

Al-Qaida's foot soldiers: A study of the biographies of foreign fighters killed in Afghanistan and Pakistan between 2002 and 2006

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Introduction

The role of foreign fighters in the insurgency in Afghanistan remains poorly understood.¹ Foreign militants in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan are often lumped together under the label "al-Qaida" – which may be convenient shorthand, but, as argued in this article, leads to an insufficient understanding of the nature of this diverse group of militants. There has also been a tendency in Western literature to focus on the fighters' links with international terrorism, rather than their contributions to local insurgencies. While the links between Pakistani tribal areas and international terrorism are indeed disturbing, one should not forget that for the hundreds of foreign fighters on the ground, the focus since 2002 has been to fight a guerrilla war against U.S. forces in Afghanistan, not to train for terrorist operations abroad.

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the identity and activities of foreign fighters in Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan after the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001. The focus of the study will not be on top al-Qaida leaders, but rather on mid-level commanders and "foot soldiers" that may or may not describe themselves as "al-Qaida members," and the nature of their militant campaign after 2001. The study is based on an analysis of a series of "martyr biographies" issued by the al-Qaida network in 2008. These are short, biographical stories of foreign militants who were killed in the area from 2002–2006, and they include details about the fighters' background, motivations and jihadist experience. Three basic questions were asked: What was the background of the fighters? What kind of militant activities were they involved in after 2001? And what was their relationship to the local population? The questions are relevant not only for gaining a better understanding of the insurgency in Afghanistan, but also for understanding how the al-Qaida network itself is developing.

The article argues that there has been a continuity of al-Qaida's activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan from 2001 and until today. Continuity was ensured because a relatively large number of Arab fighters managed to escape the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in late 2001, and settled in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. In the period 2002–2006, these veteran fighters carried the bulk of al-Qaida's activities in the region, since few new recruits came from abroad to FATA in this period. Furthermore, the article challenges the notion that the main focus of Arab fighters in FATA was to plot international terrorist attacks. The study of

martyr biographies shows that the main concern for foreign fighters on the ground was to fight U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, not to prepare for terrorist operations abroad. Over time, it appears that the Arab fighters became more embedded in local communities, especially on the Pakistani side of the border. This forms an important backdrop to understanding why al-Qaida continues to enjoy a strong sanctuary in FATA today.

Method and sources

“Foreign fighters” are here understood as non-Afghan and non-Pakistani militant Islamists based in Afghanistan or Pakistan.² “Al-Qaida” will generally refer to Arab fighters or groups led by Arab commanders, while the broader community of foreign fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan includes non-Arab groups such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM).

This definition of “al-Qaida” is broader than that used by some jihadists, who have explained that an al-Qaida member as a person who has sworn a formal oath of allegiance (*bay'a*) to Osama bin Laden.³ However, in the context of this study an ethnically based definition was found to be more practical, for two reasons. First, the primary source material used as a basis for this study rarely refers to “al-Qaida” but prefer to associate fighters with a particular commander (Abu al-Layth al-Libi, Abd al-Hadi al-Iraqi, etc) or ethnic group (“the Arabs,” “the Uzbeks,” etc). Second, the Arab commanders and fighters in FATA seemed to work together independently of whether or not they had sworn a formal oath of allegiance to bin Laden. For example, the Libyan commander Abu al-Layth al-Libi cooperated with al-Qaida’s commanders in FATA several years before he became an “official” al-Qaida member in 2007.⁴

The article is based on an analysis of 120 biographies of foreign and local fighters who were reported to have died in Afghanistan or Pakistan from 2002–2006. The biographies were taken from an Arabic-language publication entitled *shuhada' fi zaman al-ghurba* (“Martyrs in a time of alienation,”) which was distributed to militant Islamist sites in February 2008 by the *al-Fajr* Media Center.⁵ *Al-Fajr* is one of the main media outlets of the global jihadist movement and the material distributed by it is generally regarded as authentic.⁶ The book was allegedly compiled by an insider of the jihadist community in Afghanistan, who claimed to have known several of the “martyrs” personally. Out of the 120 biographies, 103 describe foreign fighters while 17 describe Afghan and Pakistani militants who were members of foreign fighter groups or who assisted them in one way or other. A summary of the biographies is provided in Appendix A.

Such martyr biographies are, in essence, issued for propaganda and recruitment purposes and may therefore not represent an accurate account of historical events. In addition, the biographies examined in this article are not a random sample gathered by this author, but a selection compiled by the militants themselves. (Random sampling was not possible due to the limited number of martyr biographies that currently exist from this area and period.) This may lead us to question their credibility and whether they can be said to be representative of the foreign fighters in the region as a whole.

Overall, the credibility of the biographies is strengthened through the use of multiple other sources such as court documents, reports of various international and local media, as well as other jihadist publications. Martyr biographies have previously been used as a source in studies of militant Islamist groups, such as Al-Qaida on the Arabian Peninsula and Lashkar-e Tayba.⁷ The advantage of using such biographies as a source is that they are one of few primary sources that can detail the history of foreign fighters in Afghanistan after 2001. They may therefore give novel insights into a topic that otherwise is extremely opaque.

With regards to representativeness, the biography collection is indeed biased, in the sense that non-Arab fighters are under-represented. The collection represents 76 militants from the Arab world, 24 militants from the former USSR or China, 17 militants from Afghanistan or Pakistan and three from elsewhere. This is also pointed out by the editor of the biography collection, who states in an introductory note that he has not been able to cover many of the Uzbek, Uighur and Waziri fighters who were killed in the same area and period.⁸ The under-representation of non-Arab fighters reflects the ethnic divisions within the jihadist community in FATA, where non-Arab groups tend to promote separate group identities and carry out propaganda campaigns in their native languages. This study can therefore not be used to generalize about the foreign fighter community in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The question is whether it can be used to generalize about “al-Qaida,” defined here as the Arab fighters and Arab-led fighting groups in the region.

This is at least partly so. The collection includes a wide spectrum of militants: From young, inexperienced fighters who recently joined the jihad, to high-ranking al-Qaida commanders such as Hamza al-Rabia’ al-Masri, who served as al-Qaida’s head of foreign operations for a period after 2001. Importantly, it includes not only militants who were killed in battle in Afghanistan, but also militants that were killed inside the tribal areas of Pakistan, either in aerial attacks or raids by Pakistani Security Forces. It also includes militants who died from ordinary causes such as illness. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the collection represents not only guerrilla fighters, but individuals who were involved in a variety of tasks on behalf of al-Qaida and its associates.

Some limitations need to be taken into account. The collection is dominated by foreign fighters active in Waziristan and the adjacent Afghan provinces (Paktika and Khost), and therefore says little about those who are active further north along the Afghan-Pakistani border (in particular the areas around Bajaur in FATA and Kunar in Afghanistan, where foreign fighters have also been known to operate). On the other hand, Waziristan is regarded one of the most important sanctuaries of al-Qaida after 2001, and the centre of gravity for its activities at least since 2003.⁹

Second, guerrilla fighters taking part in cross-border raids into Afghanistan may be over-represented in the collection, since the risk of being killed during these raids was presumably higher than the risk of being killed while conducting other types of activities inside FATA. (U.S. drone strikes against FATA were a rare phenomenon before 2008, although other types of security operations took place, especially from 2004.¹⁰) In the analysis, this has partly been accounted for by recording all the activities a fighter was involved in through his time in FATA (not only the activity at the time of his death). However, the observation that “most of the Arab fighters in FATA were involved in fighting in Afghanistan, not international terrorism” must be made with certain reservations.

Finally, the biography collection covers only the period from 2002–2006. It can therefore not be used to describe the current state of the foreign fighter community in FATA, which is likely to have changed considerably since then. The flow of new recruits to the region from abroad probably increased after 2006, while a number of veteran al-Qaida commanders were killed in U.S. drone strikes in 2007–2010. In addition, the local conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan have changed character over the past four years. The Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan exploded in scope and intensity in 2005-06, while Pakistan saw a drastic increase in anti-government violence in 2007, coupled with the rise of the “Pakistani Taliban” movement headed by Beitullah Mehsud. These recent developments must be subjected to further study.

Historical background

The history of foreign fighters in Afghanistan dates back to the early 1980s, when the first groups of Arab militants arrived in Peshawar to assist the Afghan mujahidin in their war against the USSR.¹¹ In 1984, the Palestinian ideologue Abdullah Azzam established the “Office of Services for the Mujahidin” to administer the influx of foreign volunteers to Peshawar. After the Soviet withdrawal in 1989 and start of the Afghan civil war, most of the “Afghan-Arabs,” as they became known, left the country. While many simply went back to their normal lives, others became involved in militant activities in their home countries.¹²

When the Taliban came to power in 1996, Afghanistan again became an attractive destination for militant Islamists from all over the world. While some came with their families, with the aim of emigrating to what they viewed as an Islamic state, most came for shorter periods of training in one of the many training camps operated by foreign militants. In most cases, the basic training consisted of a short course (5–6 weeks) including physical training and basic infantry tactics. Selected recruits could afterwards take more specialized training courses, or they were sent to one of the Taliban’s frontlines to gain battlefield experience.¹³ The number of militants who came to Afghanistan in this period (i.e. 1996–2001) is estimated to have been between 10,000 and 20,000.¹⁴ It can be noted that the majority of these foreign militants did not look upon themselves as “al-Qaida” or members of Osama bin Laden’s organization.¹⁵ Abu Mus’ab al-Suri, a jihadist theoretician and lecturer who knew the foreign fighter community in Afghanistan well, identified fourteen “jihadi groups, training camps, or formations” in Afghanistan around 2000, of which three were “non-Arab” (Uzbek, Uyghur and Turkish) and nine were “Arab” (one of them being bin Laden’s al-Qaida organization).¹⁶

There were attempts by the Taliban government to organize the foreign fighters in Afghanistan into more formalized structures. In the words of Vahid Mojdeh, an official in the Taliban’s foreign ministry, “all famous Arab Mujahideen [in Afghanistan at the time] considered themselves as leaders,” so in 2001, Mullah Omar convened a meeting in which Osama bin Laden was appointed to lead all Arab groups in Afghanistan. Similarly, Tahir Yuldashev would lead all groups from Central Asia, East Turkestan and China, while Massoud Azhar would be responsible for Pakistan, Kashmir, Bangladesh and Burma. The Uzbek field commander Juma Namanjani was appointed military commander of all the foreign fighters in Afghanistan.¹⁷ Al-Suri also recalls the last appointment. In his writings he described a project initiated by the Taliban’s defence department in 2000 or 2001, which aimed to set up a “Brigade 19” – essentially an army of foreign fighters that was to be organized under the Taliban’s defence department and that was

to be led by Juma Namanjani and “prominent Arab and Pakistani commanders.”¹⁸ However, it appears that the project had not been finalized by the time of the 9/11 attacks, and that the foreign fighter community at this time remained fragmented, both due to ideological differences, as well as various personal conflicts.¹⁹

There are currently few studies that have traced the history of the foreign fighters in Afghanistan after 11 September 2001. In general, we can say that their campaign has gone through three stages since then:

1. September 2001–March 2002, when foreign fighters united with bin Laden and the Taliban leader Mullah Omar to take part in an all-out armed confrontation with the U.S. and their allies. The period ended with the battle of Shah-i-Kot (“Operation Anaconda”), in March 2002, which can be described as a last stand of foreign fighters in Afghanistan.²⁰
2. March 2002–around 2005–06, which was spent hiding and regrouping outside Afghanistan’s borders, mainly in Pakistan. In this period, foreign fighters were involved in scattered cross-border attacks and other activities in support of local insurgent groups such as the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network and Hizb-e-Islami, who were gradually expanding their influence in south-eastern and eastern Afghanistan.
3. 2005–06 and until today, when the insurgency in Afghanistan exploded in both scope and intensity. In this period, foreign fighters became increasingly involved in offensive operations inside Afghanistan, in addition to taking part in supportive activities from its sanctuaries in Pakistan.²¹ From 2007, al-Qaida’s propaganda also became more explicit in its support for a violent campaign inside Pakistan, indicating that al-Qaida had built a close relationship with Pakistani militant groups by that time.²²

The rest of this article will focus on the period from 2002–2006, which is roughly the same period as that covered in the martyr biographies. In this period, the foreign fighters who had fled Afghanistan started to build a new sanctuary in FATA and established ties to local insurgent groups. This forms an important backdrop to understanding the role of al-Qaida in Afghanistan and Pakistan today. But before analysing the activities of foreign fighters on the ground, it is necessary to look at the context in which they were operating.

The local context

The militant environment in Afghanistan and Pakistan consists of a myriad of groups and informal networks which may sometimes overlap, making it hard to distinguish one militant outfit from another. To complicate matters more, groups may frequently change names or operate under multiple names, sometimes as part of a deliberate strategy to hide the real perpetrator behind attacks.²³ To provide an accurate description of this dynamic environment is beyond the scope of this article. However, some categorization is warranted in order to describe the context in which foreign fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan were operating after 2001.

Al-Qaida’s allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan today can roughly be divided into two categories: Afghan insurgent groups such as the Taliban, the Haqqani network and Hizb-e-Islami Gulbuddin

(HIG), and Pakistani groups such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Tehrik-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Muhammed (TNSM), Lashkar-e-Tayba (LeT) and others. In addition, a number of relationships exist on a personal level between foreign and local militants on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border, in particular with Pashtun tribal leaders that acted as al-Qaida's "hosts" in FATA after 2001.

Al-Qaida's allies in Afghanistan

Afghan insurgent groups include the Taliban movement led by Mullah Omar, the "Haqqani network" led by Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin, eastern Afghan groups (Salafi groups in Kunar and the network of the late Yunus Khalis), and Hizb-e Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. All except Hekmatyar are formally allied with the Taliban and recognize Mullah Omar as their leader. The Taliban's highest leadership (the "Quetta shura") is based in Quetta in Baluchistan province of Pakistan. It gives ideological and strategic direction to the insurgency as a whole, and is believed to have direct influence on the insurgency in southern Afghanistan. It appears to have less influence on the insurgent groups in south-eastern and eastern Afghanistan, which are run by regional *shuras* (councils) under the nominal leadership of Mullah Omar.²⁴

Previous studies of al-Qaida's role in Afghanistan and Pakistan have argued that al-Qaida act as a "force multiplier" for local insurgent groups, supporting them with manpower, specialist knowledge, propaganda, and through acting as an advisor and negotiator.²⁵ Another observation, which is often omitted from analysis, is that al-Qaida's contributions to the insurgency in Afghanistan are highly localized. While al-Qaida's leaders are formally aligned with the Taliban's Quetta Shura,²⁶ the *tactical* cooperation between al-Qaida and Taliban groups in southern Afghanistan appears to be limited.²⁷ Instead, al-Qaida prefers to work directly with groups and networks with which they have historical relations, such as the Haqqani network in south-eastern Afghanistan, and Hizb-e Islami, Salafi groups and the Yunus Khalis network in eastern provinces of Afghanistan.

The al-Qaida network's own propaganda seems to confirm this. Since 2005, *al-Sahab* has issued a large number of battle films from Afghanistan in its series "Holocaust of the Americans in the land of Khurasan." The films claim to show foreign and/or local fighters carrying out attacks on NATO and their allies in various parts of Afghanistan. Out of 85 films issued in the period 2005–2009, 69 were from south-eastern, eastern and central provinces, while only 16 films were said to originate from southern provinces (Kandahar, Helmand and Zabul). The largest proportion of films (44 in total) were from Khost and Paktika; provinces that border al-Qaida's sanctuaries in Waziristan.²⁸ There appears to be an unproportionate number of films from southern Afghanistan, despite the high level of insurgency-related violence in this area. These statistics should perhaps not be over-interpreted, but they seem to support the impression that al-Qaida is not much of a factor in southern Afghanistan, the traditional heartland of the Taliban movement.

This implies that the relationship between al-Qaida fighters and local insurgent groups in Afghanistan is based on geography and historical ties, rather than a close relationship with the Taliban's ideological leadership in Quetta. It reflects the fact that the Afghan insurgent movement itself is fragmented. This characteristic allows al-Qaida fighters to operate in Afghanistan in support of local groups, even if they are seen as a liability by other factions of the insurgency.²⁹

At the same time, al-Qaida seeks to maintain cordial relations with the Quetta shura, and is careful not to cause controversies and splits in the Afghan insurgent movement. Al-Qaida leaders have acted as advisors and, occasionally, as negotiators in local conflicts, but rarely as an insurgent faction in its own right. They recognize the authority of Mullah Omar and seldom take credit for attacks inside Afghanistan.³⁰ By pursuing this strategy, al-Qaida is avoiding some of the mistakes of al-Qaida's local branch in Iraq, which tried to monopolize the Iraqi Sunni insurgency. Arguably, this was one of the reasons why al-Qaida in Iraq became increasingly unpopular with other insurgent factions, and in the end failed to maintain a strong presence in the country.³¹

Al-Qaida's allies in Pakistan

On the Pakistani side, al-Qaida has cooperated with a number of militant groups after 2001. Some of these, such as Lashkar-e-Tayba and Harakat ul-Mujahidin, are important for al-Qaida on a tactical and operational level. These groups have relations with the al-Qaida network that go back to the conflict in Kashmir in the 1990s and to the training camps in Afghanistan during the Taliban regime. After 2001, the groups have continued to support al-Qaida with logistics and safe houses inside Pakistan. They have also collaborated with al-Qaida militants in carrying out violent attacks across the region. They appear to have mixed goals, and their members have acted as "freelancers" for various militant networks in Pakistan.³²

Another type of relationship is that between al-Qaida and its "tribal hosts," i.e. Pashtun tribal leaders and militants who decided to host foreign fighters in FATA after their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2001–2002. They include the South Waziristan tribesman Nek Muhammed, who was one of the first individuals to host foreign fighters in FATA after their withdrawal in 2001–2002, and Beitullah Mehsud, who started hosting foreign fighters around 2004 after Nek Muhammed's areas came under attack from Pakistani security forces.³³ Beitullah Mehsud, who established the umbrella organization known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in 2007, would become one of al-Qaida's most important allies in Pakistan.

It is unclear what prompted the tribesmen in FATA to host the foreign fighters after 2001. In the case of Nek Muhammed, historical ties may have played a role. Nek Muhammed joined the Taliban regime in the 1990s and is said to have befriended Arab militants while fighting alongside Taliban against the Northern Alliance around Kabul. After the fall of the Taliban he went back to Waziristan and, according to one unconfirmed account, personally oversaw the Arabs' flight from Afghanistan to more secure areas.³⁴ Other alliances, such as that between foreign fighters and Baitullah Mehsud, seem to have no clear historical base. In such cases, intermediaries connected to the Taliban regime in Afghanistan may have been crucial in facilitating ties between the foreign fighters and the tribal leaders in FATA. It has been suggested that Jalaluddin Haqqani, a legendary mujahidin commander and long-standing ally of Osama bin Laden, played a role in convincing Baitullah Mehsud to host Uzbek fighters in South Waziristan in 2004.³⁵

Other accounts have argued that the tribal leaders who hosted al-Qaida and the Uzbeks in FATA were motivated by monetary incentives and the prospect of using foreign fighters to boost their own military standing.³⁶ This might have been true in individual cases. Yet, monetary incentives alone cannot explain why some of the tribal leaders, such as Nek Muhammed, decided to not only support foreign fighters in their area, but also to take an active part in the fighting in

Afghanistan after 2001.³⁷ Overall, common cause and ideology appear to be a common theme in these relationships. A reading of the backgrounds of several of al-Qaida's allies in FATA reveals that they all had previous ties with the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and stayed loyal to the ousted regime after 2001.³⁸ In other words there was a shared desire among the foreign fighters and their tribal hosts to fight U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan. This made FATA a receptive environment for foreign fighters who came to the area after 2001, and who were intent on supporting the war in Afghanistan from the very beginning.

On a strategic level, the relationship between al-Qaida and its "tribal hosts" is of particular interest. Arguably, the alliance has led al-Qaida to shift its strategic focus from Afghanistan to Pakistan. This became apparent in 2007 when al-Qaida's leaders started to actively reach out to Pakistani militants in their propaganda.³⁹ The shift was connected to the rise of a violent campaign inside Pakistan in 2004, which was intensified after the Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) siege in 2007. While the Afghan Taliban opposed the campaign some of al-Qaida's tribal allies, such as Baitullah Mehsud's network, actively supported it. Al-Qaida decided to lend vocal support to Mehsud's campaign, even though it contradicted the Afghan Taliban's policy of fighting inside Afghanistan only.

This shift in focus was probably not a sudden change in strategy, but the result of the al-Qaida network's development over time after being relocated to Pakistan in 2001–2002. The rise of anti-regime violence in Pakistan gave al-Qaida an opportunity to promote its own ideology and increase its standing in the Pakistani militant environment. Al-Qaida had long viewed the Pakistani regime as a legitimate target, due to their alliance with the United States in the "War on terror" in 2001. Prior to 2004, al-Qaida fighters had already taken part in scattered terrorist attacks in Pakistan and assassination attempts on President Musharraf. The Lal Masjid siege in 2007, which sparked a wave of protests and violent attacks across the country, created the necessary pretext for al-Qaida's leaders to call for a popular uprising in Pakistan.

While the uprising failed to materialize, al-Qaida's propaganda has continued to focus on Pakistan through repeated messages by al-Qaida leaders, Urdu- and Pashto-language translations of its statements, and interviews with Pakistani tribal militants. This indicates that over time, al-Qaida has become more integrated in the Pakistani militant environment. On the other hand, there is little doubt that al-Qaida regards Afghanistan as its most important battlefield. Al-Qaida fighters continue to cooperate with Afghan insurgents on a tactical level, and al-Qaida's leaders seem to have encouraged its Pakistani allies to unite efforts with the Afghan Taliban and prioritize the insurgency in Afghanistan.⁴⁰ As long as U.S. and NATO troops are present on Afghan soil, al-Qaida's priorities in the region are unlikely to change.

Intertwined networks

The intertwined nature of the bonds between Afghan, Pakistani and Arab militants in FATA was illustrated by the suicide attack of the Jordanian "double agent" Humam al-Balawi in Khost, Afghanistan on 31 December 2009. Al-Balawi was an active member of jihadist internet forums who was recruited by Jordanian intelligence to infiltrate the al-Qaida network. He went to FATA in the fall of 2009, but never had an intention to work for Jordanian intelligence or the CIA. Instead, he devised a plan together with local militants in which he would feed Jordanian and American intelligence with information in order to gain their trust, and then carry out a suicide

operation. The attack was spectacular in the sense that it was one of the worst single attacks on the CIA in the organization's history, killing seven of its operatives.

It appears that al-Qaida, the Pakistani Taliban and the Haqqani network cooperated in organizing and carrying out the attack. After the attack, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid issued a statement saying that it had been carried out in revenge of the drone attacks that had killed the TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud and two al-Qaida operatives in FATA.⁴¹ Later, al-Qaida's media wing *al-Sahab* released a documentary about the attack that also contained an interview with al-Balawi.⁴² TTP's media wing released a separate video of al-Balawi, in which he is seen seated next to the TTP leader Hakimullah Mehsud. Similar to al-Qaida's propaganda, the attack was presented as a revenge for the drone campaign in FATA and in particular for the killing of Baitullah Mehsud in August 2009.⁴³

For a long time the Afghan Taliban stayed silent about the attack, except issuing a short statement saying that it had been carried out by a member of the Afghan Army.⁴⁴ However it was believed that the Haqqani network had been involved in some way or another, due to its influence in North Waziristan and Khost where the attack was staged. This was to some extent confirmed by Sirajuddin Haqqani a few months later, when he openly praised the attack in an interview published on al-Qaida affiliated web forums.⁴⁵ As expected he did not present it as a revenge attack for the drone campaign in FATA, like al-Qaida and TTP had done (the Afghan Taliban principally deny the existence of Taliban sanctuaries on Pakistani soil). Instead, he described it as a revenge attack against American intelligence officers working to eliminate insurgent leaders in Afghanistan. The discrepancies between the Afghan Taliban's earlier statement regarding the attack and that of al-Qaida and TTP led to discussion on jihadist web forums, prompting one of the members to contact the Taliban's web page and ask for a clarification. In an answer posted in May 2010, the Taliban representative acknowledged that the attack had been carried out by Abu Dujana al-Khurasani, and claimed that the previous statement of the Afghan Taliban had been wrong because it had been confused with another attack that had been planned on the same day and in the same area.⁴⁶

This case illustrates that although Afghan, Pakistani and Arab fighters in FATA seem to diverge in their goals and strategies at times, they are nevertheless able to cooperate effectively on a tactical level. It highlights the fragmented nature of the Afghan and Pakistani insurgent movements, and underlines the importance of individual ties and networks. This is an important backdrop to the next part of the analysis, which takes a closer look at the identity and activities of some of the foreign fighters that were active in Afghanistan or Pakistan between 2002 and 2006.

A profile of the foreign fighters in FATA, 2002–2006

The following discussion is based on an analysis of 120 biographies of foreign and local fighters who were killed in Afghanistan or Pakistan between 2002 and 2006. As previously mentioned, the biographies are taken from a book named "Martyrs in a time of alienation" which was published on jihadist discussion forums in 2008. A summary of the biographies is provided in Appendix A. Three basic questions were asked: What is the background of the foreign fighters? What kind of militant activities were they involved in after 2001? And what was their relationship to the local population?

First of all, the martyr biographies reveal that the foreign fighters who were active in FATA between 2002 and 2006 came from a variety of countries and socio-economic backgrounds. The 103 foreign fighters represented in the “martyr biography” collection came from 22 different countries in the Middle East, North Africa, former USSR and the Xinyang province of China. With the exception of one fighter from the Caribbean Islands, there were no Europeans or Americans in the collection. However, some of the fighters lived in Western Europe before they came to Afghanistan, and appeared to have travelled through European-based facilitator networks. There were also no fighters from Southeast Asia. With regards to socio-economic backgrounds, the biographies represented everything from highway robbers to lawyers and engineers. The only thing they seemed to have in common was that they were all male and from a Sunni Muslim background (i.e. there were no converts in this collection). What is perhaps more interesting in this context, is to look at the militant experience of the fighters, and how they came to join the jihad in Afghanistan after 2001.

With regards to militant experience, the biography collection represented the whole spectrum from veterans of the Afghan jihad in the 1980s, to freshly joined recruits who had no previous experience from Afghanistan or from any other jihadist battlefield. However, a large majority of the foreign fighters (around 75%), had been involved in militant activity in Afghanistan prior to the 11 September attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. Most of these were present in Afghanistan at the time of the attacks, and chose to participate in the fight against the U.S.-led invasion before withdrawing to Pakistan. A smaller group (27%) travelled to Afghanistan for the first time after 11 September 2001.⁴⁷

The last group consisted mostly of inexperienced recruits. Only eight out of 28 individuals had previous experience from Islamist militant activity (outside Afghanistan/Pakistan), while the remaining 20 joined militancy for the first time. In addition, the biographies describe ten local recruits (nine Pakistanis and one Afghan) who joined militancy for the first time after 2001. This may indicate that those recruits who have joined al-Qaida and other groups in FATA after 2001 mostly belong to a “new generation” of militants. However, based on the sparse source material it is yet too early to make any firm conclusions about these new recruits.

What can be noted is that there appeared to be no considerable influx of foreign fighters from *Iraq* to Afghanistan in this period. The biography collection only contained one example of this; a Saudi Arabian car mechanic named Sayfallah al-Zahrani who went to Iraq to fight the Americans after the 2003 invasion. He allegedly trained in a training camp in Mosul, but “... when the camp was attacked, he and a group went to Afghanistan” instead. He ended up as an administrative worker for a militant group in the Pashtun tribal areas, then he underwent training and went to a “front” in North Waziristan, where he was killed while fighting Pakistani forces.⁴⁸

The observation that not many fighters came from the Iraqi jihad to Afghanistan should perhaps not come as a surprise. In this period, foreign fighters who went to Iraq were often required to have previous military training (with the exception of volunteer suicide bombers).⁴⁹ In Afghanistan, on the other hand, inexperienced recruits had the opportunity to undergo training in the Pakistani tribal areas before being sent on missions. The biographies reflect this, as inexperienced volunteers reportedly received training in a house or other small-scale facility before being sent onto the battlefield.⁵⁰ They also tell of a few fighters who attempted to go to

Iraq before Afghanistan, but failed to do so due to a lack of experience. For example, a Saudi nicknamed Khattab al-Azdi allegedly became motivated to go to jihad after watching the 9/11 attacks on television. First he tried to go to Chechnya, but had to postpone this because his money was stolen. Later, "... he wanted to join al-Zarqawi in Iraq, but he didn't have sufficient training. He went to one neighbouring country for training, and then came the opportunity to go to Afghanistan instead."⁵¹

These observations may qualify the notion that Afghan insurgents picked up tactics and weapons from veterans of the insurgency in Iraq, at least if we talk about the period between 2003, when the Iraqi insurgency started, and 2006. In this period, Afghan insurgents may have been indirectly inspired by the techniques and tactics of Iraqi jihadists through media and propaganda. Direct exchange of knowledge between Afghan and Iraqi insurgents may also have taken place in single cases, as suggested by two *Newsweek* articles published in 2006 and 2009.⁵² However, the biographies suggest that migration of jihadists from Iraq to Afghanistan was not a wide-spread phenomenon in 2003–2006, nor was it part of an organized effort on part of al-Qaida to transfer skills and knowledge from one battlefield to another. As discussed in more detail below, the tactic of suicide bombing was probably introduced to the Taliban by Pakistani militants and al-Qaida members who fled to FATA from Afghanistan in 2001–2002, not by veterans of the Iraqi jihad. Such veterans may, of course, have played a more important role in the Afghan insurgency after 2006, a period not covered in the current analysis.

Overall, the jihadist sources indicate that there has been a continuous presence of al-Qaida fighters in FATA ever since their withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2001–2002. This may qualify previous commentaries about the “return of al-Qaida” to Afghanistan-Pakistan in 2007–2008.⁵³ In fact, al-Qaida fighters were always present in the region, even if their activities were overshadowed by the conflict in Iraq. Most of the fighters who were active in the region in 2002–2006 were veterans from the training camps in Afghanistan who had managed to escape the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. Few jihadists arrived from abroad in 2002–2006, neither from Iraq nor elsewhere. This means that the escape of a large group of foreign fighters from Afghanistan in 2001–2002 was crucial to upholding a degree of al-Qaida activity in the region. The same fighters also played an important role in transferring tactical knowledge to local insurgents, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Activities

The martyr biographies are sparse in providing dates of the events they describe, and apart from a few easily recognizable events (such as the killing of the police chief in Jalalabad in June 2004, or the attempt on General Dostum in January 2005), it is hard to check events described against events reported in the media.⁵⁴ The analysis here will therefore concentrate on identifying what kinds of activities the foreign fighters were involved in, rather than attempting to analyse changes over time.

Type of activity	Number of foreign fighters involved	% of total
Rocket attacks, ambushes and roadside bombs	62	60 %

Trainer (foreign and/or local fighters)	14	14 %
Administrative/media work	14	14 %
Suicide operations	11	11 %
Incitement of local population	10	9.7 %
Activity not specified	6	5.8 %
Weapons/explosives manufacture	5	4.9 %
Terrorist operations in Western countries	3	2.9 %
Assassination of Afghan civilians	2	1.9 %
Terrorist operations in Pakistan	1	1.0 %
Financing	1	1.0 %

Table 1: Militant activity of foreign fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 2002–2006.⁵⁵

The source material indicates that a majority of foreign fighters who were active in the region between 2002 and 2006 were involved in guerrilla-type activities across the border into Afghanistan. According to Table 1, 60% had been directly participating in rocket attacks, ambushes and/or roadside bomb attacks, usually described as targeting U.S. troops. In contrast, only 11% had directly participated in suicide attacks. At the same time, the many individual stories revealed in these biographies paint a complex picture of the foreign fighters' activities across southern and eastern Afghanistan. These include efforts at inciting the local population, training foreign and local militants, manufacturing explosives and rockets, and providing support for terrorist operations in Pakistani and perhaps also Western cities.

Guerrilla warfare

A majority of the fighters took part in operations associated with guerrilla warfare such as ambushes, rocket attacks and roadside bombs. Several of the fighters in the source material are described as belonging to a group led by a Libyan militant, Abu al-Layth al-Libi, operating out of North Waziristan. Abu al-Layth al-Libi, a veteran of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) came to Afghanistan in the late 1990s and was among the Arab commanders who retreated to the tribal areas of Pakistan after the fall of the Taliban. After the retreat, it appears that he quickly assumed a leadership role among the Arabs in the Waziristan area. Al-Suri wrote around 2004 that after the Arabs' retreat to the Pakistani tribal areas, Abu al-Layth "... assumed the leadership for groups fighting against the Americans on the Pakistani border with Afghanistan from that time on, and until now."⁵⁶ Al-Libi himself was among the first Arab commanders to give interviews to the media after the fall of the Taliban regime. In a phone interview recorded in 2002, he asserted that Osama bin Laden had survived the battle of Tora Bora, and warned that his fighters were preparing for a new stage of guerrilla warfare against the U.S. forces in Afghanistan.⁵⁷ Some of the attacks carried out by his group have been videotaped and subsequently published by the jihadist media companies *al-Sahab* and *Labbayk*. Abu al-Layth was killed in an airstrike in North Waziristan in January 2008. His death was followed by letters of condolence from a wide range of militant Islamist groups and leaders, including al-Qaida's "no. 2" Ayman al-Zawahiri, indicating the high stature he had obtained by that time within the al-Qaida network.

When looking at the activities of Abu al-Layth's group they appear to be focused on fighting U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan and to support the insurgency there. Al-Libi's name has rarely

been mentioned in connection with terrorist cases in Europe or the U.S. On the contrary, a range of sources indicate that from 2002 and until his death in January 2008, al-Libi commanded a group of foreign fighters in North Waziristan whose main aim was to assist the insurgency in Afghanistan. Training videos feature al-Libi instructing recruits of various nationalities in infantry tactics and urban warfare. According to various biographies of militants, the members in his group participated in carrying out a number of attacks against U.S. forces in south-eastern Afghanistan. His group was small and had a local reach only; jihadist videos indicate that it comprised around 50–60 fighters or less, and the attacks mentioned by his group are described as taking place in the border regions between Waziristan and the south-eastern provinces of Afghanistan. However, one cannot rule out the fact that his group may have offered support in hosting or training militants with the purpose of carrying out terrorist attacks in Western countries.⁵⁸

The biographies provide few details about the activities of other groups than al-Libi's, apart from mentioning that such groups existed in the area. In any case, it seems clear that most of the fighters described in the biography collection participated in guerrilla warfare against U.S. forces and their allies on a local, provincial level in Afghanistan. Very few were involved in the spectacular and mass-casualty terrorist attacks that have become the hallmark of the al-Qaida network. At the same time, the biographies also hint that the Arab fighters' ambitions in the area were more than being guerrilla soldiers. One indication of this is the role apparently played by some Arab militants in staging high-profile suicide attacks.

Suicide attacks

Foreign fighters have been involved in suicide attacks in Afghanistan in a number of ways. There are examples in the biographies that foreigners have been responsible for planning and organizing the attack, providing material and technical support, or for carrying out the suicide operation itself. Sometimes, the foreign fighters appear to carry out several of the stages of the operation; at other times they only contribute to part of it (for example, as a trainer, bomb maker, or as a volunteer suicide bomber).

Clearly, al-Qaida fighters possessed some of the technical expertise needed to manufacture suicide vests. For example, the biographies tell of Ibrahim al-Muhajir al-Masri, an Egyptian university-trained engineer and veteran of the Soviet-Afghan jihad. After 2001 he was based in the tribal areas where he was “an engineer for suicide operations and made equipment for suicide bombers.” He allegedly made the bomb used in the suicide attack on the U.S. consulate in the Pakistani city of Karachi (the date is not specified, so it may refer to either the June 2002 or the March 2006 bombing).⁵⁹ Another veteran from the Soviet-Afghan war, an Algerian named Abu Ali al-Maliki al-Jaza'iri, was also described as a Pakistan-based “trainer for suicide bombers.” Moreover, the biographies contain an example of an Arab who supervised suicide operations. A Moroccan, Abu Khalid al-Maghribi, was a commander based in North Waziristan who allegedly was appointed “responsible for supervising two martyrdom operations in Khost.” No details of the operations are provided except that “they were successful,” and on the way back he and an accomplice were killed.

The biographies also contain several examples of foreigners who volunteered to become suicide bombers. The first suicide attack in Kabul, which killed four German soldiers in June 2003, was allegedly carried out by a Saudi Arabian, Abd al-Rahman al-Najdi. He fled to the Pashtun tribal

areas after the fall of the Taliban, and took part in guerrilla warfare before volunteering to become a suicide bomber.

According to the biographies, there appeared to be a regime in place for foreign fighters who wished to volunteer for suicide operations. The Egyptian militant Abu Muhammad al-Masri volunteered for a suicide operation after finishing military training in a camp North Waziristan. He made the request to his emir, and one day he “received a letter of approval.” He then “left his group, and nothing was heard for a couple of weeks.” Then he allegedly carried out a suicide attack in Kabul, also targeting German troops, on 27 January 2004. According to media reports, it killed two and injured 11.⁶⁰ Fighters associated with other groups could also volunteer for suicide operations. For example, a militant from the Xinyang province of China, associated with the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), allegedly volunteered for a suicide operation after returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca. He carried out the “third and largest suicide operation in Kabul” against an American intelligence headquarters.⁶¹

Afghan militants were also trained by the foreign fighters to become suicide bombers. The biographies tell of an ethnic Tajik, Abd al-Mu’min al-Tajiki from northern Afghanistan, who became the first suicide bomber to target General Abdul Rashid Dostum (an ethnic Uzbek who is one of the most powerful leaders in northern Afghanistan – now an ally to the Karzai government). The Tajik militant already had long-standing affiliations to al-Qaida; he trained in Arab training camps prior to 9/11 and retreated with the Arabs to the Pakistani tribal areas after the fall of the Taliban, where he then stayed with the Arabs for some two years before being “given the opportunity” to become a suicide bomber. He was then trained for the task, and waited for the order to go. It appears to have been a well-organized operation. Another group conducted reconnaissance of the target, and when Dostum was seen on the street, they gave the Tajik operative the orders to move. Still, the bomb failed to kill Dostum.⁶² The story apparently refers to the attempt on Dostum on 20 Jan 2005, in which Dostum’s brother was injured, but Dostum himself escaped.⁶³

The biographies indicate that the Afghan insurgency at this time consisted not only of local guerrilla groups and their foreign allies, but that there were already broader networks in place that enabled, for example, a Uighur militant based in South Waziristan to carry out a suicide attack against ISAF forces in the very heart of the Afghan capital. As some of the examples illustrate, foreign militants seemed to play key roles in these networks.

International terrorism

Western media have tended to focus on the links between militants in FATA and international terrorism. Indeed, there are several examples of European-based jihadist cells who received training in Pakistani tribal areas after 2001.⁶⁴ To what extent, then, did the foreign fighters in the biography collection provide support for international terrorist operations? A few biographies hint that such support was provided. For example, an individual named Abu Ja’far al-Maghribi, who was based in the Pakistani tribal areas after 2001, was at one point promoted to “deputy chief for foreign operations,” and he was “trainer for foreign mujahidin who prepared to carry out operations in *al-jahiliyya*” (‘lands of ignorance’, in jihadist discourse often referring to Europe and the U.S.).⁶⁵ Another example is of the high-ranking al-Qaida member Hamza al-Rabia’ al-Masri, who, before 9/11, it is told, worked as a “personal assistant to Ayman al-Zawahiri.” At one point, after the fall of the Taliban, he was promoted to al-Qaida’s “chief of foreign operations,”

and was involved in an attempt on the life of President Pervez Musharraf. In order to escape the Pakistani police, he then went to Afghanistan and trained foreign recruits, “which resulted in the blessed attacks on the British capital” (apparently referring to the London bombings on 7 July 2005).⁶⁶ He was killed in an air bombing in North Waziristan in October 2005.

It appears that many of the foot soldiers described in the biographies were not very interested in global jihad, as the majority of them were more narrowly occupied with supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. Other sources also support the notion that foreign fighters are more interested in fighting in far-off Muslim lands perceived as being “occupied,” than carrying out terrorist attacks in Europe. There are even examples that European citizens, who could probably have accessed Europe more easily than others, preferred fighting in Afghanistan. Sohail Qurashi, a British-Pakistan accused of planning to carry out terrorist acts overseas, was arrested as he was trying to go to Pakistan in October 2006. He was carrying 9,000 GBP and military equipment, and was said to be planning to take part in a two or three week operation, probably in Afghanistan, Pakistan or Waziristan. However, Britain was to be used for fundraising only.⁶⁷ Another example of a fighter who might have easily infiltrated European countries, but chose to fight in Afghanistan anyway, is Eric Breininger, an ethnic German convert to Islam who has been affiliated with the Uzbek-led group Islamic Jihad Union, and with the Taliban-affiliated “German Taliban Mujahedeen [sic].”⁶⁸ There may be many reasons for why a fighter chooses to fight in Afghanistan, including purely pragmatic reasons, but in general, it appears that foreign fighters differentiate between going to FATA to train for and fight in Afghanistan (so-called “classical” jihad advocated by the Palestinian ideologue Abdullah Azzam and others⁶⁹), and going to FATA to prepare for terrorist attacks in Europe.

In sum, foreign fighters have been involved in a number of activities in Afghanistan since 2002, most of which can be classified as local guerrilla warfare in south-eastern Afghanistan. However, it appears that within the insurgency there were also broader networks in place, for example for organizing sophisticated suicide operations, in which foreign fighters appeared to play important roles. Furthermore, the strategy of the foreign fighters involved not only attacks on foreign troops in Afghanistan, but also assisting or organizing attacks against representatives of the Afghan government, both local police and army, and key government members. This indicates that the foreign fighters in Afghanistan adjusted their agenda to that of the local insurgents, rather than attacking targets of high symbolic value to al-Qaida. Finally, there are a few examples of foreign fighters based in Afghanistan/Pakistan who supported international terrorist operations abroad, and who took part in training jihadists for attacks in the West. However, this type of activity was not the main focus of foreign fighters in the area.

Interaction with locals

This article has already discussed the relationships that existed between foreign fighters and local militant groups in FATA. The biographies provide additional insight into the dynamics of these relationships. They seem to confirm that foreign fighters were not integrated into the formal command structures of local insurgent groups. Yet they did not operate in a vacuum, but coordinated their operations with local militants and also admitted local recruits into their ranks.

Training camps

From an early stage of the insurgency, foreign fighters were running training camps in FATA. It appears that these camps did not only admit foreign fighters, but were open to Afghan and Pakistani recruits as well. According to an article in *Newsweek*, local recruits constituted the majority of trainees. A local participant explained what happened after he graduated from an Arab training camp in Waziristan along with around 160 Pakistani tribals and 40 Afghans: “We were divided into 10 groups. Each had two or three Arabs assigned to it as commanders and instructors. We split up: some groups went to Khost and Paktia provinces and others to Ghazni and Kandahar.”⁷⁰

The martyr biography collection confirms that the Arab training camps in FATA attracted local recruits. The collection contains 17 biographies of Afghan and Pakistani nationals, ten out of whom joined militancy in FATA after 2001. The story of Abu Bakr al-Waziri, a young madrasa student from Wana, is a typical example. According to the biography, he went to the office of Sheikh Abu Muhammed al-Turkistani (aka Hasan Mahsum, the leader of ETIM) and Abu al-Layth al-Libi, who discussed if he could join a training camp. Al-Libi agreed to let him join his camp. After completing his training with Abu al-Layth’s group, he was not sent to the front line right away due to his young age. At a later point he returned to Abu al-Layth and participated in an attack in Khost, during which he was killed.⁷¹

Organization and incitement

The Arab fighters also sought to infiltrate certain areas of Afghanistan, set up cells and incite locals to participate in violent jihad against foreign forces. From the biographies, we learn that groups of fighters, mostly Saudis, were dispatched from the Pashtun tribal areas to the Jalalabad area (in the Nangarhar province of Afghanistan) to “build jihadist cells and incite jihad.”⁷² One particular group went to Jalalabad and “started re-organizing the dispersed Taliban, building jihadist cells, and preparing for battle.”⁷³ In the biography of a Saudi fighter who also went to Jalalabad, it is stated that he “trained Pashtun students [i.e. Taliban]” there.⁷⁴

It is hard to confirm whether foreign fighters actually built cells of local Afghans and to what extent they directed the insurgency in Nangarhar province, or whether they were merely assisting local militant groups. However, some cooperation with local militant networks apparently took place, since the Arabs stayed in safe houses around Jalalabad and allegedly were involved in a series of attacks on local security officials. This included a bomb that killed the police chief in Jalalabad, Haji Ajab Shah, on 1 June 2004.⁷⁵ According to the biographies, the bomb was prepared by an individual named Abu Hazim al-Suri, described as “one of the commanders in the Jalalabad area.”⁷⁶ He was later arrested and killed. Another group, led by a Yemenite, Abu al-Ahytham al-Ta’azi al-Yemeni, prepared a series of parcel bombs disguised as books, of which “one ... was sent to the police chief of Nangarhar, the second exploded amongst the soldiers of apostasy and the third was discovered.”⁷⁷ In June 2004, media reported a “book bomb” or a parcel bomb that had indeed exploded in a police headquarters of the Nangarhar province, which injured 7 policemen.⁷⁸ In addition to targeting local Afghans, the biographies also claim that the Jalalabad groups took part in attacks on “Crusaders” in the province, although few details are provided.

Occasionally, the biographies give hints of frictions between foreigners and local Afghans. Al-Zubayr al-Maghribi, an assistant of Abu al-Layth al-Libi, allegedly “went to support the fight in

Ghazni, but was kicked out by some locals, so he and his companion, Qashami‘ar al-Makki, returned to his previous base [in Khost].”⁷⁹

Marriage into local tribes

Another insight given by the martyr biographies is that marriage between foreign fighters and Pashtun women (presumably from FATA) took place, although they were not a wide-spread phenomenon. Out of 103 foreign fighters, eight were reported to have married Pashtun, Pakistani or Afghan women, and at least five of these marriages were described as taking place after 2001. The figures may be higher, as a majority of these 103 biographies (70 %) do not contain any information on the the individual’s marital status.

The biographies indicate that marriage into Afghan or Pakistani tribes or families appears to have become more common after 2001. Out of 15 marriages taking place before 2001, only one was to an Afghan, while the majority of marriages were to Arab women. In contrast, five out of eight marriages taking place after 2001 was to a Pashtun or Pakistani woman. This may be ascribed to a greater mobility of the foreign fighters before 2001. Many of the reported marriages took place while the fighters resided in the Arab world or Central Asia.

While marriage into local tribes indeed seems to have taken place, it is unclear whether this has actually become a deliberate strategy of al-Qaida after 2001. The most high-ranking al-Qaida member alleged to have married into a local tribe is Ayman al-Zawahiri, who married a woman from the Mohmand tribe in Bajaur after 2001. In Bajaur, al-Zawahiri is said to have been protected by the local Taliban leader and Mohmand tribesman, Maulana Faqir Muhammad, who was also the leader of the militant outfit TNSM.⁸⁰ The al-Qaida commander Abu Ikhlas al-Misri, who operated in the Kunar province for many years, has also been described as well entrenched in the local community. BBC described him in 2006 as “one of many of Bin Laden’s Arab fighters who married a local woman, speaks the language and enjoys the protection of the local tribes against all outsiders.”⁸¹ Anecdotal evidence suggests, at least, that inter-marriage may have strengthened the ties between foreign and local militants, and in some cases, secured them protection under tribal laws. However, it is hard to say whether intermarriages were merely an expression of, rather than a cause for, strong relationships between al-Qaida militants and their local hosts.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to shed light on the identity and activities of the foreign fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan after 2001. The focus has not been on top al-Qaida leaders, but rather on mid-level commanders and “foot soldiers,” who were based in FATA between 2002 and 2006. One of the main findings is that there was little migration of foreign fighters from abroad to FATA in this period, and practically no influx of fighters from Iraq. This contradicts the notion that Afghan insurgents picked up new tactics and technology from veterans of the Iraqi insurgency, at least prior to 2006.

In spite of the low influx of new recruits to FATA, al-Qaida managed to uphold a degree of activity in the region. This was possible because a considerable number of Arab and other foreign fighters managed to flee from Afghanistan in late 2001 and early 2002. In FATA and in

Waziristan in particular, these fighters were given sanctuary by local tribesmen supportive of the Taliban's cause. Their motivations for hosting foreign fighters cannot simply be reduced to monetary or material gain, because tribesmen also took part in fighting alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. It illustrates the intertwined nature of the bonds between the various local and foreign fighting groups in the area.

The martyr biographies analysed in this article support the last observation. In the period between 2002 and 2006, foreign fighters were involved in various types of activities inside Afghanistan, some of which were clearly dependent on coordination or cooperation with local sympathizers. Over time, the foreign fighters became more integrated in local communities, most visibly on the Pakistani side of the border. This integration took various forms. Already in 2002, the Arabs accepted Pakistani tribesmen into their training camps and fighting groups in Waziristan. Between 2002 and 2006 several marriages took place between Arab fighters and Pashtun women. These early developments may help to explain why al-Qaida continues to enjoy a strong sanctuary in FATA today.

Overall, the martyr biographies offer a rare glimpse into the identities and lives of the foreign fighters in FATA after 2001. The stories reveal that the fighters came from a range of different countries and socio-economic backgrounds, and a majority had been involved in militant activity in Afghanistan prior to 9/11. Most of the fighters came to be associated with small groups or cells led by Arab commanders, and were occupied with taking part in guerrilla warfare against the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan. But they were also involved in a range of other activities, such as training, administrative work and incitement of the local population. While some individuals volunteered to become suicide bombers inside Afghanistan, very few were concerned with activities related to terrorism in Pakistan or abroad. In a sense, they had more in common with the "Afghan-Arabs" who fought the USSR in the 1980s, than with the 9/11 hijackers.

Appendix A

No	Name	Geographical origin	Year of birth	Marital status (nationality of wife)	First time arrived in Afghanistan or Pakistan
1	Ibrahim al-Muhajir al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Palestinian)	1979–1992
2	Ibrahim al-Daghistani	Russia	1961	Married	1996–2001
3	Abraz al-Pakistani	Pakistan			After 9/11
4	Abu Ahmad al-Suri	Syria	1980		1996–2001
5	Ahmad al-Hassan Dawir	Pakistan			After 9/11
6	Idris al-Turkistani	China		Married	1996–2001
7	Usama al-Hamawi	Syria	Ca 1971	Married	1996–2001
8	Abu Usama al-Sharqi	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
9	Abu Usama al-Daghistani	Russia	1972		1996–2001
10	Usid al-Ta'asi al-Yemeni	Yemen			1996–2001
11	Uways al-Najdi	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
12	Asad Allah al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	Ca 1982–1986		1996–2001
13	Asad Allah al-Libi	Libya	Ca 1973	Married (Pakistani)	1979–1992
14	Abu Umama al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Pashtun)	1979–1992
15	Abu Ayman al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Moroccan)	1979–1992
16	Abu Bakr Azzam al-Filistini	Jordan		Married	1979–1992
17	Abu Bakr al-Maghribi	Morocco		Married (Moroccan)	1996–2001
18	Abu Bakr al-'Iraqi	Iraq	1988		After 9/11
19	Abu Bakr al-Waziri	Pakistan			After 9/11
20	Abu Bakr al-Sharqi	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
21	Abu al-Bara' al-Maqdisi	Syria			1996–2001
22	Bilal al-Maghribi	Morocco			1996–2001
23	Abu Turab al-Pakistani	Pakistan			1996–2001
24	Abu Ja'far al-Maghribi	Morocco		Married	1996–2001
25	Maulawi Jal Manur Waziri	Pakistan			1996–2001
26	Ibn Haratha al-Makki	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
27	Abu Hazim al-Suri	Syria	1979		1996–2001
28	Abu al-Hassan al-Somali	Somalia/Kenya			1996–2001
29	Hakim al-Tatarstani	Russia			1996–2001
30	Hamza al-Rabi' al-Masri	Egypt			1979–1992
31	Hamza al-Zubayr al-Filistini	Palestine/Egypt		Married (Egyptian)	1979–1992
32	Hamza al-Tatarstani	Tajikistan / Russia			1996–2001
33	Hamza Burakhil Waziristan	Pakistan			1996–2001
34	Abu Khalid al-Maghribi	Morocco	Ca 1979	Married (Pakistani)	After 9/11
35	Abu Khalid al-Kuwaiti	Kuwait		Married	After 9/11
36	Khattab al-Azdi	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
37	Aby Dajjana al-Imarati	UAE		Married	After 9/11

38	Darwish al-Waziri	Pakistan			After 9/11
39	Abu Dhakir al-Jaza'iri	Algeria			1996–2001
40	Abu Rawaha al-Suri	Syria		Married (Pashtun)	1996–2001
41	Abu Rahil al-Harbi	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
42	Al-Zubayr al-Turkistani	China			1996–2001
43	Al-Zubayr al-Maghribi	Morocco			1996–2001
44	Al-Zubayr al-Turki	Turkey	1983		After 9/11?
45	Zayd al-Daghistani	Russia			1996–2001
46	Abu Sa'd al-Qandahari al-Najdi	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
47	Samarqand al-Urdunni	Jordan			1979–1992
48	Sahm al-Ta'ifi	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
49	Sayf Allah al-Zahrani	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
50	Talut al-Ta'ifi	Saudi Arabia		Married (Uzbek)	1996–2001
51	Abu 'A'id al-Filistini	Palestine/ Jordan		Married (Syrian)	1996–2001
52	Abu 'Amir al-Sudani	Sudan			After 9/11
53	Abu 'Amir al-Filistini	Palestine/Kuwait			1996–2001
54	Abu al-'Abbas al-Kurdi	Iraq			1996–2001
55	Abdallah al-Mudir al-Libi	Libya		Married (Moroccan)	1996–2001
56	Abu Abdallah al-Jadawi	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
57	Abdallah Jan al-Afghani (Surula)	Afghanistan		Married (Pashtun)	1979–1992
58	Abdallah "BM" al-Masri	Egypt/Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
59	Abdallah al-Afghani	Afghanistan			After 9/11
60	Abu 'Ubaydah al-Panshiri al-Shahri	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
61	Abu 'Ubaydah al-Hijazi	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
62	Abu Abd al-Rahman al-Kanadi al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Palestinian)	1979–1992
63	Abu Abd al-Rahman BM al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Egyptian)	1979–1992
64	Abd al-Rahman al-Uzbiki al-Khawarzimi	Uzbekistan	1967		1996–2001
65	Abd al-Rahman al-Najdi	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
66	Abd al-Rahman al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Pashtun)	1996–2001
67	Abd al-Rahim al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1974		1996–2001
68	Abd al-Salam al-Turki	Turkey			After 9/11
69	Abd al-Aziz al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1974		1996–2001
70	Abd al-Rahman al-Usud al-Libi	Libya		Married twice (Libyan, Pashtun)	1979–1992
71	Abdullah al-Libi	Libya			1996–2001
72	Abu Abdullah al-Turkistani	Kazakhstan			1979–1992
73	Abu Abdullah al-Shami	Syria			1996–2001
74	Abdallah al-Mu'dhin al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1976	Married (Uzbek)	1996–2001
75	Abdallah Haydarah	Saudi Arabia		Married (Saudi Arabian)	After 9/11
76	Abu Abdallah al-Sumali	Somalia			1979–1992
77	Abd al-Jabar al-	Tajikistan			1996–2001

	Turkistani				
78	Abd al-Hakim al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1971		1996–2001
79	Abd al-Salam al-Turkistani	China		Married twice (Chinese, Kazakh)	1996–2001
80	Abd al-Majid al-Tajiki	Tajikistan			1996–2001
81	Abd al-Wakil al-Masri	Egypt	1968	Married (Kenyan)	1979–1992
82	Abd al-Shahid al-Turkestani	Kazakhstan			1996–2001
83	Abd al-Hakim al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1974		1996–2001
84	Abd al-Mu'min al-Tajiki	Afghanistan			1996–2001
85	Uthman al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1973		1996–2001
86	Azzam al-Maghribi	Morocco	1973		1996–2001
87	Akrama al-Ghamidi	Saudi Arabia		Married (Pashtun)	1996–2001
88	Abu 'Ali al-Maliki al-Jaza'iri	Algeria		Married (Afghan)	1979–1992
89	Ali al-Tatarstani	Tajikistan		Married (Russian)	1996–2001
90	Umar al-Dali'i al-Yemeni	Yemen		Married (Yemenite)	1996–2001
91	Abu 'Umar al-Maghribi	Saudi Arabia (parents from Egypt/Morocco)	1980		After 9/11
92	Imran Khan	Pakistan			After 9/11
93	Awjal al-Rahman Bibli (Wazir)	Afghanistan			After 9/11
94	Gharib al-Turkistani	China			1996–2001
95	Faruq al-Madani	Saudi Arabia	Ca 1981		After 9/11
96	Qash'amyar al-Makki	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
97	Mukhtar al-Karibi	Caribbean Islands /France			1996–2001
98	Abu Muslim al-Tajiki	Tajikistan			After 9/11
99	Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Turkistani	China	1964		1996–2001
100	Abu Muhammad al-Qasimi	Saudi Arabia			After 9/11
101	Abu Muhammad al-Uzbiki	Uzbekistan	1968		1996–2001
102	Abu Muhammad al-Kurdi	Iraq			1996–2001
103	Abu Muhammad al-Iraqi	Iraq			1996–2001
104	Abu Muhammad al-Masri	Egypt			After 9/11
105	Muhammad Jan Sayfali al-Waziri	Pakistan			After 9/11
106	Mukhtar al-Suri	Syria	1975		1996–2001
107	Muslim al-Tunisi	Tunisia/Italy			1996–2001
108	Abu Mujahid al-Shahri	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
109	Al-Mu'tasim al-Sana'ani	Yemen			After 9/11
110	Mina Jan Dawar (Waziristan)	Pakistan			1996–2001
111	Al-Nabras al-Sana'ani	Yemen			1996–2001
112	Nik Muhammad Wazir	Pakistan			1996–2001

113	Wasim Muhammad Ru'uf Dur	Pakistan			After 9/11
114	Waqad al-Jaza'iri	Algeria/France			1996–2001
115	Abu al-Walid al-Mawritani	Mauritania/ Germany			1996–2001
116	Abu al-Walid al-Pakistani	Pakistan	1973		1996–2001
117	Abu al-Haytham al-Ta'azi al-Yemeni	Yemen			1996–2001
118	Abu Yasir al-Nashmi al-Harbi	Saudi Arabia			1996–2001
119	Abu Yahya al-Hawun al-Masri	Egypt		Married (Syrian)	1979–1992
120	Abu Yahya al-Maghribi	Morocco/ Germany			1996–2001

Notes

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² A general definition of foreign fighters is “non-indigenous, non-territorialized combatants who, motivated by religion, kinship, and/or ideology rather than pecuniary reward, enter a conflict zone to participate in hostilities.” Cerwyn Moore and Paul Tumelty, “Foreign fighters and the case of Chechnya: A critical assessment,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no.5 (2008): 412–433.

³ See, for example, Peter L. Bergen, *The Osama bin Laden I know* (New York: Free Press, 2006): 263.

⁴ Around 2002, there was a meeting between Abu al-Layth and two al-Qaida representatives (Shaykh Abu al-Hasan al-Masri al-Sa’idi and Shaykh Abu Jihad al-Masri) in which he agreed to cooperate with al-Qaida in Afghanistan, while still identifying himself with the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG). The relationship between al-Qaida and LIFG was formalized in November 2007, when Ayman al-Zawahiri announced in an *as-Sahab* production that the LIFG, represented in the tape by Abu al-Layth al-Libi, had joined al-Qaida. “*rih al-janna, al-juz 3* [the scent of Paradise, part 3],” *al-Sahab* 1430h/2009; “*wahdat al-saff* [Unity of rank],” *al-Sahab* Shawal 1428h./Oct/Nov 2007.

⁵ A partial English summary and analysis of this biography collection was posted on the blog *Making Sense of Jihad* in 2008–2009. The blog postings cover pp. 1–244 of the 350-page document). Marisa Urgo, “A study of Martyrs in a Time of Alienation,” *Making Sense of Jihad*, last updated on 15 October 2009, www.makingsenseofjihad.com/a_study_of_martyrs_in_a_time_of_alienation/ (accessed 25 May 2010). Reference to the original source: Abu ‘Ubayda al-Maqdisi, “*shuhada’ fi zaman al-ghurba* [Martyrs in a time of alienation],” Word version (350 pages), issued by al-Fajr Media Center and downloaded on 2 February 2008 from *al-Ikhlas* <http://www.alekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=120223>. The link no longer works but the document has been stored by the author.

⁶ For a background on al-Fajr Media Center, see Hanna Rogan, “Al-Qaeda’s online media strategies: From Abu Reuter to Irhabi 007” (Kjeller: FFI, 2007): 65–67.

⁷ For other studies using martyr biographies as a source, see, for example: Mariam Abou Zahab, “‘I shall be waiting for you at the door of Paradise’: The Pakistani martyrs of the Lashkar-e Taiba (Army of the Pure),” in Aparna Rao, Michael Bollig and Monika Böck, *The Practice of war: Production, reproduction and communication of armed Violence* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007); Thomas Hegghammer, “Saudi Militants in Iraq - Backgrounds and Recruitment Patterns,” (Kjeller: FFI, 2006), Thomas Hegghammer, “Terrorist Recruitment and Radicalisation in Saudi Arabia,” *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 4 (2006).

⁸ al-Maqdisi, “Martyrs in a time of alienation,” 13.

⁹ Rohan Gunaratna and Anders Nielsen, “Al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan and beyond,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no.9 (2008): 782–783.

¹⁰ In the period 2004–2007 only 9 such attacks took place. Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, “The year of the drone: An analysis of U.S. drone strikes in Pakistan, 2004–2010,” *New America Foundation* 24 February 2010, <http://counterterrorism.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/bergentiedemann2.pdf> (accessed 23 May 2010).

¹¹ There are numerous books on the Soviet-Afghan war and the role of foreign fighters in this period. See, for example Steve Coll, *Ghost wars: The secret history of the CIA, Afghanistan and bin Laden, from the Soviet invasion to September 10, 2001* (London: Penguin Books, 2005); Muhammad Amir Rana and Mubasher Bukhari, *Arabs in Afghan Jihad* (Lahore: Nigarshat Publishers, 2007).

¹² On the “Afghan-Arabs” phenomenon, see “Arab veterans of Afghanistan war lead new Islamic holy war,” (FAS, 1994, www.fas.org/irp/news/1994/afghan_war_vetrans.html) (accessed 9 June 2010).

¹³ Thomas Hegghammer, “Al-Qaidas rekruttskoler: Hva gjorde Afghanistan-veteranene så farlige? [Al-Qaida’s boot camps: What made the Afghanistan veterans so dangerous?],” *Norsk Militært Tidsskrift* no.2 (2008).

¹⁴ *The 9/11 Commission Report*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 67.

¹⁵ See, for example, *Ibid*.

¹⁶ The “Arab” groups identified by al-Suri were 1) al-Qaida; 2) The Libyan Islamic Fighting Group; 3) The Islamic fighting group in Morocco; 4) Egyptian Islamic Jihad; 5) The Egyptian Islamic Group; 6) The Algerian jihadi formation; 7) The Tunisian jihadi formation; 8) The formation of mujahidin from Jordan and Palestine [led by Abu Mus’ab al-Zarqawi]; 9) The Khalden camp [a general training camp for Arabs run by Ibn Sheikh al-Libi and Abu

Zubaydah]; 10) The Abu Khabab al-Masri training camp [a specialized training camp for explosives and poisons]; 11) the al-Ghuraba camp [led by al-Suri himself]. Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad*, 249–250.

¹⁷ Vahid Mojdeh, *Afghanistan under five years of Taliban sovereignty*, unpublished translation to English by Sepideh Khalili and Saeed Ganji, 36.

¹⁸ Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri, *The Global Islamic Resistance Call* (in Arabic) (Place and published unknown): 787–788.

¹⁹ See, for example, “Cracks in the foundation: Leadership schisms in al-Qa‘ida 1989–2006,” *Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* (Sept 2007); on the conflict between al-Suri and bin Laden, see Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad*, 278–293.

²⁰ For an analysis of this battle, see Paul L. Hastert, “Operation Anaconda: Perception meets reality in the hills of Afghanistan,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28, no.1 (January 2005): 11–20.

²¹ In this period, the war in Afghanistan started to feature more prominently in al-Qaida’s audiovisual propaganda. In 2005, al-Qaida’s media wing *as-Sahab* started issuing battle footage from Afghanistan in the series “*mahrakat al-amrikan fi bilad khurasan* [Holocaust for the Americans in the Land of Khurasan].” The production peaked in 2006 with 38 films. The output was somewhat lower in the years 2007–2009. Based on FFI’s *Jihadist Video Database* and author’s own archive.

²² Don Rassler, “Securing sanctuary: Understanding Al-Qaeda’s strategy in Pakistan,” in “Al-Qaeda’s senior leadership (AQSL),” *Jane’s Strategic Advisory Services* (November 2009), 31–32.

²³ Muhammad Amir Rana, “Marriott Blast: How to Single out Culprit Group from a Pool of Terrorists?” *SouthAsiaNet* 24 Sept 2008, <http://san-pips.com> (accessed 25 Sept 2008); Bill Roggio and Kaushik Kapisthalam, “Banned Pakistani terror group re-emerges under new name,” *The Long War Journal* 15 Jan 2009, www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/01/banned_pakistani_ter.php (accessed 24 May 2010).

²⁴ Anne Stenersen, “The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan: Organization, leadership and worldview,” *FFI-Report 2010/00359*, www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00136/00359_136353a.pdf (accessed 24 May 2010): 18.

²⁵ Some recent articles include: Jeremy Binnie and Joanna Wright, “Conflict of interest: The Taliban’s relationship with al-Qaeda,” *Jane’s Intelligence Review* 22, no.1 (January 2010); Barbara Sude, “Al-Qaeda Central: An assessment of the threat posed by the terrorist group headquartered on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border,” Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative Policy Paper, *New America Foundation* (December 2009), Don Rassler, “Securing Sanctuary: Understanding Al-Qaeda’s strategy in Pakistan,” in “Al-Qaeda’s senior leadership (AQSL),” *Jane’s Strategic Advisory Services* (November 2009); Peter Bergen, “The Front: The Taliban-Al Qaeda merger,” *The New Republic*, 19 October 2009, www.tnr.com (accessed 12 February 2010); Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau, “The Taliban in their own words,” *Newsweek*, 26 September 2009.

²⁶ Osama bin Laden first pledged a formal oath of allegiance to Mullah Omar in 1998, although some observers have pointed out that he did so reluctantly. After 2001, other high-ranking al-Qaida leaders have confirmed their pledge to the Taliban leader. For example, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid confirmed his pledge to Mullah Omar in a videotaped speech in 2007. Vahid Brown, “The facade of allegiance: Bin Ladin’s dubious pledge to Mullah Omar,” *CTC Sentinel* 3, no.1 (January 2010); “*liqa’ al-ikhwa* [A meeting between brothers],” *al-Sahab*, Ramadan 1428 h. / Sept/Oct 2007.

²⁷ Binnie and Wright, “Conflict of interest: The Taliban’s relationship with al-Qaeda”; Anthony Loyd, “Nato has only seven months to take Kandahar from the Taleban,” *Times Online*, 11 May 2010, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/afghanistan/article7122307.ece> (accessed 24 May 2010).

²⁸ The statistics of *al-Sahab* videos are based on FFI’s *Jihadist Video Database*, located at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI) in Kjeller, Norway, and author’s own archive.

²⁹ On hostility towards al-Qaida among the Taliban: See, for example, Yousafzai and Moreau, “The Taliban in their own words.”

³⁰ In an interview aired on *al-Jazeera* in June 2009, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid took credit for only one specific operation inside Afghanistan in recent years: A suicide attack against an American base in Khost, carried out in 2008. He emphasized that al-Qaida’s fighters in Afghanistan work under the Taliban’s command. Ahmad Zaidan, “*liqa’ al-yawm: mustafa abu al-yazid ... tanzim al-qa’ida* [Today’s meeting: Mustafa Abu al-Yazid ... the al-Qaida organization],” *Al-Jazeera*, 21 June 2009, www.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/C8A7D29B-9DFA-414E-8A09-EB30948E2621.htm (accessed 24 May 2010)

³¹ Author’s conversation with Truls H. Tønnessen, Norwegian Defence Research Est. (FFI), April 2010.

³² Stephen Tankel, “Laskar-e-Taiba in perspective: An evolving threat,” *New America Foundation*, Feb 2010, www.newamerica.net/sites/newamerica.net/files/policydocs/tankel.pdf (accessed 25 May 2010); Rohan Gunaratna and Anders Nielsen, “Al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan and beyond,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 31, no.9 (2008): 782, 793.

- ³³ Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, “*ta’ziya wa tahni’at al-umma al-islamiyya fi istishad al-amir baytallah mas’ud* [Condolences and congratulations to the Islamic Ummah for the martyrdom of Emir Baitullah Mehsud],” *al-Sahab* 1430 h.
- ³⁴ Abu ‘Ubayda al-Maqdisi, “*shuhada’ fi zaman al-ghurba*,” 324–326.
- ³⁵ Giustozzi, Decoding the Taliban, 76–77.
- ³⁶ M. Ilyas Khan, “Profile of Nek Mohammad,” *Dawn*, 19 June 2004, <http://www.dawn.com/2004/06/19/latest.htm> (accessed 11 March 2010).
- ³⁷ Yousafzai and Moreau, “The Taliban in their own words.”
- ³⁸ The personalities investigated were: Nek Muhammed, Maulavi Nazir, Abdullah Mehsud and Baitullah Mehsud. Abu ‘Ubayda al-Maqdisi, “*shuhada’ fi zaman al-ghurba*,” 324–326; Yousafzai and Moreau, “The Taliban in their own words”; “As-Sahab’s meeting with Mulla Nazir Ahmad, Emir of Taliban Mujahadeen, South Waziristan (Wazir tribe),” English transcript of video interview, *al-Sahab* (2009); al-Yazid, “*ta’ziya wa tahni’at al-umma al-islamiyya*”; Sohail Abdul Nasir, “Baitullah Mehsud: South Waziristan’s unofficial Amir,” *Terrorism Focus* 3, no.26 (9 July 2006); “Kabul... Guantanamo... Waziristan... Steps on the way of jihad for the martyr Abdullah Mehsud,” *Ma’arik Islamic Network*, 21 March 2009, <http://m3-f.com/forum/showthread.php?t=14234> (accessed 4 February 2010).
- ³⁹ Don Rassler, “Securing sanctuary: Understanding Al-Qaeda’s strategy in Pakistan,” in “Al-Qaeda’s senior leadership (AQSL),” *Jane’s Strategic Advisory Services* (November 2009), 32.
- ⁴⁰ “As-Sahab’s meeting with Mulla Nazir Ahmad, Emir of Taliban Mujahadeen, South Waziristan (Wazir tribe),” English transcript of video interview, *al-Sahab* (2009).
- ⁴¹ Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, “*bayan ‘an (ghazwat abi dujana al-khurasani taqabbalahu allah) li-ikhtiraq husun al-amrikan* [statement regarding the attack of Abu Dujana al-Khurasani, may God accept him, to penetrate the fortresses of the Americans],” *al-Faluja*, 2 January 2010, <http://al-faluja1.com/vb/showthread.php?t=98772> (accessed 7 Jan 2010).
- ⁴² “*liqa’ ma’a al-batal abu dujana al-khurasani* [Interview with the hero Abu Dujana al-Khurasani],” *al-Sahab* 1431 h./2010, downloaded via <http://69.162.81.124/~majahden/vb/showthread.php?t=40103> (accessed 1 March 2010)
- ⁴³ “The last will of Abu Dujana al-Khurasani,” *Umar Studio*, downloaded via *Shabakat Ansar al-Mujahidin*, 3 March 2010, <http://202.71.111.73/~asansar/vb/showthread.php?t=16122> (accessed 4 March 2010).
- ⁴⁴ Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, “*al-taqir al-ikhbari ‘an yawm ams al-arba’a’ al-muwafiq 30/12/2009* [News report from yesterday, Wednesday, corresponding to 30/12/2009],” *al-Faluja*, 31 Dec 2009, <http://202.71.102.68/~alfaluj/vb/showthread.php?t=97952> (accessed 4 March 2010).
- ⁴⁵ “*Al-liqa’ al-khass ma’a al-qa’id siraj al-din haqqani* [Exclusive interview with Commander Sirajuddin Haqqani],” *al-Faluja*, 13 April 2010, <http://124.217.253.94/~faaall3s/vb/showthread.php?t=111543> (accessed 13 April 2010)
- ⁴⁶ “Answer from the webpage of the Emirate regarding the operation of the martyr hero: Abu Dujana al-Khurasani ‘to clear the confusion’ #corrected#” (in Arabic), *al-Faluja*, 13 May 2010, <http://alfaloja.net/vb/showthread.php?p=837348> (accessed 8 June 2010)
- ⁴⁷ It should be noted that the martyr biography collection does not include biographies of fighters who were killed in the military campaign against the Taliban regime from October-December 2001. However, it contains several biographies of fighters who were killed during the Battle of Shah-i-Kot in March 2002.
- ⁴⁸ al-Maqdisi, “Martyrs in a time of alienation,” 151–152.
- ⁴⁹ Truls Hallberg Tønnessen, “Training on a Battlefield: Iraq as a Training Ground for Global Jihadis,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 20, no. 4 (October 2008): 543–562.
- ⁵⁰ The training facility is often described as a *ma’qal al-tadrib* (fortress, refuge for training), rather than as a *mu’askar al-tadrib* (training camp), which was commonly used to describe pre-9/11 training camps in Afghanistan.
- ⁵¹ al-Maqdisi, “Martyrs in a time of alienation,” 113.
- ⁵² Sami Yousafzai, Ron Moreau And Mark Hosenball, “The regathering storm,” *Newsweek* 25 December 2006, www.newsweek.com/id/44269/page/2 (accessed 25 May 2010); Sami Yousafzai and Ron Moreau, “The Taliban in their own words,” *Newsweek*, 26 September 2009, www.newsweek.com/id/216235 (accessed 25 May 2010).
- ⁵³ See, for example, Brian Glyn Williams, “Return of the Arabs: Al-Qa’ida’s current military role in the Afghan insurgency,” *CTC Sentinel* 1, no.3 (February 2008): 22–25; Michael Scheuer, “Al-Qaeda’s New Leader in Afghanistan: A Profile of Abu al-Yazid,” *Terrorism Focus* 4, no.21 (July 2007).
- ⁵⁴ Both sources contain inaccuracies. The biographies often contain detailed information about the perpetrator of an attack, but seldom provide accurate dates and place names. Journalistic sources may provide the accurate date of an event but seldom provide details on the perpetrator.
- ⁵⁵ Some of the militants were involved in several types of activities; this is why the total number of militants involved is larger than the number of biographies.

⁵⁶ Al-Suri, *Global Islamic Resistance Call*, 764.

⁵⁷ The interview with Abu al-Layth al-Libi was recorded and published as an audio file on jihad.net, one of al-Qaida's main media outlets at the time. Abu al-Layth al-Libi, in "*liqa' ba'd suqut taliban* [Interview after the fall of the Taliban]," audio file, downloaded via *al-Ikhlās*, www.alekhlaas.net/forum/showthread.php?t=120370 (accessed 2 Feb 2008). An English translation can also be found at *Mario's Cyberspace Station*, <http://mprofaca.cro.net/abu-laith.html> (accessed 11 March 2010). See also "Al-Qa'idah commander warns of new operations in Afghanistan," *BBC Monitoring*, 28 July 2002, <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/724333/posts> (accessed 11 March 2009).

⁵⁸ The German scholar Guido Steinberg has asserted that Abu al-Layth cooperated closely with the IJU in Waziristan and that it is "highly likely" that he played a role in the so-called "Sauerland plot," revealed in Germany in 2007. Guido Steinberg, "A Turkish al-Qaida: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism," *Strategic Insights*, July 2008, Center for Contemporary Conflict, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California, www.swp-berlin.org/common/get_document.php?asset_id=5147 (accessed 25 May 2010).

⁵⁹ al-Maqdisi, "Martyrs in a time of alienation," 14.

⁶⁰ James Astill, "Afghan suicide bomber kills two in Kabul," *The Guardian*, 28 Jan 2004, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2004/jan/28/afghanistan.jamesastill> (accessed 11 March 2009).

⁶¹ al-Maqdisi, "Martyrs in a time of alienation," 131.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 248–249.

⁶³ See Stephen Ulph, "The attempt on Afghan warlord Dostum," *Terrorism Focus* 2, no.3 (May 2005); Brian Glyn Williams, "Target Dostum: The campaign against Northern Alliance warlords," *Terrorism Monitor* 3, no.20 (Oct 2005).

⁶⁴ See, for example, Petter Nesser, "Chronology of Jihadism in Western Europe 1994–2007: Planned, prepared, and executed terrorist attacks," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 10 (Oct 2008): 924–946.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 95–99.

⁶⁷ "Al Qaeda-trained terrorist jailed," *Metropolitan Police Homepage*, 9 Jan 2008, http://cms.met.police.uk/news/convictions/al_qaeda_trained_terrorist_jailed (accessed 12 March 2009); "London man jailed for preparing for terrorism," *The Guardian*, 8 Jan 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/jan/08/terrorism.world> (accessed 12 March 2009).

⁶⁸ Yassin Musharbash, "The memoirs of a German Jihadist," *Der Spiegel*, 5 May 2010, www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,693216,00.html (accessed 25 May 2010).

⁶⁹ For an explanation of the term "classical jihadism" (as opposed to "global jihadism"), see Thomas Hegghammer, "Jihadi-Salafis or revolutionaries? On religion and politics in the study of militant islamism," in Roel Meijer (ed.), *Global Salafism: Islam's new religious movement* (London: Hurst, 2009).

⁷⁰ Yousafzai and Moreau, "The Taliban in their own words."

⁷¹ Al-Maqdisi, "Martyrs in a time of alienation," 67–68.

⁷² The biographies mention seven Saudis, two Syrians, one Yemenite, one Egyptian and one Tunisian as being among those who went to Jalalabad after 2001.

⁷³ al-Maqdisi, "Martyrs in a time of alienation," 337.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁷⁵ "Seventeen suspected Taliban killed in southern Afghanistan," *Afghanistan News Center*, 5 June 2004, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2004/june/jun42004.html> (accessed 11 March 2009).

⁷⁶ al-Maqdisi, "Martyrs in a time of alienation," 88.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 337.

⁷⁸ "Book bomb addressed to Afghan police official kills one, wounds at least four, officials say," *Associated Press*, 3 June 2004, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2004/june/jun42004.html>; "Parcel bomb injures 7 policemen in eastern Afghanistan," *Dawn*, 3 June 2008, <http://www.dawn.com/2004/06/03/welcome.htm> (both accessed on 11 March 2009).

⁷⁹ al-Maqdisi, "Martyrs in a time of alienation," 134.

⁸⁰ Gunaratna and Nielsen, "Al Qaeda in the tribal areas of Pakistan and beyond," 779.

⁸¹ Paul Danahar, "Afghanistan five years after 9/11," *BBC*, 11 September 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/5335060.stm (accessed 24 Feb 2010).