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## THE LANDING ZONE RC EAST OSINT SUMMARY 18 December 2008



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**(U) Afghanistan: Bid To Split Taliban, Al Qaeda, Christian Science Monitor, English, 16 December 2008**

(U) (Source: [United States, independent press agency](#))

***(U) In Afghanistan, US and NATO reassess their strategy amid concerns that their efforts are failing.***

(U) Kabul, Afghanistan - The Afghan government and its allies are reconciling with moderates and isolating hard-liners in a bid to split the insurgency, Western and Afghan officials say.

(U) The idea of wooing moderates has gained traction as violence in Afghanistan has reached record levels this year. The United States and NATO are reassessing their strategy amid a growing chorus of Western officials who say that the international effort here is failing.

(U) "Some ministries have started a program to try to separate Al Qaeda and the Taliban," says Ursula Rahmani, a former Taliban official who has been involved in talks

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with the government. Mr. Rahmani says that the Interior and Defense ministries are involved in the effort.

(U) "We are trying to exploit the natural tensions that exist between Al Qaeda and those under Mullah Omar," the fugitive leader of the Taliban, adds a senior intelligence officer with the international forces, who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

(U) Some insurgent commanders may be closely aligned with Al Qaeda, which is waging an international, ideologically driven war against the West. But Afghanistan experts say that most Afghan insurgents fight because of local grievances, including tribal rivalries, poor economic opportunities, and dissatisfaction with the Afghan government and international forces. Many experts say these insurgents have little interest in attacking sites in the West and restrict their concerns to Afghanistan. Western officials dub these fighters "moderates," even though many of them are just as religiously conservative as their Al Qaeda counterparts.

(U) "Over the long term, I see reconciliation as one of the primary actions that will have to occur for there to be success," says Carter Malkasian, who directs the Stability and Development program at CNA, a Washington-based think tank.

#### (U) Two-pronged strategy

(U) Such reconciliation is a key ingredient in the kind of counterinsurgency strategy militaries have used for decades, including in Iraq. The strategy may take two approaches. First, it will focus on the low-ranking insurgent fighters who may be easier to reconcile with the government.

(U) "We tend to talk about the Taliban, but there is 'big T' Taliban, that is Mullah Omar and the [others] who ... swept through the country in the mid-'90s," says Eric Edelman, the Pentagon's senior policy official, told reporters in Washington recently. "There is what I call the 'small-T' Taliban, which are Pashtun tribals who are not reconciled to the government and may be engaging in ... activity kind of opportunistically."

(U) According to officials at the Afghan Social Outreach Program, part of an Afghan government initiative to strengthen local governance, a new body is being formed to reconcile such fighters with the government that will use the promise of government jobs and cash inducements. This body will replace an already existing government organization that many say is corrupt and ineffective.

(U) The second approach will be to sow divisions in the insurgency's leadership and isolate elements close to Al Qaeda. Al Qaeda and the Taliban have differing strategies: Al Qaeda's policy of global warfare has brought it into confrontation with the Pakistani government, while the Afghan Taliban are on good terms with Islamabad and restrict its fight to Afghanistan.

(U) "Al Qaeda's activities draw Pakistani military action, and this leads to natural tensions between them and the [Afghan] Taliban," says the senior intelligence officer with the international forces.

(U) There is evidence that such tensions have existed for some months. In February, Mullah Omar issued a statement saying, "We want to have legitimate relations with all countries in the world," and expressing solidarity with Iran, a Shiite country viewed by the Sunni-extremist Al Qaeda as an enemy. The statement also indicated that the Taliban's main purpose was to fight within Afghan borders.

(U) In response, prominent Al Qaeda websites posted messages denouncing the "nationalist trend" and pro-Iranian orientation in the Taliban's communiqués.

### **(U) Psychological operations**

(U) The effort to widen such possible divisions may include so-called psychological operations. According to intelligence officers, international forces and the Afghan government plant fake e-mails on jihadi websites or circulate bogus letters in the insurgent community.

(U) For instance, a few months ago, there appeared a letter signed by Jalaluddin Haqqani, who heads an insurgent network that is independent of Mullah Omar's Taliban and very closely aligned with Al Qaeda. The letter denounced Mr. Omar as "ineffective, ignorant, and illiterate" and appealed to insurgents to follow Mr. Haqqani. Intelligence agents with the international forces suggest that the letter originated from the Afghan government or its allies as an attempt to inflame tensions between insurgent groups.

(U) Some insurgent commanders might be more amenable to negotiations than others. The US government is also backing talks between Afghan officials and former Taliban figures. A first set of meetings was held in the fall in Mecca, under the auspices of the Saudi king. Although many attending the meeting were low-ranking former Taliban officials or people who have fallen out of favor with the current insurgent leadership, observers say that Kabul may be hoping to use these talks as a starting point for future direct negotiations with senior leadership.

(U) Some who attended the Mecca meetings say that future meetings are being planned in places like Dubai, and both sides are looking into meeting regularly in the coming months.

(U) Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who heads an insurgent network allied with the Taliban, may not be fighting for purely nationalist or other ideological reasons.

(U) "Hekmatyar's main concern is power, and he will do whatever it takes to get it back," says Waliullah Rahmani of the Kabul Center for Strategic Studies, an independent think tank. Mr. Hekmatyar was one of the few warlords not offered a position in the post-Taliban government.

(U) In the spring, Hekmatyar sent a letter to Afghan President Hamid Karzai, stating, "I have dedicated my whole life to struggle, but I am old." The letter goes on to imply that Mr. Karzai should remove all foreign troops from urban centers. A similar message was sent in October.

(U) According to Waheed Muzhda, a former Taliban official who has seen one of the letters and is familiar with the negotiation process, Hekmatyar may be interested in a senior government post.

(U) Splitting the insurgency, however, may prove difficult. "Many of the Taliban's financial resources come from Al Qaeda," says analyst Mr. Rahmani. The Taliban may also lack sufficient incentive to split from Al Qaeda or negotiate with the Afghan government as long as they feel they are winning the war and their havens in Pakistan are not threatened.

(U) "Omar and his followers have nothing to lose and everything to gain if they can hold out long enough for foreign forces to withdraw," says Matthew DuPee, a researcher with the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, Calif.

(U) But if the US can weaken the insurgency, it could force splits in insurgents' ranks. "If you achieve a measure of military success, then you are in a position to negotiate with the warlords," says Stephen Biddle, a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. The US must also offer incentives, such as more autonomy on the local level and more resources, he adds.

(U) "If your end game is negotiated settlement, then you need both sticks and carrots," he says.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ **Analyst Comment:** The strategy of separating the Taliban from Al Qaida is a pretty farfetched concept since the majority of low level fighters for these organizations are known to be used by both. The probability of there being a split between Taliban and Al Qaida is functionally unlikely as these organizations are not operationally fused. Al Qaida plays a coordination and strategic role between several syndicate organizations, enabling global support while simultaneously ensuring the harmonization of these groups. These actions assist with command the control of the Taliban's main objective of forcing western forces out of Afghanistan and regaining control of the national government. Since Al Qaida's role is a strategic one which deals with multiple independent organizations the Taliban's ability to separate itself from Al Qaida would only be feasible at a propaganda level.

**(U) Afghanistan: Afghan daily says USA prepared to fight war without NATO allies, Kabul Cherah, Dari, 14 December 2008**

(U) (Source: Afghanistan, Undetermined)

(U) On his latest visit to Afghanistan, which was much more like a fact-finding visit than one to reiterate old recommendations and give new ones to Kabul officials, the US defense secretary said that new and more soldiers will be sent to Afghanistan to fight insurgency.

(U) Though announcing this report is not a news; considering the closeness of the anti-American circle of China, Russia, Iran and India, the increasing tension between Pakistan and India and the Taleban's readiness to fight foreign troops in Afghanistan it gives rise to concern lest the presence of 20,000 extra American soldiers in the geography of Afghanistan give cause for a new bloody confrontation between the superpowers.

(U) It appears that the legacy of the NATO troops in Afghanistan is being questioned by the USA's European friends and that the Europeans do not want to back a losing horse and accept responsibility for all the consequences of America's hegemonistic nature.

(U) Therefore, when Pentagon officials were left hopeless and alone by the allies and partners in sending more troops to Afghanistan to fight terrorism, they have decided to carry the technical and human burden of this project alone and transform this international war into an American one.

(U) The question is whether sending more troops can survive this war from an absolute failure and change the situation according to the will of American?

(U) The experience our people have of foreign troops' presence is that increasing the number of soldiers will never change the flow of the war in favor of any group and bring about a favorable end. Because increasing the number of foreign soldiers has a direct affect in increasing violence and increasing recruitment by insurgents and that will also increase the casualties of foreign troops.

(U) On the other hand, there are internal protests against the increasing the number of soldiers in Afghanistan. Earlier, elders of southern provinces have asked the new president-elect of America to pay attention to training and equipping of national police and army instead of sending more soldiers and do not challenge sensitivities and national pride of Afghans any more.

(U) Thus, it is better for the Americans to deal more reasonably with internal and regional problems and developments and prevent from violent strategies of President Bush which do not cause anything but international hatred for Americans, economical disorders and improvement of terrorist groups across the world.

~~(C//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ **Analyst Comment:** It is common knowledge that the US is the leading force in the war against terror, and that the breeding ground for terrorism is primarily East Afghanistan and West Pakistan. The US not only leads this fight financially but also by providing the most amount of troops. Coalition partners have decreased the number of troops they provide towards the fight; however it would

be unfair to compare such countries with the US due to their economic, political and cultural differences.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ **Analyst Comment:** Insurgent leaders have released statements warning the US that the addition of troops will only create more casualties and more blood shed. However this can be seen as either a bluff with hopes that the US will reconsider sending more troops or as a propaganda scheme aimed towards inspiring fighters to not quit and to continue the fight. From the insurgents prospective, history has proven that success is not related to numbers or to modern technology rather success is achieved by understanding the environment in which one operates. NATO's plan however, might not be of just adding troops to the front lines but to utilize these additional troops as trainers and better prepare Afghanistan's security forces. These additional troops might also be utilized as PRTs which will assist with winning the hearts and minds of the local population by facilitating reconstruction efforts which will provide a better quality of life.

**(U) Kabul: Afghan police shut down foreign security company in capital, Kabul Hewad, Pashto, 15 December 2008**

**(U)** (Source: [Afghanistan, Government Run](#))

**(U)** Another security company has been closed down in Kabul. The police collected arms from the personnel of the company. The head of Criminal Investigation Branch of Kabul, Gen Ali Shah Paktiawal, said that the ERD Security Company, whose central office is located in District No 9 of Kabul, had been shut down for disobeying the regulations and carrying out illegal activities. Its weapons were collected, which included a number of Kalashnikovs, 18 PK machine-guns, six pistols and some ammunition.

**(U)** Paktiawal added that ERD was a foreign company and that its previous activities were being investigated. However, he did not say whether senior officials or workers of the company had been arrested or not.

**(U)** The police shut down many other private companies the other day on charges of carrying out illegal activities and arrested some senior officials of those companies.

**(U)** Senior officials of the Interior Ministry have time and again said that some private security companies are involved in illegal activities and aggravating the security situation. The Interior Ministry is working to devise a mechanism for putting the activities of these companies on a legal footing.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ **Analyst Comment:** It is unclear and unknown of what type of illegal activities were carried out by this company. It is possible that this company was providing security for drug lords or for the products owned by drug lords. It is also possible that this company was conducting illegal activities in the form of kidnappings and extortion due to the ease of conducting such operations empowered by the ability to legally possess arms. A questionable procedure is the failure of the ANP to

arrest the individuals associated with this company. If indeed this company is guilty of unlawful acts by its employees, then those employees should be the ones questioned and prosecuted by the ANP. A reasonable suspicion of bribery is apparent since ultimately no one was held responsible for any illegal acts only a company that can eventually reopen under a different name. It is upon GIRoA's best interest to question the ANPs decision to simply close a company and to not bring the companies employees forward to face legal procedures.

**(U) Khost: Three, including woman, killed in coalition operation in Afghan east, Peshawar Afghan Islamic Press, Pashto, 17 December 2008**

**(U) (Source: Pakistan, claims independence, history of close ties with the Taliban)**

**(U)** Three people, including a woman, have been martyred in a foreign military operation. According to reports, foreign forces carried out the operation in a home in Kundi village, five kilometres north of Khost city, last night. A spokesman for foreign forces in Khost, Maj (Patrick Sieber), told Afghan Islamic Press [AIP]: "The operation was carried out in a home where a person affiliated to Al-Qa'idah was present."

**(U)** He added that during the operation, two men and a woman, who had a Kalashnikov, were killed and another woman was wounded who is now being treated. He also said that six people were detained during the operation.

**(U)** The acting governor of Khost, Mohammad Tahir Sabari, confirmed the incident earlier this morning and told AIP: "I have not yet received complete information. But preliminary reports say foreign forces carried out the operation in a home in Kundi village. A woman and two men were killed and another was wounded."

**(U)** The local people told AIP that the person wounded was a woman and that the foreigners detained three people alive during the operation.

**(U)** As to whether they had been informed of the operation, the acting governor said: "No, never. We have time and again said that foreigners should inform us of such operations in advance. But they have never informed us."

**(U)** Khost shares a long border with Pakistan and is considered a region where the Taliban enjoy influence. Previously, foreign forces have also carried out such operations in this province.

~~(S//REL TO USA, ISAF, NATO)~~ **Analyst Comment:** This report has been confirmed with official US reporting; however the details reported in this open source article are significantly contradicting. Further details concerning the differences from this report cannot be released due to the sensitivity of the information. The statement released by the acting governor of Khost, in which he complains of foreign forces withholding operational information from GIRoA officials is a valid complaint. However, due to the

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delicacy of these operations and the unwillingness to jeopardize their success the distribution of operational orders is extremely minimized.

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