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US Department of State  
*Bureau of Intelligence and Research*  
Intelligence Assessment  
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## (U) Afghanistan: Al-Qaida Military Contribution to the Taleban

(S) With the decline in military aid by Pakistan over the last year, the Taleban have increasingly relied on Usama bin Laden and the al-Qaida organization for support. Bin Laden provides money, recruits, materiel, and training for the fight against the Northern Alliance.

### (U) Funding

(S) Bin Laden probably contributes several million dollars a year (from both personal and network funds) to the Taleban. A small percentage of this money is earmarked for civic infrastructure; the rest probably is intended for military use. Bin Laden's largess is such that the press reported in late August that Taleban leader Mullah Omar had appointed him as Afghanistan's "Defense Minister," but apparently there was no formal announcement.

### (U) Recruits

(S) Bin Laden's global network for funneling recruits into Afghanistan for training has existed since the 1980s. Some of the volunteers are sent to fight in Afghanistan. It is unlikely that the Taleban could sustain themselves without the fresh supply of foreign volunteers that bin Laden provides, unless they were to increase their highly unpopular forced recruitment of fighters from the local population.

### (U) Fighters

(S) The so-called 55th, or 055, Brigade is made up predominately of expatriate mujahidin forces loyal to bin Laden. Members of the brigade generally are employed in small groups where they are most useful on the battlefield rather than as a single large unit. The strength of the 55th probably ranges between 500 and 2,500. Al-Qaida probably rotates personnel through this brigade to gain combat experience prior to their dispatch abroad.

(S) The unit has a reputation for tenacity in battle and seems less susceptible to the defection and bribery that plague Taleban ranks. [redacted] noted that bin Laden and a senior Taleban official had visited a frontline Arab unit north of Kabul. Brigade members are frequently employed as "shock troops," or to stiffen the line against the Northern Alliance.

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## **(U) Equipment**

(S) Bin Laden's supply network parallels his recruiting structure. Sympathizers obtain supplies abroad and smuggle them to Afghanistan. Al-Qaida's reach and scope is impressive, extending across several continents.

## **(U) Camps**

(S) Almost all the training camps in Afghanistan are associated with both al-Qaida and the Taleban. Some camps are associated with specific nationalities; a few are designated specifically for al-Qaida use. There probably is significant overlap and interaction between Taleban troops and the foreign mujahidin during initial training sessions. Taleban forces have provided logistical and security support to bin Laden-financed camps. Both groups have collaborated in providing basic combat training for militants fighting against the Northern Alliance. This cooperation includes specialized training at certain camps where militants are instructed in using poisons, sniping, manufacturing explosives, and handling specialized weapons for guerrilla warfare in Chechnya, Kashmir, and other countries.

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Reason for Classification: 1.5 (c)(d)

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