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Operation Nusrat (Victory) Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province

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THE CULTURE AND CONFLICT REVIEW



Operation Nusrat (Victory): Understanding the Taliban Threat to Kunduz Province

Matthew C. DuPée[1], 11/1/2009

“Although we had no such modern weapons, we have had one thing which is our faith; that real Mujahidin will never be defeated. We have faith even if we do not have modern weaponries.”

– Taliban “Shadow” Governor for Kunduz, Mullah Abdul Salaam Baryali, May 2009.[2]

“The Germans are the most important enemy in the north. If they leave their base, they will find booby traps and bombs waiting for them on every road. They will have to carry many more bodies in coffins on their shoulders if they don't come to the realistic conclusion that their forces must withdraw from our country.”

– Maulavi Bashir Haqqani, a Taliban military subcommander in Kunduz, May 2008.[3]

Since 2007, high level Taliban commanders have repeatedly threatened to expand their growing insurgency into the largely passive and ethnically divided north, a sparsely populated area occupied largely by non-combat ready ISAF units and local security forces. The Taliban's strategy regarding the north has been to slowly build up intelligence and support networks in the northern districts of Herat and in the Pashtun districts of Badghis (Balamurghab and Ghormach).[4] The Taliban have deployed a similar strategy to the northeast, creating a serious destabilization of the region since last year.

The northern provinces of Afghanistan, long described as stable, have come under increased stress from insurgent and criminal activity. In particular, the northern province of Kunduz has borne the brunt of the most extreme spikes in insurgent activity, including a protracted suicide and roadside bomb campaign initiated by Taliban and foreign fighters. The Taliban's northern offensive, orchestrated since 2007 under the leadership of the Quetta-Shura's Mullah Shah Mansoor Dadullah[5], Mullah Berader, and to an extent, Mullah Mohammad Omar, has recently proved successful in targeting NATO's unity and its mission in Afghanistan. In fact, earlier this year Mullah Berader announced the launch of Operation Nusrat (Victory), the 2009 Taliban campaign aimed at attacking NATO and Afghan government forces including a special decree for insurgents in Kunduz to ramp up their activities.[6] This is a far cry from 2004 when Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami (HIG) faction remained the most well financed and capable insurgent group in the region. Allegedly, HIG leadership even established bounties to be paid when their operatives attacked: \$50,000 for a car-bombing, \$10,000 for killing an IASF soldier, \$5,000 for wounding an ISAF soldier.[7]

Reasons for HIG's influence eroding in Kunduz since 2004 are the early successes of the first national elections and the UN's Disarmament, Demobilize and Reintegration (DDR) initiative. The 2004 election turnout in Kunduz was 86%, a much higher percentage than analysts predicted at that time would turnout; even Kuchi nomads participated in the election in Kunduz.[8] Some warlords converted into government positions, others did not and either “retired,” were dealt with militarily, or maintained mini-fiefdoms such as the Ismaili-family in the Imam Sahib district[9]. However, it was during the return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan in 2003-2005, some of whom were sympathetic to Mullah Omar's Taliban movement that the slow infiltration of Taliban sleeper-cells began.

Tactically speaking, the Taliban's penetration and entrenchment of Kunduz over the past 18 months has resulted in a spate of recent fatalities and casualties among US and German forces, let alone the scores of Afghan security personnel and government officials also killed by insurgent violence. The reason

Taliban forces are targeting Kunduz largely revolves around its pivotal location in northern Afghanistan which is situated along several key transit routes. Kunduz contains part of the logistics route NATO forces rely on to funnel fuel and other combat necessities from Tajikistan along what is known as the Northern Distribution Network. "The concern is if we don't stunt the (Taliban) growth, it could cause problems with our northern distribution network," a senior US intelligence official, who asked not to be further identified because he wasn't authorized to speak publicly, told reporters in August. [10] "A couple of years ago, (Taliban leader) Mullah Omar said 'We need to open up new fronts in the north and cause a dissipation of (U.S.) resources.' To a degree, it's working."

Mostly calm 18-months ago, the northern provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan now have at least five districts under defacto Taliban control.[11] The violence in the area prior to 2007 was largely attributed to HIG, narcotics trafficking groups, rival warlords, intra-tribal rifts, and criminal activity, according to the meticulously researched Kunduz Conflict Analysis report published by the Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) organization.[12] However, the latest violence is widely attributed to the Quetta-Shura supported Taliban fighters occupying the Charhar Darra district under the command of Mullah Abdul Salaam Baryali, his deputy Mullah Shamsullah, and Qari Bashir Haqqani, as well as from the litany of foreign fighters indentified by German intelligence reports as "Chechen, Arab and Uzbek fighters" (see Appendix I). Recent evidence suggests even female militants are operating alongside the cadres of foreign fighters.[13] There is an estimated 600-800 Taliban fighters currently engaged in insurgent activity full-time in Kunduz with an additional 60 foreign fighters, according to German military estimates.[14] There are approximately 400-600 Taliban fighters operating in northern Baghlan province which borders the unstable southern districts of Kunduz.

The Taliban infiltration into the Pashtun districts around Kunduz did not occur overnight, but took months of preparation and persistence. Influential militia commanders, former mujahedeen leaders, and government heads were assassinated to help pave the way for the Taliban's infiltration. Kunduz citizens were forced to pay taxes to the Taliban infiltrators, even licit commodities such as wheat were taxed at the farm gate, and schools, teachers and pupils alike were violently targeted by the Kunduz Taliban.[15] Several attempts were made against the life of Engineer Mohammad Omar,[16] the long standing governor of Kunduz since 2004, and his brother, Col. Noor Khan, who served as the Dashti-Archi district police chief for the past few years. By August 12, Khan's luck would run out as Taliban raiders stormed the Dashti-Archi police headquarters, killing Khan in a hail of gunfire and rocket-propelled grenades along with several of his bodyguards. A short while later, Mohammad Fahim Qasim, the vice presidential running mate of Hamid Karzai, survived a complex IED-ambush on the Takhar-Kunduz highway that left several attackers and some of Fahim's bodyguards dead.[17] Less than a week before the attack on Fahim, presidential candidate Mullah Salaam "Rocketi" survived a Taliban ambush in neighboring Baghlan province. The complexity and consistency of Taliban attacks in Kunduz over the past year highlight their level of commitment in destabilizing the northern region and their enhanced capabilities from previous campaigns against the north.

By late 2008 and early 2009, the Taliban in Kunduz brazenly operated in broad daylight and established sanctuaries throughout the southern districts. "Three years ago when I was appointed as the military leader in charge for Kunduz province, we were passing our nights in ruined houses, but God thanks, now based on Mujahidin sacrifices, we own a very good atmosphere," Mullah Abdul Salaam Baryali, the Taliban "shadow" Governor of Kunduz province said in an interview with the jihadist magazine Al Samood published in May.[18] An Al Jazeera news segment filmed in June this past June lends credence to Mullah Salaam's claims by showing heavily armed Taliban fighters traveling in large packs in broad day light and protecting their commander, Habibullah, who is interviewed by the news crew. During the segment, Taliban operative "Mohammed Hashem" claimed that Taliban fighters in the province recently perfected a \$40 improvised-explosive device (IED) that can detonate against a military vehicle "from 20-meters away." Within a month following Hashem's claims, two deadly IED attacks in Kunduz left four US soldiers and three German soldiers dead.[19]

Clearly, IEDs have become an integral part of the Taliban's northern offensive. "At the first stages of our activities we were using remote-controlled IEDs then we started ambushes, subsequently we started suicide attacks and nowadays we launch operations. For all these attacks we have our expert Mujahidin ready to inflict casualties on the enemies. We are applying different tactics, but most often we use IDEs and ambushes because these operations inflict more casualties to the enemy and less to us and also it will not be reveal for the enemy who had attacked on them ... so far we have used the suicide attacks ten-times, the bulk of which were launched against German forces and to a lesser extent, against domestic forces ('mercenaries and militias')," Mullah Salaam Baryali told the militant magazine Al

Samood in May.[20]

Aside from IEDs, the Taliban in Kunduz have received additional funding and personnel from a small cadre of al Qaeda-linked terrorist organizations. During the 2009 fighting season, Uzbek insurgent groups such as the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), both operating out of Pakistan's FATA area and linked to the Taliban, began deploying some of their operatives to fight and train alongside Taliban fighters in Kunduz. Scores of foreign fighters have been killed and captured in recent Coalition, NATO and Afghan security operations in the north.

On August 28, NATO forces raided a suspected IMU hideout in the volatile Chahar Dara district. Upon entering the compound, NATO forces received direct fire from several positions before returning fire and killing several militants, including a female that was firing an AK-47 and wearing a combat-vest loaded with spare ammunition magazines.[21] On September 12, a joint Afghan-NATO operation began with a raid on a compound near the village of Torbah Kash, north-east of Kunduz city. The combined force engaged and killed a number of foreign fighters thought to be Uzbeks and confiscated several rocket-propelled grenades and assault rifles following the clash. Two days later, Afghanistan's intelligence department, the National Directorate of Security (NDS), announced the capture of two Uzbek fighters in Kunduz, including one identified as Khalid Ahmadov, a former resident of Uzbekistan's Ferghana Region.[22] The pair allegedly traveled to Kunduz on direct orders from outlaw IMU commander Tahir Yuldushev. Kunduz remains a battlefield destination for the myriad of foreign fighters held up in western Pakistan, home to approximately 5,000 Uzbek fighters, according to a recent statement by Habibullah Khan Khattak, an administrator from Pakistan's tribal areas.[23]

The commander of the ISAF international security force in Afghanistan, US General Stanley McChrystal, expressed deep concerns about the deteriorating situation in Kunduz this summer, saying the situation warranted "closer scrutiny." Nevertheless, the Taliban continued to operate up-tempo throughout the summer and even managed to severely disrupt the presidential election efforts there; forcing 22 out of the 80 polling stations in three areas (Chahar Dara, Aqtash, Khanabad) to remain closed and destroyed several ballot boxes by burning them and throwing others into the Kunduz River.[24] Although German forces made a concerted effort to change some of their restrictive rules of engagement earlier this year, the German force stationed in Kunduz largely remains unfit and unable, or possibly unwilling (especially politically) to complete its mission. To highlight German inefficiency, it is pertinent to mention when German and Afghan forces sheepishly launched Operation Adler (Pashto for Eagle) in late July, a two-week long "offensive" against the Taliban entrenched in the Chahar Dara district some twenty-minutes from the German PRT-base.

Operation Adler left several Taliban killed, well over a dozen insurgents arrested, and successfully confiscated quantities of small arms, ammunition and explosives. However, immediately following the operation, the 600-strong Afghan National Army unit tasked with static security in Chahar Dara backed off and withdrew up to 300 men, more than half the combat-ready force needed to secure the district. Within hours, Taliban fighters numbering around 150 reentered the district and made their presence known. Deputy "shadow" Governor Mullah Shamsullah quickly phoned local reporters telling them, "We are back. Everything is going to be the same as it was earlier." [25] His fighters could be heard shouting "God is great!" in the background. Wahid Omar Khel, the Chahar Dara district governor, also confirmed the Taliban's return saying "they [Taliban] stood with weapons slung on the market squares of the villages and seemed as happy as if they had just won a victory. They're in control of the whole of southern Chahar Dara again."

Simply put, Operation Adler was a tactical failure. "The last operation [Operation Adler] against the Taliban in Chahar Dara was unsuccessful, because the soldiers were hardly prepared to stage air strikes," Kunduz Governor Engineer Muhammad Omar said in a media interview following Operation Adler's conclusion. [26] "They [Germans] are overly cautious, and they don't even get out of their vehicles. They should leave, and the Americans should replace them. The Americans would finally provide security." The lack of military action over the past several years by the Kunduz-based German IASF contingent, a 667-strong force based at the Kunduz Airbase under PRT auspices (contains less than 325 combat ready troops), is a partial explanation for the Taliban's success in occupying three districts so close to Kunduz City. Unrealistic and hyper-restrictive rules-of-engagement, as well as stifling political pressure from the German Parliament, effectively neutered German troops from any offensive military capabilities they could implement on the battlefield.

The overall quality of the German unit serving in Afghanistan has also come under fire by NATO allies. Over the past several years, the German contingent has been accused of being the most "physically

unfit" NATO unit in Afghanistan and the least aggressive. Media reports indicate German forces serving in Afghanistan consumed about 90,000 bottles of wine and 1.7 million pints of beer last year, a poor dietary habit that has left over 40% of German soldiers overweight, compared to 35% of German civilians of the same age who are overweight, while 8.5% of German soldiers are classified as "seriously overweight."[\[27\]](#)

NATO allies have repeatedly chastised German commanders over their inability to conduct "hunter-killer" missions that could have a detrimental impact on improving security in the north. One such incident, which occurred last March, had elite German KSK special-forces hunting a most-wanted Taliban commander held responsible for the deadly suicide-bombing of a sugar-factory in Baghlan province that killed 79 people, including dozens of children and six Members of Parliament. Upon discovering the location of the "Baghlan bomber," elite KSK forces spent weeks studying the habits and routine of the Taliban fugitive. Ultimately, the German unit attempted a night raid to capture the Taliban leader which failed, and into the night he escaped. US and British doctrine would have permitted a lethal attack, such as laser-guided weapon being dropped on the fugitive's compound or vehicle, but restrictive German rules of engagement does not allow the use of lethal force unless German soldiers are under attack. The failure to kill the Baghlan bomber brought additional tension and friction between NATO allies and their German counterparts. "The Krauts are allowing the most dangerous people to get away and are in the process increasing the danger for the Afghans and for all foreign forces here," an incredulous British officer at ISAF headquarters told Der Spiegel reporters last year.[\[28\]](#)

Numerous tales of Germans leaving fellow NATO forces abandoned on the battlefield are also common. During Operation Desert Eagle in Faryab and Badghis provinces in 2007, Taliban fighters ambushed a small Norwegian detachment alongside their ANA counterparts. The stranded unit suffered casualties and called in German medical air-capabilities from Mazar-i-Sharif but was left on the battlefield following Germany's tight restrictions prohibiting their aircraft from flying past 5PM local time. One Norwegian cavalry officer, who was engaged in the day-long fight with more than 40 Taliban near Jari Siya in Badghis, told reporters: "It's hopeless. We were attacking the bad guys, then [at] three or four o'clock, the [German] helicopters are leaving. We had to go back to base. We should have had Norwegian helicopters. At least they can fly at night."[\[29\]](#)

Up until this spring, German soldiers were forced to give three spoken commands before engaging a threat with their rifles. A report in The Times this past July exposed the shocking caveats:

"The seven-page pocket guide to combat tucked into the breast pocket of every German soldier offers such instructions as: "Before opening fire you are expected to declare loudly, in English, 'United Nations — stop, or I will fire,'" followed by a version in Pashtu — Melgaero Mellatuna - Dreesch, ka ne se dasee kawum!" The alert must also be issued in Dari, and the booklet, devised by a committee in some faraway ministerial office, adds: "If the situation allows, the warning should be repeated." The joke going round NATO mess tents poses the question: 'How can you identify a German soldier? He is the corpse clutching a pocket guide.'[\[30\]](#)

By early September, whether they were trying to shed their reputation of being weak-kneed or acting in concert to a looming crisis, the German PRT commander Colonel George Klein would order an airstrike that will forever change the German mission in Afghanistan and adversely affect the security situation in Kunduz for months, if not years to come.

Sometime on September 3, a band of Taliban fighters and foreign militants attacked an Afghan fuel convoy as it traveled south from Tajikistan and into the Ali Abad district of Kunduz province, a NATO logistics route known as the Northern Distribution Network. Local accounts describe the brutality of the "Chechen" fighters among the insurgent hijacking squad who allegedly executed two of the Afghan truck drivers by sawing off their heads, a common battlefield tactic among foreign fighters in Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan and Chechnya.[\[31\]](#) The Taliban fighters hijacked the two fuel trucks filled with gasoline roughly fifteen-kilometers from Kunduz City, a short distance southwest of the Kunduz Airbase where the 667 strong German PRT is located.

After a fierce summer season of intense violence in Kunduz province, including several high profile assassination attempts and bridgehead explosions near Kunduz City, the Taliban ran into difficulty transporting the weighed down fuel tankers over the muddy banks of the Kunduz River near Omar Kheil, a small hamlet located between the Taliban controlled districts of Chahar Dara and Ali Abad. As the trucks bogged down in the mud on a small "island" in the middle of the Kunduz River, the Taliban and Chechen hijackers encouraged locals to siphon off some of the fuel to help lighten the load so the trucks

could be extracted from the muddy grave. Around this time, German forces requested help from an American B1-B to locate the trucks. By the time the bomber located the bogged down trucks (10 minutes after arrival), the aircraft made preparations to refuel and left the scene. Notating how close the hijacked fuel trucks were to the German PRT, additional aircraft was requested by Colonel George Klein and within twenty minutes two American F-15Es arrived on station.

Within the early hours of September 4th, the American F-15E's dropped a pair of 500lb. bombs on the hijacked fuel trucks as they remain stuck in the mud near the villages of Omar Kheil and Yaquobi. What happened next would catapult Germany's presence in Afghanistan and the growing insecurity of northern Afghanistan into the spotlight. The incident drew a near instantaneous negative response from the US commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan, Gen. Stanley McCrystal, severely damaging US and German relations and prompting German government officials to be speaking about "exit plans" for their forces to withdraw from Afghanistan.^[32]

The bombing of the fuel trucks spawned local reports describing the horrific scene carnage, with high civilian casualties and fatalities being among the first details. Little credence was given to the fact that the bombing took place at 2:30 AM local time in a Taliban controlled district in Kunduz or how exactly, did heavily armed Taliban and feared "Chechen" fighters wrangle up nearly 100 villagers in the dead of night to siphon gasoline out of trucks bogged down in the Kunduz River. The incident prompted a visit by General McCrystal to the blast site and to a local hospital where many civilians injured in the blast were being treated shortly after the incident.

Local residents soon drafted a list of those missing, or those thought to have perished in the attack, something local Taliban officials also made available in a spectacular propaganda coup (see Appendix II). German officials maintained the threat of two hijacked fuel trucks represented too high of a security threat not to take immediate action, a notion that the Kunduz Governor also agreed with. German intelligence officers believed the hijacked fuel trucks were going to be used as large-vehicle-borne-improvised-explosive devices (LVBIEDs) against the German PRT base, a short drive from where the tankers were blown in place. Aerial surveillance feed and single source reporting guided Col. Klein's decision and he ordered the US strike jets to bomb the fuel trucks, obliterating the sunken vehicles, dozens of insurgents and scores of civilians. A recently completed NATO investigation into the bombing concludes that nearly 70 militants were killed in the blast, with an additional 30 civilians also killed; a similar conclusion was reached by a separate investigation conducted by the Afghan government.^[33] The Taliban claim NATO used white phosphorus bombs on the fuel tankers, blanketing the area in a wall of flame that explains why now bomb crater was present at the scene of the strike and also why both tankers were not completely blown apart upon impact.^[34] At the time of this writing, little attention has been paid by the media into the Taliban's claims, although it does not explain the presence of plastic fuel jugs located near the blast site in some of the photos, which obviously would have melted during the fire and white phosphorus (See Appendix III).

Nevertheless, the body count remains insignificant in light of the incident's framing by both the international media and Taliban propaganda activities. The hamlets surrounding the blast site will inevitably become hardened bastions of the Kunduz Taliban movement, signs of which have already surfaced as armed Taliban "guard" the village from foreign influence and the Taliban's capture of a New York Times journalist and his "fixer" in Omar Kheil days after the air strike occurred. The continued presence of Taliban fighters and their influence over the local population (convincing them to siphon fuel at 2:30 AM and paying them \$750 to plant IEDs^[35], providing food and water to fighters, etc.) in Kunduz is troubling, and security and stability in the northern provinces will certainly remain elusive as long as NATO forces continue to maintain the status quo of limited interaction with local communities and blunderous battlefield decisions. Recent media reports from the region imply the instability caused by the Taliban in Kunduz is having an adverse affect on the security situation in Tajikistan, an adhoc domino-effect that could eventually threaten regional security at a level unseen since the late 1990's. "The escalation of fighting in Kunduz and other Afghan provinces (bordering Tajikistan) may make the situation at the border more tense and provoke the Taliban to break through," Tajikistan's Deputy Defense Minister Ramil Nadyrov told reporters.^[36]

If NATO continues to allow Taliban and insurgent activity to thrive in areas north of Baghlan, the Taliban will likely begin to coordinate with regional warlords, narco-traffickers and Taliban sympathizers to help push their violent agenda to areas further west, including into Samangan and Balkh provinces. Taliban activity already underway further west in Badghis and Faryab provinces threaten to complete the Taliban's two-pronged approach into the north, including their ambitious aims to eventually stage large scale attacks in the largest city in northern Afghanistan, Mazar-i-Sharif. Additionally, if NATO does not

address the strategic linkages between Afghan insurgents and Pakistani militant groups, this will allow for other “far flung” regions of Afghanistan, including those currently deemed “stable,” to be the next target of the Afghan insurgency whose leadership continues to operate unhindered from their sanctuary in southwestern Pakistan (Baluchistan). The instability in Kunduz serves as the perfect example of this nexus. “The anti-government resistance in Kunduz is controlled from Pakistan,” Kunduz Governor Engineer Omar said recently.^[37] “At first, only a few local residents supported the movement, but in the run-up to the election, Pakistan's intelligence service has activated its sources in Kunduz. What kind of a response do the Germans have to that?” Precisely, if the German contingent cannot even control a district that is 15-minutes from their PRT base, there is no chance of them stopping or disrupting the pipeline of insurgents, explosives, and doctrine flowing over the border and into northern Afghanistan. The stability and security situation in Kunduz is certainly grim, and in light of the recent air strike scandal, the political situation is increasingly bad. Without an immediate change of course, Kunduz could eventually become the northern capital for the defacto Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Appendix I^[38]

Kunduz Province- Personalities



Engineer Mohammad Omar: Kunduz Governor; Several media reports accuse Engineer Omar of being highly corrupt and that he routinely passes sensitive information to known Taliban fighters working in the province. The reports further speculate that Omar is also linked to the drug trade citing same sources. These reports are largely unsubstantiated however. German officials are lobbying for his removal and have gained support from the current Interior Minister Mohammad Atmar. Omar has been Kunduz governor since March 2004. Association: *Hizb-i Tanzim Dawat-i Islami-I Afghanistan (Sayyaf)*.

Mahbobullah Syedi: the spokesperson of provincial governor.

General Abdul Razaq: Former Kunduz police chief? Brigadier-General Razaq is a Tajik from Paghman district in Kabul, and is a former officer in the Communist forces.

Col. (identified as Brigadier General last year) Abdul Rahman Aaqtash (Haqtash): deputy provincial police chief.

Col. Noor Khan: The brother of Mohammad Omar and district police chief for Dashti Archi. Survived an ambush on May 20th in the Wazir Khan village area. One police escort was wounded and a police truck destroyed. The counterattack allegedly left two attackers dead while the Taliban claim to have killed 8 policemen in the clash. He was killed August 12 after Taliban forces raided the Dashti-Archi district headquarters.

Sheikh Saduddin- Dashti-Archi district governor.

Abdul Majid Azimi: NDS provincial chief for Kunduz and works closely with the German military contingent.

Maulavi Abdullah: Provincial council chief of Kunduz.

Preme Qull: Uzbek, former mujahedeen commander with a “ruthless reputation” who fought the Taliban during the 1990's and is now a Member of Parliament. He lives in a massive compound in Kunduz and is protected by soldiers. He told reporters in August: “We all know that opposition to this government is all over Afghanistan. It is not simply the old Taliban, but also former mujahedeen who have switched sides and decided to fight the government. Our old mujahedeen fighters found themselves without jobs or influence. They are fighting with the Taliban now.”

Dr. Humayun Khamoosh: Head of Kunduz Central Hospital.

Abdul Wahid Omarkhil (Abdul Wahid Omarkhel): Current district chief of Chahar Darreh district, an area 15 km northeast of Kunduz City plagued by Taliban activity.

Malim Nazir: Former administrative head of Charhar Darreh district (July 2008).

Lt. Col. Baryali: Chahar Darreh district police chief.

Malim Juma Din: Current district chief form Imam Sahib district.

Mohammad Najeb Jamil: The director of Oil and Gas Department of Shir Khan port bordering Tajikistan, who was killed near Kunduz city around June 18. Jamil was asked to pay the Taliban before his death. Since his assassination, his replacement has been asked to fund the Taliban as well.

Mehmoodul Hassan: Deputy investigative officer of Takhar; nearly assassinated in Kunduz on June 10. Taliban claimed credit for the attack.

Qaiz Azimy and Hameddullah Shah: Two al Jazeera producers arrested by NDS after meeting and filming Taliban fighters and their leader in Kunduz in mid-June. The pair was later released after 3 days of questioning.

Taliban and Insurgents

Habibullah: Young Taliban commander in Kunduz interviewed by al Jazeera in June 2009. During the interview, Habibullah claimed to have 12 suicide bombers at the ready for attacks across the province. One of fighters (*Mohammed Hamesh*---see below) claims to have constructed a new IED that “explodes when a tank gets within 20 meters of it. It only costs \$40 dollars to make.” Taliban check-points have been established a few kilometers north of the city. *Photo (above) shows Habibullah during a spring 2009 interview with Al Jazeera.*



Khalid Salim: One of ten most wanted Taliban and insurgent leaders operating in Kunduz. He operates in the Aqtash area and may run the “task force” in charge of attacking schools in Kunduz. He refers to Kunduz as the Islamic Emirate of *Northern Afghanistan*.

Abdul Razzeq: Taliban commander in Badakhshan responsible for several high profile attacks and IEDs. He was apprehended recently during a KSK commando raid on the outskirts of Faizabad and flown directly to Kabul. He was one the 10 most wanted list for RC-North. He was the Mullah of the Tirgaran *madrassah* in upper Badakhshan district of Warduj.

Mullah Salam (Shaykh Mulla Abdulsalam [Biryali]): Salam is the son of Muhammad Sarwar Bin Mulla Muhammad Khan, and is 35 years old. His family(Pashtun, Tokhi tribe) is known for their religious and educational background and they originally hail from the Dasht-e Archi District of Kunduz province. Salam is currently number one on ISAF's 10-most wanted list for Kunduz. He takes direct orders from the Quetta Shura, in particular, from Mullah Berader. To avoid being tracked he rarely makes calls and he travels in various disguises. “Even in Kunduz, he never sleeps in the same house for two nights in a row.” Following the arrest of Abdul Razzeq and several offensives launched by German soldiers



in the spring of 2009, Salam is believed to have fled for Kandahar. He is responsible for facilitating and orchestrating nearly every attack directed against German troops in Kunduz. He has vowed to continue his attacks until all Germans and foreign invaders are ousted from Kunduz. *Photo shows Salam being interviewed by Al-Sumud, a militant magazine from Afghanistan published in Arabic.*

Mohammad Hashem: Taliban fighter based in Kunduz operating alongside commander Habibullah. Both Hashem and Habibullah appeared in a controversial al Jazeera news segment in the spring of 2009. Afghan intelligence officials arrested the three al Jazeera producers responsible for the segment shortly after they met with Taliban fighters outside of Kunduz City and held them for 3 days. Hashem claims the Taliban have deployed ‘new IEDs’ capable of destroying NATO vehicles at the cost of \$40 a bomb. Shortly after his interview, two separate roadside bombs in Kunduz left 3 Germans and 4 US soldiers dead. *Photo (left) is taken from the al Jazeera news*



segment.

Mullah Shamsullah: Deputy to Mullah Salam, Mullah Shamsullah is still active and physically present in Kunduz. He is the overall commander for the Chahar Darreh district , the most unstable district in

Kunduz now that Mullah Salam is allegedly on the run. He claims to switch his location everyday and stays in a variety of different houses. He allegedly always has two bodyguards with him.

Shaikh Abdul: Lead Taliban leader in Kunduz and the target of a combined operation in the Gul Tiapa area on June 16. He was reportedly killed by German and Afghan soldiers along with four of his men.

Mufti Selim: Uzbek commander for Uzbek nationals fighting in Kunduz. He is tightly linked with Kunduz Taliban commander Mawlawi Abdul Rahman. "This war shows the hypocrisy of the world," Mufti Selim told reporters in August. "During the Russian jihad everyone gave weapons to us, now they are all against us." He spoke in a very eloquent classical Arabic that he said had learned in madrasas in Afghanistan and Pakistan.[39]

Mawlawi Abdul Rahman: A younger Taliban leader for Kunduz and member of the *Qomission*, or Committee. He is allied with a Turkomen insurgent commander and the Uzbek commander for Kunduz, Mufti Selim.[40]

Qari Abdul Wadoud- He is the senior Taliban commander in the Imam Sahib district of northern Kunduz. He is suspected of commanding up to 100 insurgent fighters. "German troops with the cooperation of national security forces arrested Taliban key commander Qari Abdul Wadoud from Qarakator village of Imam Sahib district Friday," Juma Khan, the governor of Imam Sahib, told Xinhua on August 1, 2009.

Mullah Khairullah: Suspected Taliban suicide bomb and IED facilitator for Kunduz (Chara darah district). Police authorities allegedly arrested Khairullah and several of his men ('trained' suicide bombers) on July 9, 2008. The Taliban denied being linked to a Kunduz insurgent commander by this name.

Maulavi Ahmad: Identified himself as the Taliban's "shadow" governor for Kunduz during a media interview published on September 7.[41] He claims to have over 700 fighters under his command. There is reason to suspect the interview was fake, since Mullah Abdul Salaam has been verified as the Taliban's shadow governor for Kunduz. One interesting note is Kunduz Governor Engineer Omar has claimed Mullah Abdul Salaam was killed in an Afghan security operation in September, an incident that occurred before Maulavi Ahmad's declaration of his shadow governor position. However, a man claiming to be Abdul Salaam phoned reporters following Omar's claim of his death, vowing to continue his attacks against the government.

Qari Sidiqullah: Designated Taliban district chief for Imam Sahib District. He was reportedly killed alongside a companion in the area around May 30-31 during a security operation.



Mullah Bashir (Qari Bashir Haqqani): (Information likely inconsistent, possibly falsified or mixed identities) Top Taliban leader operating in northeastern Afghanistan including Baghlan and Kunduz. Serves as a semi-official spokesman for the north and has issued several threats against the German government and its military forces in the north. He is a subcommander of Mullah Abdul Salaam. He made headlines in the summer of 2007 when he was granted temporary amnesty to conduct negotiations in Ghazni over the fate of the 21 abducted South Korean hostages. *Photo (left) shows Bashir in August 2007 as he and Mullah Nasrullah engaged in negotiations with the South Korean and Afghan governments over the fate of the 21 SK hostages seized in a Taliban ambush.*

RC-North Taliban personalities

Mullah Usman: Former top Taliban leader in northeastern Afghanistan (Badakshan, Takhar, Kunduz). He was killed during a police operation along with several insurgents and police after the militant group attacked a security check post in Takhar's Kalafan district on July 26-27, 2008.

Shaykh Mawlawi Muhammad Hasan Hashimi: Taliban commander in Takhar. He is the son of Muhammad Hashim, who was born "in a famous well-educated and jihadist family in the village of Ardishan in Farkhar Subdistrict in the Takhar Province 38 years



ago.” He is a top commander in Takhar. *Photo (left) allegedly shows Hashimi during an interview with Al-Sumud Magazine, a militant magazine from Afghanistan published in Arabic)*

ANP: Local units are notoriously corrupt. Many are sympathetic to the Taliban and/or actively participate in the narcotics industry, most likely providing protection for drug convoys and money laundering.

Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) – Two IJU operatives were arrested in Kunduz on May 12. The lead individual was described as a “known IJU militant” while the second person arrested was described as an associate. The IJU is a Turkish based militant group with strong ties to the Haqqani Network, who are active in western Pakistan (North Waziristan) and RC-East (Khost/Paktia/Paktika/Logar/Ghazni/Kabul).

The IMU, which the IJU initially splintered from, is believed to be responsible for the trafficking of nearly 70 percent of all heroin trafficked through Central Asia and are also active in Badghis province.

Locations

Chahar Darreh district: 15km southwest of Kunduz city where the German contingent is based. Aqtash is completely overrun by Taliban. Locals refer to them as “the only government functioning here.” Qosh Tappeh, a village also close to Kunduz, has resisted Taliban infiltration by countering their threats from former Mujahedeen commanders who now support the government and work at the schools. This is also the area where a June 8th ambush left two German soldiers shot and injured as well as the late June attack that killed three German troops when their armored personnel carrier crashed into a ditch and they drowned following a Taliban ambush.

Qasabha village (Chahar Darrah district): The area where 2 German soldiers would be injured during an IED on their vehicle on June 8.

Dobandi (Charhar Darrah district): The scene of a suicide bombing attack against a German convoy that left three school children (female) wounded on July 6, 2008. This was the third suicide bombing in Kunduz in 2008. The blast destroyed a German vehicle and a roadside electrical transmission pole, severing electricity to most of the district.

Imam Sahib district: Area in northern Kunduz that had an appointed Taliban district administrator. It is also a known smuggling transit route. Police confiscated over 1,000 bottles of alcohol here (smuggled in from Tajikistan) in July 2008.

Sharawan (Imam Sahib district): Shah Rawan is the name of a canal carrying water from the river in Taloqan to water the large plain of Dashti Archi (dasht means plain / steppe); along that canal Pashtun settlers were brought in since the 1930s. It is also near a village in Imam Sahib district that saw a fierce clash between police and Taliban on May 30 which left 3 insurgents dead and their motorcycle, RPG and machine gun confiscated.

Gunbad (Imam Sahib district): Area where the Taliban claim to be active in.

Hasqalan- Is the area near Kunduz City where four engineers were injured in a roadside bombing on June 18.

Aqtash village (Khanabad district): Northeast of Kunduz city, Aqtash is an insurgent stronghold. Taliban fighters are muscling in and shutting schools down in and near the village

Durahi Archi district: Durahi means road fork; it’s the junction on the road where the road to Archi goes off the main tarmac road. This is the area where Mohammad Najeb Jamil, director of Oil and Gas Department, was shot dead by Taliban assassins on June 17.

Wazir Khan village (Durahi Archi district): Scene of late night ambush that nearly killed district police chief (and brother to the governor) Col. Noor Khan on May 20.

Gul Tiapa: Located northwest of Kunduz City, GT was the area where German and Afghan soldiers killed Sheikh Abdul and his four men on June 16. Previously, insurgents blew a critical bridgehead in GT on August 17, 2008. The blast severed the connection between several villages on Kunduz City.

Angor Bagh (area of Kunduz City): Location of June 10 attack that nearly killed Deputy investigative officer of Takhar Mehmoodul Hassan.

Kabul Bandar (Bandar means “port of entry”): Scene of the September 23rd, 2008 suicide car bombing that rammed a German convoy and injured several people.

Aliabad and Chardara district corridor: Area where a German convoy was struck by an IED on August 27, 2008. Chardara was rocked by two suicide attacks and three IEDS between Jan. 1 and August 27, 2008.

Appendix II[\[42\]](#)

Taliban Statement Regarding the September 4 Air Strike in Kunduz

Findings of the Investigation Commission of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on the Gruesome Event of Kunduz and Names of Victims Ramadan 18, 1430 A.H, September 9, 2009

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

As reported in the media, Kunduz a northern province of Afghanistan, borne the brunt of a horrendous event. Jet fighters of foreign invaders on Friday night bombed a congestion of people who had gathered to take fuel from tankers left by the enemy. More than one hundred persons from various villages of Char Dara and Ali Abad districts were killed as a result. People who witnessed the place of the event and some media reporters who visited the scene say all the victims are civilians but NATO and Kabul regime's spokesmen and other authorities brazenly claim the victims are armed Taliban.

On the following day of this horrific event, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan constituted an investigation team to find facts about the event and submit them in the shape of a separate report. The aim was to present facts before our country men and the people of the world for their judgment. This report has been prepared under the sole moral, religious and patriotic Afghan obligation. It is neither a politically motivated report nor a propaganda-oriented. The facts contained in the report are solely those told by local people and the victims relatives. Therefore, it is a credible report of the event.

1. How the Event Occurred: Mujahideen ambushed fuel tanker on high way in Ali Abad district on Thursday September 3, 2009. The fuel tankers were carrying fuel for military vehicles from central Asian countries. Mujahideen usually carry out such attacks but this time the NATO forces left two fuel tankers intact in the scene of fighting. Mujahideen tried to drive the tankers to Char Dara district but one fuel tanker trapped in mud in a river between Ali Abad and Char Dara district,. The Mujahideen tried to empty the fuel of the tanker.

However, witnessing the tankers, the local people of the surrounding villages who were still awake because of Ramadan, approached the Mujahideen and requested them to allow them to take the gushing fuel home. Mujahideen allowed them to take the fuel but upon seeing the enemy reconnaissance planes in the air, Mujahideen told people to stop taking the fuel. But now the gathering of the people had reached hundreds of persons. Every one wanted to take the fuel home. Mujahideen could not prevent all the people from taking the fuel. However, they stopped some of them but many others came once again to take fuel. The Mujahideen who were present on the site say, we tried hard to tell people to go home but could not force them to do so. Exactly, at 1:45 AM in the night, jet fighters bombed the fuel tankers.

2. All the Victims are Civilians: At the time of the bombardment, some Mujahideen and local people had left the site but still there were people on the site. Residents of Haji Abdur Rahman village of Ali Abad district, Haji Essa khan village, Haji Aman village, Haji Rustam village, and Yaqub bai village, Essa khel of Char Dara district and of other villages say the victims are their sons and brothers and are common villagers. Many of them are miserable youth and students. The people categorically rejected statements by spokesmen of USA, the Kabul regime and some other vested-interest circles who claim the victims were armed Mujahideen. Similarly, tens of the injured are villagers as well.

3. White Phosphorus were used in the Attack: Contrarily to the claims that the victims have been burnt up in the flames of the fuels of the tankers or as a result of bomb explosions, in fact, the victims have been burnt in the flames of the bombs and other explosives. The witness says they saw flaming fire from the jets descending to the ground which in two cases scorched a ground of 100 square meters. They say the tankers were not hit directly from the planes but the fuel tankers caught fire from the flames of the bombs thrown from the jet fighters. The ground has been baked with flames.

There is no cavity or crater to show the impact of the bombs strike. The victims say a bad smelling matter glued to their bodies which they felt to be burning all their flesh down to bones. A father of two sons, who died after the air raid, said his sons had lost mental balance before dying. These are the same symptoms seen in victims of Bala Blok, Farah province. Later, doctors in Bala Blok said the symptoms of the victims were the result of the use of white phosphorus.

This unfolds veil from an unforgivable crime. The white phosphorus is a poisonous matter which is banned to be used according to all laws governing wars. But the invaders are brazenly using them. Ironically, the United Nations and other human rights advocacy entities have remained deaf and blind about this serious issue. The Kabul government was not allowing the victims to be taken to Kabul for the treatment. It is clear that they did not want the world to know about the use of the white phosphorus in Kunduz.

The exact number of the victims is still unknown because the victims of this horrendous event are hailing from villages sparsely situated in the area. To collect information about the exact number of those killed in the air raid will take time. Many of the corpses were burnt to ashes while others burnt beyond recognition.

Some dead bodies were carried away by water of the river. Some injured persons have been taken to hospitals. There are families who still do not know whether their members are martyred or injured or not. The local people and eye-witness estimate that up to 120 people may have died in the bloody event but the exact number of the victims could not be confirmed.

The following is the list of the victims along with their names and identity who have been buried up by their families. However, this is in no way the final account of the victims.

No.	Name	Father's Name	Village	Age	Job
1	A. Rahim	Haji Bashir	H.A. Rahman	34	Driver
2	Ibrahim	Haji Bashir	H.A. Rahma	20	farmer
3	Sami ullah	Haji Bashir	H.A. Rahman	17	Student
4	Zakir ullah	Abdul Dayan	H.A. Rahman	13	Student
5	Ahmad Gul	Gul Raiz	H.A. Rahman	15	Student
6	Muhammada Gul	Gul Raiz	H.A. Rahman	13	Student
7	Mullah Noor	Abdul Raof	H.A. Rahman	16	Student
8	Arif khan	Abdul Rahman	H.A. Rahman	12	Student
9	Abdul Dayan	Abdul Hanan	H.A. Rahman	14	Student
10	Abdul Samad	Abdul Hanan	H.A. Rahman	11	Student
11	Mohammad Sadiq	Gulo Bai	H.A. Rahman	35	farmer
12	Momin	Aziz khan	H.A. Rahman	22	Driver
13	Abdul Hameed	Abdulallah Khan	H.A. Rahman	34	farmer
14	Qudrat ullah	Aman ullah	H.A. Rahman	40	Shopkeeper
15	Abdul Ghoyor	Sahar Gul	H.A. Rahman	25	Labor
16	Najmudin	Gulanudin	H.A. Rahman	35	farmer
17	Muhammad Wali	Tor	Char Dara migrant	35	farmer
18	Ayaz	Muhammad Wali	Char Dara migrant	8	Student
19	Gul Douz	Ajab khan	Char Dara migrant	50	farmer
20	Muhammad	Gul Douz	Char Dara migrant	14	Student
21	Hakamudin	Haji Musa	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	31	Driver

22	Allah Noor	Haji Musa	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	25	farmer
23	Gul Din	Haji Musa	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	27	Shopkeeper
24	Ahmad Noor	Laludin	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	15	farmer
25	Abdul Khaliq	Suliman	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	24	Labor
26	Hasan	Muhammad Omer	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	60	Wrestler
27	Fazal	Wrestler Hasan	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	15	Labor
28	Mullah Qadam Shah	Abdul Mansor	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	40	Labor
29	Muhammad din	Abdullah Jan	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	25	farmer
30	Nadar khan	Akhtar Muhammad	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	15	farmer
31	Arif	Nadar khan	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	15	farmer
32	Alaf din	Akhtar Muhammad	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	16	farmer
33	Daoud	Ibrahim	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	15	Student
34	Aman ullah	Abdul Salam	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	30	farmer
35	Qodrat ullah	Abdul Dayan	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	20	farmer
36	Khodai dad	Abdul Wahab	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	19	farmer
37	Hafeez ullah	Abdul Wahab	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	17	Student
38	Jan Muhammad	Juma bai	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	20	Driver
39	Noor ullah	Juma bai	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	9	Student
40	Salam	Abdul Wadoud	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	14	Student
41	Alaf din	Haji Gul din	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	25	farmer
42	Wazir	Haji Gul din	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	22	Driver
43	Bashir	Haji Gul	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	17	farmer
44	Zikrullah	Alaf uдин	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	12	Student
45	Ajmal	Abdul Hanan	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	15	Student
46	Muhammad Ali	Noor Muhammad	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar Dara	35	Driver
47	Rahmat ullah	Muhammad Ali	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	14	Student
48	Ibrahim	Noor Muhammad	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	20	farmer
49	Saed Muhammad	Haji Jalat	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	33	Mill owner
50	Juma Gul	Haji Jalat	Yaqob bai village, District	27	farmer

			Char Dar		
51	Asad ullah	Haji Jalat	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	22	Shopkeeper
52	Aman ullah	Feroz	Yaqob bai village, District Char Dar	16	Shopkeeper
53	Hafeez ullah	Haji Nor ahmad	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	28	Boat worker
54	Masjidi	Mir Rahman	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	24	farmer
55	Sahamsudin	Mir Rahman	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	17	Student
56	Ihsan ullah	Saed Muhammad	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	19	Labor
57	Nasrat ullah	Muhammad ullah	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	25	farmer
58	Gulbadin	Jamaludin	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	22	Labor
59	Din Muhammad	Juma khan	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	45	Labor
60	Abdul Rahim	Mir Akbar	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	17	Student
61	Asad ullah	Wali Jan	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	19	Hotel worker
62	Faiz Muhammad	Jan Muhammad	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	18	Shopkeeper
63	Ahmad Shah	Muhammad Dauod	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	10	Student
64	Fazal Rahman	Mullah Abdul Rahman	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	19	Labor
65	Muhammad Musa	Ghaeb ullah	Haji Amanullah village, District Char Dara	33	farmer
66	Abdul qayom	Haji Mida	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	26	farmer
67	Ali Muhammad	Jan Muhammad	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	30	farmer
68	Ahmad din	Saed Aleem	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	14	Student
69	Noor Alam	Salamat khan	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	25	Shopkeeper
70	Saed Rahim	Samandar	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	28	farmer
71	Aziz ullah	Saed Ahmad din	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	24	farmer
72	Bashir Ahmad	Ghami	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	32	farmer
73	Abdul Rahim	Ghulam	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	22	farmer
74	Amir Gul	Karim	Essa khel village, District Char Dara	30	
75	Shah Wali	Mullah Akhtar	Haji Rustum village, District Char Dara	40	
76	Juma khan	Haji Shalo	Haji Rustum village, District Char Dara	35	Driver
77	Ajab khan	Haji Shalo	Haji Rustum village, District Char Dara	32	Shopkeeper
78	Ikram udin	Adam khan	Haji Rustum village, District Char Dara	21	Labor

79	Jamal udin	Naeem udin	Haji Rustum village, District Char Dara	21	farmer
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Conclusion

The above report substantiates that a most deplorable act of crime and atrocity has taken place in Kunduz province in which Afghan civilians have been targeted. The Charter of the United Nation, principles of the Amnesty International and the Geneva Conventions clearly oppose such crimes. If the United Nation, the Amnesty International and other human rights entities, the Islamic Conference and finally the so-called civilized world respect the value of the blood of a human being, their sincerity and commitment will be put to test following this horrendous event.

If the judges sitting in the Hague tribunal do not summon the perpetrators of this event to question them, or at least do not show reaction in the shape of condemnation against this event, then what face will they have to raise the voice of prosecuting perpetrators of crimes of humanity.

Ostensibly, they issue summons time and again to bring to book those who are involved in crimes of humanity. The event in Kunduz will prove that whether the world entities of human rights are sincerely working for the protections of human rights or they only raise empty slogans.

To end, we express our sympathy with the people of Kunduz for this atrocious event and suffice to remind them of the following divine message in order to deliver them from the violence of colonialism "Do not think Allah is unaware of the deed the wrongdoers do but He only postpones it until the Day when their eyes will be blurred. (True is the Word of Allah)

Toward an independent Islamic system in the country.

Fact-find Commission on Kunduz Event Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan

Appendix III

Photos of Ali Abad/Chahar Dara Air Strike, September 4, 2009





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