

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

Asia times online

## Al-Qaeda's sights on Pakistan, and beyond

By Syed Saleem Shahzad  
12/24/2009

ISLAMABAD - While the surge of 30,000 United States troops in Afghanistan can only lead to an escalation of fighting, a major problem looms across the border, where al-Qaeda plans a new front against the Pakistan army - a move that will further dry up Islamabad's vital support for the war in Afghanistan.

At the same time, the American-supported coalition government of liberal and secular parties in Pakistan faces a serious political and constitutional crisis, while the armed forces are stalled in their campaign against the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the tribal areas.

Simultaneously, al-Qaeda sources have told Asia Times Online, al-Qaeda has re-established itself in Somalia and Yemen. From Somalia, the sources say, al-Qaeda plans to further disrupt trade routes around the [Horn of Africa](#), while from Yemen, al-Qaeda aims to make a comeback in Iraq and in Saudi Arabia and beyond. The overall goal is to take control of all Muslim resistance movements in the region, very much on the lines of al-Qaeda's South Asian pattern.

In South Asia, al-Qaeda's chief of the Lashkar al-Zil (Shadow Army), Ilyas Kashmiri, sits in [Afghanistan](#) orchestrating targets, including in India. (Lashkar al-Zil is an alliance of several [Pakistani](#), Afghan, Uzbek, Iraqi and al-Qaeda groups that carry out operations under the al-Qaeda banner.)

Agents in the United States in early October exposed a plot in which an American national, David Coleman Headley, was allegedly planning terrorist attacks in Denmark and India. One of Headley's handlers was Ilyas Kashmiri.

The "Chicago [Conspiracy](#)" took the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) all the way to Lahore in

Pakistan, where a retired army officer, Major Abdul Rahman, was said to be Ilyas Kashmiri's main advisor. According to the FBI, massive acts of sabotage were planned in India, including attacks on nuclear facilities, the National Defense College and on parliament in the [capital](#), Delhi.

The objective, very much like the attacks on Mumbai in November 2008, was to spark a war between Pakistan and India that would force Pakistan to disengage from any support of the war in Afghanistan. As al-Qaeda sees it, victory in Afghanistan runs through Pakistan, and in combating the Pakistan army.

In his book *Sharpening the Spearheads for Fighting the Pakistani Army*, a top al-Qaeda ideologue, Abu Yahya al-Libbi, wrote a lengthy thesis justifying the need to fight against Pakistan's army and ruling elite, which he referred to as American [proxies](#) and as heretic as any Christian establishment, he writes:

... the affairs of Pakistan have reached a stage [where there is] .... aversion from the sharia, displacement from its rulings, placing in power of corrupt ones, alliances with the disbelievers, manifest assistance to them, warring against the people of faith and giving precedence to sacrifices that would gain the pleasure of the stray Nasaara [a Koranic term for Christians]. Thus, Pakistan became a staunch supporter in the alliance with the disbelievers who are in open war against the religion of Islam. Its army became a rich source for its spies and police, [heading](#) the fighting with the most direct participation in tearing apart the joints of the Islamic nation.

After drawing references in support of his argument from classical and modern Muslim jurists and scholars, Libbi gave three reasons for revolt against the Pakistani establishment. These include the fact that it is ruled by those who do not believe in the Islamic system of life and that "the Pakistan army appears as a group that holds back from much of the manifest and *mutawatir* legislation of Islam". Secondly, "The army of Pakistan has become an enemy assaulting religion, defending against which is obligatory."

And thirdly:

The government of Pakistan, its [resources](#) [army, police and secret agencies] has extended to this "assailant" enemy whatever it has been endowed with of military power and secret services, etc, and its army and secret services have been dedicated in the most absolute, open and public manner to these Christian forces that have transgressed upon the lands of the Muslims in Afghanistan. This is after they have opened their ports for their ships and supplies; and facilitated the ways for their convoys and their weapons; and put down military bases for their planes and forces; and established prisons for the detention of the righteous and mujahideen from the Muslims. They torture them and lacerate their bodies in order to please these disbelievers. They have mobilized their forces to act as guardians and protectors of what they call the boundaries between it and Afghanistan in order to prevent the Muslim mujahideen from helping their brothers and fulfilling the sharia-legislated obligations required of them.

In light of these three points, reinforced by the Pakistan army's crackdown against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, Libbi calls on the Muslims of Pakistan to revolt against its rulers and army.

This could be dismissed as a mere academic work by the Libyan Libbi, who was recently (incorrectly) said to have been killed in a US drone strike in the North Waziristan tribal area. Yet anger against the Pakistan military is widespread among militants.

"We don't have any intention for any ceasefire agreement or a peace deal. This is a battle which will go until final victory. Either the generals of the Pakistan army are wiped out, or we are," a senior commander of an al-Qaeda-linked militant group told Asia Times Online on condition of anonymity.

"The Pakistan army has reached a dead-end in its pursuit of the mujahideen. They realized their position and hence they offered a ceasefire deal," the militant said. "They evacuated the Kani Garam and Jannat areas of South Waziristan as a gesture of goodwill, but the mujahideen are in the mountains and we don't have any intention for any ceasefire.

"They also offered to have lengthy dialogue with the top Pakistani Taliban commanders to discuss the situation after the US withdrawal from the region, but we will not discuss any short-term or any long-term negotiations with them. This battle will go until the last."

Despite this apparent offer of peace talks, another military campaign looms. After some success in South Waziristan, the army has entered Orakzai Agency, the new headquarters of the TTP.

The militant explained, "The operations were done under immense American pressure and they will continue; that's why we don't trust any army offer. They always succumb to American pressures. However, even in Orakzai, they realize they are at a dead-end.

"They attacked the mujahideen from three [directions](#) - from Khyber Agency, from Hungu and from Kurram Agency. We blocked their advance from all three sides and the weather, which is increasingly cold with snow falls in the mountains, is helping the mujahideen. Before the snow melts, all the mujahideen will be gathered in Tera Valley [opposite the Afghan Tora Bora mountains] in Khyber Agency, including groups like Mangal Bagh, which were previously not ready to fight. From here we will mount an attack against the Pakistan army," the militant commander said.

### **Trouble in Islamabad**

Apart from whatever steps the Pakistani army takes to suppress the militants, the pro-American coalition in Islamabad is losing its grip. The situation is developing into a struggle between the civilian government on the one side and the Supreme Court and [the military](#) establishment on the other side. The sole beneficiary of this is likely to be al-Qaeda, as the state will lose its focus in the war against that group. The loser will be the United States.

The Supreme Court last week struck down the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) signed in 2007 by then-president Pervez Musharraf following a Washington and London-brokered deal between former premier Benazir Bhutto and Musharraf.

Under the NRO, all corruption cases against Bhutto and her husband, now President Asif Ali Zardari, were dropped, enabling them to return to Pakistan from exile. In addition, about 8,000 politicians, [political](#) workers and bureaucrats accused of corruption, embezzlement, money laundering, murder and terrorism were granted an amnesty. Many of these people now hold

senior positions, including cabinet posts, and they face court proceedings. The president cannot be tried while in office.

The names of these people were placed on the Exit Control List on the orders of the court. As a result, Minister Defense Chaudhary Ahmad Mukhtar was stopped from going to China to negotiate a defense deal. Minister of the Interior Rehman Malik, on whose orders the Exit Control List is constituted, is also named on it. The court also ordered the resumption of a court case in Switzerland for the recovery of state money allegedly swindled by Zardari and Benazir Bhutto.

According to sources close to the military establishment, a four-point agenda has been presented to Zardari for him to ride out the storm:

- ☐ Cancellation of the 17th constitutional amendment, at the latest by December 31, under which the president is empowered to dissolve the National Assembly and appoint the chiefs of the armed forces.
- ☐ Removal of all corrupt-tainted ministers from the cabinet.
- ☐ Implementation of good governance, which means no interference in the functions of national institutions so that they can work fairly and freely.
- ☐ The national government should include representatives of the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz group, the main opposition party.

Zardari has not responded well to this program, and he is bent on challenging the court's ruling on the NRO.

### **New fronts opening**

While the US focus is Afghanistan and the fresh 30,000 troops it will have there, al-Qaeda will push on to open up the war theater in Pakistan. At the same time, it has consolidated in Yemen and Somalia.

Al-Qaeda's presence in Somalia was limited until 2004, after which it applied the tactics it had learned in the Pakistani tribal areas - the transformation of indigenous Islamists into al-Qaeda's "blood brothers", and this without having to mobilize significant human or material resources. In Somalia, this has meant nurturing al-Shabaab Islamist insurgents.

The emergence in Somalia in 2006 of the Islamic Court Union - very similar to the Taliban - and its fall within six months and subsequent chaos and war with Ethiopia - provided al-Qaeda with the space to push its agenda; this is where the Lashkar al-Zil was launched. At this point, Ilyas Kashmiri and the recently killed al-Qaeda leader in Waziristan, Saleh Somali, oversaw the emergence of al-Shabaab. Hundreds of youths were funded and organized by al-Qaeda to work exclusively on pirate operations off Somalia to disrupt the important trade route.

Simultaneously, al-Qaeda regrouped in Yemen, spearheaded by the Lashkar al-Zil. Yemen is an exceptionally important country in the broader al-Qaeda strategy of forming a strategic backyard from which to control events in Palestine and Iraq and beyond - notably to revive its broken networks in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt.

Geographically, Yemen's location is similar to that of the tribal belt straddling Afghanistan and

Pakistan, from where militants run their operations in both countries. In Yemen, the Lashkar a-Zil's expert teams are training the Ibnul Balad (Sons of the Soil).

Some of al-Qaeda's key operations before the September 11, 2001, attacks on the US were hatched in Yemen. These include the bombing of the *USS Cole* in October 2000, logistical preparations for the "Black Hawk Down" operation and killing of US soldiers in Somalia in 1993, attacks on Jewish properties in Mombassa, Kenya, in 2002 and major attacks against Saudi targets.

Al-Qaeda took about five years to reach a turning point in the Afghanistan and Pakistani tribal areas, but the al-Qaeda leadership is convinced that its Yemen and Somalia operations will take a much shorter time.