knights of the London Raid,” it depicted Tanweer expressing similar views to those of Khan. “To the non-Muslims of Britain,” he begins,

“You may wonder what you have done to deserve this. You are those who have voted in your government, who in turn have, and still continue to this day, continue to oppress our mothers, children, brothers and sisters, from the east to the west, in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Chechnya . . .”

The video concludes with Tanweer warning “all you British citizens to stop your support to your lying British government, and to the so-called ‘war on terror,’ and ask yourselves why would thousands of men be willing to give their lives for the cause of Muslims.” 2

Since his arrest, Shahzad has articulated many of the same arguments. Indeed, one of the first things he asked the law enforcement officers who arrested him as he was attempting to flee the United States on a commercial flight bound for Dubai was “How would you feel if people attacked the United States? You are attacking a sovereign Pakistan.” In a New York City courtroom less than two months later, he amplified that comment, declaring himself a “holy warrior” (mujahid) and a “Muslim soldier,” much as Khan and Tanweer previously had.


2 Ibid.
He saw himself ineluctably as fighting what he termed as a “war” and described himself as “part of the answer to the US terrorizing Muslim nations and the Muslim people.” Shahzad promised that if the U.S. did not cease invading Muslim lands and did not leave Iraq, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries, there would be more attacks on the U.S. Americans, Shahzad explained, “don’t see the drones killing children in Afghanistan… [They] only care about their people, but they don’t care about the people elsewhere in the world when they die.” Accordingly, attacks on children and innocents in his view, were both justified and should be expected in the future.

Not Just Empty Rhetoric

How seriously should we take Shahzad’s remarks and threats? Were these the mad ravings of a homicidal lunatic and an incompetent wannabe terrorist or the statement of someone who both presented—and whose likely successors will present—a serious challenge to the security of the U.S. and the safety of its citizens and residents? In other words, do we ignore Shahzad’s statements at our peril? The answer, unfortunately, is yes, for at least three significant reasons.

First, Shahzad’s attack may have been rushed and botched, but that does not mean it was not deadly serious. The grand jury investigation into the Times Square plot revealed that the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP or Pakistani Taliban)—beyond any doubt a formidable terrorist force in Pakistan—provided Shahzad with explosives and other training in Waziristan, Pakistan during December 2009. The training may have been cursory and too compressed in terms of time to provide Shahzad with the requisite skills needed to succeed in Times Square last May. However, we can be confident that the terrorist movement responsible for deploying the next attacker to the U.S. will ensure that person receives the sufficient training to ensure the success of that future operation. Indeed, as the aforementioned NYPD analyst notes, “A successful Faisal Shahzad is our worst case scenario.”

Second, a Times Square-style plot is by no means an expensive proposition for any terrorist group to contemplate. The grand jury indictment in the Times Square case further details how two payments totaling approximately $12,000 (roughly the same cost of the 7 July 2005 London attacks) were rather effortlessly transferred from overseas bank accounts to Shahzad via locations in Massachusetts and New York State on two separate occasions. Given the minimal cost of orchestrating such an operation, foreign terrorist groups will likely continue to regard U.S. homeland operations as both desirable and at least financially feasible options. They also understand
that even failed plots, such as Shahzad’s bungled effort, still pay vast dividends in terms of publicity and attention. Indeed, such incidents virtually guarantee a disproportionate return on a very modest investment given the febrile media coverage that they generate; the heightened security measures that invariably follow in their wake; and, the widespread fear and concern and that remain.

Third, as Shahzad’s own words proclaim, his attempted attack should not be regarded as a “one-off” or an isolated incident perpetrated by a lone individual acting on his own, but as part of a continuing effort by al-Qaeda and its allies to target the U.S. Indeed, this is made clear in the superseding indictment filed by the U.S. Department of Justice on 7 July 2010 in connection with the terrorist plot uncovered the previous September to attack the New York City subway. That indictment unambiguously details a plot directed by “leaders of al-Qaeda’s external operations program dedicated to terrorist attacks in the United States and other Western countries” involving an “American-based al-Qaeda cell.” It further describes how the plot was organized by three longstanding senior al-Qaeda operatives — Saleh al-Somali, Rashid Rauf, and Adnan El Shukrijumah. All three are well known to al-Qaeda watchers.

Al-Somali, for instance, was among al-Qaeda’s earliest recruits from outside the inner circle of Saudis, Yemenis, and Egyptians who had either served or fought in Afghanistan during the 1980s and 1990s and formed the movement’s original hardcore. Al-Somali is believed to have joined al-Qaeda at least as far back as the early 1990s. He is said to have participated in the attacks on U.S. and coalition peacekeeping military forces in Somalia during 1993 that culminated in October 1993 with the bloody events in Mogadishu made famous by the book and the film of the same name, “Black Hawk Down.”

Shukrijumah is similarly well known to authorities. A 34-year-old native of Saudi Arabia, Shukrijumah lived in Brooklyn during the 1990s, where his father worked for Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman, the so-called “Blind Sheikh,” an Egyptian-born cleric who was implicated both in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and a follow-on plot to attack New York City bridges, and tunnels, and the United Nations building. Shukrijumah later moved to Florida and in 2003 was placed on the FBI’s “Most Wanted” list as a result of his growing role in al-Qaeda attack planning. The subject of a $5 million reward, Shukrijumah was described at the time by American law enforcement as an “imminent threat to U.S. citizens and interests.” That assessment remains highly relevant, if not prescient, today.

Finally, British-born Rashid Rauf has long been involved with al-Qaeda plots both in Pakistan and abroad. He played a key role in the two assassination attempts made on then-Pakistani president Pervez Musharraf in December 2003 and was regarded as a protégé of then al-Qaeda number three commander Abu Faraj al-Libi. Rauf was also pivotal to the planning and orchestration of the 2006 airline plot to blow up seven U.S. and Canadian passenger airliners en route from London to North America. Like Al-Somalia, he is believed to have been killed in a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan.

According to the indictment, Al-Somali and Shukrijumah were directly responsible for recruiting Najibullah Zazi, the Afghan native and former New York City pushcart operator turned Denver, Colorado airport limousine driver, as well as two of his fellow conspirators, Zarein Ahmedzay and Adis Medunjanin. While in Pakistan, Zazi, Ahmedzay, and Medunjanin received instruction from al-Qaeda trainers in the fabrication of improvised explosive devices from such commercially available materials as hydrogen peroxide (e.g., hair bleach), acetone, flour, and oil in order to carry out the suicide bomb attacks planned for the New York City subway in September 2009. Zazi pleaded guilty to his role in the New York subway plot last February 2010; Ahmedzay similarly pleaded guilty in April 23, 2010.

The superseding indictment also added new charges to the pending indictment against Medunjanin. He is charged with attempting to crash his car into another one on the Whitestone Expressway in Queens, New York as part of a desperate bid stage out a suicide attack on American soil after learning of Zazi’s arrest. This chilling epilogue to the subway plot should leave no doubts about the perpetrator’s homicidal intentions.
Finally, the indictment also linked the New York plot to a similar attack that was planned for Manchester, England in April 2009. A senior al-Qaeda operative referred to in the indictment only as “Ahmad” was the key organizational and communications link for both. Further, when British authorities arrested Abid Naseer and Tariq Ur Rehman in Manchester, they discovered large quantities of flour and oil as well as surveillance photographs of public areas in Manchester and maps of Manchester’s city center posted on the wall, with one of the locations from the surveillance photographs highlighted in searches of the two men’s homes. Naseer is currently in custody in England and the U.S. intends to seek his extradition to face trial. Rehman is not being held.

It is significant too that both Zazi and Shahzad had tribal and family ties in Pakistan that they used to make contact either with al-Qaeda and Pakistani jihadi groups which facilitated their recruitment. British authorities have always regarded the high volume traffic between Britain and Pakistan, involving upwards of 400,000 persons annually, as providing prime opportunities for recruitment and radicalization of British citizens and residents. These same concerns likely now exist among U.S. authorities as well.

A Deliberate Strategy of Diversification

In assessing the proliferation of terrorist threats to the American homeland, senior U.S. counterterrorism officials now repeatedly call attention to al-Qaeda’s strategy of “diversification”—mounting attacks involving a wide variety of perpetrators of varying nationalities and ethnic heritages to defeat any attempt to “profile” actual and would-be perpetrators and overwhelm already information-overloaded law enforcement and intelligence agencies. Indeed, this development has previously been identified by inSITE as a major new security challenge. “Diversity,” one senior analyst opined, “is definitely the word.” Similarly, in a 30 June 2010 interview at the Aspen Security Forum, Michael E Leiter, Director, National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) also identified this trend. “[W]hat we have seen, which is I think most problematic to me and most difficult for the counterterrorism community,” he explained, is a diversification of that threat. We not only face Al-Qaeda senior leadership, we do face a troubling alignment of Al-Qaeda and some more traditional Pakistani militant groups in Pakistan, and is as well known to this group and most Americans, the threat of Abdulmutallab that has highlighted the threat we see from Al-Qaeda in Yemen, the ongoing threat we see from Al-Qaeda elements in East Africa.7

Yet, as previous inSITE analyses have also pointed out, there remains no federal government agency or department specifically charged with identifying radicalization and intercepting recruitment of U.S. citizens or residents for terrorism. As one senior intelligence analyst recently lamented, “There’s no lead agency or person. There are First Amendment [Constitutional] issues we’re cognizant of. It’s not a crime to radicalize, only when it turns to violence. There are groups of people looking at different aspects of counter-radicalization. [But it] has to be integrated across agencies, across levels of government, public-private cooperation”—which, unfortunately, it is not. America is thus vulnerable to a threat that is not only diversifying, but arguably intensifying. 

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Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical American-born cleric, has drawn attention for providing spiritual guidance to many of the recent home-grown jihadists targeting the United States. The additional scrutiny, and prestige, resulting from a number of his followers being arrested while attempting terrorist attacks against the United States, appears to have exacted changes to Awlaki’s status within the jihadist community. Messages and interviews in recent months indicate that Awlaki’s views have been increasingly moving towards those held by some of the most extreme ideologues of al-Qaeda. Best illustrated in his May 22, 2010 video interview with a representative of the al-Malahem Foundation, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula’s (AQAP) media wing, Awlaki expressed views closely approximating the official al-Qaeda justification for September 11, 2001. Through the interview, Awlaki repeatedly called on followers to either carry out attacks or leave the West for jihad. In support of his calls to jihad, Awlaki provided his followers with a ruling justifying the deaths of millions of civilians as well as a near-boundless permission for followers to attack the United States.

Beyond releasing followers from the need to validate actions that might appear to bypass Islamic rules of warfare, the language of the interview suggests that Awlaki is trying to expand his audience and position himself as a natural successor to the diminished cohort of al-Qaeda scholars. Stylistically, his rulings in the video echoing the language of former al-Qaeda ideologue Yusuf al-Ayiri’s defense of the religious legitimacy of the September 11th attacks, drawing Awlaki closer to the most hardcore fringe of al-Qaeda. Linguistically, by recording and distributing the interview in Arabic, Awlaki might be suggesting that he is attempting to and cultivate an audience and greater credibility within the Arabic-speaking jihadist community. Hailed as “…the main man who translated the jihad into English”, Awlaki’s traditional base of support has been strongest in the English speaking jihadist world. Reflecting the demographic of his followers, the majority of Awlaki’s past communications have been issued in English. Distribution in Arabic would not necessarily restrict the interview to Arabic-speaking audiences as English-language jihadist forums have developed sophisticated translation networks that can release English translations of jihadist material from Arabic to English within days. Thus, Awlaki could reasonably expect that his message would be received by his primary Anglophone audience.

Underscoring Awlaki’s transitioning audience, the visual interview opened with an introduction from the narrator, providing a biographical sketch for Awlaki. The biography, presented in bullet points, informed viewers of his Yemeni tribal membership, that he was born in the United States and spent 21 years in the country, his educational history and religious training, the locations where he had worked as imam, and the jihadists whom he counted as followers. After introducing Awlaki, the narrator described the featured interview as al-Malahem Foundation’s first with Awlaki:

“Al-Malahem Foundation for Media Production sought to hold this first and exclusive interview with him after the American campaign against Yemen. After overcoming a series of security obstacles, we were able – with grace from Allah – to get hold of the sheikh and to hold this interview. We ask Allah that it be beneficial to the Muslims.”


2 SITE Intelligence Group, “AQAP Releases Interview with Anwar al-Awlaki”. May
Throughout the video, Awlaki expressed clear endorsements for attacks targeting civilians and reiterated the importance of jihad against the West. These views are significant as they encourage his followers to carry out attacks targeting non-combatants. Claiming that the imbalance of suffering that Muslims have incurred because of actions of the United States means that Muslims are owed a vast number of American lives, Awlaki impressed upon the interviewer that concern for the lives of civilians should not restrict action. Taking his ruling even further, Awlaki finishes his thought by calling upon listeners to “attack them in the very same way they attack us”, a reference to alleged American attacks upon women and children that serve as a call to arms on jihadist forums:

“The bill between us and Americans, as far as women and children only are concerned, has reached over a million. Those who could have been killed in that plane are a drop in the sea and we should treat them the same way they treat us and attack them the very same way they attack us.”

Later in the interview, after confirming that Umar al-Farouk Abdulmutallab and Nidal Hasan are among his students, the interviewer began questioning Awlaki over the appropriateness of attacks against non-combatants. Discussing al-Farouk’s attempted bombing of a Delta Airlines plane flying between Amsterdam and Detroit, the interviewer explicitly asked Awlaki for his views on the permissibility of attacks that target civilians, asking:

“You support such operations, even though they targeted—as they say in the media—civilians who are not guilty of anything?”

In response, Awlaki strongly endorsed attacks against civilian targets, marshaling three main points of justification. In two of these points, actions made by the United States allow jihadists to view the country as having surrendered the religious protections that Islam affords to non-combatants. As a democracy, Awlaki presumely the government can only carry out policies that the majority of the population supports and funds. On this basis, he argued that democratic governance undermines the logic of religious protection for non-combatants and thereby permits attacking American civilians. Secondly, he claimed that the American military gave up protections afforded to American civilians by killing Muslim civilians when, according to Awlaki’s judgment, the American military has the ability to distinguish between fighters and non-combatants. Muslims, he argued, are permitted to reciprocate such indiscriminate targeting. Finally, on the issue of reciprocity, Awlaki claimed that so many Muslim civilians have been killed through the actions of the American military and the alliance of the American government, that Muslim fighters are permitted their due.

The three justifications for attacking civilian targets presented by Awlaki are strongly reminiscent of another’s argument for an airborne attack against civilians: the September 11th justification by Yusuf al-Ayiri in 2002. Ayiri’s 2002 essay justifying the attacks on New York and Washington represent al-Qaeda’s official religious justification for the attacks on September 11, 2001. The unique judgment, part of a larger book on al-Qaeda’s military designs, denies that the religious protections afforded to non-combatants—particularly women, children, and the elderly—apply against American and Israeli targets. In his argument that American civilians are not protected by the rules of war, Ayiri argued that by targeting Muslims, Americans and the West had forfeited religious protections. Similarly the judgment ruled that protected people forfeited their non-combatant status upon giving any support, whether in “deed, word, or mind”, to a government at war with Muslims.
In order to compare the two documents, excerpts from each are placed side by side below. Although similar in word and tone, Yusuf al-Ayiri’s ruling on targeting civilians adheres to a more traditional structure by providing evidence of similar events in narratives ascribed to the Prophet Muhammad and his companions during the first years of Islam. Conversely, the declarations of Awlaki conspicuously skirt Islamic juridical tradition by not providing support from the Qur’an or Hadith.

Awlaki’s first argument that the American civilians should not be considered exempt from attack because they voted for the administration and finance American wars:

“When it comes to the American people as a whole, they are participants as they voted for this administration. Also, they are the people who are financing this war. In these elections and the ones which preceded it, the American people had other options - to vote for people who did not want the war, although those received a mediocre vote....”

This argument is made even more forcefully in Ayiri’s justification for the September 11, 2001 attacks, and has become a central plank in the jihadist justification for attacks against civilians living in Western democracies:

“Third: It is allowed for Muslims to kill protected ones among unbelievers on the condition that the protected ones have assisted in combat, whether in deed, word, mind, or any other form of assistance, according to the prophetic command. This is what happened at the time of Abu Dawud and others who were involved in the murder of Duraid Ibn al-Samma. When he was 120 years old he went out with the Hawazin tribe to advise them. They consulted him on battle procedure and he went from being a protected one to being a target because of his advice regarding the war against Islam.”

Awlaki continued to argue that the United States has forfeited protection to their non-combatants by claiming that the United States military has access to precise weaponry and that the American military would be able to discriminate between military and non-military targets if they wished. He concludes that the existence of American attacks against Muslim non-combatants indicates that the United States is not interested in minimizing Muslim casualties. For Awlaki, that the United States allegedly does not distinguish between civilians and fighters releases the mujahideen from having to do the same:

“Today, America possesses weapons that can differentiate - their weapons are precise. If they wanted to differentiate and discriminate between targets, they would; however, they still target weddings, they target funerals and they target families, killing many women and children ....”

Similarly, Ayiri argued that an inability to differentiate between permissible and non-permissible targets allows for collateral damage as long as it occurs “incidentally and unintentionally” or if the combatants had used weapons that do not distinguish between combatants and protected civilians. Interestingly, while Awlaki’s argument is essentially based on casualty reciprocity, Ayiri’s argument appears to refer entirely to the weapons and technology available to the mujahideen, and is separate from an argument about reciprocity in casualties:

“Second: It is allowed for Muslims to kill protected ones among unbelievers in the event of an attack against them in which it is not possible to differentiate the protected ones from the combatants or from the strongholds. It is permissible to kill them incidentally and unintentionally according to the saying of the Prophet. When he was asked, as in al-Bukhari, about the offspring and women of unbelievers who stayed with the unbelievers and were killed, he said, ‘They are from among them.’ This indicates the permission to kill women and children because of their fathers if they cannot be distinguished. In the account of Muslim he said, ‘They are from their fathers.’”

Thirdly, during his interview Awlaki asserted that the imbalance between Muslim and American casualties must be equalized. Laying out his argument, he responded to the interviewer:

“The bill between us and America contains no less than a million woman and children, and we did not mention the men. The bill between us and Americans, as far as women and children only are concerned, has reached over a million. Those who could have been killed in that plane are a drop in the sea

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and we should treat them the same way they treat us and attack them the very same way they attack us. 12

For Ayiri, the reciprocity argument is of primary importance, and the first that he makes:

“First: It is allowed for Muslims to kill protected ones among unbelievers as an act of reciprocity. If the unbelievers have targeted Muslim women, children, and elderly, it is permissible for Muslims to respond in kind and kill those similar to those whom the unbelievers killed. As Allah almighty says, “You may transgress against those who have transgressed against you just as they have transgressed against you.” There currently exists an extermination effort against the Islamic peoples that has America's blessing, not just by virtue of its effective cooperation, but by America's activity. The best witness to this is what is happening with the full knowledge of the world in the Palestinian cities of Jenin, Nablus, Ramallah, and elsewhere. Every day, all can follow the atrocious slaughter going on there with American support that is aimed at children, women, and the elderly. Are Muslims not permitted to respond in the same way and kill those among the Americans who are like the Muslims they are killing? Certainly! By Allah, it is truly a right for Muslims. 13

As in previous interviews, such as a December 23, 2009 interview with a Yemeni journalist, Awlaki has repeated confirmed that he provided spiritual guidance to jihadists who have sought to carry out solitary attacks against the United States. Acknowledging his ties to Nidal Hasan and Umar Farouk Abdumutullab, Awlaki noted that he strongly endorsed their actions.14 The unidentified al-Malahem Foundation interviewer asked Awlaki to clarify his connection to Abdumutullab, and Awlaki’s views on the attempted attack. Expressing approval for the attempted bombing Awlaki claimed:

“This operation realized the goals of the mujahideen. It is considered a retaliatory and deterrent attack against the Americans....Though the operation did not take even one life, it was greatly successful.

When it comes to brother Umar al-Farouk, he is also one of my students, and I am honored that people like Umar al-Farouk are my students. I support what he did” 15

In a similar passage later in the interview, Awlaki acknowledged that Nidal Hasan was one of his students. As with Abdumutullab, Awlaki specifically reiterated his support for his attack. Beyond expressing support, he took the opportunity to call upon all Muslims - specifically those serving with the American military- to carry out similar operations. Further encouraging such attacks, Awlaki wrote that using their access to carry out an attack would expunge Muslims from the “evil” of participation in a military that brought suffering to Muslims, saying:

“...Nidal Hasan is one of my students and I am very honored for that. I am honored that people like Nidal Hasan are my students. What he did is a heroic act, a formidable operation...I support what he did and I call upon each and everyone who claims to belong to Islam and who is serving in the American Army to follow the path of Nidal Hasan. The good removes the evil. 16

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I also call Muslim[s] to follow his lead, to either seek jihad through their words or seek it through their actions. Nidal Hasan’s example is a wonderful example; we ask Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, to make it an opportunity for Muslims to follow his lead.” 17

In conclusion, messages from and about Anwar al-Awlaki during May 2010 suggest a jihadist leader in transition. With a strong following among English-speaking jihadist sympathizers and an involvement in many homegrown attacks against the United States, Awlaki has a position of great influence among Western jihadists. His Arabic-language interview with the media arm of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula indicates that he may be attempting to broaden his base of support among Arabic-speaking jihadists. Additionally, given that many of Awlaki’s means of reaching followers have either been disrupted or compromised by security services, Awlaki may be seeking closer relationships with al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula in order to connect with the larger online jihadist infrastructure. Finally, even if he fails to generate a new means of contacting supporters, Awlaki’s recent interviews have provided a clear set of religious rulings authorizing plotters to stage attacks against Western civilians. With clear permission from Awlaki, potential attackers no longer need to risk contacting Awlaki directly for permission to carry out attacks, as did Nidal Hasan and Umar al-Farouk.  

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On May 22, 2010, al-Malahem Foundation, the media arm of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), released the video of an interview it conducted with Anwar al-Awlaki. Awlaki, a radical Yemeni-American cleric, has risen to prominence in the past year, due in part to his contact with Fort Hood shooting suspect Nidal Malik Hasan, and the failed Christmas Day airplane bomber, Umar al-Farooq Abdulmutallab. In interviews, audio speeches, and written messages issued in the wake of those attacks, Awlaki expressed his support for Hasan and Abdulmutallab and argued that these men are to be taken by Muslims as paragons of jihad. His words mirror those of other al-Qaeda ideologues in calling for and justifying violence against the West, and in turn, al-Qaeda’s branch in Yemen has shown its support for Awlaki by offering him haven.

The al-Malahem interview is the first instance of Awlaki appearing in a production from AQAP. It was followed in July 2010 with the full release of “Inspire” magazine, an English-language publication by AQAP, in which Awlaki wrote an original article inciting for violence against anyone who insults the Prophet Muhammad. Awlaki argued that supporting Muhammad is the pinnacle of jihad and carries more importance for a Muslim than traveling to Afghanistan or Iraq for jihad.

The video interview opened with the following biography of Anwar al-Awlaki:

- The preacher, Sheikh Anwar bin Nasser al-Awlaki, is of the Awlaki tribe, one of the tribes of Shabwa province in Yemen. Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki was born in the United States, where he spent 21 years.

- He received a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering from a university in Colorado.

- He received a masters degree in business administration from San Diego University.

- After the second Gulf War, he began studying Islamic Shariah-jurisprudence from a number of Muslim scholars.

- He worked as an imam in some mosques in Colorado, California and Washington, and had a major role in calling to Allah through conferences and lectures.

- After the September 11 invasion, Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki left to Britain after being harassed by the American government, and then he left to the Arabian Peninsula and settled in Yemen, where he continued his preaching journey, through teaching and giving English-language lectures that were disseminated via the internet. The latter had a significant impact on promoting Islam in America and the West.

- Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki was arrested in Sana’a and stayed in prison for 18 months, then he was released.

- He is very well-known for inciting to jihad against the Crusader occupation of Muslim countries through his website.

- He was accused of having a relationship with the operation of brother Nidal Hasan and the operation of brother Umar al-Farooq – may Allah release them both – due to the huge media campaign against Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki.

What follows is a translation of the near 45-minute interview:

Al-Malahem Foundation for Media Production sought to hold this first and exclusive interview with him after the American campaign against Yemen. After overcoming a series of security obstacles, we were able – with grace from Allah – to get hold of the sheikh and to hold this interview. We ask Allah that it be beneficial to the Muslims.

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Al-Malahem:

In the name of Allah, the most Gracious and Merciful…
Praise be to Allah. Peace and prayer be upon the Messenger of Allah.

Al-Malahem Foundation for Media Production is pleased to welcome you to this special interview with the preacher, Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki, who accepted our invitation and bestowed upon us the privilege to hold this exclusive interview, Welcome O honorable sheikh.

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Welcome and greetings. Thanks you for taking such hardship to get here.

Al-Malahem:

May Allah reward you with the best, O sheikh.

We begin this interview by discussing the recent uproar raised by the American and generally Western media, which accused you of having a connection to 14 cases in the United States, Canada and Britain. What is the truth of these allegations promoted by the media? And what are the reasons for this attack?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

The reason for this attack is that I am a Muslim who is calling to Islam.

The charge is incitement. Nidal Hasan, and then Umar al-Farouk, and now all these other cases you mentioned. The common factor among them all is incitement. Incitement to what? Incitement for jihad, incitement for Islam as it was revealed by Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, in His Qur'an and the traditions of His Prophet. This is the charge.

Americans today do not want an Islam that defends the causes of the Ummah. They do not want an Islam that calls for jihad, for reinforcing Shariah, for allegiance and exemption. They do not want that doors of Islam be opened and that people will be called to enter them. What they want is an American, democratic, liberal, passive, and civil Islam, as they suggested and promoted in some of their reports, and as mentioned, for example, in a RAND report.

What we have these days is a proud jurisprudence, one that calls for justice on the one hand, while on the other hand, we have a jurisprudence of humiliation and subservience.

One of the CIA's high-ranking officials says that if Mullah Omar appeared for us, we will come up with Mullah Bradley; in other words he is saying: if you elevate Mullah Omar, we will raise Mullah Bradley from our side.

This battle for hearts and minds in the Islamic world is at its peak. America today is trying to promote a false Islam, just like their predecessors did before them. They twisted Christianity and twisted Judaism and now they want to twist Islam, though the religion of Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He is intact.

Today there is jurisprudence of pride in the field. It is called for by some messengers and some who are working in the Islamic field. For example, your speeches in al-Qaeda Organization represent the jurisprudence of pride. When Doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri addressed Obama, what did he say to him? He said: “O Mr. Obama, may Allah doom America by the hands of the mujahideen, so we and the rest of the world can rest from your evil.” This is a speech which represents pride. This speech is straightforward and clear, and represents Muslims’ perspective on America. We are waiting for when we and the world can rest from your evil oppression and for what you did, as far as violating the world.

On the other hand, when Obama visited the Islamic world, he visited Riyadh via Cairo. One preacher welcomed him, saying: “What a blessed point in time, O Abu Hussein, what a blessed occasion!” Is it a blessed point in time for Obama to visit the Arabian Peninsula, the heart of the Islamic world? Is it a blessed occasion to welcome Obama - today’s leader of the Crusader, the commander of the war against Islam, the pharaoh of the era - to welcome him with such words! This is what represents the jurisprudence of humiliation and the culture of subservience.

Obama, who pledged to protect Israel; Obama, who escalated the attacks against Afghanistan and Pakistan using unmanned aircrafts, and now intervened in Yemen; Obama, who promised that he will eliminate terrorism in Somalia and Yemen; Obama, who wants to lead America into new wars… is that how we welcome him? “What a blessed point in time, O Abu Hussein!” Where is the blessing in Obama’s visit?

Just a few hundred kilometers from the grave of the Prophet, Allah’s peace and prayer be upon him, from the city of Mecca in the Arabian Peninsula, about which the Prophet, Allah’s peace and prayer be upon him, said: “Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula”… now we welcome Obama like this at “a blessed point in time.” “O Abu Hussain, what a blessed occasion”?

Such speech appeals to America, and that is why we find that some satellite channels are tarnished with similar statements which come from the people of this jurisprudence.
When it comes to Doctor Ayman - since he represents the jurisprudence of pride about which we spoke, and since he represents the pursuit of justice - how do they deal with him?

They deal with him in two ways: they either assassinate the person or assassinate the personality.

They assassinate the person through liquidation, killing or assassination, or they assassinate the personality. If they fail to assassinate the person, they will assassinate the personality through defamatory propaganda campaigns. This is the American method of today, so we shall be cautious and careful.

Al-Malahem:

So the issue is an issue of defaming the Islamic preachers who call for justice and returning rights to the people. But the Americans accused you of having connections to the operation carried out by the good brother, Nidal Hasan, against American soldiers at Fort Hood.

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Yes, Nidal Hasan is one of my students and I am very honored for that. I am honored that people like Nidal Hasan are my students. What he did is a heroic act, a formidable operation. I pray unto Allah that He reinforces him, that He guards him and releases him. I support what he did and I call upon each and everyone who claims to belong to Islam and who is serving in the American Army to follow the path of Nidal Hasan. The good removes the evil. I also call Muslim to follow his lead, to either seek jihad through their words or seek it through their actions. Nidal Hasan’s example is a wonderful example; we ask Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, to make it an opportunity for Muslims to follow his lead.

Al-Malahem:

Our honorable Sheikh, you support such operations, but some Islamic organizations in America denounced this operation and described it as a terrorist one and unjustifiable violence and that it no way is connected to Islam. For example, one of those organizations said: “We strongly denounce such a cowardly act and we call for those who committed such an act to be severely punished to the fullest extent of the law”… to the point that it said, “What makes this act more offensive is that it aimed at the volunteer forces that protect our homeland. Muslim Americans stand for their fellow citizens in offering support to the victims and in offering condolences to the families of the deceased and wounded.”

How would you reply to such statements, and what are the causes behind such positions?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

This rotten, flat and acquiescent talk is their talk today. But if we go back a decade or more in this era to some of these Islamic organizations in America, in one of those days, these used to support jihad in Afghanistan; they used to support jihad in Bosnia and support jihad in Chechnya; and they used support jihad in Palestine. I was in America during that time. On the podiums, we used to call for everything in Islam - jihad in the Cause of Allah, the establishment of the Caliphate, allegiance and exemption. Let us honestly talk: America’s ceiling of freedom was open for us to have spoken as such. We enjoyed more freedom than most of the countries of the Islamic world, though America kept tightening. This is the tradition of the preachers, just like it was with the Prophet, Allah’s peace and prayer be upon him, preaching in Mecca in the beginning. The Quraish ignored him at first, until they felt the danger. After that they said: When he openly called for his mission, the people clashed. The same applies to America. When it felt the danger of the call presented by Muslims, they started tightening, and this tightening remained gradual and the ceiling of freedom gradually decreased until it reached its utmost in the wake of the September invasion. At that time there came a whole new list of laws which constricted Muslims until it became difficult to be a Muslim living in America, speaking of justice, without somehow getting into trouble for it. So the choices boiled down to two: either migration or prison.

These organizations that I mentioned speak in such a restrained environment, an environment which makes you always feel like you are indicted and seeking to defend yourself. This was the state of Muslims in Andalusia after the fall of Grenada - always trying to prove loyalty so you could survive. That is why such statements cannot be taken for granted.

Glory be to Allah, how can we object to an operation as Nidal Hasan’s operation?! He killed American soldiers who were on their way to Afghanistan and Iraq. Who would object to that?! There is unanimous consent, there is agreement when it comes to this matter, not only as far as Adam’s children are concerned, but also as far as domesticated animals are concerned. If a cat is cornered, he will raise his fur, bear his teeth and protrude his nails to defend himself. And we are saying that the Muslim has no right to protect himself!

Nidal Hasan is of Palestinian origin. He was defending his Ummah. Even in the animal world this is unacceptable. Then what would you say if one tries to conceal such talk with a quasi-legal disguise. It is said that the Muslim has no right to protect his Ummah, that he has no right to defend his issues and that he has no right to kill the American soldiers who are about to deploy to kill Muslims. This talk is completely unacceptable. What brother Nidal Hasan did was a heroic act, a
wonderful act, and as I said, we pray for him and we ask that Allah reinforces him.

Al-Malahem:

They say that such operations distort the image of Islam in the West and in America.

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Yes, this is one of their justifications. They said that such acts will restrict Muslims there and will distort the representation of Muslims in the West. However, we ask this following question:

Is protecting the reputation of Muslims in America more important than thousands if not millions of Muslims who receive American rockets and shells?

Second, we will say, what kind of reputation is this that you are trying to maintain?

If the reputation is that the Muslim forgives and the Muslim pardons when possible, and that we call for it through honorable preaching, this would be good especially when dealing with the infidel, which we hope that he would convert to Islam. However, we are dealing today with an infidel nation that is fighting us. The reputation that we would like to get across to America is: “O America, if you violate us, we will violate you, and if you kill us, we will kill you.” This is the reputation we should maintain.

Those American soldiers who were on their way to Afghanistan and Iraq, we will kill them. We will kill them if we can in Fort Hood. We will kill them if we can in Afghanistan and Iraq. “It may be that Allah will restrain the evil might of the disbelievers…” [From An-Nisa’ 4:84] We will restrain the evil of those infidels through killing and inciting not to surrender or lay down one’s arms.

Al-Malahem:

Especially that the Americans are occupying the lands of the Muslims.

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Yes, we are now dealing with an American occupation in Afghanistan and Iraq and other forms of occupation in the rest of the Islamic world.

Al-Malahem:

Do you consider Yemen to be occupied by the Americans?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

No, Yemen is not occupied by the Americans. Unfortunately, the issue is worse than that. The occupation is a reality - if we are talking about occupation - if America entered using ground forces, using armored vehicle to occupy the mountains, plains and deserts of Yemen. This is occupation and they hold control over the lands.

But what is happening now is that the Yemeni government is saying to the Americans: You take over the air and the sea and we shall surrender to you the lands. We will avail with spies on the ground to spy on the Muslims of the Yemeni people. You spy using your aircrafts and we will not stop you from that. Spy on the faults of Muslims, spy on the residents of Yemen. Prepare your battleships to attack the people of Yemen using Cruise missiles and aircraft that bomb with cluster bombs, as it happened in Abyan and Shabwa, and we will provide you with the land and occupy the lands for you.

Today, the Americans cannot launch a third campaign after Iraq and Afghanistan. If the Americans were to enter Yemen, then the American soldier will be killed on Yemen’s mountains, plains, valleys, green and deserts. The American Treasury cannot finance a new campaign to occupy a country like Yemen, which has been known as the grave of the invaders.

Today, the American economy is faltering. The Yemeni government substituted the Americans with their shortcomings. We will give you the rest and all that you have to do is take over the air and the sea. What is happening today is that Americans are saying, for example, we want this person to be liquidated and killed.

Take for example, Sheikh Abdullah al-Midhar. The American Administration came into contact with the Yemeni National Security agency and said: This person is not desired. Do the Americans need to provide the Yemeni government with evidence? No, once they say we no longer want this person, this will be sufficient.

Sheikh Abdullah al-Midhar is a tribal leader, a social public face well-known to the people. The Yemeni government did not accuse him of anything, not even based on their circumstantial law. No verdict against him was reached. Despite that, the armed forces and National Security forces besieged the home of Sheikh Abdullah al-Midhar. Per American orders, he was killed in his house. After that, the Yemeni government billed the Americans. This is the price of the blood of Sheikh Abdullah al-Midhar. They also sent a bill for the blood of the women, children and elderly who were killed in Abyan - little girls, children and women who were killed due to American air strikes. Then this gang that controls Yemen, which by
the way is not a government but a gang, trades in the blood of its children… the greater the number of dead, the greater the amount of money they receive. Now, they promised them billions of dollars for the Muslim blood was shed in Yemen.

**Al-Malahem:**

Incidentally, a fatwa was issued by the scholars of Yemen, regarding the compulsory need for Muslims to carry out jihad against the Americans, if those were to enter Yemen. Would you support such a fatwa?

**Anwar al-Awlaki:**

Without any doubt, the role of scholars is to lead the Ummah. Leading should be relatively significant to the incident. This is a very important incident, and so the scholars call for jihad against the Americans. We are definitely thankful for that, though we should clarify one matter: The battle between the Muslims and the Americans is not a battle over oil, it is not a battle over a water strait, and it is not a battle over a land or a sea. It is not only a battle for Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan. All of these factor into the causes of the conflict, though the battle in its essence and core and bases is a battle for tawhid [monotheism].

America wants to eliminate Islam as Muhammad, Allah’s peace and prayer be upon him, revealed it. They want to bring in the false Islam, which I have previously mentioned. It is a battle for tawhid. So the battle should not be confined within a tight framework or framed by a material substantial matter. The battle is greater than that. That is why scholars should have a bigger role.

This fatwa is in need for details and activation:

It is in need of details, because some points in this fatwa were not detailed. There are also certain points which were completely ignored. For example: The fatwa did not highlight the position of the Yemeni government. This is indeed a very important matter… The Yemeni government is not indirect when dealing with the Americans; they are indeed direct. The Yemeni government has taken the initiative of the Crusader campaign with the Americans when American aircrafts launched air strikes on Abyan and Shabwa. Alternatively, with those air raids, the military forces raided the houses of our brothers in Arhab, all at the same time. They participated in launching this campaign with the Americans. The fatwa did not touch upon this matter. What is the position today on this agent and traitor government? What is the position regarding this government which is working with the Americans?

The fatwa is in need of activation. We mentioned the verdict, “jihad against the Americans is necessary.” Okay. The people are now in need that this fatwa be activated. You can say to them: The American aircraft is above your head, go ahead and down it. The tribes of Yemen own weapons with which they can down the aircraft (DshK, Shlka, 23). These are available to the Yemeni tribes. So it is possible for aircrafts to be downed. Scholars are calling on the tribes to do so: “Down these aircrafts. Why are they flying over your homes? Down them. These American battleships that are in our regional waters, target them. If you find American officers in Sana’a or Aden, target them.” This is how the fatwa can be activated. These also represent the roles which scholars need to play at this time when governments can’t lead. The leaders are corrupt, that is. Now, only scholars can lead the people on the right path.

**Al-Malahem:**

After the attacks on Abyan and Shabwa, the mujahid, Umar al-Farouk, attempted to blow up an American Delta airplane, which was flying from the city of Amsterdam to the American city of Detroit. This operation was a reaction to the unjust American raids against Yemen. So what is your connection to Umar al-Farouk?

**Anwar al-Awlaki:**

This operation realized the goals of the mujahideen. It is considered a retaliatory and deterrent attack against the Americans. This operation revealed the flaw of American security agencies, whether as far as intelligence is concerned or national security is concerned. The Americans spent more than 40 billion dollars on airport security, and then the mujahid, Umar al-Farouk, was able to penetrate these security apparatuses. Also, intelligence agencies claim that they had put him under surveillance and despite that, he was capable to get to the heart of America, Detroit. Though the operation did not take even one life, it was greatly successful.

When it comes to brother Umar al-Farouk, he is also one of my students, and I am honored that people like Umar al-Farouk are my students. I support what he did.

**Al-Malahem:**

You support such operations, even though they targeted – as they say in the media – civilians who are not guilty of anything?

**Anwar al-Awlaki:**

When it comes to the case of civilians, this term has been used over and over. We prefer however to use the terminology that our jurists have used to differentiate between fights and non-fighters.
When it comes to the fighter, it is he who carried a weapon, even if that was a woman. The non-fighter is he who does not participate in the war.

When it comes to the American people as a whole, they are participants as they voted for this administration. Also, they are the people who are financing this war. In these elections and the ones which preceded it, the American people had other options - to vote for people who did not want the war, although those received a mediocre vote.

Also, before we talk about anything, we should look at this issue from a Shariah-perspective. This decrees this matter, whether this is acceptable or not acceptable.

Had brother Umar al-Farouk been able to target hundreds of military officers, that would have been wonderful. We are talking about the reality of a battle. The Prophet, Allah's peace and prayer be upon him, when he was able to fight only during day light, he would. Though on some occasions, he would send the battalions at night; those battalions which he, Allah's peace and prayer be upon him, would send at night due to the darkness…

Today, America possesses weapons that can differentiate - their weapons are precise. If they wanted to differentiate and discriminate between targets, they would; however, they still target weddings, they target funerals and they target families, killing many women and children.

Al-Malahem:

They also killed Bedouins in Bakazem.

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Yes, in Bakazem. That was a Bedouin massacre… women, children and farmers. This shows that America is deliberately seeking to kill women and children.

There is also another issue: Fifty years of completely suffocating a nation - Muslims people in Palestine - with American sponsorship and military support.

Twenty years of besieging then occupying Iraq.

Now the occupation of Afghanistan.

After all this, we should no longer care about the targeting of some Americans who could have been killed onboard an aircraft. The bill between us and America contains no less than a million woman and children, and we did not mention the men. The bill between us and Americans, as far as women and children only are concerned, has reached over a million. Those who could have been killed in that plane are a drop in the sea and we should treat them the same way they treat us and attack them the very same way they attack us.

Al-Malahem:

The Yemeni government claims that the air strikes which took place in the last campaign is Yemeni, and that the Americans do not collaborate but in national security affairs and in the field of intelligence. (As they say).

Anwar al-Awlaki:

No, this talk is not accurate. The air strikes that were carried out against Abyan were the same as those carried out against Bakazem - those are from the Awlak's two tribes. The attack was also carried out against Shabwa, also from my own tribe. We know those people and we are in contact with them. We got in contact with them after the incident. Witnesses told us that they saw American Cruise missiles. Also, after the air strikes, some of the cluster bombs did not explode. On the, it was written that they are American-made. This talk is completely inaccurate. Those were American aircrafts and so were the battleships; those are the ones which attacked all the way from Abyan and Shabwa.

Even if what the government said is true, they have no excuse whatsoever. They admitted to collaboration with American intelligence as if they were saying, we allowed the Americans to come and spy on our faults. We took the information from them then we were the ones to attack, based on their commands.

Add to that, the Americans confessed. This is a very well know matter reported in the media, which declared their participation in this campaign. So what the government said is absolutely inaccurate.

Al-Malahem:

The Americans are saying that after Nidal Hasan’s operation, they tried to exert pressure on you, closing your website on the internet and that you have since been pursued. Is that true?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Yes, they closed the website after Nidal Hasan’s operation. I posted an editorial on the site in which I supported what Nidal Hasan did, so they shut it down. After that, I read an article in the Washington Post, which said they were tapping my phone. So I was compelled to refrain from those calls. I left the region. After that, American raids were launched.
The concern that I am chased is not true. I go back and forth between the members of my tribe as well as other regions of Yemen, and that is because the people of Yemen hate the Americans and the people of justice support the oppressed. I go back and forth between al-Awlak and I have a base of support in a large section of the people here in Yemen, whether in Obeida, Dahem, Waela, Hashed, Bakil or Kholan, whether in Hadramout, Abyan, Shabwa, Aden or Sana’a. Praise be to Allah, there are a lot of good people, even though they know they are taking risks and dangers due to American’s pursuit of them. Despite that, they graciously and happily come forward and host us with the most refined hospitality. These are from the blessings of Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, and may it be on all those honorable ones from the country’s people.

Al-Malahem:

We ask Allah to guard them and reward them with what is best and that He guards you, our honorable sheikh, and protect you from all evil. We go back to the Yemeni government: The Yemeni government claimed that it killed you in an air strike on the Rafed area, Said region in Shabwa while you were in a meeting with leaders of al-Qaeda Organization. Were you really killed in this assumed meeting?! And how do you interpret such unreliable statements?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

There are distinct traits that characterize a certain individual or a certain group. For example, a person is unique for being smart. This becomes his attribute (this person is smart). A certain people are famous for their courage, so that becomes their distinct trait. A certain government becomes known for being tyrannical, so this becomes the unique and distinct trait for this government.

The unique and distinct trait for the Yemeni government is lying. This is a two-faced government, which lies to its own people. It lies to its neighbors. It lies to those on the inside and the outside. That is why they said, “we killed such and such and such,” and at the end, it was clear that this was all a lie. The people lost trust in this government. No one believes this government right now. That is why such talk is absolutely nonsense.

Al-Malahem:

Our honorable sheikh, the Yemeni government jailed you. You were imprisoned in the Political Security prison in Sana’a. For how long were you in prison and what were the circumstances of your arrest?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

The period of detainment was a year and a half, and that was due to a local accusation; though when the Americans knew that I was in prison, they sought to interrogate me. So the investigation was delayed, and then the investigation was over. The Yemeni government said: This matter is out of our hands. We can’t do anything about him. I was in prison until several tribes pressured for my release.

Al-Malahem:

Ali al-Ansi, the Director of the National Security Agency said in a meeting with the Wall Street Journal newspaper that there are tribal mediation arrangements, which intend to turn you in to the Americans. Are those tribal mediation arrangements authentic, and are you intending to surrender yourself to the Americans, especially that you are an American citizen?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

In the past, negotiations were done with the Yemeni government. Of course, I objected to that matter, generally and specifically, as I was not accused in the first place. What is the charge? That I call for justice? That I call for jihad in the Cause of Allah? That I call for defending the issues of the Ummah?

The one to point the finger at is the Yemeni government; it is the one charged for being a traitor and an agent, for stealing the money of Muslims and corrupting the land. When it comes to me, no accusations were made; therefore these negotiations are definitely not acceptable. Justice is not open for negotiation, in the first place.

When it comes to the Americans, the same applies; I cannot turn myself in to them. If the Americans want me, let them search for me. Allah is the best protector. If Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, wants to rescue me from them, if they were to spend all what is on this earth, they won’t be able to get to me. And if Allah predestined that my death be on their hands and the hands of their agents, then that would be my fate.

Al-Malahem:

Ali al-Ansi said that if those mediation agreements don’t work out - as he claimed - they will be compelled to forcibly take you. There is also another statement by Muhammad Abdullah Saleh, that the Yemeni tribes are salaried and that they are working for the interest of those who pay more and that they must protect their sons who are involved in terrorism - this is according to what he said.
Today, no front is resisting the American program but the mujahideen. All other forms of resistance are limited and biased. For example, China’s disagreements with America have to do with economics. Russia’s conflict with America concerns power in specific regions. No front is resisting the American hegemonic project but this band of the mujahideen. It is the tribe that embraces jihad these days - the tribes in Afghanistan, the tribes in Iraq, the tribes in Somalia and even in Pakistan, there are tribal areas and non-tribal areas. We see that those who embrace jihad are in the tribal areas. The same applies to Yemen.

America intends to corrupt the tribes. This is part of the American scheme of “corrupting the tribes.” They want to eliminate those attributes which make tribes stand out such as courage, loyalty, support, generosity and sacrifice. These are the much appreciated Muslims characteristics. The Americans don’t want that. What they want is for those people to be corrupt people. That is why they are seeking to corrupt the tribes. For example, we are witnessing their attempts to distribute drugs and spread corruption among the children of the tribes. The most dangerous image of corruption which could possibly hit the children of the tribes is the enlistment in the army. If the son of the tribe enlists in the army, he will become loyal to America. He would perhaps not know that or he might attempt to know that, when in reality the orders are given to him by the American Administration. Of course, he is not directly given those orders. These are first given to the security agencies in Yemen, and it is these security apparatuses which order this soldier to go out and raid the homes of the mujahideen; that he kills the honorable ones of the Ummah’s children; and that he in fact kills those who walked out to sacrificing themselves and their money for the Cause of Allah in order to defend the Ummah.

What do the mujahideen want? Did they come out seeking the material world? They’ve escaped from the material world. Many of them enjoyed the material life; however, they abandoned it for the Cause of Allah. They want to be mujahideen in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Palestine, and in Yemen, seeking jihad against the Americans. These are now chased by governments. The Yemeni government is chasing those and it is the soldier who has taken on such endeavors. Know O soldier, that your orders have come directly from America. This is the most dangerous way to corrupt the sons of the tribes. This is an American plot and it is a must for people to pay attention to it.

Al-Malahem:

From what you mentioned from the American scheme against the tribes, is anything at all from the workings of and an execution of Petraeus’ instructions and plan to deal with Muslims and the mujahideen, as well as the tribes and the Muslim populations?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Petraeus came to deal with a specific reality in the Islamic world. The American armed forces went through a bad experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. So Petraeus came forward to present a novel plan based on this American experience. He said that acts be tied to the mujahideen. For example, [he instructed] that bombs be set off in markets in order to kill Muslims, claiming that those were set off by the mujahideen. Another would be that a specific personality be assassinated, then claiming that it was the mujahideen who committed such act. This would lead to establishing Awakenings in that the country’s people that would fight among each other, while America watches them. What we also witness nowadays in the Awakenings experience in Iraq, who are from the sons of the tribes, those were exploited against the mujahideen. As we have heard from Britain before, these were from the politics of “divide and conquer.” Now, they are trying to revive such politics in the Islamic world.

Al-Malahem:

The Americans accuse you of having connections to the mujahideen in Somalia, specifically the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement, after you wrote an editorial on your official website, congratulating the Movement for its victories. What is the nature of your connection with the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement? And how do you view jihad and the mujahideen in Somalia?

Anwar al-Awlaki:

Yes, I wrote a letter in which I congratulated the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia. They replied also with congratulatory remarks. Consequently, the Americans said those words.

When it comes to the Somalia experience in jihad - in my opinion though Allah knows better - Islamic movements, religious scholars and Islamic universities should send deputy envoys to Somalia to learn and be trained at the hands of those mujahideen in order to return and transmit this experience by teaching it. The Islamic movements are seeking a solution for the Ummah. Religious scholars are also looking for a solution. Those Islamic movements present what they deem to be suitable from solutions. This band of mujahideen, using minimal capabilities, can established a state in which they can rule in accordance with the Shariah of Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, and present people with solutions. Right now, people living in the areas controlled by the mujahideen live in security, and the economy is improving. This is because if there...
was security, commerce and agriculture will be active. Such experience has been proven. It is an experience of which we should take advantage. Now, they are dealing with a reality, presenting it with solutions from Islamic Shariah. That is why, as I mentioned, this is a unique experience from which the Ummah should benefit from.

**Al-Malahem:**

Our honorable sheikh, there are many fears and recurring discussions in Europe and America regarding the danger of an increasing sympathy and affinity for the mujahideen amongst Muslim brothers of European and American origins; that they will carry out operations against America, that they would also travel to join organizations which the West deems as terrorist groups. In your opinion, what compels the youths to such things?

**Anwar al-Awlaki:**

Let us take as an example, Nidal Hasan. Nidal Hasan was one day an American Muslim as America would want him to be. Nidal Hasan used to pray, fast and pay his charity, and at the same time however, he was a soldier in the American Army and his loyalty was to and for America. Because of American crimes, Nidal Hassan was transformed into a mujahid in the Cause of Allah. Nidal Hasan was changed from the American soldier to the mujahid who would kill the soldiers with whom he used to serve.

If American crimes persist, we will see a new Nidal Hasan. There are also mujahideen from the West and from America in Afghanistan and Iraq, and this phenomenon will increase due to the American and Western crimes in the Islamic world.

**Al-Malahem:**

May Allah reward you O our honorable sheikh. At the end of this interview, we would like you to address a message to Muslims in general and the people of the Arabian Peninsula in particular.

**Anwar al-Awlaki:**

To Muslims in general and to the people of the Peninsula in particular:

We must jointly participate in this jihad against America. It is America today who is leading the global Crusader campaign against Muslims. The America of today is the Pharaoh of yesterday. We must participate. There is a glimpse of hope in this small band of mujahideen in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia who were capable to force the American Army to kneel down. It is because of jihad that the American economy today is faltering. So if this small band of mujahideen was successful in defeating America, what would then happen if the entire Ummahakens? American cannot confront the world. America is weaker than that. America’s deception is weaker than a spider web. America is not capable to confront this Ummah. All that we have to do is participate with our mujahideen brothers, verbally and materially, and finally support them as much as we can. This is our obligation today as America seeks to annihilate Islam and wipe out Muslims. Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, will protect His religion. It is Allah, Glorified and Exalted be He, who will defeat America through the mujahideen. So we pray that Allah rewards somehow, thanks to their deeds.

**Al-Malahem:**

O Allah, amen. At the end of this interview, I would like to very much thank our preacher, Sheikh Anwar al-Awlaki, who accepted our invitation for this interview. We ask that Allah protects you, guards you and blesses you, granting you a long life. Peace be upon you, and Allah’s mercy and blessings.

**Anwar al-Awlaki:**

May Allah reward you for your good deeds.
On July 11, 2010, three coordinated attacks tore through the Ugandan capital of Kampala, striking World Cup viewing parties, and killing at least 76 people. Suspicion of responsibility for the attacks immediately fell upon the Somali-based Shabaab al-Mujahideen (Shabaab). The group confirmed their responsibility the next day, at a press conference in Mogadishu. Several hours later, the Shabaab reiterated their claim by posting excerpts on their official website from the 10 minute, 10 second Somali language statement given by their spokesman, Sheikh Ali Muhammad Raghe (AKA Dheere). The statement clearly asserts Shabaab responsibility for the attack and announces that the Shabaab’s attack intentionally targeted Ugandan civilians in retribution for Uganda’s military presence in Somalia:

“Early last night, troops from the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement carried out coordinated attacks at some locations in the capital city of Uganda, Kampala, where they have inflicted huge damage to a group of people consisting of Ugandans and other nationalities including Americans and Ethiopians.

These attacks, which were coordinated, have killed close to 100 people - mostly Ugandans - who were having fun at those locations. This is the best response to the activities of the Ugandan troops in Mogadishu.”

Although the Kampala bombing represents the first major al-Qaeda style attack that the Shabaab took responsibility for committing outside of Somalia, the group’s history of rhetoric clearly demonstrates intent to carry out international attacks. Sunday’s bombings in Kampala were the culmination of an escalating series of threats issued by the Shabaab against Burundi, Ethiopia, and Uganda. Video messages and communiqués since at least early 2008 identify the three countries as targets for the Shabaab.

The Shabaab have long distributed messages threatening Uganda for the country’s role in the African Union’s peacekeeping mission in Somalia (AMISOM). Uganda currently deploys half of the troops assigned to the mission and was the first country to contribute troops when the mission began in

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1 SITE Intelligence Group, “Shabaab Claims Bombings in Kampala, Uganda”. July 12, 2010
This has made their forces frequent targets of Shabaab operations within Somalia, such as an April 28, 2010 suicide bombing against an AMISOM base in Mogadishu, carried out in revenge for slain Islamic State of Iraq leaders Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir.4

Burundian forces based in Somalia are also targeted by the Shabaab in retaliation for fielding troops with AMISOM, while Ethiopia is presented as the architect of a Christian attempt to destroy Somalia’s Islamic heritage. In addition to targeting Burundian and Ugandan troops in Somalia, and militias allegedly supported by Ethiopia, the Shabaab have periodically threatened attacks against civilians from each of the three countries in retaliation for alleged AMISOM aggression against Somali civilians. These threats have become increasingly frequent, issued almost weekly in the immediate run-up to the World Cup Final.

Just two weeks before the attacks, leaders of the Shabaab issued several warnings against Uganda through a number of mediums. Messages announcing the Shabaab’s intent to target Uganda were distributed online through videos, recorded messages, and printed statements as well as via public announcements at Shabaab rallies. In addition to utilizing a number of different means of communication, the Shabaab’s warnings were distributed in both English and Somali. On June 27, 2010 an English-language video released by al-Kata’ib, the media arm of the Shabaab, attacked the African Union’s presence in Somalia and called on Uganda and Burundi to cease sending troops to Somalia. The video, distributed both to the Shabaab’s official website and jihadist forums, threatened that Burundian and Ugandan troops in Somalia are subject to ever greater casualties and questioned the rationale of both nations for sending their sons to die in an internal Somali conflict:

“Thus, the question remains to be answered by the people of Uganda and Burundi, who are sending their sons to die miserably in Mogadishu, for what cause is the blood of your sons being shed on a daily basis here in Mogadishu? Wouldn’t it have been far more worthwhile for your sons to die protecting the people from the raids of Joseph Kony and his army?

“And if the sensible among the Ugandan and Burundian public cannot restrain them, then prepare to receive the remains of your sons in coffins. The choice is in your hands.”

The Shabaab reiterated their threats against Ugandan and Burundian civilians in a series of messages distributed days before the attacks. On July 4, 2010, about a week before the attacks, Shabaab leader Abu Zubair issued a warning to the people Uganda in a 9-minute Somali-language audio. The audio asserted that alleged Ugandan “massacre[s]” invited retaliation against Ugandans:

“My message to the people of Uganda and Burundi is that you will be the targets of retaliation for the massacre of women, children and elderly Somalis in Mogadishu by your forces.”

In another message calling for attacks against Ugandan and Burundi targets outside of Somalia, prominent group member Abu Mansur called for jihadists around the world to target diplomatic missions of Uganda and Burundi. The message, aimed at jihadist groups in Asia and the Caucasus, was distributed on July 8, 2010 during a public rally in Mogadishu:

“We urge our brothers from Chechnya, Pakistan, Afghanistan and from anywhere around the world to attack the diplomatic missions of Uganda and Burundi”?

The Shabaab’s view that Burundian and Ugandan civilians are legitimate targets was in evidence after the Shabaab broke from the Islamic Courts Union as an independent group in 2006. In a written statement issued on January 3, 2008 and distributed to jihadist forums by the Global Islamic Media Front, the group announced that the capitals of Burundi, Ethiopia, and Uganda would be targeted if they did not withdraw from involvement in Somalia. The statement, titled

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“You Will be Condemned as You Condemn Others”, invoked Ayman al-Zawahiri’s concept of the “correct equation” or reciprocity in both violence and peace. Justifying their intent to target civilians in each of the three countries named, the Shabaab declared:

“Whoever displaced the Muslim people, it is our right to displace his people. We will do it, Allah willing. Those who killed our women, then we will kill his women; those who assaulted our honor, we respond to him with what suits him; those who widowed our mothers and made our children orphans, we will make their mothers widowed and increase their orphans because everyone is punished according to his aggression. Let him increase it, if he wishes, or decrease it.”

Threatening the three countries with attacks in their capitals if the African Union continues to carry out operations against the Shabaab, the message continued:

“If Mogadishu, the capital of the Muslim Somalia, knows the heavy bombing and destruction by the alliance of Ethiopia, Uganda, and Burundi, then Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, Kampala, the capital of Uganda, and Bujumbura, the capital of Burundi, will taste the same bitterness that Mogadishu tasted because this is the balance of justice.”

After establishing their view that attacks against civilians in Burundi and Uganda are legitimate targets, the January 3, 2008 message chastised both countries for participating in what the Shabaab construed as a duplicitous peacekeeping mission. Placing responsibility on Ethiopia for leading the two other countries into a plot to establish a “Christian empire” in Somalia, the message claimed:

“In particular, we address this message to Burundi and Uganda, in addition to those who follow them including anyone who tries to enter the Muslim land under the cover of what is called peace-keeping forces and other names... You fell into the nets of the devils and the conspiracies of America and Ethiopia. The goal of bringing your forces is to destroy the peace and shake in order to prevent the establishment of the Islamic State in Somalia. After that comes the role of your masters in Ethiopia executing the long-range plans to control the country, steal its resources and displace the Muslim inhabitants. It has tried in vain to achieve the dream which it dreamt a long time, which is to establish a Christian empire in the land of the Muslim Somalia.”

In conclusion, the Shabaab’s intention to carry out attacks against civilians in Uganda has been clear in messages and statements issued by the group. With the July 11, 2010 attack in Kampala, the Shabaab’s capabilities reached the point at which they are able to extend beyond the borders of Somalia. Whether the Kampala attacks are the only international attack that the Shabaab has the ability to carry out is unknown. However, unsettlingly, the Shabaab strongly indicated an intent to continue to perpetuate international attacks. The June 12, 2010 statement of responsibility clearly threatens that the Shabaab expects to march onwards to Burundi:

“In sending a message to the public in Burundi, he told them that they are weaker than the Ugandans, and for that reason they have to learn their lessons from what happened in Kampala. If they do not do that, he said, the troops of the Shabaab al-Mujahideen cannot be stopped anywhere, and that the Ugandans will get the message soon in their capital city.”

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9 Ibid
10 Ibid
11 Ibid
12 SITE Intelligence Group, “Shabaab Claims Bombings in Kampala, Uganda”. July 12, 2010
The Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) has evolved its activity on jihadist forums, changing from a media group centered on homemade productions, to a source of multimedia from militant groups in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia. The group formerly published a variety of material, including magazines dedicated to the war in Iraq (Echo of the Land of Two Rivers) and jihad in general (Echo of Jihad), videos presenting jihad to viewers in innovative ways (Voice of the Caliphate, Jihad Candid Camera), and documents inciting for support of jihad and espousing views held by al-Qaeda. Today, the group focuses less on original productions, and instead has become an outlet for others, namely the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement in Somalia and Taliban-affiliated groups.

The GIMF became a media source for the Shabaab in Somalia and the Army of Islam, a militant faction in Gaza, around the same time, in April/May 2007. Its relationship with the latter group ended in June 2009, when the Army of Islam announced that GIMF is no longer its official media source and duties were transferred to another media group, al-Noor. The GIMF continued to release its Echo of Jihad magazine regularly through 2007 and 2008, but releases become more sporadic in 2009. The last issue, the 35th issue, was published in July 2009. Releases of original multimedia productions and posts also became more sporadic, and as of June 2010, have effectively ceased.

Today, the GIMF’s activities are primarily to release Arabic-documents and productions by the Shabaab, and its own English translations of Arabic material produced by media organizations of al-Qaeda affiliates, and to distribute videos from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The first video distributed under this new role came in April 2009, with a production by al-Hijrat, a media organization of the Afghan Taliban. That video detailed the planning and execution of the October 30, 2008 suicide bombing at the headquarters of the Ministry of Culture and Information in the Afghan capital, Kabul. The next video GIMF distributed was a production of Fateh Studio, a media organization of Tehrik-e-Taliban Swat (TTS), in June 2009. Unlike the first video, however, the GIMF placed its logo on the Fateh Studio production. The release focused on military activity and implementation of Islamic law by TTS, and footage of military training exercises by the Shaheen Commando Force, a militia head by Maulana Fazlullah. Fazlullah is the leader of Tehrik-e-Nifaz-Shariat-e-Mohammadi.
In September 2009, the GIMF distributed what it called an “exclusive” video of an elderly suicide bomber striking Afghan forces in Paktia province of Afghanistan in February of that year. The GIMF added its own commentary in the forum post introducing the video, reproaching Muslim youth for their inaction towards jihad while a man over 60 carried out a suicide bombing. The most recent video distributions by the GIMF came in June 2010, with two productions by the Soldiers of Sacrifice Foundation. Previous videos from that group, an Afghan Taliban-affiliate, were posted by members of jihadist forums. Both videos were released in three languages: Arabic, Barahwi, and Urdu. The first is a feature focusing on 16 fighters slain in the Afghan provinces of Helmand Zabul. The second showed various items and weapons taken as booty following a raid by the Afghan Taliban on British forces in Garmsir district of Helmand.

Amongst the aforementioned releases, the GIMF distributed on March 14, 2010, a letter attributed to Khalid bin Laden, a son of al-Qaeda leader Usama bin Laden. That letter was released in Arabic- and English-languages, and addressed the Supreme Leader of Iran, Ali Khamenei, demanding that he release his family members held in detention in Iran. The group also distributed other releases, including a testimony by a former member of the Mujahideen Army, an insurgent faction in Iraq, against the leaders of that group, and documents by jihadists commenting on the jihad in Iraq and elsewhere.

Other than al-Fajr Media Center, which releases material by al-Qaeda-affiliated groups, the GIMF is one of the most prolific of the jihadi media organizations. Though its activities and focus have changed over time, it continues to release material by the Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement and prominent jihadists, as well as to provide English translations. The GIMF has now added the distribution of productions from Taliban-affiliates to its tasks, acting as their outlet for jihadist forums, and in the process, becoming today more engaged with groups on the ground than before.
Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, also known as Sheikh Saeed, was recognized as a financial manager for al-Qaeda as well as one of the group’s founders and a member of its Shura Council. Until his death in early 2010, Yazid also served as the general head of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. His death was announced in a written message distributed to jihadist forums on May 31, 2010. Although not specifying a cause of death, the announcement stated that his wife, three of his daughters, his granddaughter, and other men, women, and children, were killed in the incident. According to media reports, a US official said that there is “strong reason” to believe that Yazid was killed by a CIA drone strike in the tribal regions of Pakistan in the two weeks preceding the announcement.

The details of al-Yazid’s history in al-Qaeda were provided in an eulogy written by al-Qaeda ideologue Hani al-Sibai and posted on the website of his organization, al-Maqreze Center for Historical Studies, on June 1, 2010. According to the document, al-Yazid was assigned the general commander position of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2007, following the capture of his predecessor. In his 22-year involvement with jihad and al-Qaeda, Yazid had an extensive background within al-Qaeda’s top leadership: he was member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad under al-Zawahiri before traveling to Afghanistan for jihad in 1987. The next year, in 1988, Yazid joined the Shura Council of al-Qaeda, eventually becoming one of the first accountants for al-Qaeda’s early training camps in Afghanistan. Following the end of the first Afghan jihad, Yazid traveled to Sudan and back to Afghanistan with the al-Qaeda leadership.

The following timeline presents Sheikh Mustafa Abu Yazid’s major video appearances and published statements since his ascension as the General Head of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan:

May 25, 2007: “Interview with Shayk Mustafa Abu al-Yazid “Shaykh Saeed”

Mustafa Abu al-Yazid’s first appearance in an al-Qaeda video came on May 25, 2007, when as-Sahab released a 42:24 minute video interview with him. The video displayed Yazid seated alone, with an off-camera interviewer. Interview questions touched upon a variety of topics concerning the state of jihad and issues such as the row between Hamas and al-Qaeda.
over the Palestinian; the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Gama‘a al-Islamiyya in Egypt; the perception of al-Qaeda as a weakened organization post-September 11th; the arrest of Yazid’s predecessor Abdul Hadi al-Iraqi in Turkey; and the importance of unity for the mujahideen.

Asked about the state of al-Qaeda and the contention that the group is unable to carry out attacks on the scale of September 11th or establish large training camps, Yazid answered that al-Qaeda’s purpose was to embroil the United State in a war of attrition outside its borders. He contended that such fronts had been opened such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Algeria, and Somalia, adding that al-Qaeda had succeeded in the “globalization of the concept of Jihad that they had aspired”.


As-Sahab released on July 14, 2007 its first “The Winds of Paradise” video, a series glorifying slain fighters in Afghanistan. The series features al-Qaeda leaders praising martyrdom and brief biographies of individual martyrs created by their friends and fellow mujahideen. In the video, Yazid addressed Muslims, stating that the Islamic heroes have made their way to Afghanistan, and reiterating Afghanistan’s status as a land of jihad. His contribution appears to have been recorded specifically for the video.

October 3, 2007: “The Truth of Belief”

Yazid called for support for the Afghan Taliban and declared that al-Qaeda in Afghanistan had accomplished a series of victories against enemy forces in an audio message release by as-Sahab on October 3, 2007. The speech, entitled, “The Truth of Belief,” is spoken in Arabic; however, a Pashto language track giving a translation of the speech muffled Yazid’s. The dubbing indicates that the speech was directed at Pashtuns, and in this way, “The Truth of Belief” predicts many of Yazid’s later videos expressly targeted at non-Arabic-speaking populations.

In the speech, Yazid argued that faith in Allah is the primary means for a Muslim to secure victory against their enemy. Yazid encouraged his listeners to jihad, arguing that all Muslims must participate in the struggle to defeat the U.S.-led and Afghani forces. Scholars of Islam are instructed to incite others to jihad and to physically engage themselves in fighting. Urging support for Afghanistan, where the Taliban and Mujahideen are surrounded by enemies, Yazid declared:

“In every corner of the world, Muslims should be concerned about Afghani Muslims and help them. Every Muslim who has the feeling of sacrifice in his heart should come forward and fight for the independence of Afghanistan.”


In commemoration of the sixth anniversary of the 9/11 attacks, on September 19, 2007, as-Sahab released a documentary-style production focusing on the war on terror. Yazid appeared in the video sitting outdoors next to Mullah Mansour Dadullah, a former Afghan Taliban field commander. Yazid explained that the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in the aftermath of 9/11 drew al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban closer. In response to a question from an individual off-camera about the relationship between the two groups, Yazid said:

“By the grace of Allah, the strong ties between the brothers who have emigrated from all over the world have become stronger. The ties between the brothers in al-Qaeda and brothers in the Taliban have increased. The affection between them has increased.”


9 SITE Intelligence Group, “‘The Power of Truth’ – Video Documentary from as-Sahab on the War Between Islam and the United States and the West
As-Sahab released the second entry in its “Winds of Paradise” video series on January 27, 2008. The video featured clips of attacks and footage of al-Qaeda leaders Abu Yahya al-Libi and Yazid.10 Yazid praised the martyrs for renouncing the pleasures of life in the developed world for jihad in Afghanistan, stating:

“These are our martyrs who went on their path in the blessed land of Afghanistan, the land of Jihad and preparation, and the school of heroism... They prepared themselves with diligent work, and in the training camps and on the front they were good soldiers and Mujahideen. The world came to them with its temptations but they ignored it because they knew heaven offered better.” 11

February 5, 2008: “Light and Fire: An Announcement to the Ummah”

Yazid presented an eulogy for Abu Laith Al-Libi, a senior al-Qaeda commander killed in Pakistan, in a video released by as-Sahab on February 5, 2009. The speech praised Abu Laith for his “martyrdom” and assured Muslims that jihad will continue unabated with the loss of commanders. Light, according to Yazid, is the death of Abu Laith and the illumination of the path of jihad; fire, is that force ignited in the mujahideen to burn the “enemies of Allah” in revenge. He stated:

“For the death of these heroes does not and will not end the path of Jihad or smother it and cover its light like the enemies delude themselves into thinking; instead in truth it will push the journey forward, and give more strength and steadfastness and eagerness. 93

March 6, 2008: “They Lied… Now the Fight Has Come”

As-Sahab released on March 6, 2008, an audio message from Yazid calling to sections of Muslim society, including parents and scholars, to not deter Muslim youth from jihad, and urging doctors and electrical engineers to join the ranks of the mujahideen and provide their expertise. He spoke of the benefits in the hereafter a mujahid receives when dying as a “martyr,” and warned that those Muslims who do not support jihad when doing so is an obligation will be punished by God.13

“They Lied…Now the Fight Has Come” is one of the first messages from Yazid that conveys specific al-Qaeda needs and requests for certain types of material support to their followers.

May 11, 2008: “Statement about the Martyrdom of Sheikh Suleiman al-Oteibi”

In a written message released on May 11, 2008, Yazid announced the martyrdom of Sheikh Abu Suleiman al-Oteibi in Paktia province, Afghanistan. Before fighting in Afghanistan, Abu Suleiman was a Shariah Court judge in the Islamic State of Iraq until August 2007. According to the message, Abu Suleiman left from Iraq to Afghanistan six months prior to his death. The message noted that Abu Suleiman and another mujahid, Abu Dajana al-Qahtani, were killed during a confrontation with enemy forces.14

July 8, 2008: “Jihad and Martyrdom”

Yazid joined a number of al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan in an as-Sahab video released on July 8, 2008, eulogizing a fallen al-Qaeda in Afghanistan lead-
er Abu al-Hazan al-Saeedi. The video, titled, “Jihad and Martyrdom”, contained English-subtitles for Arabic language portions, and featured eulogies and reflections for Abu al-Hasan from al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan. These leaders include Mustafa Abu al-Yazid and two other individuals not shown previously in as-Sahab productions: Khalil Habib, head of military operations, and Abu Khalil al-Madani, a member of al-Qaeda’s Shura Council. A biography of Abu al-Hasan was previously published by al-Fajr Media Center.15

**July 14, 2008: Report of the Death of the Commander, Abu Abdullah al-Shami, and a Group of His Brothers, May Allah Have Mercy Upon Them**

Abu Abdullah al-Shami, an escapee from Bagram prison and commander in Afghanistan, was announced as a martyr by al-Qaeda in a July 14, 2008 communiqué signed by Yazid. The message was released on July 31, 2008. According to the eulogy, Abu Abdullah was one of four escapees from Bagram prison in July 2005, along with Abu Yahya al-Libi, Abu Nasser al-Qahtani, and Omar al-Farooq. The communiqué indicated that Abu Abdullah and a group of mujahideen were killed in a US air strike, but the date and location of the strike were unspecified. Yazid stressed Abu Abdullah’s passion for jihad and martyrdom, and notes that after he broke from prison, the commander demonstrated greater ardency, persistence and pride in his jihad.16


Al-Qaeda announced the “martyrdom” of Abu Khabab al-Masri, an explosives and poisons expert, and the “martyrdom” of three other individuals and children in a communiqué released on August 2, 2008. As with previous martyrdom statements from al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, the message, dated July 30, was signed by Yazid. Abu Khabab (AKA Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar) operated a training camp in Derunta, Afghanistan, and distributed training manuals that contain instruction for making chemical and biological weapons. According to reports, Abu Khabab and five other individuals were killed in a missile strike in South Waziristan on July 28. The communiqué does not indicate the date, location, or how Abu Khabab and the others – Sheikh al-Murabbi Muhammad Ibrahim bin Abu al-Faraj al-Masri, Abdul Wahhab al-Masri, Abu Islam al-Masri, and some children – were killed.17

A suicide bomber involved in the June 2, 2008 attack on the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, was profiled in a video from as-Sahab that was released September 4, 2008. The video, featuring al-Yazid, was styled as a documentary profiling the suicide bomber, his motivation for his action, and the circumstances about the insult to the Prophet Muhammad and Islam by Denmark through the cartoons. In the video, Yazid threatened that the suicide bombing was only the first of upcoming attacks against Western states who “insult, mock, and defame” the Prophet Muhammad.18 Yazid also used the video to call upon Muslim youth living in the West to “retaliate” on behalf of their Prophet:

> “We have warned previously – and we warn once more – the Crusader states which insult, mock and defame our Prophet and Quran in their media and occupy our lands, steal our treasure, and kill our brothers … what you have seen and experienced in the Danish embassy and prior operations is but the beginning, God willing, if you don’t end your errant ways and aggression.

> And we call on the Muslim youth in the West…to fear Allah and retaliate on behalf of their Nabi [Prophet], their Quran, their Deen [faith] and their Ummah against the enemies of Islam and Muslims in whose midst they live.”19

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September 19, 2008: “Results of 7 Years of the Crusades”

Yazid was featured in Al-Qaeda’s video commemorating the seventh anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The video, “Results of 7 Years of the Crusades” was released by as-Sahab on September 19, 2008. Reviewing events from the wake of September 11, 2001, the video and featured speeches from Yazid as well as al-Qaeda leaders Ayman al-Zawahiri, Yahya al-Libi, and Attiya Allah, who had never previously appeared as-Sahab productions. To incite Muslims for jihad, the will of 9/11 hijacker Ahmed al-Ghamdi is included. Yazid’s segment featured an update on the mujahideen’s control of Afghanistan, noting specifically their 40% increase in operations from 2007 to 2008.20

October 7, 2008: “Meanings of Piety and Patience”

Yazid contributed an article, “Meanings of Piety and Patience” to the twelfth issue of Vanguards of Kharasan. Vanguards of Kharasan is a periodic electronic magazine concerning jihad and mujahideen in Afghanistan issued by al-Fajr Media Center. The twelfth issue, released on October 3, 2008, contained eighteen articles: two composed by al-Qaeda leaders Mustafa Abu al-Yazid and Abu Yahya al-Libi, one by al-Qaeda ideologue Attiya Allah, and another by Abu al-Walid al-Ansari, who authored the introduction to Fajr’s 350-page book of 120 martyrs.21

“Meanings of Piety and Patience” focused on the importance of unity amongst the mujahideen, a frequent subject of Yazid’s videos and written messages. In the article, Yazid claimed that unity is a duty made incumbent upon Muslims in the Qur’an and an obligation due to circumstances in war. In particular, he stressed to mujahideen that they must not constitute a new group when one already exists in their area. Mujahideen must obey their commanders, and commanders in turn must be just to their soldiers. However, he instructs that commanders must expel those who sow enmity amongst Muslims.

Yazid wrote:

“It is not in their interest that they work separately so the ranks of the mujahideen and Muslims become divided and their power weakens. And it is not wise, reasonable, or good management [to be divided] while we face heavily armed enemies, equipped

November 14, 2008: GIMF Provides Geo TV Interview with al-Qaeda Leader

The Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) issued Arabic and English transcripts and subtitled videos for a 9-minute and 28 second interview conducted by Pakistani Geo TV with Mustafa Abu al-Yazid. The interview was broadcast on Geo TV on July 22, 2008, and distributed by GIMF to jihadist forums on November 14, 2008.

Questions presented during the interview regard al-Qaeda’s position relative to the United States and its citizens, the planning behind the September 11, 2001 attacks, and invitations to remark on other events such as the suicide bombing near the Danish Embassy in Islamabad on June 2, 2008. During the dialogue, Yazid commented “with regret” that the Pakistani government, through Pervez Musharraf, inflicted the most damage to the mujahideen by arresting and torturing them, and delivering them to the US. In response to a question asking whether al-Qaeda received assistance from the Tribal Areas, Yazid affirmed the aid while noting that this assistance is a duty imposed upon them by Islam.23
March 26, 2009: “A Message to the People of Pakistan”

Yazid called Pakistani Muslims to jihad and threatened India in a video produced by as-Sahab and released on March 26, 2009. As-Sahab released two versions: an Arabic-only version that is 28 minutes, 19 seconds in length, and a version containing an Urdu audio track and extended introduction of highlights that is 30 minutes, 16 seconds in length. The production date, Safar 1430H, corresponds approximately to February 2009.

Jihad, Yazid declared, is a duty incumbent upon every Pakistani Muslim. He called upon the Muslims of Pakistan to rise against the Pakistani government and to join the mujahideen and provide them support. Additionally, Yazid threatened India, warning that its continued aggression against Muslims in Pakistan will not be tolerated, and mujahideen will deploy to strike its economic interests. Finally, Yazid addressed a message to Muslims in Gaza, extending condolences for their losses amidst the Israeli offensive. Yazid explained the lack of material al-Qaeda support by claiming that the mujahideen are unable to cross the borders to provide direct support to Palestinians.24

June 10, 2009: “Advice to the Turkish People”

In an audio message released by Taifetul Mansura on June 10, 2009, Yazid asked Turkish Muslims to consider themselves as part of a greater community and to embrace Muslims all over the world, including those on the battlefield. From that basis of brotherhood and compassion to all Muslims, Yazid urged Turkish Muslims to contribute money to the mujahideen in Afghanistan. He also announced to Turkish Muslims that many of their countrymen have been “martyred” in Afghanistan, and this is to be considered an “honor” for them.25

The production date of the speech is unspecified, but Yazid refers to George W. Bush as saying that past months in Afghanistan were amongst the toughest of days, indicating that it may have been recorded prior to Barack Obama taking office in January 2009.26

23 June 2009: Al-Jazeera Interviews al-Qaeda Leader in Afghanistan

Mustafa Abu al-Yazid met with al-Jazeera correspondent Ahmed Zaidan for an interview that was broadcast on June 21, 2009. The 43-minute segment was digitally recorded and distributed by members of jihadist forums. The video depicts Yazid and Zaidan talking with each other outdoors while several armed fighters are positioned on rocks in the background. The interview, recorded in May 2009, touched upon many topics concerning the global jihad, including fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, and Yemen; and other issues such as al-Qaeda strategy against the US and other foes; the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan; position to Iran; and the financial need of al-Qaeda.

In Afghanistan, Yazid reported that al-Qaeda enjoys cooperation with the Taliban, training their fighters and coordinating attacks against foreign forces such as suicide bombings in Kabul and Khost. Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan frequently consults with the Taliban, and according to Yazid, receives messages with Taliban leader Mullah Muhammad Omar. Yazid claims that al-Qaeda in Afghanistan is able to communicate with Mullah Omar and that they maintain “constant” communication with Usama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, keeping the al-Qaeda leaders abreast of developments in jihad. He asserted that both leaders are safe, and their location is unknown.

26 Ibid
On the issue of Pakistan and military activity in the tribal regions, Swat Valley in particular, Yazid denied that al-Qaeda is pushing the country towards collapse, but is rather part of its defense and the defense of its Islamic character. He argued that through its army, the Pakistani government seeks to impose English law on Pakistani Muslims, and began the fighting in the tribal regions, but will ultimately be defeated. Yazid predicted that Pakistan’s nuclear weapons will not be taken by the US, but instead will be gathered by the mujahideen for use against America.27

July 13, 2009: “Patience on the Fields of Jihad, Battle, and Garrison”

Al-Yazid contributed an article, titled “Patience on the Fields of Jihad, Battle, and Garrison” to the fourteenth issue of Van-guards of Khorasan. The 96-page issue was provided by al-Fajr Media Center on jihadist forums on July 12, 2009. Several of the 20 articles in the issue were written by prominent al-Qaeda leaders and ideologues, including al-Yazid, Abu Yahya al-Libi, and Attiya Allah. Amongst the articles is an Arabic translation of excerpts from a book by Marc Sageman, entitled, “Leader-less Jihad,” which includes commentary from Attiya Allah.

September 7, 2009: Yazid Clarifies Position on Hamas

In a message released on September 7, 2009, Yazid clarified a comment he made regarding Hamas in an interview with al-Jazeera correspondent Ahmed Zaidan. During that interview, when asked if al-Qaeda only compliments its fighters and not those of other organizations, Yazid commented that al-Qae-da supports all the “honest mujahideen” in Palestinian Territories, even those of Hamas, as they share one thought and method. Yazid’s September message stated that this comment is inaccurate and is akin to a “slip of tongue in an improvised interview.”28 He clarified that he meant to distinguish between Hamas’ political leaders and its “honest” and “good” mujahideen, who are a minority in the movement.29

September 30, 2009: “Condolences and Congratulations to the Islamic Ummah on the Martyrdom of the Emir, Baitullah Mehsud, May Allah have Mercy on Him.”

Yazid praised Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan’s (TTP) leader Baitullah Mehsud for his participation in and support of jihad in a video eulogy released on September 30, 2009. Yazid particularly lauded Mehsud’s provision of haven to foreign fighters in his tribal area in Waziristan despite the risks and ensuing casualties. He complimented the slain TTP leader as an example other mujahideen should follow due to his defiance against the enemy and his pursuit of mujahideen unity. He also recognized Mehsud as a man of “great ambition,” noting his hearing firsthand of Mehsud’s declaration: “I want to break the pride and arrogance of the Americans and strike them in their own lands.”30

November 11, 2009: Al-Qaeda Accuses Blackwater of Peshawar Bombing

In an audio message produced by as-Sahab and released on November 11, 2009, Yazid denied that the mujahideen carried out a suicide car bombing in a market that reportedly killed 117 people, and moreover, could not possibly perpetrate such a “heinous act”.31 Yazid claimed that Blackwater and foreign forces, who allegedly committed similar acts in Afghanistan and Iraq, carried out the attack so that the mujahideen would be blamed and slandered.

In denying their responsibility for the attack, Yazid told Muslims - particularly those in Pakistan - that the mujahideen take caution to strike the enemy in areas not frequented by civilians, and only targets those security and intelligence forces responsible for bloodshed in Pakistan’s tribal regions. He called upon journalists and writers to expose the “conspiracy” between Blackwater, foreign forces and the Pakistani government, warning them they will be the second target of the enemy if the mujahideen, “the first line of defense,” are defeated.32

29 Ibid
32 Ibid
January 6, 2010: “Statement Regarding the Invasion of Abu Dujana al-Khorasani, may Allah Accept Him, to Penetrate American Fortifications”

Yazid released a written statement to jihadist forums on January 6, 2010 lauding the suicide bombing of a CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan by an alleged Jordanian double-agent, Abu Dujana al-Khorasani. “Abu Dujana” is the nom de guerre of Dr. Humam Khalil Muhammad Abu Mulal who reportedly detonated explosives smuggled in on his person at a CIA base after being invited to act as an informant. The December 30, 2009 attack killed seven agents. Yazid’s statement called the attack “a successful epic” to penetrate both the American and Jordanian intelligence. His commentary added:

“Your brothers will continue the march on your path and they will not rest and their populace will not part with the populace of the Americans till they inflict upon them the greatest and most astonishing deaths and wounds, with permission from Allah.”

March 1, 2010: The Credit of Seeking Allah’s Mercy and How to Obtain It

Yazid contributed “The Credit of Seeking Allah’s Mercy and How to Obtain It” to the sixteenth issue of Vanguards of Kharasan, a periodic electronic magazine concerning jihad and mujahideen in Afghanistan. Al-Fajr released the 16th issue to jihadist forums on February 26, 2010

May 4, 2010: Statement of Condolence on the Martyrdom of the Two Emirs, Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, may Allah have Mercy on Them

Mustafa Abu al-Yazid released a statement on behalf of al-Qaeda’s General Command, offering condolences to the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) for the deaths of its top leaders. The statement was posted on jihadist forums on May 4, 2010. Yazid also directed the condolences to the mujahideen in Iraq and around the world, and to all Muslims in general, and reminded them of the necessity of unity. He added that they must “make of the martyrdom of the leaders of jihad a double fuel to increase effort, generosity, and sacrifice…”

June 15, 2010: “He Who Equipped a Raider, Raided”

As-Sahab released a posthumous audio from Yazid urging support of jihad and claiming that the bombing in Pune, India, on February 13, 2010, was carried out by al-Qaeda in Kashmir. The message added that Ilyas Kashmiri leads that group. The audio message, entitled “He Who Equipped a Raider, Raided,” was released on June 15, 2010, almost two weeks after news of Yazid’s death was announced to jihadist forums.

The message heavily focuses on support of jihad by donating money, and urges Muslims to contribute as much as they can. Yazid said of the fighters’ needs:

“They do not need men as much as they are in need of money, which would allow them to persist in their jihad against the enemies of Allah and inflict as much damage as they can in order to aggravate them.”

In addition to calling for financial contributions, Yazid exhorted Muslims to physically participate in jihad and to offer support, be it in traveling to a battlefield or engaging in media jihad on the internet. Turning to the latter point, media jihad on the internet, he referenced several jihadists—CIA base bomber Humam al-Balawi, as well as Muhammad bin Ali al-Mutlaq and a user identified as “Salil al-Sayuf”—as having “graduated” from the internet.

Yazid justified attacking the US in his call for physical participation, saying:

“They terrified our people so it is our duty to terrify them. They displaced our children so it is our duty to displace them. They destroyed our homes and households so it is our right to destroy their homes and organizations. They targeted our villages and cities, so we must target their cities and bases.”

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34 Ibid
38 Ibid
39 Mutlaq, No. 74 on the list of 85 men wanted by Saudi Arabia for participation in extremist activity abroad, was reportedly killed, though the date or location of his death were not specified. He used the online nickname “Qahir al-Salib.”
40 Ibid
41 Ibid
Afghanistan

6/1- Al-Qaeda’s media arm as-Sahab released a video on June 1 of mujahideen launching an ambush on a NATO military convoy in Kunar province of Afghanistan. Footage shows the conduct of the ambush on vehicles traveling along a road, and also shows a fighter giving a speech that calls for piety to God and incites for avenging insults to Islam and the Prophet Muhammad.

6/2- The Afghan Taliban claimed a rocket strike and suicide bombing aimed at the National Consultative Peace Jirga in the Afghan capital, Kabul, on June 2. According to the group, four rockets fell in the vicinity of the conference, causing its disruption and Afghan President Hamid Karzai to take flight; and in clashes with police near the conference, a fighter carried out a suicide bombing.

6/7- The Afghan Taliban claimed a suicide raid on an Afghan police training center in Kandahar province. A suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden vehicle at the gate of the center, after which three other fighters carried out attacks with light and heavy weapons. The Afghan Taliban claimed killing 17 enemy forces including four instructors.

6/8- The Afghan Taliban claimed a tactical bombing in Marjah, Helmand province, in which 25 soldiers were allegedly killed or wounded. They reported that Afghan Taliban fighters rigged with explosives an empty field that the enemy used for operations, and upon the arrival to the field of the enemy, the explosives were detonated.

6/11- The Afghan Taliban claimed the killing of 13 US soldiers as a result of a suicide bombing in Shah Joy district of Zabul province. They reported that the suicide bomber struck a foot patrol in an area market, killing soldiers and two translators.

6/17- Al-Qaeda’s media arm as-Sahab released a video showing a mortar strike on an unidentified base in Wata Pur district of Kunar province. Footage shows a group of fighters walking to the mortar launch site and then firing the mortars. The camera shows smoke rising from the target. As-Sahab pointed out that the fighters are led by a white-bearded sheikh carrying the mortar cannon.

6/22- The Afghan Taliban reported that a woman carried out a suicide bombing in Kunar province, killing 10 American soldiers. Afghan Taliban spokesman Zabihullah said that according to “mujahideen sources,” a female named “Halima” struck a patrol of Afghan and American forces in front of a health center in Shigal district. The attack reportedly killed 10 American soldiers and wounded another 7, and also wounded 10 Afghan soldiers.

6/27- The Afghan Taliban issued a statement threatening foreign companies from engaging in the bidding process to extract minerals from Afghanistan. Arguing that the Karzai government is illegitimate, an agent of the American government, and does not represent the Afghan people, the group declared that the government does not have the right to bid away the natural resources of the country.

Algeria

6/7- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) issued a statement denying reports that two of its members surrendered to Algerian authorities. They said that two men, Abu al-Abbas Uthman and Abu Nu’man, did not surrender, but were captured by the enemy in “intelligence operations.” AQIM identified Abu al-Abbas as an administrator of the Wassat region, and Abu Nu’man as a member of the medical committee in the same re-
gion. According to media reports, Uthman Touati (AKA Abu al-Abbas), a senior AQIM leader, had turned himself in to authorities on May 25 after his wife convinced him to do so.

6/16—AQIM claimed a suicide bombing and subsequent raid on a Republic Guard barracks in Timizar village, located in the Amman municipality of Boumerdes province of Algeria, which occurred on June 11. They reported that a suicide bomber detonated an explosives-laden truck at the barracks, and afterwards, AQIM fighters stormed the site with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. AQIM gave the number of dead as 11, and cited some sources as estimating the number of wounded to be 20. They added that two fighters died in this attack, not six as reported in the media.

6/27—AQIM released a video of its ambushing Algerian security forces in Timezrit, Algeria. The video shows footage of the mujahideen scouting a location for the attack, then strategizing, before taking their positions and executing the ambush. According to AQIM, eight police officers were killed in the raid and several weapons were seized by the mujahideen.

Iraq

6/3—The Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) issued report of 17 military operations it carried out in Diyala province between March 17 and March 29, 2010. Each of the attacks struck Iraqi targets amongst Awakening council members, Iraqi security forces, and security elements from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). Most attacks involved the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and in one instance, the ISI used an adhesive bomb on a target’s vehicle, and in another, wired to explode the houses of two Awakening officials.

6/12—Ansar al-Islam released a video of a fighter firing a rocket at what they say is a US base in Kirkuk. Footage shows a masked individual preparing a rocket for launch in an empty field and then firing it at an unseen target. Ansar al-Islam reported that the rocket hit its target.

6/16—The ISI claimed June 13th raid on Iraq’s Central Bank. According to media reports, gunmen wearing police-commando uniforms stormed the bank, killing at least 24 people and injuring 46. The ISI reported that a five-man team carried out the operation, using firearms and explosive belts in what they call a “unique” strike “unprecedented in this era of human history to be done only by the pure people of tawhid [monotheism].”

6/18—Ansar al-Islam released a video of bombing what they say is a US minesweeper in Mosul. Footage shows an explosion behind a wall, and the targeted vehicle continuing to move for some distance. Ansar al-Islam reported that the minesweeper was damaged in the blast.

6/20—The ISI claimed two suicide bombings in Diyala province, one on June 9 and the other on June 11, each targeting US forces. On June 9, the ISI reported that an Iraqi suicide bomber detonated his vehicle near a gathering of US forces in al-Muqaddadiyah, destroying a Stryker military vehicle and killing all who were inside. Two days later, another Iraqi suicide bomber detonated his vehicle near a US convoy in Jalawla, destroying a vehicle and reportedly killing 10 individuals.

6/22—The ISI claimed the June 20th strike on the Trade Bank of Iraq. According to media reports, suicide bombers detonated two explosives-laden vehicles outside the bank, killing at least 18 people. The ISI did not give an estimate of the casualties caused by the blasts, but claimed that most of the building was destroyed and most of the financial staff and security guards were killed.

6/22—Ansar al-Islam released a video of firing a Katyusha rocket on what they say is a US base at Mosul airport. Footage shot at night shows a rocket fired. Ansar al-Islam reported that the rocket struck the base, but the damages are unknown.
Pakistan

6/9- The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) released a video focusing on military activity of foreign and native Pakistani fighters in the tribal regions of Pakistan. The video was initially released in Urdu on March 26 and then in Arabic on June 9. Footage shows various groups of fighters engaged in military activity at several points in 2009, and also shows the aftermath of air strikes in Spinkai Raghzai and other areas. Narration incites Pakistani Muslims to participate in violent jihad, arguing that it is only through fighting that they can have a Shariah-abiding government, which will grant peace to Pakistan.

6/11- Taifetul Mansura reported that an Arab al-Qaeda military commander, Ihsanullah, and a Turkish commander of a group affiliated with the Taliban, Fursan-e-Muhammad, were killed in an airstrike in Waziristan. The group's spokesman, Abu Yasir al-Turki, reported that on June 10, a drone struck a house in which the two commanders and a third individual were located. The spokesman also named the Fursan-e-Muhammad Group as the “Yunus Group.”

Palestinian Territories

6/1- Tawhid and Jihad Group, Beit al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), remarked on the Gaza flotilla incident, saying that Muslims who feel sympathy towards the victims of the raid should rather feel shame for their own inaction. The group said that Israel’s raid on the Gaza-bound aid flotilla is “not surprising,” and added that some blame be placed on the Hamas-led government in Gaza that imprisons those who espouse jihad, and also on Arab rulers in neighboring countries. To support Palestinians, Tawhid and Jihad Group urged Muslims to support Salafist Jihadists and to overthrow rulers who stand against them.

6/25- Ansar al-Sunnah Group in Jerusalem released a video celebrating the “martyrdom” of several of its fighters and calling others in the region to join their cause. The group, which appears to have been inspired in part by Sheikh Abu Noor al-Maqdisi who was killed by Hamas in August 2009, eulogizes three of the group’s soldiers who were reportedly killed in an Israeli airstrike. The video contains footage of the mujahideen firing weapons and rockets, as well as scenes from their funerals.

Somalia

6/3- The Shabaab al-Mujahideen Movement reported its defeat of a massive enemy raid on its positions in Shibis district in the Somali capital, Mogadishu. The group boasted that the clash was “one of the greatest epics and triumphs that will go down in history as a fateful battle between the Ummah of Islam and the Army of the Cross.” They added that their fighters finally liberated Shibis in this clash, after having captured an intelligence headquarters in that district on May 23.

6/9- The Shabaab claimed a bombing on a militia foot patrol in Hamar Jajab district, east of the Somali capital, Mogadishu. According to the communiqué, Shabaab fighters detonated an explosive on the target near the Iskool Bulisiyo base, killing seven militia elements.

6/15- The Shabaab announced that some officials of Hizb al-Islam in Beledweyne, the provincial capital of Hiran in central Somalia, joined its group. In the announcement, the Shabaab said that officials from both groups celebrated the union. The governor of Hiran, Sheikh Yusuf Ali Ujas, and other officials spoke at the ceremony and urged fighters in other areas to unite with them. Hizb al-Islam is another militant faction in Somalia.

6/29- The Shabaab declared that its fighters had taken over “several strategic neighborhoods” in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, and called this success a “tremendous step” in its battle to control the capital. The Shabaab further maintained that it was also able to repel African forces from the port of Mogadishu. The group promises that it “will not stop the march towards the leadership headquarters and the symbol of the presence of the apostate Sharif government that is manifested in the presidential palace.”

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