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INSURGENT GROUP PROFILE: AL QAEDA IN IRAQ (AQI)

(U) **Aliases:** Jama'at al-Tawhid Wa'al Jihad (JTJ—The Organization for Unity and Holy War); Tanzim Qa'idat al Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (TQJBR—Al-Qaeda Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers); Abu Musa'ab al-Zarqawi (AMZ) Network.

Group Origins and Ideological Framework

(U) The complex history of al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) dates back to the late 1990s, when a relatively remote jihadist outpost sprang up in the city of Herat in western Afghanistan, near the Iranian border, serving as a training camp for international jihadists. It was set up and run by a Jordanian ex-convict and radical Islamist, Abu Musa'ab al-Zarqawi (AMZ), under al-Qaeda auspices and with the direct support of Osama bin Laden and his top lieutenants.¹ The camp received recruits from eighteen different countries around the world, including a good number of Jordanians and Palestinians.² The banner at the entrance of the camp, which was disguised as a religious school, read: "Tawhid wal Jihad (Unity and Holy War), which would become the name of Zarqawi's organization in Iraq a few years later.³

(U) The camp's strategic location facilitated easy access to Iraqi Kurdistan via Iran,⁴ which made direct contact possible between the jihadists in Afghanistan and the biggest Islamist organization operating in Iraq prior to OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom): Ansar al-Islam. According to Jean-Charles Brisard, a French terrorism expert, Zarqawi was communicating with the Islamic Kurdish resistance as early as 2000, gradually establishing a road link between Herat and the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan by way of Mashhad, Iran.⁵ Allegedly per bin Laden's instructions, AMZ took charge of the Sargat Camp in Northern Iraq, where terrorist training included the manufacture and testing of powerful chemical and biological weapons.⁶ Moreover, a number of Zarqawi's associates, including Khaled al-Aruri (a.k.a. Abu Ashraf) and Abdel Hadi Ahmad Mahmoud Daghlas (a.k.a. Abu Ubaydah) took up residence in Iran, near the Iraqi Kurdistan border, where they subsequently helped coordinate Ansar al-Islam's operations per Zarqawi's orders.⁷ This initial operational exchange not only gave AMZ a strategic foothold in Iraq well before the US invasion of 2003, but enabled him to play an increasingly important role in directing and overseeing Ansar al-Islam's operations, as well as placing him at the forefront of the SRE (Sunni Religious Extremist) insurgent movements following the fall of Saddam's regime.

¹ Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda. 2005: Librairie Artheme Fayad. Page 72.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid. Page 73.

⁵ Ibid. Page 78.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

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(U) After U.S.-led forces invaded Afghanistan in 2001, AMZ, along with other senior al-Qaeda leaders fled the country, making his way to Syria through Iran and Iraq under a false passport. Once there, he reestablished contact with surviving members of his organization and regrouped in preparation of continuing his jihad against the West.⁸

~~(S/REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL)~~ In October 2002, AMZ formed a shura council in order to come up with a blueprint that would serve as his long-term strategy for the struggle in Iraq which he chose as his next battlefield, five months prior to the U.S. invasion.⁹ He was in fact the first known insurgent leader to have anticipated the successful occupation of that country and the formation of a democratic government there,¹⁰ which put his movement well ahead of many others that sprang up in the aftermath of OIF in terms of organizational preparedness. As one of the few groups that had a foothold in the country before the U.S. invasion, it was considerably larger, better organized, and better financed than most emerging insurgent groups of that era, second only to the FRL (Former Regime Loyalist) organizations, whose Ba'athist hierarchical structure and networks of support (including funds expropriated by leading members of Saddam's Administration) were already in place at the time of the invasion.

(U) In June of 2003, approximately two months after the fall of Baghdad, AMZ's network emerged on the Iraqi stage under the same name that was inscribed at the entrance of his camp in Afghanistan: Jama'at al-Tawhid Wa'al Jihad (JTJ). This new resistance force was Salafist in orientation and aimed to liberate Iraq from foreign domination, overthrow the interim Iraqi government, and establish an Islamic state based on Shari'a law.¹¹

Organizational Structure

~~(S/NF)~~ The AMZ Network quickly grew in size and scope, operating in five provinces (al-Anbar, Diyala, Salahuddin, Babil, and Nineveh), as well as in Baghdad, and consisting of approximately 1,000 members as early as the summer of 2003.¹² Like other insurgent groups, JTJ adopted a cellular organizational structure and drew on its members' extended family and tribal affiliations in an effort to expand its support networks, as well as its sources of political, religious, social, and financial backing.¹³

~~(S/REL TO USA AUS GBR)~~ From the very beginning, AMZ planned to use Fallujah, the heart of the Sunni Triangle, as his center of operations in Iraq. By the time that Baghdad fell to Coalition forces, his network stockpiled tons of arms and munitions in 3-5

⁸ Ibid. Page 93.

⁹ Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: MCFI/20160110

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=4338).

¹² Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: MCFI/20160110

¹³ Ibid.

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locations around the city.¹⁴ By September of that year, AMZ was conducting training sessions for his fighters on the town's outskirts.¹⁵ Throughout the insurgency, Fallujah remained one of JTJ/AQI's major strongholds and bases of support, despite coalition operations that have temporarily dislodged the rebels. Moreover, the organization enjoyed considerably more popular support in Fallujah than in any other major locale.

~~(S/REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL)~~ In October 2004, AMZ pledged loyalty to Osama bin Laden and JTJ formally became the al-Qaeda Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers, more commonly known as AQI (al-Qaeda in Iraq).¹⁶ This change in status marked several significant structural differences from an organizational and operational standpoint. While JTJ started out as a group primarily led by foreign fighters, AQI drew heavily on local support, in an effort to "Iraqify the insurgency."¹⁷ Subsequently, AMZ made the conscious choice to empower regional Iraqi emirs to make targeting decisions autonomously.¹⁸ This was intended to transform the group into a local organization and increased its Iraqi membership to approximately 90%.¹⁹ From a financial and logistical standpoint, AMZ's allegiance to bin Laden resulted in increased funding, recruits, logistical support, as well as political and religious backing from al-Qaeda's leadership.²⁰

(U) Aside from the military structure of the organization, Zarqawi also set up a media department under the leadership of Abu Maysarah al-Iraqi, who was charged with writing and disseminating the organization's press releases.²¹ The department has reportedly employed three staff members in Iraq, while relying on computer facilities in other countries, utilizing the most up-to-date graphic design and video editing techniques, as well as visual effects²² that dramatize the impact of the organization's activities, ranging from executing foreigners to ambushing coalition and Iraqi forces. The group also has access to a number of media channels, as well as a website for posting its messages.²³ Furthermore, it has been known to partake in numerous online Islamist discussion forums in an effort to spread propaganda and broaden its appeal worldwide.²⁴ The sophistication of the movement's media capabilities is further evidenced by the fact that a number of Arabic language media outlets in the Persian Gulf regularly broadcast its messages without editing their content.²⁵

¹⁴ Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: IIR 7 921 0005 05

¹⁵ 82nd Airborne Division Daily INTSUM, 30 SEP 03

¹⁶ Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: IIR 7 921 0005 05

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ 050722 al-Kurdi Debrief

²¹ Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda. 2005: Librairie Artheme Fayad. Page 143.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

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Goals and Objectives

(S/REL TO USA AUS CAN GBR NZL) AQI's stated long-term goal is to restore the Islamic Caliphate beginning in Iraq and extending to neighboring states.²⁶ In achieving this aim, AMZ first planned to inflame sectarian tensions within Iraq in an effort to instigate a confrontation that would reverse the Shi'a domination of the country; continue to attack coalition forces until the West loses its political will to fight; and use the country as a springboard for spreading jihad throughout the region by overthrowing "apostate" governments.²⁷ Initially, AMZ capitalized on U.S. preoccupation with FRLs (Former Regime Loyalists) following OIF, by operating clandestinely, right underneath coalition radars.²⁸ Every effort was made to avoid antagonizing the coalition and provoking counter-operations during this crucial organizational phase.²⁹ Instead, the movement used this time to develop its cellular structure, increase its size, build strategic and tactical alliances with other groups, expand its bases of operations, thereby, enhancing the effectiveness of its networks.³⁰ According to one of the movement's main operational leaders who was captured in 2005, Abu Umar al-Kurdi, clandestine operations that were undertaken during this time were carried out in a manner that was designed to place the blame on former Ba'athists,³¹ in a bid to both, mislead and confuse the coalition and avoid retaliatory strikes. After the organization increased in strength, stature, and influence, more direct confrontations with U.S. and Iraqi troops were possible. AMZ estimated that it would take between three and five years to sufficiently degrade the morale of coalition forces to prompt their departure.³²

Tactics and Strategy

(U) *"Zarqawi is not a great strategist. His prominence is due to his brute force against the American 'invader'."*³³—Jean-Charles Brisard

(U) On April 9, 2004, Nicholas Berg, a 26 year old American businessman was abducted in the west of Baghdad. One month later, a website associated with Ansar al-Islam disseminated a video of his brutal execution under the title: "Sheikh Abu Musab Zarqawi slays an American Infidel."³⁴ The graphic footage depicted Berg kneeling in an orange jumpsuit, modeled after the ones worn by prisoners in Guantanamo, in front of AMZ and his associates, who read from a text denouncing the American enemy and called on all Muslims to join the struggle: "The time has now come to make jihad and brandish the sword that the prophet has sent us... You will see your warrior brothers hang the head of

²⁶ Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: IIR 7 921 0005 05

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda. 2005: Librairie Artheme Fayad. Page 133.

³⁴ Ibid. Page 131.

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this infidel from one of the bridges in Baghdad, so that no one will forget the way we treat infidels. May he bear witness to the honor of the Muslims.”³⁵ Zarqawi then produced a knife and proceeded to saw off the head of the hapless hostage. The brutal spectacle, which marked the beginning of a long series of hostage executions,³⁶ sent shockwaves all over the world, but it also provided a deeper glimpse into the tactical and strategic mindset of the organizational leadership at the time.

(U) AMZ’s intention was to arouse maximum resentment in the media³⁷ and increase his personal notoriety, as well as that of his movement. For that reason, he focused not so much on the number of attacks and kidnappings his group carried out, but on the regularity of enemy executions and the advertisement thereof.³⁸ This was partially a testament of AQI’s organizational capabilities, which demonstrated its capacity to kidnap foreigners on a routine basis all over Iraq. On the other hand, the sadistic method of killing was designed to instill fear in adversaries, as well as to demoralize them. By graphically displaying scenarios as gruesome and barbaric as Berg’s beheading, AMZ inspired terror in the public mind all over the world,³⁹ which was consistent with his organization’s strategy of depleting the coalition’s political will to fight.

(U) Aside from hostage-taking and executions, AQI claimed responsibility for countless suicide bombings, an integral tactic in its war against the coalition, which reflected the group’s obsession with martyrdom. In this regard, Zarqawi’s network relied heavily on the theological teachings of Sheikh Yusef al-Qardawi, one of the religious leaders of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who was in exile in Qatar.⁴⁰ Qardawi warned against U.S. attempts to install an “Iraqi Karzai,” and regarded the use of “Human bombs,” as a form of religious martyrdom that was justified under the Koran in thwarting enemy aggression.⁴¹ Moreover, the JTF/AQI leadership saw such operations as a show of strength, designed to demonstrate the insurgents’ willingness to sacrifice themselves for their beliefs, which bolstered their credibility among supporters.

~~(S/REL TO MCFD)~~ In an intercepted letter from AMZ to al-Qaeda’s central leadership, Zarqawi claimed to have orchestrated twenty five suicide attacks during the course of 2003 alone, but noted that the security situation was not yet conducive to making claims of responsibility.⁴² These attacks included the bombings of the Jordanian Embassy (August 7, 2003) and the U.N. Headquarters in Baghdad (August 19 2003). Suicide missions remain a major tactical component of the organization’s operations today.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid. Page 142.

³⁸ Ibid. Page 143.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. Page 147.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Zarqawi Letter, January 2004

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(S/REL TO USA, AUS, CAN, GBR, NZL) Another major part of AQI's strategy under Zarqawi's leadership relied on inciting sectarian violence, primarily by targeting the Shi'a. The creation of the Umar Brigade, an offshoot of AQI whose mission was to "hunt and kill" members of the Shi'a Badr Corps,⁴³ greatly increased sectarian tensions and polarized Iraqi society, which was exactly Zarqawi's intention—to create a chaotic environment by raising the level of distrust and hostility between the Sunnis and the Shi'a, while championing his organization as a protector of Sunni interests in Iraq.

(U) In February 2006, this approach was taken to new extremes when the Golden Mosque in the city of Samarra, one of the most sacred Shi'a shrines, was bombed. In one swoop, Zarqawi single-handedly undid the progress made by the Coalition during the December 2005 election, which aimed to reconcile differences in Iraqi society. The attack regenerated distrust and greatly increased cross-sectarian tensions, but it also had negative effects, since it alienated al-Qaeda's senior leadership, as evidenced by letters between the two parties in which AMZ received rebukes from his superiors.⁴⁴ In one such letter addressed to AMZ, al-Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, wrote: "...many of your Muslim admirers amongst the common folk are wondering about your attacks on the Shia. The sharpness of this questioning increases when the attacks are on one of their mosques, and it increases more when the attacks are on the mausoleum of Imam Ali Bin Abi Talib, may God honor him. My opinion is that this matter won't be acceptable to the Muslim populace..."⁴⁵

(S/NF) Al-Qaeda's senior leaders had good reason for concern, since sectarian attacks against the Shi'a in its name jeopardized their complex relationship with Iran⁴⁶ and cost them international support. Nonetheless, AMZ never diverted from his policy of sectarian killings, despite requests from his superiors to change course. Only after his death in June 2006 did the organization, under the leadership of Abu Ayyub al-Masri, halt such activities. Likewise, the policy of beheadings and indiscriminate killings of civilians, which were considered extremely controversial within Islamist ranks, were halted as well.

Leadership

(U) *"When it comes to violence, Zarqawi brings terrorism back to its original meaning: terror."*⁴⁷ Jean-Charles Brisard

⁴³ 050722 al-Kurdi Debrief

⁴⁴ Report: Complete Text of Al-Zawahiri 9 July 2005 Letter to Al-Zarqawi. Washington Office of the Director of National Intelligence Website in English 11 Oct 05

⁴⁵ Report: Complete Text of Al-Zawahiri 9 July 2005 Letter to Al-Zarqawi. Washington Office of the Director of National Intelligence Website in English 11 Oct 05

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda. 2005: Librairie Artheme Fayard. Page xiii.

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(U) **Abu Musa'ab al-Zarqawi (AMZ)** (real name: Ahmed Fadil al-Khalayleh), the former founder of JTJ/AQI, started his adult life as a petty criminal on the streets of Zarqa, Jordan, fighting, shoplifting, drinking, and dealing drugs.⁴⁸ His first brush with Salafism was in a neighborhood mosque, where fundamentalist imams groomed young congregants for jihad against the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁴⁹ Zarqawi quickly became obsessed with the prospect of participating in a "holy war," which he perceived as the best way out of his purposeless life, but to his great disappointment, he arrived in Afghanistan too late, missing the fighting by several months.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, his experience in jihadist camps completely transformed him into a committed Islamist.⁵¹ Shortly after his return to Jordan, he was arrested for involvement in terrorism and spent five years in prison,⁵² during which time he hardened his fundamentalist views. Within a month of his release, he made his way back to Afghanistan where he joined al-Qaeda and became a member of its managerial staff.⁵³ After escaping the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan following 9/11/01, he correctly predicted Iraq to be the next "field of jihad" and waited anxiously to fulfill his long-lost opportunity to fight. He proved to be an effective organizer, successfully mobilizing various groups around his agenda, but earned a reputation for brutality and sadism, killing anybody whom he suspected of working against his cause. His tactics involved gruesome murders, which he frequently carried out personally, torture, and terrorizing the civilian population into submission. While other insurgent leaders made significant achievements by cultivating popular support, Zarqawi met many of his political and religious objectives through brute force.⁵⁴ As the most wanted man in Iraq since the outset of the insurgency, AMZ managed to evade coalition forces for more than three years, until he was finally killed in a U.S. air strike on June 7, 2006.

(S/NF) **Umar Husayn Hadid al-Khurayfawi al-Mohamdi**, a native of Fallujah who was formerly a member of Saddam Hussein's special guard,⁵⁵ had an extensive history of involvement in both, salafist organizations and criminal activities, which gave him the necessary credentials to serve as one of AMZ's top lieutenants. In the mid-late 1990s, he was involved in an Islamic extremist movement in Fallujah, which targeted liquor stores and unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the head of the city's Ba'ath Party.⁵⁶ Following the failed plot, Hadid fled to Afghanistan, where he received terrorist training in al-Qaeda camps. In 2002, he resurfaced in Fallujah where he met Zarqawi and quickly established himself as part of his inner circle, playing a major role in the movement's

⁴⁸ Ibid. Page 13.

⁴⁹ Ibid. Page 15.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Page 17.

⁵¹ Ibid. Page 26.

⁵² Ibid. Page 57.

⁵³ Ibid. Page 70.

⁵⁴ Ibid. Page 203.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Page 137.

⁵⁶ Chapter 3, Page 21.

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recruitment effort of Islamist fighters during the 2002 Hajj in Mecca, Saudi Arabia.⁵⁷ Hadid's local knowledge and connections prompted AMZ to appoint him Emir of Fallujah.⁵⁸ Subsequently, he played a critical role in organizing the city's defenses in the run-up to Operation AL FAJR,⁵⁹ in which he was killed by coalition forces.

(S/NF) **Lu'ai Saqa** (a.k.a. Ala al-Din) was a senior al-Qaeda associate charged with providing logistical support to members of the organization, ranging from forged documents to safe houses and money. He operated mainly out of Syria and Turkey, but by 2004, Saqa based himself in Fallujah with AMZ and became regarded by some as his second in command. As JTJ's external operations chief, he served as the direct link between AMZ and the Iran-based al-Qaeda leadership.⁶⁰ Saqa was arrested in Turkey in August 2005 during a failed plot to bomb Israeli cruise ships.⁶¹

(U) One of the men closest to Zarqawi was a Jordanian cleric and fellow disciple of Abu Muhammed al-Maqdisi, **Abu Anas al-Shami** (a.k.a. Omar Yussef Jumah). After graduating from the University of Mecca in Saudi Arabia in 1990, al-Shami returned to Jordan, where he became the imam of a mosque. In the mid-1990s, he helped found the Jamaat al-Sunnah wal Kitab, a local Islamist movement, which led to the closing of his mosque by the authorities. By 2003, he left for Iraq and established contact with AMZ, who pronounced him as the religious leader of JTJ.⁶² Al-Shami became a key public relations instrument for AMZ, posting internet reports on battles with coalition forces in the Sunni Triangle and broadcasting radio messages justifying the killing of civilians who refuse to fight the coalition. This is evidenced by a July 28, 2004 broadcast in which al-Shami proclaimed: "if the infidels take Muslims as protectors, and these Muslims refuse to fight, it is permitted to kill these Muslims."⁶³ Likewise, he justified attacks on the Shiites, whom he alleged to have forged "an alliance with the infidels."⁶⁴ Although al-Shami did not have a known operational function within the organization, he served a crucial role nonetheless, by using his theological credentials to grant religious sanction to JTJ's activities, which was deemed necessary in order to win popular support. He was eventually killed by coalition forces on September 20, 2004.⁶⁵

(U) **Sami Mohammed Ali Said al-Ja'af** (a.k.a. Abu Omar al-Kurdi, Abu Yusef) was one of AMZ's top lieutenants and explosive experts who rose to prominence in JTJ due to his numerous deadly attacks against U.S. and coalition forces in Iraq, as well as his terror

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: CTC 2004-30132

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Chapter 3, page 5.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda. 2005: Librairie Artheme Fayad. Page 134.

⁶³ Ibid. Page 135.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

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campaign against Iraqi civilians. He is believed to be responsible for 32 car bombings, which caused hundreds of deaths.⁶⁶ After his capture by Iraqi security forces on January 15, 2005, he confessed to building 75% of all car bombs used in Iraq since OIF, including those used to attack the attack on the U.N. headquarters in the summer of 2003.⁶⁷

~~(S/NF)~~ **Abu Ayyub al-Masri** (a.k.a. Abu Hamza al-Muhajir) is considered among the most experienced and skilled insurgent leaders in Iraq. As a prominent member of Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ) since the early 1980s, he traveled to Afghanistan where he first met AMZ. Prior to the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001, he fled to Iraq and arrived in Baghdad ahead of AMZ, renewing contact with some of his former colleagues and continued to work on behalf of EIJ. Al-Masri obtained a farm in Diyala Province through his Iraqi contacts, which he converted into a terrorist training camp for foreign fighters. Following Saddam's overthrow, he traveled to Fallujah where he served as one of AMZ's top lieutenants. After AMZ was killed in a U.S. air strike, al-Masri took over control of the organization and is now considered to be the head of al-Qaeda in Iraq.⁶⁸ Unlike his predecessor, al-Masri is an adept strategist and tactician who is believed to be well-versed in Islamic scriptures, as well as in intelligence gathering, recruitment, and training.⁶⁹ Moreover, he does not resemble his predecessor's sadistic personality traits and tends to be motivated more by politics and pragmatism than brutality.

(U) A number of highly-placed JTJ/AQI lieutenants that have not appeared in the Anbar reporting, nonetheless, are believed to have played a prominent role in the national leadership of the organization. For instance, Zarqawi's head of special missions in Iraq and abroad was his brother-in-law, Khaled Mustafa Khalifa al-Aruri (a.k.a. Abu al-Qassam, Abu Ashraf).⁷⁰ Having served a prison sentence with Zarqawi in Jordan in the 1990s, he traveled with him to Afghanistan and then to Iran and Iraq, becoming one of his closest and most trusted advisors.⁷¹ Likewise Abdel Haadi Ahmad Mahmoud Daghlis (a.k.a. Abu Ubaydah, Abu Muhammad al-Sham) was another close Zarqawi associate from Jordan, who ran the Herat camp in AMZ's absence, but followed his leader to Iraq after the invasion. According to a JTJ press release, he is deceased.⁷² Hamid al-Saedi (a.k.a. Abu Humam, Abu Rana, Hamid al-Su'aydi, Hamid Jumaa), an Iraqi national who oversaw numerous terrorist cells and was responsible for ambushing coalition forces, conducting kidnappings for ransom, and terrorizing the civilian population, was also credited with planning and carrying out the infamous attack against the Shia Askari

⁶⁶ MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=4338).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Chapter 3, page 5.

⁶⁹ MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=4416).

⁷⁰ Brisard, Jean-Charles. Zarqawi: The New Face of Al Qaeda. 2005: Librairie Artheme Fayad. Page 135.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

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Shrine in Samarra in February 2006.⁷³ Al-Saedi was subsequently captured by Iraqi forces in June 2006, shortly after Zarqawi's demise.⁷⁴

Membership and Recruitment

(S/NF) During its first organizational meeting in Fallujah in October 2002, JTI formed a leadership council, which primarily consisted of foreign fighters, with only a handful of Iraqis, including Abu Umar al-Kurdi, Hajji Thamir al-Atruz, and Abu Basir.⁷⁵ However, as the organization evolved, it focused on recruiting more local members and commanders in an attempt to broaden its public appeal. AMZ was particularly interested in former regime elements with extensive military, security, and intelligence experience. His efforts to "Iraqify" the insurgency produced a number of promising new recruits, including: Ghassan Amin⁷⁶ (former major in Saddam Fedayeen), Thamir Mubarak Atrouz⁷⁷ (former Republican Guard), Ahmed Ali Waelis⁷⁸ (former IIS Chief of Staff), Saif al-Din al-Rawi⁷⁹ (former Republican Guard Chief of Staff), Mohammed Sulleiman Fizza Shenather⁸⁰ (Head of the Muslim Brotherhood in Zaidon), and Mullah Humaydi⁸¹ (former Mayor of Haditha and AQI's spiritual leader for Anbar). According to one British intelligence assessment, Zarqawi's ability to draw members of other insurgent groups into his organization largely accounted for his success as a leader.⁸²

(S/NF) Mosques and their imams also played a prominent role within the organization from the very beginning, offering not only religious/spiritual guidance, but serving as recruitment hubs and providing supplies, funding, sanctuary, and logistical support to the insurgents.⁸³ As major focal points in the community, mosques were ideal locations for meeting with residents who were potentially interested in joining the insurgency and the backing of the imams was instrumental in facilitating such exchanges, as well as rallying their congregants around the insurgents' agenda.

(S) Although most insurgent groups had employed the services of child soldiers throughout the insurgency, AQI developed a structured child-recruitment apparatus in early 2006, sending recruiters to high schools throughout Anbar Province, in an effort to mobilize willing participants between the ages of 12 and 17.⁸⁴ AQI particularly targeted poor teenagers who were regarded as especially susceptible due to their families' lack of

⁷³ MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base (www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=4338).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ 050722 al-Kurdi Debrief

⁷⁶ 03 Feb 05 The Bullet and the Box: A Guide to Factions in Iraq. Defense Intelligence Report. 3 Feb 2005.

⁷⁷ [Military | CTC 2004-30132 | S/NF |]

⁷⁸ [Military | TACTICAL FUSION CENTER: GRINTSUM 050705|20050705| (S/NF) |]

⁷⁹ 03 Feb 05 The Bullet and the Box: A Guide to Factions in Iraq. Defense Intelligence Report. 3 Feb 2005.

⁸⁰ [Military | TACTICAL FUSION CENTER: GRINTSUM 050705|20050705| (S/NF) |]

⁸¹ 03 May 06 MNF-W INTSUM

⁸² 03 Feb 05 The Bullet and the Box: A Guide to Factions in Iraq. Defense Intelligence Report. 3 Feb 2005.

⁸³ Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: MCFL/20160110

⁸⁴ [Military | 16 Oct 06 MNF-W INTSUM | 16 Oct 06 | (S/NF) |]

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financial resources.⁸⁵ The organization compensated the children with either a lump sum of \$27 per operation or a monthly wage of \$400.⁸⁶ The adolescent recruits were mostly tasked with conducting surveillance, planting IEDs, and other duties that were considered menial and did not require much training, although in the Haditha area, teenagers conducted indirect fire and small arms attacks against Coalition forces.⁸⁷ Moreover, in Fallujah and Rawah AQI recruited and/or coerced some teens into conducting suicide missions, while on rare occasions, some highly radicalized AQI members recruited their own children for suicide attacks.⁸⁸

(S/NF) According to several intelligence assessments, the organization's full-time membership increased from approximately 1,000 in the summer of 2003⁸⁹ to an estimated 5,495 in January 2006, with approximately 230,000 supporters nationwide.⁹⁰ It is likely, however, that these figures increased drastically following the Samarra Mosque bombing in February 2006.

Sources of Funding

(b)(3) 50 USC § 3507

(S/NF) Not unlike other insurgent groups, JTI/AQI engaged in kidnappings for ransom, blackmail, extortion, car thefts, and other criminal activities as a means of raising funds, regularly cooperating with smugglers, and criminal groups.⁹³ One of the greatest sources of revenue for the organization, however, came from smuggling oil from Bayji to other regions of Iraq, as well as to neighboring countries and selling it on the black market for as much as three times the government-subsidized rate, initially generating approximately

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ 12 JAN 06 CIOC Special Analysis Paper: Assessing Al Qaeda's Strength

(b)(3) 50 USC § 3507

⁹³ 09 Apr 06 MNF-W INTSUM

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\$50,000 per week in revenue.⁹⁴ Such operations were made possible by the high level of institutionalized corruption, as well as lax law enforcement. By April 2006, AQI established a monopoly on black market oil sales and expanded its operations to Ramadi, where it resold fuel acquired from the state-owned refinery in Baiji, amounting to an estimated \$500,000 in revenue per month.⁹⁵ The fundraising model was quickly applied to other areas of the country and largely accounted for the group's self-sufficiency.

Alliances

(S/NF) One of JTJ/AQI's greatest strengths throughout the insurgency was its ability to forge strategic and tactical alliances with diverse groups. Its leaders formed local umbrella organizations that were intended to not only facilitate cooperation between different insurgent movements, but to mobilize as many of them as possible around AQI's agenda. The Fallujah Mujahideen Shura, for instance, set up in early 2004 as a loose confederation of groups with no central leadership, paved the way for JTJ to dominate the council's agenda in an effort to radicalize the insurgency in the city and turn it into a safe haven for foreign fighters.⁹⁶ The Shura was comprised of a total of 39 groups, including various al-Qaeda affiliated organizations, foreign groups (i.e. Palestinian Hamas, 1.4b, 1.4c FREs (Islamic Army of Iraq, Hamza Battalion, Iraqi National Islamic Resistance, etc), SREs (Ansar al-Sunnah, Jaysh Mohammed, Saraya al-Jihad, etc), and FRL remnants.⁹⁸ Moreover, two of the groups on the council were Shi'a and were believed to be associated with Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army.⁹⁹ Their presence on the JTJ/AQI-dominated council shed light on the reciprocal tactical cooperation between Sadr and the Sunni insurgents, who supplied each other with arms and provisions,¹⁰⁰ despite the animosity between them.

(S/NF) A major facilitator of such cooperation was Abdullah Janabi, a leading member of the Fallujah Mujahideen Shura and a key AQI ally. As a well respected local cleric who was formerly associated with Saddam's security services, he served as the imam of the Sa'ad bin Abi Waqas Mosque in Fallujah, using his position to urge his congregants and followers to fight coalition forces at every opportunity. Moreover, he facilitated contact between AQI and various insurgent groups across tribal, ideological, and sectarian lines, without himself being subordinate to any of the organizations.¹⁰¹

⁹⁴ 02 Apr 06 MNF-W INTSUM

⁹⁵ 20 Apr 06 MNF-W INTSUM

⁹⁶ [Military | MARINE CORPS INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY: BRIEFING: ANBAR : INSURGENCY GROUPS | 20061 | ~~N~~ | o e sted.)

(b)(3) 50 USC § 3507

⁹⁸ [Military | MARINE CORPS INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY: BRIEFING: ANBAR : INSURGENCY GROUPS | 20061026 | (S/NF) |] Slide 6 (No sources listed.)

⁹⁹ [Military | OIA SF 2004-30014 | (S/NF) |]

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. and [Military | OIA SF 2004-30022 | (S/NF) |]

¹⁰¹ Chapter 3, page 23.

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(S/NF) Following the destruction of the Fallujah Mujahideen Shura during Operation AL FAJR in November 2004, AQI regrouped, retaining many of its allies and eventually forming a successor umbrella organization known as the Mujahideen Shura Council in early 2006. As the insurgency became violently split between movements who favored a political compromise and those who opposed it, AQI spearheaded the effort against anybody who sought rapprochement with the Coalition or cooperated with it in any way. Consequently, many groups that were ideologically opposed to AQI's agenda were forced to ally with it nonetheless, to ensure their continued existence. For instance, after joining forces with the 1920 Revolution Brigade against AQI, the Islamic Army of Iraq (IAI) suffered tremendous losses during the winter of 2006, forcing it to subsequently renege on its alliance and cast its lot with AQI. Many smaller organizations (i.e. Abu Harun Group, Black Flags Battalion, etc) followed suit as well. Thus far, AQI has forged by far the most powerful alliances since the outset of the insurgency, which has contributed greatly to its success as an insurgent force.

Assessment of Gains

(U) JTI/AQI's high level of organization, fundraising capacity, and ability to recruit a wide range of experts largely accounted for its success over the years. Its first major gain was AMZ's early prediction of a U.S. invasion of Iraq,¹⁰² which enabled it to emerge as one of the best equipped organizations at the outset of the insurgency. Secondly, the organizational leadership brilliantly exploited the Coalition Provisional Authority's de-Ba'athification policy, which left numerous highly skilled military and intelligence professionals unemployed. Aside from providing them with a constant source of income, JTI appealed to their sense of patriotism, as well as self-worth. As many former regime elements joined the group's ranks, JTI was able to greatly enhance its operational capabilities, which translated into more deadly attacks against the coalition.

(S) Other gains over the years included the movement's ability to raise funds, discussed above, eventually attaining financial self-sufficiency by early 2006. Moreover, its "sticks and carrots" approach towards Iraqi civilians deterred many of them from cooperating with the coalition, while encouraging them to support the organization through a number of incentives. Consequently, AQI's increasing level of support, coupled with its military capabilities facilitated the takeover of every major urban area in al-Anbar by early 2006, including Ramadi, which has been a bastion of the 1920 Revolution Brigade and other anti-AQI groups over the years. As a result, the 1920 Group, formerly one of the most powerful insurgent forces in the country, was largely wiped out. Its areas of operation have been reduced to a small pocket around the town of Habbaniyah. By eliminating rivals, AQI secured its position as the dominant insurgent force in the country.

Assessment of Losses

¹⁰² Expanded Insurgent Group Notes: MCFI/20160110

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(S/NF) JTI/AQI's campaign of terror has incurred numerous costs over the years. The first major losses sustained by the organization were during Operation AL FAJR in November 2004, which claimed the lives of hundreds of fighters and several top lieutenants, including Umar Hadid, the Emir of Fallujah. Moreover, its aftermath sparked a violent rift between AQI and rival groups that began to seek venues for political engagement with the coalition. This resulted in a long and protracted internal battle, wherein AQI used murder and intimidation against rivals to coerce them into cooperation. Although, AQI emerged victorious, it has lost numerous fighters and incurred the wrath of many tribes, as well as segments of the population that continue to resent its influence. Consequently, in 2006-2007, many of these tribes, some of which were formerly anti-Coalition, began working against AQI with Coalition support, after having concluded that such an alliance is more likely to ensure their tribal survival.

(S) Aside from alienating numerous Iraqi tribes, AMZ marginalized the central al-Qaeda leadership as well, by ignoring its request to cease sectarian attacks against the Shi'a, which sparked controversy within international jihadist circles, resulting in a loss of both, domestic and international support. AMZ attempted to compensate for this loss, however, by continuing to actively kill critics and opponents of his organization and terrorizing the Iraqi population into submission. His death in the summer of 2006 could be considered a major moral blow to AQI, although its operational capabilities were largely unaffected.

Conclusion

(U) Overall, JTI/AQI's gains have greatly surpassed its losses. Its resilience as a movement has been proven time and again over the years by its remarkable ability to withstand large-scale Coalition operations such as AL FAJR, STEEL CURTAIN, and SAYYAD II, after which it has staged comebacks and regrouped itself relatively quickly. Moreover, its refusal to consider political compromise and its violent stance against anyone who engages and/or cooperates with the coalition earned AQI its undisputed position as the vanguard of the Iraqi insurgency. The past four years of fighting have seen the rise and fall of numerous insurgent groups of various sizes, but despite the concerted efforts of coalition and Iraqi forces, AQI remains as strong as it has ever been.

AL QAEDA IN IRAQ AREAS OF OPERATION IN AL-ANBAR

YEAR	MAJOR AREAS OF OPERATION
2003	Fallujah, Zaidon, and the al-Qaim-Khusaybah Corridor.
2004	Fallujah, Ramadi, al-Qaim-Khusaybah Corridor, Hit-Haditha Corridor, and Zaidon.
2005	Fallujah, Ramadi, al-Qaim-Khusaybah Corridor, Hit-Haditha Corridor, Zaidon, Habbanyah, and every major urban area in the province.
2006	Every major urban area in the province.
2007	Every major urban area in the province.

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