



Central Asian Militancy

A Primary Source Examination

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR

Duncan Fitz

CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

Thomas M. Sanderson

Sung In Marshall

CSIS

CENTER FOR STRATEGIC &
INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

MAY 2014

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ISBN: 978-1-4422-2813-9 (pb); 978-1-4422-2814-6 (eBook)

Center for Strategic & International Studies
1616 Rhode Island Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202-887-0200 | www.csis.org

Rowman & Littlefield
4501 Forbes Boulevard
Lanham, MD 20706
301-459-3366 | www.rowman.com

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Acknowledgments

Special thanks to David Elkind, Zack Fellman, Sandra Geahchan, Annie Hudson, Chris Looney, Damian Mencini, Jack Miller, Daniel Paltiel, Joshua Russakis, and Brian Shevenaugh.

This report would not be possible without the generous support of the Diana Davis Spencer Foundation.

A Note about Sources

Obtaining primary source material on the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) remains extremely difficult, and this report bears out these difficulties. Since 2012 the Transnational Threats Project has endeavored to build a database of cached source material on the IMU and IJU. In the process of writing this report, some of these websites have gone offline. Thus, in many cases direct access to primary source material used in this report is simply no longer possible. To provide the reader with as much information as possible, the writing team has taken extreme pains to track down alternate ways for readers to access these primary sources.

Introduction

In these pitch-black circumstances, a glitter of hope and signs of dawn in the east of the nation of Islam has shone. Initiatives were taken to return the house of Islam and banners of Al-Shari'ah flap over the plains of Afghanistan. Many of the oppressed on earth started to group and mobilize again towards the refuge of Kharasan¹ the proud. . . . Signs of hope for prophesies of jihad began moving in Central Asia from Tajikistan to Uzbekistan to East Turkistan.²

Sometime around 1999, a militant ideologue named Abu Mus'ab al-Suri wrote a pamphlet titled *The Muslims in Central Asia and the Coming Battle of Islam*. A strong Afghanistan and the spread of jihad in Central Asia, al-Suri argued, was the first and most important priority for the global jihad.³ Any near-term prospect of using Afghanistan as a platform for the Central Asian jihad collapsed, however, when the U.S.-led coalition toppled the Taliban government in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001, attacks.

More than a decade later, Western forces in Afghanistan are drawing down and the ability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to secure the country remains uncertain.⁴ Within this context, the risk of reconstituted militant safe havens in Afghanistan cannot be ignored. If the Afghan security transition does go awry, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and an IMU splinter group called the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) could revisit and rekindle al-Suri's ideas.⁵ Both groups remain active in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater and may use northern Afghanistan as a springboard for extending the

1. Khorasan (also spelled Kharasan) refers to a vast territory comprising parts of Iran, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan that is often used as a jihadi rallying cry. According to radical Islamists, after they defeat their enemies in the Khorasan they will march on the Levant. Al Qaeda often uses the Khorasan in their propaganda. See Bill Roggio, "Omani Jihadist killed in US airstrike in the 'Khorasan,'" *Long War Journal*, May 14, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/05/us_drones_kill_omani.php.

2. Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri, "In the Name of Allah the Merciful," 2009, 29. <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/AFGP-2002-002871-Trans-Meta.pdf>.

3. Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al Suri* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 237.

4. U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, Report to Congress (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2012), 93, http://www.defense.gov/news/1230_Report_final.pdf.

5. For more on these organizations, see Thomas M. Sanderson, Daniel Kimmage, and David A Gordon, *From the Fergana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asian Jihadists* (Washington, DC: CSIS, March 2010), http://csis.org/files/publication/100324_Sanderson_FerganaValley_WEB_0.pdf.

banner of shari'a north of the Amu Darya River, the natural boundary separating Afghanistan from post-Soviet Central Asia.

The purpose of this report is to shed light on the IMU and IJU through an analysis of their media. What does the propaganda produced by these groups tell us about their ideology, the background of their fighters, their operational activities, and other important issues? Addressing these questions can help analysts and policymakers anticipate how the IMU and IJU may respond to a changing operating environment in Afghanistan.

Methodology

Evaluating any political entity through the lens of propaganda is fraught with challenges. As one IJU fighter put it, “When a hypocrite brings news to you, you have to investigate it thoroughly. It’s not only hypocrisy; much of the news is fabricated” and is “being broadcasted as part of psychological warfare.”⁶ The same can be said for jihadi media, which is saturated with hyperbole and self-aggrandizement.⁷ However, primary source material, with hyperbole and self-aggrandizement, reveals much about the priorities, worries, and strategies of terrorist networks.

Thus the first step for the research team was to build a library of primary source material released by IMU, IJU, and associated groups. Additionally, statements from jihadi websites were included in the collection. Researchers then set about translating and analyzing the propaganda, martyrdom tapes/interviews, combat footage/reports, training footage, memoirs, etc. The team then proceeded to collect data on all known attacks by these groups. This included looking at their operations across all of South and Central Asia.

Two additional methodological caveats must be mentioned. First, the clandestine nature of terrorist communications renders any catalog of IMU and IJU incomplete. This collection gap prevented researchers from making several key analytic judgments, such as how the ideology and messaging of both groups has evolved over time.⁸

Second, a lack of Uzbek language skills not only prevented the team from systematically exploiting websites associated with the IMU and IJU, but also made researchers heavily dependent on translations provided by others. Notwithstanding these limitations, the documents gathered offer a unique and at times candid perspective on the thinking and outlook of IMU and IJU members.

6. “Interview with IJU fighter Abu Tasir Al-Turki,” NEFA Foundation, April 14, 2008. Please note that the NEFA (Nine Eleven Finding Answers) foundation is defunct and its website is no longer in existence. This report draws upon cached NEFA pages.

7. The IMU, for example, claimed to have killed 137 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) soldiers during a single 2011 battle in Baghlan Province; iCasualties.org, an independent website cited by major newspapers, indicated that only 7 coalition casualties occurred in Baghlan that entire year. See iCasualties.org, “Fatalities by Province,” <http://icasualties.org/oef/ByProvince.aspx>; and J. Z. Adams, “An Uzbek struggle in name only,” *Asia Times*, January 25, 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NA25Ag01.html.

8. For an example of the insights provided by a more comprehensive collections of jihadi media, see Daniel Kimmage, “Al-Qaeda Central and the Internet,” New America Foundation, March 2010, http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/kimmage2_0.pdf.

1 | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

Operational Scope

In conjunction with like-minded groups, the IMU has expanded its operational reach to include much of northern Afghanistan, possibly creating linkages from Waziristan to Uzbekistan. Nonetheless, IMU operations do not currently pose an existential threat to any state and the group's fate is likely tied to the broader outcome of the Afghan War. Interestingly, IMU propaganda indicates an increasing emphasis on attacks in Europe itself—primarily in Germany. However, given that the documents analyzed here reflect problems with recruitment and morale, this changing emphasis may be a sign of strategic weakness and a desire to maintain the group's relevance.

PAKISTAN

The “apostate” Pakistani government features heavily in IMU propaganda documents—not surprising given the centrality of that nation to the global jihad as well as the fact that the IMU has been based in Waziristan since 2002.¹

Although IMU propaganda is prone to dramatic exaggerations—such as claiming to have killed 137 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) soldiers in a single battle in Baghlan Province during 2011²—militants have unquestionably been very active in Pakistani territory in recent years. The IMU has undoubtedly contributed to the violence. A set of photographs released by the IMU in November 2009 shows a number of beheaded Pakistani soldiers, accompanied by the caption “this happens when you befriend infidels.”³

The image of Pakistan selling out to the United States is a recurring one throughout the documents analyzed for this report. After the death of Osama bin Laden, for example, IMU representatives took to the airwaves and declared that “if Sheikh Usama bin Laden had actually been martyred, then the US [United States] would not have been able to commit this despicable crime within the boundaries of Pakistan without the assistance,

1. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2008* (London: Child Soldiers International, 2008), 40–42, http://www.child-soldiers.org/global_report_reader.php?id=97.

2. J. Z. Adams, “An Uzbek struggle in name only,” *Asia Times*, January 25, 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NA25Ag01.html.

3. “Uzbek terror group releases photos of German recruits, beheaded Pakistanis,” BBC Monitoring Europe, November 19, 2009.

cooperation or at least the notice of this state of Kufr . . . : we once again call our brothers in Pakistan, in the region and all over the globe to wage Jihad against the US and the blood-thirsty apostate government of Pakistan.”⁴

A three-part German-language video, titled “Good News from Pakistan,” was released in September 2011. It accosts Pakistani leaders for selling out Muslims to “the unbelievers.” While images of mujahideen attacking Pakistani army outposts roll across the screen, Yassin Chouka declares, “We fight the Pakistani government because they are God’s enemies, because they have betrayed God’s religion, because they fight God’s religion, because they have left God’s religion. . . . [T]hey find themselves in one trench with the Americans [and] fight with them side by side against Islam and the Muslims.”⁵

AFGHANISTAN

As noted in a 2010 Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report, all previous large-scale movements of IMU fighters have resulted from significant changes to the status quo—often changes imposed by external actors.⁶ Perhaps unsurprisingly, the IMU’s operational reach expanded during the past few years as violence steadily increased throughout much of Afghanistan. Between July 2009 and July 2010, the number of enemy-initiated attacks doubled to roughly 4,000. By July 2012 there were fewer attacks, though still at a higher level than in 2009.⁷

By 2012 IMU fighters had become concentrated in southern as well as north-central Afghanistan. The former region is a hotbed of the Haqqani network and is an area where IMU fighters have been implicated in a number of coordinated insurgent attacks.⁸ Given that the IMU is based across the border in North Waziristan, this is a logical development.⁹ The IMU is also relatively strong in pockets of ethnic Uzbeks in the south, particularly in the Deh Chopan District of Zabul Province.¹⁰ In a piece for *Small Wars Journal* in 2010, U.S. Army Captain Andrew Feitt described how IMU fighters acted as force multipliers for the Taliban-led insurgency.

4. “The Translation of a Statement of Abdul Fattah Ahmadi, the Vice-Amir of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan,” *Azelin*, May 2011, <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/jundullah-studios-presents-a-new-statement-from-the-deputy-amc4abr-of-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-e28098abd-al-fatae1b8a5-ae1b8a5madc4ab-on-the-death-of-bin-lc481den.pdf>.

5. “German-Language Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Video Carried on Dailymotion,” Dailymotion, September 7, 2011, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xkvlwo_1-2-studio-jundullah-froh-e-botschaft-aus-pakistan-teil-2_news.

6. Thomas Sanderson, Daniel Kimmage, and David A. Gordon, *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asian Jihadists* (Washington, DC: CSIS, March 2010), 18, http://csis.org/files/publication/100324_Sanderson_FerghanaValley_WEB_0.pdf.

7. Matthew Rosenberg, “Coalition Says Afghan Attacks Didn’t Fall After All,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/27/world/asia/coalition-says-afghan-attacks-didnt-fall-after-all.html>.

8. Anand Gopal, “The most deadly US foe in Afghanistan,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2009/0601/p10s01-wosc.html>.

9. “Uzbek group concedes killing of its leader,” *Dawn*, August 5, 2012, <http://dawn.com/2012/08/05/uzbek-group-concedes-killing-of-its-leader/>.

10. Captain Andrew Feitt, “Countering the IMU in Afghanistan,” *Small Wars Journal*, March 11, 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/countering-the-imu-in-afghanistan>.

In places like the Deh Chopan district of Zabul province, the IMU is a critical piece of the local insurgency. . . .¹¹

[T]heir safe haven in Deh Chopan allows them to influence events throughout RC-South [Regional Command-South]. . . . The district of Deh Chopan in the far north of Zabul province was one of the first locations where the Taliban returned following their initial expulsion, and it later became a refuge for their Uzbek allies. The region's precipitous mountain valleys keep it isolated from the outside while its location at the crux of Zabul, Uruzgan, and Kandahar provinces makes it an ideal staging ground for insurgent movements. The district itself is sparsely populated, but from here insurgents can transit with relative ease to the Marah or Hazarbuzz valleys and then continue north into Uruzgan or south to join the course of the Arghandab River into Kandahar province. It was this combination of secluded mountain safe haven and ready access to the battlegrounds of RC-South that made Deh Chopan attractive to [IMU leader Tahir] Yuldashev and the IMU.¹²

The expansion into northern Afghanistan is perhaps more troubling, however, because it shows that the IMU—successfully banished to the Pakistani tribal regions by 2002—is now capable of operating throughout much of Afghanistan. According to the *Long War Journal*, for instance, the IMU had successfully integrated into the Taliban's shadow government in virtually every northern province.¹³ Indeed, "The IMU has been a prime target of special operations forces in Afghanistan. So far this year [August, 2012], special operations forces have conducted at least 26 raids against the IMU; in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Faryab, Logar, Helmand, Kunduz, Takhar, and Wardak, or eight of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, according to International Security Assistance Force press releases."¹⁴

The Jundullah¹⁵ propaganda machine has focused heavily on the IMU's activities in Kunduz Province, home to the largest German base in the country. Multiple German-language videos extol the sacrifices of IMU's German "martyrs," for example, while a recording released in March 2011 showed the execution of an Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier by militants based in the province.¹⁶ The IMU has also claimed credit for numerous suicide assaults in Afghanistan in recent years including the May 2010 attack on the American base in Bagram, the October 15, 2011 assault on the Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction

11. Ibid.

12. Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

13. Bill Roggio, "ISAF captures 'senior IMU leader' in Kunduz," *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/08/isaf_captures_senior_imu_leade.php#ixzz23dK4CcYf.

14. Ibid.

15. Jundullah Media or Jundullah Studio is the official media wing of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Jundullah consistently produces high-quality videos that play an integral role in the IMU's multilayered media operations, which also include the publication of audio, written statements, and newsletters in Uzbek, Russian, Persian, Arabic, German, Burmese, Urdu, and Pashto. For more information, see http://www.actforamericaeducation.com/downloads/All_Files_by_Type/nefajihadmedia0309.pdf.

16. "IMU Releases Fifth Video on Activity in Afghanistan," SITE Intelligence Group, March 17, 2011. Please note that the SITE Intelligence Group requires a fee for access to its services.

Team (PRT), and an attack that targeted an armored bus in Kabul on October 29, 2011.¹⁷ According to data compiled by the *Long War Journal*, the IMU became, by 2012, the most heavily targeted foreign terrorist group in Afghanistan.¹⁸

The IMU's fixation on Kunduz was foreseeable given some members' linguistic and emotional ties to the province's presiding NATO (German) forces. Similarly, IMU fighters have flocked to the ethnic Uzbek areas of northern Afghanistan, particularly in Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan, Samangan, Sar-e-Pol, and Takhar provinces.¹⁹ In addition to exploiting the general instability, the demographic connections have allowed the foreign extremists to claim the mantle of popular resistance fighters. Two months before Yuldashev's death in August 2009, Joshua Foust of the America Security Project cited on-the-ground sources that warned:

In the Uzbek areas of northern Afghanistan, we've been hearing the IMU and Tahir Yuldash [Yuldashev] invoked more and more often over the past year. The IMU name has shown up on night letters, and local government figures (initially dismissive) are now publicly claiming that Yuldash is behind the recent escalation of insurgent activity in Jawzjan [Jowzjan] province—especially in southwestern Darzab district and Qush Tepa district, where anti-government forces carried out a dramatically successful assassination of the district governor, police chief, and head of intelligence back in March.

The Taliban are remembered with loathing by most of the non-Pashtun population between Faryab and Balkh. This is probably why the IMU “brand” has been coming back into fashion, regardless of whether Yuldash's gang is actually involved . . . the erosion of security in the majority-Uzbek provinces of Afghanistan is worrying, and worth watching.²⁰

Indeed, the tempo of insurgent activity in northern Afghanistan has increased dramatically in recent years.²¹ While much of the coalition and media focus has been on operations in RC-South and RC-East, events in RC-North continue to warrant additional scrutiny.

GERMANY

Even before the 2007 Sauerland plot served notice that jihadists were willing and able to strike on Western territory,²² the origins of IMU leaders such as the Chouka brothers²³ gave

17. Bill Roggio, “IMU announces death of new emir, names new leader,” *Long War Journal*, August 4, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/08/imu_announces_death_1.php#ixzz23ckR14zb.

18. Ibid.

19. Jacob Zenn, “IMU Reestablishes Bases in Northern Afghanistan,” Central Asia–Caucasus Institute, February 8, 2012, <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5710/print>.

20. Joshua Foust, “Taking the IMU in Northern Afghanistan,” *Registan*, June 28, 2009, <http://registan.net/index.php/2009/06/28/taking-the-imu-in-northern-afghanistan/>.

21. Bill Roggio, “Special operations forces capture two in Afghan north,” *Long War Journal*, July 10, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/07/special_operations_f_11.php.

22. Sanderson et al., *From the Fergana Valley to South Waziristan*, 9.

23. Mounir and Yassin Chouka are two Moroccan brothers born in Germany who carry out operations for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan's media wing, Jundullah, along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. The U.S. State Department designates the brothers as “specially designated global terrorists.” For more information, see

the organization a particular interest in Germany. Although they failed, the attempted attacks highlighted the IMU's ability to successfully attract Germans and Turks to its ranks.

IMU propaganda focuses heavily on German-speaking Muslims living in Europe. The Chouka brothers employed a dual track strategy, repeatedly extolling the virtues of German martyrs²⁴ while simultaneously shaming Muslims who stayed behind. "It is strange, my brothers and sisters," declared a German IMU fighter in the winter of 2008, "if somebody reads the following [Qur'anic] verse and does not hurry to take action: "Unless ye go forth, He will punish you with a grievous penalty, and put others in your place."²⁵

The speaker accuses Muslims in Europe of focusing too much on their earthly lives rather than on the hereafter. "Do you not want Allah's mercy?" he asks.²⁶

Similarly, a video from September 2008 featured recorded messages from IMU fighters of German origin and exhorted their countrymen to embark upon global jihad. "I do not say to you merely to come to the land of jihad, rather I say to you [that] you should be racing one another to come to the land of jihad . . . in Khorasan," says one fighter. Another fighter, identified as Commander Muhammed, downplays his German roots in an appeal to Islamic solidarity. "Come and let us fight together [in Khorasan]. . . . I love you for Allah's sake—I am not a Berliner.'" ²⁷

Yassin Chouka himself belittled the struggle in Germany and instead argued that every Muslim was obliged to emigrate in search of jihad.²⁸ He states "my dear brothers in Germany, it cannot be that some mujahideen lead a jihad, and that others sit at home and do nothing."²⁹ The documents analyzed here contain the unmistakable opinion that it is a Muslim's Islamic duty to travel to Khorasan, where the "real" jihad is taking place.

The IMU propaganda compiled for this study underwent a subtle shift starting in early 2011, and may shed insight into the jihadists' evolving strategic outlook. While they still encouraged Muslims to travel to Khorasan for the global jihad, for instance, Yassin and Mounir Chouka increasingly urged German Muslims to take up arms in their native country instead. Jundullah videos began to blame German "crimes" on the "Evil

"Terrorist Designations of Yassin Chouka, Monir Chouka, and Melvut Kar," media note, U.S. Department of State, January 26, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/01/182550.htm>.

24. Bill Roggio, "IMU lauds another German killed in US drone strike," *Long War Journal*, April 19, 2013, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/04/imu_lauds_another_ge.php; and Florian Flade, "After bin Laden: Martyrdom Celebrated in German Recruiting Video," *Die Welt*, June 2, 2012, <http://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/after-bin-laden-martyrdom-celebrated-in-german-recruiting-video-/c1s2969/>.

25. "Anne Stenersen, "A Unified Strategy towards Germany?," *Jihadica*, February 2, 2009, <http://www.jihadica.com/a-unified-strategy-towards-germany/>.

26. Ibid.

27. "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU): 'Glad Tidings from Afghanistan,'" NEFA Foundation, September 2008.

28. "German terrorists pass through Yemen, meet Awlaki, before joining IMU in Pakistan," *Long War Journal*, February 15, 2011, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/02/german_terrorists_pa.php.

29. Florian Flade, "After bin Laden: Martyrdom Celebrated in German Recruiting Video," *Worldcrunch.com*, May 2, 2011, <http://worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/after-bin-laden-martyrdom-celebrated-in-german-recruiting-video-/c1s2969/>.

Fatherland”³⁰ itself rather than on an American- or Jewish-led global conspiracy.³¹ After Filiz Gelowicz was convicted of financially supporting terrorists, Mounir Chouka declared Germany to be an enemy state. Chouka also called on all Muslims to follow a “pyramid system” for attacks in Germany, targeting heads of state first, followed by federal officials, soldiers, and finally average citizens.³²

Jundullah releases began to pay increasingly close attention to the German domestic scene as well. On February 9, 2012, Mounir Chouka posted a lengthy video detailing the many “crimes” committed by his birth nation. “The German government must think we are stupid,” he claims, because “our main enemies are the German politicians, the German leadership in the background who are working for the Jews, [and] the hedonistic German society who gives his vote to homosexual politicians.”³³ Chouka subsequently vows that “there will and must be a series of attacks in Germany targeting the people. . . . [W]hy should the Muslim live in fear and you in safety? Jihad in Germany is just a question of time.”³⁴ Not to be outdone, Yassin responded on 10 March with a statement of his own, urging German Muslims to “turn their fun-loving society to nothing. . . . [L]et them live in sorrow and fear as your sisters in Palestine live in sorrow and fear.”³⁵

Jundullah’s focus on German issues rather than the pan-Islamic jihad continued in earnest. After the Pro-North Rhine Westphalia (Pro-NRW) political party displayed caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad during a series of rallies, for example, the Chouka brothers called for the assassination of Pro-NRW members as well as employees of the *Der Spiegel* magazine that covered the events.³⁶ Rather than demonstrating in public and risking arrests, however, the audio statement offered detailed tactical advice on how the missions should be carried out. “Lie in ambush for and seek single persons from Pro-NRW in the way a secret service would do. Gather information about their places of residence, their daily routines, their workplaces, and other information. And then, after good and extensive research and a strategic plan, take action [and] kill them!”³⁷

30. Bill Roggio, “Wanted IMU leader urges attacks in Germany,” *Long War Journal*, February 11, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/02/wanted_imu_leader_ur.php.

31. “Islamic Terrorist Group Threatens to Attack Germany and Jews,” Anti-Defamation League, April 24, 2009, http://archive.adl.org/main_Terrorism/imu_video.htm.

32. “Germany: al Qaeda militant, 3 suspects planned attacks,” CNN, May 2, 2011, <http://www.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/europe/04/30/germany.qaeda.arrests/index.html>.

33. Abu Adam Al-Almaani, “Evil Homeland” (in German), Jundullah Studio, February 9, 2012, <http://archive.org/details/mtn-shr-de?start=583.5>.

34. Ibid.

35. “German IMU Spokesman in New Message Incites Western Muslims to Carry out Terror Attacks: ‘Only Justification for Living among Infidels Is to Terrorize them,’” Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), April 10, 2012, <http://www.memri.org/report/en/0/0/0/0/0/6263.htm> (subscription required).

36. Associated Press, “German magazine steps up security after terrorist calls for killings of employees,” Fox News, May 22, 2012, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2012/05/22/german-magazine-steps-up-security-after-terrorist-calls-for-killings-employees/>.

37. Ibid.

CONCLUSION

Although significant, this shifting rhetoric by itself does not provide definitive proof of a change in the IMU's ability to attack domestic Western installations. Although it could reflect greater confidence rooted in their expanding operational reach, it may in fact signal a sign of weakness—either difficulties attracting Germans to the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater or increasing pressure from coalition forces, for instance. When viewed in this light, Mounir Chouka's desire to see “the Arab Spring be followed by a European Summer”³⁸ is more reminiscent of Osama bin Laden's futile desire to foment organized global jihad, documented in *Letters From Abbottabad*,³⁹ than it is of the protestors in the streets of Tahrir Square.

Indeed, the IMU has taken a tremendous beating in recent years. Hints of low morale and problems with the low quality of new recruits are evident in much of the documents analyzed here. An internal letter prepared in May 2011 criticizes the “undisciplined” recruits, whose “naiveté . . . ingratitude . . . and greed” are causing headaches for senior leadership. The author also laments that spy planes and drone attacks, which “circle 24 hours a day over our heads,” had taken a sizable toll,⁴⁰ with thousands of fighters killed and “great misfortunes” for the IMU cause.⁴¹

The writer complains that “all the states that feel threatened by the jihad have turned on their secret services and now there is a jam of people trying to listen to our phone lines and catch our emails. . . . [I]n the 21st century, one [can even] hurt the mujahideen through computer viruses.”⁴² Another possibility, reported by *Der Spiegel* and others, is that the IMU is losing German recruits because the movement could no longer afford adequate training or weapons for its fighters.⁴³

These documents suggest that the IMU, often described as a “localized threat,”⁴⁴ may be attempting to change its operational locale. While it remains vulnerable to Coalition pressure in the AfPak region, it is not yet clear if the IMU has been successfully contained or if it can in fact strike in the European theater. As such, much will depend on how the broader transition to Afghan National Security Forces control—as well as greater intelligence sharing between Western nations—fares in the coming years.

38. “In New Audio, IMU Spokesman Praises Muhammad Merah,” MEMRI, April 9 2012, <http://www.memrijttm.org/in-new-audio-imu-spokesman-praises-muhammad-merah.html> (subscription required).

39. Don Ressler, Gabriel Koehler-Derrick, Liam Collins, Muhammad al-Obaidi, Nelly Lahoud, *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Laden Sidelined?* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2012), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/letters-from-abbottabad-bin-laden-sidelined>.

40. Jumad al-Awwal, “Obstacles in the Way of Jihad” [in German; author's translation], May 6, 2011, <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/abd-al-fatae1b8a5-ae1b8a5madc4ab-obstacles-in-the-way-of-jihc481d.pdf>.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Yassin Musharbash, “Home-Grown Militant: Terrorists Claim German Jihadist Dead in Afghanistan,” *Der Spiegel*, June 3, 2011, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/home-grown-militant-terrorists-claim-german-jihadist-dead-in-afghanistan-a-766406.html>.

44. Foust, “Taking the IMU in Northern Afghanistan.”

Relations with Other Groups

Closely allied with al Qaeda and the Taliban before 9/11, IMU propaganda now points to a strong partnership with the Haqqani network as well. IMU fighters are also growing closer to Taliban shadow governments in northern Afghanistan. The IMU's relationships with local populations, however, seem to range from passive toleration to active opposition.

The IMU has proven itself capable of integrating with jihadi groups regardless of location. This resiliency has allowed it to survive despite the post-2001 crackdown. In Afghanistan, Jundullah videos repeatedly claim that the oaths sworn to Mullah Omar remain valid, suggesting that IMU fighters remain close with Taliban leaders in the Quetta Shura.⁴⁵ As IMU fighters have expanded their reach throughout Afghanistan, so too have they increased their number of partners. Evidence suggests that IMU mujahideen now work closely with the Haqqani network as well as local Taliban units throughout much of Afghanistan.⁴⁶

Interestingly, al Qaeda does not feature prominently in either the IMU's media releases or internal documents. Although homage was paid to Osama bin Laden after his death, very few documents purport to show any sort of an operational connection.⁴⁷ In contrast, a recurring theme is the closeness between the IMU and leaders of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP; usually called the Pakistani Taliban).⁴⁸ A Jundullah video released in December 2010, for instance, contains footage of IMU and TTP fighters attacking Pakistani army checkpoints. Afterward, a TTP commander based in South Waziristan praises the raid and discusses his goals for further militancy in the region.⁴⁹

More recently, in November 2012—and with the help of the TTP, IMU is reported to have attempted a suicide bombing of Pakistani militant commander Maulvi Nazir.⁵⁰ Nazir, later killed in a U.S. drone strike on January 2, 2013,⁵¹ was a leading detractor of the IMU and often conflicted with the TTP over that group's close relationship with the foreign fighters. Commander Nazir was deeply critical of what he considered the IMU's harmful impact on tribal politics and life in South Waziristan, where the IMU fled in 2002 following U.S. and coalition battlefield successes in Afghanistan.

45. Anne Stenersen, "A Unified Strategy towards Germany?," *Jihadica*, February 2, 2009, <http://www.jihadica.com/a-unified-strategy-towards-germany/>; message from Mohammad Tohir Farouk, January 5, 2006.

46. Bill Roggio, "ISAF Captures IMU Facilitator in Northeastern Afghanistan," *Long War Journal*, May 24, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/05/isaf_captures_imu_fa_1.php.

47. "IMU Questions US Account of Bin Laden's Assassination," SITE Intelligence Group, May 24, 2011.

48. "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) Abu Adam al-Almani: 'New Year in Waziristan,'" NEFA Foundation, January 19, 2011.

49. "Asia Times Online in Swat," Youtube.com, January 15, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11ZZr4K23nw&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

50. Jacob Zenn, "The Growing Alliance between Uzbek Extremists and the Pakistani Taliban," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 11, no. 5 (March 8, 2013), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40562&tx_ttnews\[backPid\]=684&no_cache=1#.UpPCNeIXln8](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40562&tx_ttnews[backPid]=684&no_cache=1#.UpPCNeIXln8).

51. Salman Masood and Ismail Khan, "Drone Kills a Pakistani Militant Behind Attacks on U.S. Forces," *New York Times*, January 3, 2013.

Shortly after the attempted assassination of Nazir, in December 2012 the IMU also contributed to a TTP assault on a Pakistani air force base in Peshawar.⁵² And in April 2012 the IMU and TTP executed a coordinated assault on the Bannu prison in Pakistan, setting free almost 400 prisoners.⁵³

CSIS interviews in Peshawar and Lahore in January 2013 revealed differing opinions concerning the relationship between the TTP and the IMU—and the overall strength of the Uzbek fighters. A former senior Pakistani law enforcement and intelligence official believes that the IMU is assertive and surging in influence, citing as evidence the 2012 air base, airport, and prison attacks.⁵⁴

Offering a different assessment, one of Pakistan's most respected journalists suggested that the IMU in 2013 was in decline.⁵⁵ In describing their state of affairs, this Peshawar-based journalist characterized IMU operators as “leftovers” whom (at least for the dwindling number of actual Uzbeks in the group) may want to return to Uzbekistan, but they had no choice but to attack the Pakistani state while under the protection and support of the TTP. “They are foreigners and have no choice,”⁵⁶ he added. Finally, this source suggested that from a peak of 1,000 fighters initially entering Pakistan in 2001, their numbers were down to “only a few hundred” and suffered from recent operations in Afghanistan's Kunduz and Takhar provinces.

Supporting this assessment of a more diverse membership, IMU propaganda rarely discusses the Uzbek government or other Central Asian jihadi groups. In fact, the Chouka brothers mainly attack Western governments for supporting the Karimov government rather than focusing on Karimov himself.⁵⁷ One possible explanation is that, as evidenced by an IMU release showing that only 4 of 87 “martyrs” during 2011 were actually from Uzbekistan, the IMU has morphed into “an Uzbek struggle in name only.”⁵⁸ Another possibility—and one echoed by the aforementioned journalist interviewed in Peshawar in January 2013—is that President Islom Karimov's brutal crackdown⁵⁹ has caused the jihadists to temporarily focus their efforts on what they perceive as softer targets.

By closely linking itself with unpopular extremist groups such as the Taliban, however, the IMU has failed to win the allegiance of local populations. A common refrain throughout the internal documents reviewed for this report, for example, is frustration with local tribes alerting American and Pakistani officials to jihadists' whereabouts in return for

52. “Chechen Militants Behind Peshawar Airport Attack,” *Pakistan Today*, December 26, 2012, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2012/12/26/news/national/chechen-militants-behind-peshawar-airport-attack>.

53. Christopher Anzalone, “The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: Down but not out,” *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2012, http://afpak.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/11/20/the_islamic_movement_of_uzbekistan_down_but_not_out.

54. Author interview in Lahore, Pakistan, January 14, 2013 (source identity withheld).

55. Author interview in Peshawar, Pakistan, January 17, 2013 (source identity withheld).

56. Ibid.

57. Roggio, “Wanted IMU leader urges attacks in Germany.”

58. Adams, “An Uzbek struggle in name only.”

59. Sanderson et al., *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan*, 10.

reward money.⁶⁰ IMU leaders complain that much of their time is spent trying to “persuade the people of the actual situation” in order to counter “the bribing of tribal leaders and the spreading of lies”⁶¹ by foreign intelligence services.

Tension between local residents and foreign fighters is not surprising, however, particularly after instances such as the clashes between Uzbek fighters and local tribesmen in South Waziristan that killed 160 people in March 2007.⁶² IMU’s religious authorities are not immune from local animosity either, as evidenced by the subdued reception given to Mufti Abu Zar Azzam’s request for help with the jihad by worshippers in a Waziristan mosque in January 2012.⁶³

As a result, IMU fighters have been forced to rely on intimidation as they have expanded into new, often unfamiliar locations. In the Larzab area of Zabul Province, for instance, IMU fighters reportedly ban the local population from making eye contact or interacting with the mujahideen. This does not stop the foreign fighters from demanding that the local population pay “taxes” to support the armed struggle, however.⁶⁴ While anecdotal, these stories paint a dramatically different picture from the situation portrayed in the IMU’s external propaganda, in which local residents shower the mujahideen with praise and gifts.⁶⁵

Given IMU’s purported closeness to the Pakistani Taliban, American policymakers may be curious about the IMU’s relationship with the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The documents reveal an IMU that is befuddled by the ISI’s duplicity and double-dealing—sentiments that are, ironically, likely to resonate with U.S. officials. IMU leaders repeatedly accuse the ISI of sending prisoners to, and sharing information with the Americans in return for U.S. financial assistance while simultaneously arming mujahideen to attack U.S. forces across the border in Afghanistan.⁶⁶ In May 2011, for instance, an IMU commander recounts an offer previously received from ISI officials. “Late Amir Muhammad Taher ‘Faruq’ received an offer from the ISI five years ago. [The ISI’s] offer was that they would support him financially if he would give up the fight in Pakistan and move instead to fight the Americans in Afghanistan. In addition, he was asked to turn over some of his old and weak fighters, so that they could be shown to the Americans as proof that the Pakistanis had the tribal areas under control.”⁶⁷

This offer was purportedly turned down. Perhaps as a result, the ISI increased pressure against IMU militants in the tribal areas. In a November 2011 speech, militant leaders

60. Al-Awwal, “Obstacles in the Way of Jihad.”

61. Ibid.

62. Sanderson et al., *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan*, 13; Feitt, “Countering the IMU in Afghanistan.”

63. “Respected Mufti Abu Zarr (h.A),” Dailymotion, 2011, http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xmc9rp_respected-mufti-abu-zarr-h-a_tech.

64. Feitt, “Countering the IMU in Afghanistan.”

65. Banner of Tawheed, part 10 of *What’s Happening in Tribal Areas*, <https://archive.org/details/WhatsHappeningInTribalAreasPart-10>.

66. Al-Awwal, “Obstacles in the Way of Jihad.”

67. Ibid.

complained that “today, the helpless and poor people of Waziristan have helped to defeat the so-called superpower . . . for harboring the mujahideen, they are being killed and targeted by the drones, by the apostate Pakistan Army, by the ISI, and by tribal militias.”⁶⁸

Funding

The documents analyzed in this report contain few references to the IMU’s financial situation or fund-raising efforts. As such, it is impossible to make definitive judgments on this issue. Nonetheless, there are a few interesting story lines that emerge.

First, the IMU likely receives much of its funding through drug trafficking proceeds. The organization’s closeness with the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban—both of whom receive tens if not hundreds of millions of dollars annually from the narcotics industry⁶⁹—buttresses this hypothesis. U.S. Special Forces units have documented how IMU militants facilitate the poppy trade throughout southern Afghanistan from militant bases in Deh Chopan, Zabul.⁷⁰

Second, other IMU documents reference funding sources located in European nations such as Germany and the Czech Republic.⁷¹ While few details are provided, these developments are notable because they describe a potentially large financial reservoir for the IMU. Given the evidence of financial and supply shortages that appear in these IMU documents, American intelligence analysts should keep a close eye on any increase in overt IMU fund-raising efforts in Europe.

68. Bill Roggio, “IMU cleric urges Pakistanis to continue sheltering jihadis in Waziristan,” *Long War Journal*, November 23, 2011, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/imu_cleric_urges_pak.php#ixzz23dkTVZTm.

69. Gretchen Peters, *Seeds of Terror: How Drugs, Thugs, and Crime are Reshaping the Afghan War* (New York: Picador, 2010).

70. Feitt, “Countering the IMU in Afghanistan.”

71. Al-Awwal, “Obstacles in the Way of Jihad.”

2 | Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)

Operational Scope

As with its Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) brethren, the IJU propaganda machine focuses heavily on militant operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan. A 2007 broadcast entitled *Lions of Khorasan* previewed an imminent attack against two Afghan National Army (ANA) bases in Paktika Province,¹ for instance, while dead North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) coalition soldiers were filmed in a video released in December 2007.² By combining pre-attack planning sessions with the deadly aftermath, these propaganda pieces attempt to convey a sense that the jihadists are winning the war and are in control of their own destiny.

Similarly, these documents purport to show an increasing ability to conduct large-scale attacks throughout Afghanistan. IJU statements have emphasized the group's ability to strike in southeast Afghanistan, as is evidenced by a March 2008 attack in the Sabari District of Khost Province which allegedly claimed the lives of 60 U.S. troops and 70 members of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).³

Other IJU press releases are rife with reports of missile, rocket, and small-arms attacks elsewhere in the region.⁴ More recently, IJU spokesmen have been praising attacks in a growing number of northern and eastern provinces such as Badakhshan, Balkh, Kunduz, Nuristan, and Parwan.⁵ The IJU narrator boasts that “the mujahideen do not only stay in the southern provinces but they also help the Taliban in northern Afghanistan and provide them with military consultation. . . . [N]eighboring Uzbekistan

1. Garbi, “Islamic Jihad Union: ‘Badr al-Tawheed - Horasan Aslanlari,’” Blog, *Ultima hora Jihad*, July 23, 2008, <http://jihad-e-informacion.blogspot.com/2008/07/islamic-jihad-union-badr-al-tawheed.html>.

2. Guido Steinberg, “A Turkish al-Qaeda: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism,” *Strategic Insights*, July 1, 2008, <http://calhoun.nps.edu/public/handle/10945/11426>; “IJU Operation: The End of the Apostates,” *Şehadet Vakti*, December 27, 2009, http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1794 (site discontinued).

3. Karen Hodgson, “Turkish fighters in the Islamic Jihad Union,” *Long War Journal*, August 18, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/08/_several_turks_have.php.

4. “Turkish-Language Jihadist Site Posts IJU Statement on Operations in Afghanistan,” *Şehadet Zamani*, May 23, 2008, as cited in *Jihadica*, June 17, 2009, <http://www.jihadica.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sehadet-zamani-breiniger.pdf>; “Turkish-Language Jihadist Site Posts Statement on Afghanistan Operations, Photos,” *Şehadet Vakti*, June 6, 2008, http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb42b.html?haber_id=1924 (site discontinued); and “Turkish Jihadist Website: IJU ‘Martyrdom Brigade’ Carried Out Jalalabad Attack,” *Şehadet Zamani*, June 6, 2008, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1925 (site discontinued).

5. Bill Roggio, “Islamic Jihad Union details cooperation with Afghan Taliban,” *Long War Journal*, February 3, 2012, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/02/islamic-jihad-union.php>.

and Tajikistan, northern Afghanistan is strategically a very important region for the Muslims of Central Asia.”⁶

Despite the exaggerated claims of many of the IJU reports, NATO’s International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) press releases confirm the terrorist group’s increasing operational reach. Between 2008 and 2011, for instance, ISAF units conducted raids against IJU fighters in Balkh, Khost, Kunduz, Paktia, and Paktika provinces,⁷ with the dead IJU fighters originating from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.⁸

Interestingly, IJU representatives claim credit for missions involving other terrorist groups such as the Taliban. Rather than promoting its role as a force multiplier, for example, IJU press releases detailing joint operations are typically titled “Islamic Jihad Union Operations” and mention the IJU’s contributions first.⁹ At the very least, the IJU portrays itself as an equal partner, such as a June 2009 ambush against an ANA convoy in which IJU fighters provided covering fire for the far more numerous Taliban fighters.¹⁰ Given the vast gulf in manpower, supplies, and capabilities between the IJU and the Taliban, these rhetorical flourishes are likely part of a concerted effort by IJU leaders to boost their profile with potential recruits rather than an accurate portrayal of Taliban deference on the ground.

Unlike the IMU literature, which primarily emphasizes combat operations, IJU apologists repeatedly praise the deployment of suicide bombers in the AfPak theater. The first suicide attack involving a German national in Afghanistan, for instance, was carried out in March 2007 by an IJU fighter named Cüneyt Ciftci.¹¹ An ethnic Turk, Ciftci became a prominent figure in jihadi literature for leaving the comforts of Europe to seek “Paradise”¹² in Afghanistan.

IJU leaders showered plaudits on Ciftci in subsequent videos, including a level of praise not commonly given to other deceased fighters. “We can recommend [suicide attacks] to all Muslims because it is the only way for a devoted Muslim to reach the highest rank in the next world,” says one. “According to Muslim scholars, there is no act that can match a suicide attack.”¹³

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. “Turkish-Language Jihadist Site Posts Statement on Afghanistan Operations, Photos,” Şehadet Vakti, June 6, 2008, http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb42b.html?haber_id=1924 (site discontinued); and “Turkish-Language Website Posts Islamic Jihad Union Operations Statement and Photos,” Şehadet Zamani, August 4, 2008, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1950 (site discontinued).

10. “Turkish-Language Jihadist Site Statement Details Joint Operations in Afghanistan,” Şehadet Zamani, June 11, 2009, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2126 (site discontinued).

11. “Video of German Suicide Bomber in Afghanistan,” NEFA Foundation, March 1, 2008.

12. John Rosenthal, “Germany’s Taliban Trail: From Murat Kurnaz to Cüneyt Ciftci,” *World Politics Review*, May 14, 2008, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/2114/germanys-taliban-trail-from-murat-kurnaz-to-c-neyt-ciftci>.

13. “Şehid Saad Ebu Furkan ve Abu Muslim’in Vasiyetleri,” Youtube.com, February 10, 2008, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OxL3TGe5Zjo&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

In addition to Afghanistan and Pakistan, IJU propaganda focuses heavily on the Muslim diasporas living in Germany and Turkey. The German jihadist Eric Breininger appears in a number of videos, urging Muslims in his birth nation to attack local installations in retaliation for German oppression of Islam around the world.¹⁴ The IJU's sizable Turkish contingent also repeatedly appeals to ethnic brethren to take up arms and join the fight.¹⁵ These efforts have met with some success. Karen Hodgson of the *Long War Journal* notes that

Over the past several years, a number of Turks have been killed while waging jihad against NATO, US, and Afghan forces in Afghanistan. Other Turks were arrested in foiled plots to carry out attacks against European and US targets in Europe. The group with which most Turkish jihadists are affiliated is the al Qaeda-linked Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) (formerly called the Islamic Jihad Group or IJG), which was designated a global terrorist organization by the US State Department in June 2005. In early 2007, the IJU debuted its Turkish-language website, and since then a growing number of similar Turkish websites have emerged, which suggests an increase in Turkish involvement in jihadist activity over time. These sites and postings also indicate that Turks are active in the Haqqani Network; the Taifatul Mansura (or the Victorious Sect, a transnational Turkish jihadist group that operates along the Afghan-Pakistani border and is affiliated with the IJU, al Qaeda, and the Taliban); and the Cemaat-ul-Islam (or the Jamaat or Assembly of Islam, a jihadist group affiliated with the Afghan Taliban).¹⁶

As with the IMU, however, rhetoric targeting European Muslims for recruitment does not automatically equate with growing capabilities. IJU propaganda has previously targeted women¹⁷ and Kurds,¹⁸ for instance, and neither group has shown much proclivity toward joining IJU efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan to date. Nonetheless, Western authorities must continue to work diligently to prevent the radicalization of domestic populations.¹⁹

Interestingly, the IJU's news releases frequently target Uzbekistan and the Karimov government—in contrast with the IMU, which was described as “an Uzbek struggle in name only” in 2012.²⁰ A 2007 video, released in the Uzbek language, answered questions

14. “Attacks Imminent? German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video,” *Der Spiegel*, April 29, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/attacks-imminent-german-islamist-appears-in-new-jihad-video-a-550583.html>; “Islamic Jihad Union Interview with German Islamic Convert ‘Eric B.’,” NEFA Foundation, May 23, 2008; and “New Video of Wanted German Terrorist Eric Breininger,” NEFA Foundation, October 1, 2008.

15. “Interview with IJU fighter Abu Tasir Al-Turki,” NEFA Foundation, April 14, 2008.

16. Hodgson, “Turkish Fighters in the Islamic Jihad Union.”

17. Ronald Sandee, “The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU),” NEFA Foundation, October 14, 2008, as cited in Einar Wigen, “Islamic Jihad Union: al-Qaida’s Key to the Turkic World?” Norwegian Defense Research Establishment (FFI), February 23, 2009, <http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/09-00687.pdf>.

18. Karen Hodgson, “Video eulogizes Turkish fighters killed in Afghanistan,” *Long War Journal*, August 30, 2012, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2012/08/video_eulogizes_turkish_fighte.php.

19. “Germany, US to Improve Data Exchange in Terrorism Fight,” DW.DE, March 3, 2011, <http://www.dw.de/germany-us-to-improve-data-exchange-in-terrorism-fight/a-3185589>.

20. J. Z. Adams, “An Uzbek struggle in name only,” *Asia Times*, January 25, 2012, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/NA25Ag01.html.

about the creation of the IJU, as well as its motivation for waging jihad. “Some like-minded brothers in faith got together with the aim of starting a jihad against the Uzbek government’s bloody regime” and that the aim of the group was to “restore Islam in this land.”²¹

Moreover, Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih, the leader of the IJU, emphasized during a May 2007 interview that his organization’s original *raison d’être* was nothing more than the overthrow of President Islom Karimov—a goal that persists to this day.²² A 2009 IJU press release praised a subsequent 2009 attack against Uzbek security forces in Andijan Province. The release states that IJU fighters succeeded in “killing several of the apostate security forces which defend the infidel Karimov regime” and that the mission was motivated by a desire for revenge for the oppression of Muslims in Uzbekistan.²³

IJU propaganda also appeals to Muslims in other Central Asian states to rise up and join the global jihad. An example of IJU propaganda reaching more widely occurred in December 2011, when IJU media outlets released videotapes showing several mujahideen that had left their birth nation of Kazakhstan in order to fight in Waziristan. Multiple speakers state that their eventual goal is to create an Islamic state in Kazakhstan and other Central Asian nations.²⁴ Although these statements do not shed any light on actual capabilities, IJU propaganda undoubtedly contains a decidedly more pan-Central Asian focus than its IMU counterpart.

IJU’S IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

The documents in our collection help clarify the IJU’s ideology and goals, portraying a Salafi-jihadist group with regional and global aspirations. “Our doctrine is to understand and practice the religion like the Prophet’s followers and supporters did, and to carry out a jihad the way they did,” one IJU fighter declares.²⁵

This statement and many like it reflect the group’s Salafi-jihadist DNA. The group is Salafi because it seeks to emulate the practice of the Prophet and his companions. As scholar Roel Meijer points out, however, the practice and method of mainstream Salafism largely seeks to eschew politics, a quality that the IJU most certainly lacks.²⁶ By contrast, Salafi-jihadism “concentrates on the analysis of political reality” and on “devising strategies and practices for how to change [this reality].”²⁷

As Meijer also notes, the creed (*‘aqida*) of Salafi-jihadists is less focused on the tenets of Wahhabism—such as monotheism (*tawhid*) and the sin of idolatry/polytheism (*shirk*)—and

21. “Islamic Jihad Union Commander Mohammed Fetah,” Youtube.com, October 30, 2007, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WckBFFgPzB0>.

22. “A Chat with Commander Ebu Yahya,” NEFA Foundation, May 31, 2007.

23. “Turkish-Language Jihadist Website Posts IJU Statement of Attack in Uzbekistan,” Şehadet Zamani, May 27, 2009, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2112 (site discontinued).

24. Gordon Hahn, *Islam, Islamism, and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER)*, no. 49 (December 30, 2011), http://csis.org/files/publication/111230_Hahn_IIPER_49.pdf.

25. “Islamic Jihad Union Commander Mohammed Fateh,” Youtube.

26. Roel Meijer, ed., *Global Salafism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 24.

27. Ibid.

more fully geared toward jihad.²⁸ The fetishization of jihad permeates the IJU's media. One example of this phenomenon appears in Eric Breininger's autobiography, released on several jihadi websites following his death in April 2010. In his memoirs, Breininger elevates the obligation of jihad over the basic pillars of Islam, arguing that "neglecting jihad is like neglecting to fast and to pray. More than that, neglecting jihad these days is worse."²⁹

Echoing the beliefs of Abdel al-Salam al-Faraj, the Egyptian militant who authored the *Neglected Obligation*, IJU messages consistently refer to jihad as an individual obligation for all Muslims. A Turkish member articulated this argument in a 2008 interview, stating that "jihad is written as a binding duty to all Muslims, those who cannot sacrifice their lives should sacrifice their assets, and if that cannot be done, then they should at least spread propaganda in favor of the jihadists [to] keep the jihad warm in the agenda of the religious community."³⁰

The IJU's primary long-term goal appears to be regime change in Uzbekistan. A video uploaded to a jihadi website in April 2007 declares that the group's "aim, above all, is a jihad . . . especially to restore Islam to Uzbekistan," and calls on Muslims in modern-day Central Asia and Russia to help free the Muslims of Uzbekistan.³¹

The IJU has gone to great lengths to demonstrate this focus. Following terrorist actions in Tashkent in spring 2004, the IJU released a message pointing to these activities as proof of the group's emphasis on Uzbekistan.³² The IJU made similar arguments when taking credit for a 2009 operation in Uzbekistan. According to a statement released by the group's "press center," IJU fighters struck government targets in the border town of Khanabad on the night of May 25.

The raiders, supposedly acting under orders from IJU "headquarters," included men from the group's Mawara al-Nahr (Transoxiana) section and allegedly killed several Uzbek officials without suffering any casualties.³³ According to the United Nations, the attack

28. Ibid.

29. Eric Breininger, "Mein Weg Nach Jannah," May 4, 2010, as cited in Ann-Sophie Hemmingsen, "The Attractions of Jihadism: An Identity Approach to Three Danish Terrorism Cases and the Gallery of Characters around Them," Danish Institute for International Studies, September 2010, http://www.diis.dk/files/_Staff/ahe/The-Attractions-of-Jihadism.pdf.

30. "Interview with Turkish Islamist IJU fighter Abu Tasir Al-Turki," NEFA Foundation, April 14, 2008; "Ebu Yasir El Türki'den Türkiyeli Kardeşlerine," Muhabbetullah.com, April 14, 2008, <http://anadoluhaber.blogspot.com/2008/04/wwwmuhabbetullahcom-ebu-yasir-el.html>.

31. "Interview with Islamic Jihad: Our interview with IJU's Emir Abu Yahya Muhammad Fatih," Şehadet Zamani, May 31, 2007, http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1202 (site discontinued).

32. In late March 2004 a series of bombings and shootings in Tashkent killed almost 50 people, most of whom were police officers. They were followed up in late July with attacks on the U.S. and Israeli embassies. This was the first time the tactic of suicide bombing was seen in Central Asia. See Thomas Sanderson, Daniel Kimmage, and David A. Gordon, *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asian Jihadists* (Washington, DC: CSIS, March 2010), 9, http://csis.org/files/publication/100324_Sanderson_FerghanaValley_WEB_0.pdf; "Islamic Jihad Union Commander Mohammed Fateh," Youtube Channel: Şehadet-vakti, Turkish Language, October 30, 2007; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WckBFFgPzB0>.and UN Security Council, "Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1267 (1999) Concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and Associated Individuals and Entities," <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/NSQE11905E.shtml>.

33. Transoxiana, or the land beyond the Oxus River, is the historical name for the area of Central Asia consisting of parts of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. See Ahmed Rasin, "The New

killed 1 and wounded 16.³⁴ The IJU claimed to have carried out this operation in order to “raise the name of God on earth, and to take revenge for [its] oppressed brothers and sisters who are suffering under the Infidel Karimov regime.”³⁵

Why does the IJU target Uzbekistan? The IJU articulated specific grievances against President Islom Karimov and his government in a 2007 video, specifically mentioning religious persecution of Muslims, bad governance, and corruption, among others.³⁶ The narrator, speaking in Uzbek, begins his diatribe by criticizing the regime’s “brutal torture” and incarceration of Muslims. He mentions specific prisons where Muslims are allegedly mistreated and killed, including a facility in Tashkent where women are supposedly held “for their adherence to Islam.”³⁷

The speaker then moves on to Karimov’s “tyranny” over “ordinary people,” blaming the regime for the dire economic conditions in the country.³⁸ Corruption in Uzbekistan is the next topic of discussion.³⁹ Government officials “are making a lot of money . . . occupying senior posts,” the narrator declares, and “they are building mansions for themselves and depositing nine billion dollars, like our Karimov . . . into bank accounts.”⁴⁰ Having leveled significant accusations against the Karimov regime, the speaker then argues that the only way to remedy the abysmal situation in Uzbekistan is to “overthrow Karimov” and install a leader who “thinks about this nation” and “wants us to live as Muslims.”⁴¹ This objective cannot be accomplished without force, according to the narrator: “We have taken up arms to get rid of Karimov’s regime and we will fight to the last drop.”⁴²

Although overthrowing Uzbekistan may be the IJU’s ultimate strategic goal, the group’s media point to other ambitions in Central Asia and the surrounding regions. In a 2007 video the organization announced its desire to “liberate Muslims’ land in the Commonwealth of Independent States [CIS] and Central Asia” through *dawa* (missionary work) and

Struggle for Central Asia: A Primer for the Baffled,” *World Policy Journal* 17 (2001): 34–41; and “Turkish-Language Jihadist Website Posts IJU Statement of Attack in Uzbekistan,” *Şehadet Zamanı*, May 27, 2009, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2112 (site discontinued).

34. UN Security Council, “Security Council Committee Established Pursuant to Resolution 1267.”

35. “Turkish-Language Jihadist Website Posts IJU Statement of Attack in Uzbekistan,” *Şehadet Zamanı*, May 27, 2009, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2112 (site discontinued).

36. “İSLAMİCİHAD İTTEHADI Emiri EBU YAHYA MUHAMMED FATİH ile Röportajımız (Our Interview with the Amir of the ISLAMIC CIHAD UNION, EBU YAHYA MUHAMMED FATİH),” *Şehadetvakti.com*, May 31, 2007, http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1202 (site discontinued, as cited in “The Anatomy of a Militant Radical Islamic Website: The Islamic Jihad Union’s Information Operations,” Karen Kaya, 2012.)

37. “Islamic Jihad Union Video Calls For Overthrow of Uzbek Government,” *Şehadet Vakti*, April 12, 2007, www.sehadetvakti.com (site discontinued). The IJU claims that these prisons are located in Qashqadaryo, Kaslyk, and Qoraqalpogiston. The women’s prison is in Tashkent’s Qoyluq neighborhood, according to the video.

38. Ibid.

39. According to Transparency International, Uzbekistan in 2007 was tied with Tonga as the fourth most corrupt country in the world. See Transparency International, “2007 Corruptions Perceptions Index (CPI),” September 26, 2007, http://www.icgg.org/corruption.cpi_2007.html.

40. “Islamic Jihad Union Video Calls For Overthrow of Uzbek Government,” *Şehadet Vakti*, April 12, 2007, www.sehadetvakti.com (site discontinued).

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

jihad (holy war).⁴³ The IJU reiterated their interest in the CIS in a March 2011 video message directed at the Caucasus Emirate (CE), a jihadi organization based in Russia's turbulent North Caucasus.⁴⁴ The IJU expressed "support and solidarity" with the CE and celebrated the group's formation under the banner of *tawhid* (unity).⁴⁵

IJU propaganda focuses heavily on Afghanistan, which is unique to the group for several reasons. As one fighter put it, "the spirit of jihad [in Afghanistan] is a bit different from the other regions of jihad, because there is an effort to bring victory once again to an Islamic state that has been toppled . . . to reestablish the Islamic state."⁴⁶

Afghanistan is also critical to the IJU because the group sees the conflict as a stepping-stone for jihad in Central Asia. A December 2011 video, for example, described northern Afghanistan—which borders Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan—as "strategically a very important region for the Muslims of Central Asia."⁴⁷

Furthermore, the battlefields of Afghanistan—along with those in Pakistan—provide critical training and combat opportunities for the IJU. This preparation, according to the group, will be critical "when it is time for [IJU fighters] to help their brothers and sisters in Central Asia."⁴⁸

The IJU frames its ambitious goals in Uzbekistan, the CIS, Central Asia, and the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre within the structure of a global, pan-Islamist struggle. A video posted in 2007 declares that the group was "established with the aim of [raising] the flag of Islam in the whole world" and boasts of targeting "Jews, Christians, infidels, and hypocritical religions" worldwide.⁴⁹

Another video entitled "Islamic Jihad—The Path to Heaven" further illustrates how the IJU blurs the local with the global and seamlessly blends images of the September 11 attacks, the June 2004 bombing of the prosecutor-general's office in Tashkent, the May 2005

43. Ibid.

44. "UmmaNews Presents a New Video Message from the Islamic Jihād Union: 'Message from the Mujāhidīn in Khurāsān to the Caucasus Emirate,'" *Jihadology*, March 13, 2011, <http://jihadology.net/2011/03/13/ummanews-presents-a-new-video-message-from-the-islamic-jihad-union-message-from-the-mujahidin-in-khurasan-to-the-caucasus-emirate/>. According to the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), the Imarat Kavkaz (IK; also Caucasus Emirate) was "founded in late 2007 by Chechen extremist Doku Umarov, [and it] is an Islamist militant organization based in Russia's North Caucasus. Its stated goal is the liberation of what it considers to be Muslim lands from Moscow. The group regularly conducts attacks against Russian security forces in the North Caucasus. In the period 2010–2011, it carried out high-profile suicide bombings against civilian targets in Moscow that killed dozens. The U.S. State Department in May 2011 designated Imarat Kavkaz as a "specially designated terrorist group" under Executive Order 13224 and authorized a \$5 million reward for information leading to Umarov's arrest." See "Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)—Terrorist Groups," NCTC Counterterrorism Calendar 2013, <http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/iju.html>.

45. "UmmaNews Presents a New Video Message from the Islamic Jihād Union: 'Message from the Mujāhidīn in Khurāsān to the Caucasus Emirate.'"

46. "Turkish Jihadist Site Posts Statement on Paktia Clashes, Photos of IJU 'Martyrs,'" *Şehadet Zamanı*, September 11, 2008, http://sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1984 (site discontinued).

47. Roggio, "Islamic Jihad Union details cooperation with Afghan Taliban."

48. Ibid.

49. "Terrorism: Islamic Jihad Union Video Calls for Overthrow of Uzbek Government."

unrest in the Uzbek city of Andijon, footage of suffering women and children, and American soldiers and tanks.⁵⁰

Other IJU media releases reinforce the group's pan-Islamist credentials. IJU propaganda makes repeated references to Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian-born cleric who helped internationalize the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad and served as one of the intellectual architects of the contemporary global jihad currently exemplified by al Qaeda. One IJU video, for example, features a clip of Azzam stating "Jihad is an individual obligation until we free Palestine, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Andalusia, Siberia, and . . . every inch of land ever ruled by Islam is taken back."⁵¹

Another indication of the IJU's pan-Islamist underpinnings comes from a 2008 interview with a Turkish member of the organization, who declared "for us Jihad is not the specific cause of Afghan or Chechen or Palestine; we are Allah's warriors, and we will fight until the only religion in the world is Islam or until we become martyrs."⁵²

Given that the IJU is more globally focused than the IMU, it is not surprising that the IJU advocates jihad against the United States and the West, in part because these states are viewed as supporting the Karimov regime, but also because of their perceived assault on Islam.⁵³ Such was the rationale provided by the IJU in 2007 following a disrupted plot targeting American and Uzbekistani interests in Germany. "Our goal in these operations," the IJU statement of responsibility read, was to express that "we are against the oppression . . . of the United States and Uzbekistan, that are leading in the policy of savagery against Islam and the Muslims, and to be a warning for the expulsion of the German military airbase" at Termez, Uzbekistan.⁵⁴ For the IJU, the United States and Uzbekistan are "waging an insidious struggle against Islam and Muslims . . . and they should be aware that if they do not abandon this behavior, they will be the targets of [IJU] actions."⁵⁵

On first glance, the IJU's ambitions appear grossly misaligned with its capabilities. After all, a relatively small group operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan has very little chance of ever achieving the ambitious objectives outlined above. Upon further reflection, however, the group's goals are actually well suited to react to strategic targets of opportunity.

By embracing such a broad and open-ended formulation of jihad, the group is not limited to a single target and can seize operational leads where and when they emerge. This flexibility helps explain why the IJU has undertaken attacks or plots in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Germany. A narrower set of goals by contrast, would risk making the group irrelevant. A singular focus on the distant Karimov regime, for example,

50. "Terrorism: Islamic Jihad Union Calls for Jihad Against World Leaders."

51. Ibid.

52. "Interview with IJU fighter Abu Tasir Al-Turki," NEFA Foundation, April 14, 2008.

53. "Islamic Jihad Union Commander Mohammed Fateh," Youtube.

54. Garbi, Islamic Jihad Union: "Badr al-Tawheed - Horasan Aslanlari" Ultima hora Jihad." Garbi, "Ultima hora Jihad."

55. Ibid.

would have prevented the IJU from capitalizing on the failed Sauerland plot to build name recognition within militant circles.

IJU MEMBERSHIP

Available IJU media releases contain some biographical data on the group's fighters. Although anecdotal, these biographies suggest that the IJU attracts cadres of different nationalities and ethnicities. According to a video uploaded in 2007, the organization's members hail from Central Asia, the Commonwealth of Independent States, Europe, and beyond.⁵⁶

This assertion is borne out in subsequent releases. For example, in September 2008 the IJU announced the death of two fighters originally from the Adana region of Turkey.⁵⁷ Later that month, the group released statements about fallen fighters from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey.⁵⁸ The varying languages used in the group's propaganda, including Uzbek, Arabic, Russian, Pashto, Urdu, German, and Turkish also reflects this diversity.⁵⁹

The story of German citizen Eric Breininger provides insights into some of the group's German-speaking members. In an account of his radicalization published after he died fighting Pakistani forces in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, in April 2010, Breininger describes himself as growing up in a modest German household struggling with his personal identity.⁶⁰ A chance encounter with a Muslim led him to challenge his Christian upbringing and eventually drove him to accept Islam. Through conversations with other conservative Muslims, Breininger's sense of Western persecution against Muslims grew:

Above all the news from the prisons frightened us and how those crusaders acted with our brothers, how they tortured and suppressed them. Also the fact that these unbelievers put innocent women to prisons, how they raped them day after day so that some of the women carried children afterwards. . . . [A]ll this aroused anger in the Kuffar [unbeliever] in me. . . . The decision for me was now clear, that I needed to go off on the path of Allah to do jihad against the enemies of Allah and to undertake to die as a martyr for the cause of Allah, because that the word of Allah is the highest.⁶¹

After traveling through Iran and Pakistan to get to Afghanistan, Breininger linked up with IJU and the Taliban, who eventually allowed him to form a subgroup, the German Taliban Mujahidin 'Jama'a, which was intended to "be a home for all German-speaking

56. "Terrorism: Islamic Jihad Union Video Calls for Overthrow of Uzbek Government."

57. "Our Martyred Brothers in Afghanistan" Şehadet Zamani, September 1, 2008, http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1976 (site discontinued).

58. "Turkish Jihadist Site Posts Statement on Paktia Clashes, Photos of IJU 'Martyrs.'"

59. "UmmaNews Presents a New Video Message from the Islamic Jihād Union: 'Message from the Mujāhidīn in Khurāsān to the Caucasus Emirate.'"

60. Bill Roggio, "Wanted 'German Taliban' member killed in Pakistan," *Long War Journal*, May 3, 2010, http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2010/05/wanted_german_taliban_member_k.php.

61. "Memoirs of German Mujahid Eric [Breininger] Posted on Pro-Jihad Forum," de.Ansar1, May 5, 2010, <http://de.ansar1.info/showthread.php?t=4368>.

Muslims who come here from all over the world to fulfill [sic] their obligation to Allah, in order to fight on the path of Allah.”⁶²

Breiningner was also associated with the Sauerland cell, a group of German and Turkish nationals who were arrested in 2007 in the midst of plotting to detonate car bombs at U.S. military installations in Germany.⁶³ Breiningner’s story is not unique. At the time of his death in 2010, he was the fourth German national to die on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border fighting with IMU or IJU: Saudullah Kaplan was killed in 2007, Cüneyt Ciftci was killed in a March 2008 suicide bombing, and Javad S was killed in a fight with Pakistani soldiers in the fall of 2009.⁶⁴ More recently, several U.S. air strikes in 2011 and 2012 are believed to have killed German members of IJU.⁶⁵

IJU media also provides some deeper insight into the group’s Turkish members. In 2008 the organization released an interview with a Turkish fighter named Abu Yasir al-Turki. Al-Turki lived a reasonably normal life in Turkey; he had a three-room house and a good income.⁶⁶ In Afghanistan, al-Turki shared a one-room mud hut with his wife and children.⁶⁷ Despite the austere conditions, al-Turki boasted that his new life was more satisfying than the one he left behind.⁶⁸ For him, the obligation of jihad on behalf of his coreligionists trumps material comfort:

What was the reason for you to lie down on your couch and watch when in Palestine bombs were showering down on little children, when bombs were falling on the homes of the weak and unprotected people, when their men were blindfolded by bags placed over their heads and led to unknown destinations where you listening to the wailing of women and children lying on your couch and not lifting a finger to do anything? You will face these questions. Was it the lodging you loved so much or was it your business for which you were worried about? Or was it your children you loved more than yourself?⁶⁹

The depth of al-Turki’s commitment to the cause seems consistent among the IJU’s Turkish cadre. At least two Turks have conducted suicide attacks. Saad Abu Furkan, a

62. Ibid.

63. Yassin Musharbash and Marcel Rosenbach, “Sauerland Cell in the Dock: Germany Prepares for Homegrown Terror Trial,” *Spiegel Online*, April 16, 2009, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/sauerland-cell-in-the-dock-germany-prepares-for-homegrown-terror-trial-a-619381.html>; Yassin Musharbash, “Homegrown Terrorists: German Jihadist Eric Breiningner Killed in Pakistan, Group Claims,” *Spiegel Online*, March 5, 2010, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/homegrown-terrorists-german-jihadist-eric-breiningner-killed-in-pakistan-group-claims-a-692673.html>.

64. Musharbash and Rosenbach, “Sauerland Cell in the Dock: Germany Prepares for Homegrown Terror Trial.”

65. Bill Roggio, “‘German Taliban Mujahideen’ leader thought killed in US airstrike,” *Long War Journal*, October 4, 2011, http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/10/german_taliban_mujah.php; “Drohne Der USA Tötet Deutschen Islamisten Bei Angriff in Pakistan,” *Spiegel Online*, April 28, 2012, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/drohne-der-usa-toetet-deutschen-islamisten-bei-angriff-in-pakistan-a-830343.html>.

66. “Ebu Yasir El Türki’den Türkiyeli Kardeşlerine,” *Muhabbetullah.com*”

67. Ibid.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

Turkish national from Germany, died in a suicide bombing against an ISAF base in Paktika Province in March 2008.⁷⁰ That December another Turk in the IJU's "martyrdom battalion" detonated a 1,300-kilogram bomb near a government building in Khost Province.⁷¹

The gradual internationalization of the IJU's ranks probably has helped drive the organization's global focus. However, it is also important to note that certain IJU members trained and fought in regional jihadi fronts and likely maintain an interest in these conflicts. One such individual was Yahya Uzbekistaniy. One of three fallen fighters eulogized in a June 2008 IJU video, Yahya's nom de guerre (*kunya*) suggests he is probably from Uzbekistan.⁷²

According to the IJU, he left Uzbekistan around 1998 and headed to Tajikistan. Following training, he led a group of fighters to Kyrgyzstan in 1999, most likely as part of the IMU force that entered the country in August of that year to stage cross-border attacks against the Karimov regime.⁷³ Successful in his mission, Yahya was put in charge of a training camp in Tajikistan, where he remained until traveling south to fight with the Taliban against the Northern Alliance during the Afghan civil war.⁷⁴ Following the September 11 attacks, he stayed in Afghanistan and battled coalition forces, first in the Shahi Kot Mountains and later in Paktika Province.⁷⁵

A second fighter commemorated in the same video, Bilal Uzbekistaniy, spent time in the North Caucasus and Central Asia before ending up in Afghanistan, according to the IJU.⁷⁶ He left Uzbekistan the same year as Yahya, traveling to Chechnya for training with "Hattab"—likely a reference to Khattab, the famous Saudi field commander in Chechnya.⁷⁷ After completing his training, Bilal linked up with fighters in Tajikistan before moving south to Afghanistan, where he worked in a "mujahideen office" in northern Kabul.⁷⁸ After the invasion of Afghanistan, Bilal fought coalition forces in the Shahi Kot Mountains and later in the Zabul, Ghazni, and Paktika provinces.⁷⁹

With the passing of experienced veterans like Yahya Uzbekistaniy and Bilal Uzbekistaniy, the cadre of IJU fighters with operational experience in the North Caucasus and

70. "Turkish Jihadist IJU Site Posts Press Release on Afghan Attack, 'Muhajid' Photos," Şehadet Zamani, March 3, 2008, as cited in Hodgson, "Turkish fighters in the Islamic Jihad Union."

71. Guido W. Steinberg, *German Jihad: On the Internationalization of Islamist Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 102.

72. "Islamic Jihad Union Eulogizes Three 'Martyrs,'" Şehadet Zamani, July 22, 2008, http://www.sehadet-zamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1938.

73. Sanderson et al., *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan*.

74. "Jennet Tu—1.4" [The Path to Heaven—1.4], Youtube.com, January 8, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKW0m047tj4>; "Jennet Tu—2.4" [The Path to Heaven—2.4], Youtube.com, January 8, 2012, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vHqLzgrL8OQ>; "Jennet Tu—3.4" [The Path to Heaven—3.4], Youtube.com, January 8, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTLz_Stoekg; "Jennet Tu—4.4" [The Path to Heaven—4.4], Youtube.com, January 9, 2012, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XTLz_Stoekg.

75. "Jennet Tu—1.4"; "Jennet Tu—2.4"; "Jennet Tu—3.4"; "Jennet Tu—4.4."

76. "Jennet Tu—1.4"; "Jennet Tu—2.4"; "Jennet Tu—3.4"; "Jennet Tu—4.4."

77. Thomas Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia: Violence and Pan-Islamism since 1979* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 55–57.

78. "Jennet Tu—1.4"; "Jennet Tu—2.4"; "Jennet Tu—3.4"; "Jennet Tu—4.4."

79. "Jennet Tu—1.4"; "Jennet Tu—2.4"; "Jennet Tu—3.4"; "Jennet Tu—4.4."

Central Asia appears to be dwindling. A March 2011 IJU video suggests otherwise, however, claiming that many of the group's members have trained or fought in the Caucasus.⁸⁰ So long as the IJU retains this class of veterans, there will be a faction within the organization with memories of jihad north of the Amu Darya River. Should the opportunity present itself in the lead up to or following the 2014 withdrawal of ISAF forces, this constituency may be more likely to prioritize regional struggles in the former Soviet Union over global jihad against the West.

Relations with Other Groups

THE IJU AND AL QAEDA

The IJU's ideology is very similar to that of al Qaeda. Both groups espouse global jihad and extol suicide attacks. For example, an IJU fighter selected for a so-called martyrdom operation argued that such acts are "the only way for a devoted Muslims to reach the highest rank in the Next World."⁸¹ "God willing," another video declared, "we are . . . ready to blow ourselves up for the sake of our cause, like our Palestinian brothers do, who are struggling to liberate their land."⁸² Beyond similar ideologies and attitudes toward suicide attacks, both groups are active in the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater. These commonalities raise obvious questions about potential links between the IJU and al Qaeda.

Interestingly, only a handful of available IJU documents even mention al Qaeda. Several of these references convey the IJU's respect for al Qaeda and its leaders. One 2007 IJU video, for example, features footage of Osama bin Laden praying in a mosque and declaring "he who doesn't wage a jihad and claims that he teaches people to be religious doesn't understand the path chosen by the Prophet."⁸³

A year later a Turkish IJU fighter listed bin Laden, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and another militant as role models for the group's members.⁸⁴ In March 2008 the IJU issued a press release taking credit for a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) attack on ISAF forces in Paktika Province "in retaliation for our mujahid Abu Leys al-Libi, [sic] who was martyred earlier."⁸⁵ Abu Leys al-Libi is probably a variation of Abu Laith al-Libi, a senior al Qaeda leader killed the month before in North Waziristan.⁸⁶

While IJU infrequently mentions al Qaeda in public statements, other evidence points to more concrete links between the IJU and al Qaeda. According to a German scholar, the

80. "UmmaNews Presents a New Video Message from the Islamic Jihād Union: 'Message from the Mujāhidīn in Khurāsān to the Caucasus Emirate.'"

81. "Şehid Saad Ebu Furkan ve Abu Muslim'in Vasiyetleri."

82. "Terrorism: Islamic Jihad Union Video Calls for Overthrow of Uzbek Government."

83. "Terrorism: Islamic Jihad Union Calls for Jihad Against World Leaders."

84. "Ebu Yasir El Türki'den Türkiyeli Kardeşlerine," Muhabbetullah.com. Zarqawi is the late leader of al Qaeda in Iraq. Khattab is a high-profile Saudi veteran of the Afghan jihad who subsequently fought in Tajikistan and Chechnya. For more information, see Hegghammer, *Jihad in Saudi Arabia*, 54–57.

85. "Turkish Jihadist IJU Site Posts Press Release on Afghan Attack, 'Muhajid' Photos."

86. "Fighting Terrorists: A Strike Against al-Qaeda," *Economist*, February 1, 2008, http://www.economist.com/node/10632193?story_id=10632193.

IJU confirmed that a number of its operatives were killed during the attack that killed senior al Qaeda member Abu Laith al-Libi.⁸⁷

The IJU also seems to have had links with another key al Qaeda commander named Abu Yahya al-Libi.⁸⁸ Indeed, Abu Yahya al-Libi is featured in at least one IJU video seated alongside Abdullah Fatih, the IJU's late emir.⁸⁹ How this relationship has evolved since the deaths of Abu Laith al-Libi, Abu Yahya al-Libi, and Abdullah Fatih is unclear according to the documents in our possession.

Beyond interpersonal relationships, the group's media provides specific instances of cooperation between the two groups on the tactical level. For example, an IJU statement uploaded to a Turkish-language jihadi website in 2008 described a joint IJU–al Qaeda attack in which fighters from both groups launched Katyusha rockets at an ISAF base in Paktika Province. Based on this information, it appears that the IJU indeed had ties with al Qaeda.

Funding

The jihadi literature provides a revealing glimpse into the IJU's financial status and methods of generating revenue. Many documents reveal strains between the movement and its financial backers, as IJU fighters constantly appeal for greater donations from Muslims living in Europe. A May 2008 interview with an IJU spokesman concedes that “truthfully, we have a shortage of money,”⁹⁰ for instance, while other IJU leaders repeatedly guilt European Muslims into donating.

In May 2007 a jihadi website linked to the IJU released a video in Uzbek, Russian, and Arabic, which criticized Islamic leaders for urging peace rather than violent jihad. “Your worship is a childish game,” accused one mujahid. “You play with your worship [in the mosque] but the mujahideen offer their blood and bodies.”⁹¹

Similarly, a video produced by Badr-at-Tawhed in May 2009 featured Turkish mujahideen appealing for donations by criticizing excessive frugality amongst the *umma* (global Muslim community). The fighters presented the exact costs of weapons such as hand grenades, rockets, and bullets to argue that the success of their jihad “all depends on economic

87. Guido Steinberg, “The Islamic Jihad Union: On the Internationalism of Uzbek Jihadism,” Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, April 2008, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2008C07_sbg_ks.pdf.

88. Christopher Anzalone, “Al-Qaeda Loses Its Chief Juridical Voice,” *Foreign Policy*, June 14, 2012, http://southasia.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/06/14/al_qaeda_loses_its_chief_juridical_voice; and Jason Burke, “Abu Yahya al-Libi Obituary,” *Guardian*, June 6, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/06/abu-yahya-al-libi>.

89. “IJU Video Eric Breininger Und Abu Yahya Al Libi,” Youtube.com, June 6, 2009, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lHaPDxDxpQg&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

90. Ibid.

91. “Terrorism: Islamic Jihad Union Calls for Jihad Against World Leaders.”

conditions.” “We are giving our lives,” they plead, “but you do not give your money.”⁹² In a 2010 letter, German IJU member Eric Breininger argued that

Here, I would like to speak directly to my brothers and sisters in Germany and remind you that jihad of possessions (donations) is mandatory for every single Muslim, like the individual jihad. At present, we receive hardly any donations from Germany, although we are a German jama’a and although Germany is a wealthy country. It is very sad that our brothers and sisters in Germany have such tight fists and do not fulfill their duty. If the brothers and sisters would buy only one kebab less each week, we could buy almost 20 sniper bullets from this money over here to fight the *kuffir*. Just think how much reward this could be for you, God willing, when an unbeliever died from such a bullet.⁹³

Breininger claimed to receive donations from a number of nations but praises Turkish Muslims in particular for their generosity.

Interestingly, an IJU leader divulged salaries for mujahideen during a 2008 interview, claiming that a fighter with two kids would receive 4,000 rupees each month (approximately \$51.29) but that “the reason we are here is not to live in luxury” and “no matter how hard the conditions are, the fighters are enduring them.”⁹⁴ He urges the *umma* to donate funds so that these salaries can be increased, suggesting that some of his men may be unhappy with their low wages.

Taken as a whole, the prevalence of begging and inflammatory rhetoric seems to indicate that the IJU is not satisfied with its current fund-raising efforts. Given its apparent closeness to other, better-funded jihadi groups, however, this is unlikely to cripple the organization in the foreseeable future.

The Role of Women and Children in the IJU’s Jihad

Two documents in our collection highlight the IJU’s attitudes towards women and children. In September 2008, a Turkish-language jihadi website published a letter by an IJU member named Ummu Muhammed addressing the “place of women” in Afghanistan.¹ According to Muhammed, a women’s role in the Afghan jihad amounts to little more than a glorified housewife. “There are a good many mujahids here,” he writes, who cannot eat hot meals, lack clean clothes, and are far away from their families.² “Even washing clothes for a group of mujahideen here, making food for them, and sewing their clothes, would bring glory to the mujahideen and abasement to the infidels.”³ In an effort to make Afghanistan appear more

92. “Heaven Lovers—Cennet Aşıkları 1,” Youtube.com, February 10, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vAeRAu140s#t=2000>.

93. Thomas Hegghammer, “Guest Post: The Story of Eric Breininger,” *Jihadica*, May 11, 2010, <http://www.jihadica.com/guest-post-the-story-of-eric-breininger/>.

94. “Interview of Turkish IJU Fighter,” NEFA Foundation, April 14 2008.

attractive to potential female recruits, Muhammad argues that “there is a prohibition on performing the daily prayers in Uzbekistan, and on the headscarf, but there is no probation here.”⁴

Children also factor into the IJU’s propaganda. An online statement posted on a Turkish-language jihadi website in August 2008 featured several pictures of young children “being trained at madrassas within the framework of the IJU.”⁵ One image shows 22 boys standing and kneeling in front of the black banner. Other images feature smaller groups drilling with what appear to be pistols and rifles. For a relatively small organization like IJU to dedicate limited resources to training cadres this young indicates the group’s commitment to a long-term struggle.

1. “Turkish Jihadist Site Posts Statement on Paktia Clashes, Photos of IJU ‘Martyrs.’”

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

Conclusion

With the departure of International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) troops from Afghanistan approaching, questions loom about the future of the broader region and of the numerous militant groups currently engaged in the fighting. Violent extremists are likely to boost propaganda and media efforts to portray the Western-led withdrawal as a “defeat” similar to that of the Soviet Union in 1989. This narrative of Western retreat, along with the stimulation borne of fighting and surviving years of intense counternetwork activity, may embolden some groups to seek new goals and targets.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) have at times played key roles in Central and South Asian conflicts. Though no longer exclusively manned by Central Asians, there are likely dozens of fighters and activists inside both IMU and IJU who remain focused on Uzbekistan. Monitoring the content on their websites can provide some indications as to where they go next.

The foregoing analysis of IMU and IJU propaganda provided valuable clues to important organizational elements ranging from strategy, ideology, operations, partnerships, and fund-raising. These perspectives are valuable to analysts seeking to better understand future movements of the groups and can provide opportunities for disruption and dismantlement. Given the 2014 ISAF withdrawal and known interest of jihadists in fighting new battles, this source of insight and intelligence should be exploited.

About the Authors

Duncan Fitz is currently a senior consultant with Monitor 360, a consulting firm that helps both governmental and corporate clients make sense of complex geostrategic challenges. He has years of experience working on Central Asia and Afghanistan-related issues, including using his knowledge of local languages and cultures to manage nationwide Dari and Pashto literacy programs for the Afghanistan National Security Forces and civilian population.

Fitz graduated magna cum laude from Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He also holds an M.A. from the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, where he concentrated in strategic studies.

Thomas M. Sanderson is codirector and senior fellow in the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Transnational Threats Project, where he works on terrorism, transnational crime, global trends, Central Asia, and intelligence issues. He has conducted field work over 60 countries and has authored or coauthored 13 major reports, as well as opinion pieces, debates and articles in *The Economist*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *West Point CTC Sentinel*, and *Harvard Asia-Pacific Review*.

Sanderson serves as a course instructor and consultant for the U.S. government and the private sector on terrorism, China, and global threats. He provides expert commentary for the media and courts of law. From 1998 to 2002 he served on contracts for the Defense Intelligence Agency's Office of Counterterrorism; in the winter of 2005 he completed a fellowship at the American Academy in Berlin. In 2001 he held a fellowship at Fudan University in Shanghai, China. Sanderson holds a B.A. from Wheaton College in Massachusetts and an M.A. from the Fletcher School at Tufts University.

Sung In Marshall is the former research associate and program coordinator for the CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program. She is currently a senior analyst for the Human Rights and Societal Risk team at Maplecroft, a United Kingdom-based global risk and strategic consulting firm that helps multinational companies assess and manage risk across global operations, supply chains, and distribution networks. Prior to joining CSIS, she was a Peace Corps volunteer in Kazakhstan from 2007 to 2009 and returned to the region to work for American Councils for International Education in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. She holds a bachelor's degree in international politics from Georgetown University and a master's in international peace and security studies from King's College London.



1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW | Washington, DC 20036
t. 202.887.0200 | f. 202.775.3199 | www.csis.org

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