

**Islamic Jihad Union:  
al-Qaida's Key to the Turkic World?**

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## Sammendrag

De tyrkiske folkene har vært av marginal betydning i global jihadisme. Gruppen Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) kan vise seg å endre dette. Den brøt ut fra Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) i 2002, etter Talibans fall. Lederskapet og kjernen av krigere ser ut til å være usbekere, og ideologien trekker på elementer av sosiorevolusjonær islamisme og global jihadisme. Gruppen nevner Tyskland og Usbekistan ofte, men det er lite som tyder på at de følger opp ordene med handling. Hovedvekten av angrep utført av IJU har vært mot amerikanske og britiske soldater i Afghanistan, samt soldater fra den afghanske hæren.

En av IJUs viktigste kommunikasjonskanaler er en tyrkisk-språklig nettside kalt *Şehadet Zamani*. Det er uklart hvorvidt valget av språk er bevisst, men valget vil gjøre gruppen kjent blant militante islamister blant kurdere og tyrkere i Tyrkia og Tyskland, samt blant de tyrkiskspråklige folkene i Sentralasia.

I september 2007 ble en terroristcelle med tilknytning til IJU pågrepet i Tyskland. Cellen planla å lage tre ganske kraftige bomber av hydrogenperoksid for å angripe den amerikanske flybasen i Ramstein, samt de usbekiske og amerikanske konsulatene i Tyskland. Gruppen ble ledet av en tysk konvertitt og bestod i hovedsak av tyrkere og tyske konvertitter. I kretsen rundt cellen fantes militante islamister som har oppholdt seg i området Mir Ali i Waziristan, der IJU har sin base. Personer med tilknytning til cellen har også dukket opp i IJUs propagandavideoer, mens de trener eller tar del i operasjoner i Afghanistan og Pakistan. I mars 2008 fikk Tyskland sin første selvmordsbomber, da den bayerske tyrkeren Cüneyt Çiftçi utførte et selvmordsangrep mot en amerikansk militærleir i Afghanistan. Den tyske konvertitten Eric Breininger har også begynt å dukke opp ganske ofte i IJUs propagandamateriell, hvor han fremsetter trusler om terrorangrep mot Tyskland.

IJU ser ut til å være nært knyttet til to grupper i Mir Ali, der de har sin base. De ser ut til å ha et nært samarbeid med en gruppe arabiske krigere som inntil hans død ble ledet av den al-Qaida-affilierte Abu Laith al-Libi. Det har blitt spekulert i hvorvidt han var drivkraften bak IJUs forsøk på å ta kampen til Vesten. IJUs andre viktige allierte er Taliban-kommandanten Jalaluddin Haqqani og hans sønn Sirajuddin. De ønsker en mer Afghanistan-orientert kamp, og foretrekker at jihadistene fokuserer sine krefter i Afghanistan. Etter Abu Laiths død har det vært få tegn på IJUs globale ambisjoner, men skulle noen med lignende ambisjoner ta over etter ham, er IJU rede til å skape flere celler i Tyskland. En slik utvikling kan også gi al-Qaida et fotfeste hos militante islamister blant de tyrkiske folkene.

## English summary

The Turkic peoples have assumed a relatively marginal role in global jihadism. The group Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) appears to have changed this. It broke off from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in 2002, after the fall of the Taliban. The leadership and core fighters appear to be Uzbek, and the group's ideology draws on traits from both sociorevolutionary Islamism and global jihadism. The group refers to Uzbekistan and Germany as enemies, but there is little evidence of following up the words with deeds. The bulk of IJU attacks have been against American, British and Afghan National Army soldiers in Afghanistan.

One of the IJU's most important communication outlets is a Turkish-language website called *Şehadet Zamani*. It is uncertain whether the choice of language is deliberate or not, but it is likely to draw fame from the Turk and Kurd populations living in Turkey and Germany, as well as Turkic speakers in Central Asia.

In September 2007 a terrorist cell associated with the IJU was arrested in Germany. The cell had planned to build three sizeable hydro peroxide bombs and attack the Uzbek and American consulates in Germany, along with the U.S. Ramstein Airbase. The group was led by a German convert and consisted mainly of Turks and German converts. Among the cell members were people who had spent time in Mir Ali in Waziristan, where the IJU is based. Persons with connections to the cell have also turned up in IJU propaganda videos, apparently receiving training from, and operating in, both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In March 2008, Germany got its first suicide bomber; the Bavarian Turk, Cüneyt Çiftçi, blew himself up when striking an American base in Afghanistan. The German convert Eric Breininger has also started featuring in IJU's propaganda, where he has threatened Germany with terrorist attacks.

The IJU appears closely connected to two groups in Mir Ali, where they have their base. They appear to cooperate closely with a group of Arab fighters which was led, until his death, by the al-Qaida-affiliated Abu Laith al-Libi. There has been speculation that he was the driving force behind the the IJU's efforts to take the fight to the West. The other main IJU ally is the Taliban commander Jalaluddin Haqqani, and his son Sirajuddin. They want a more Afghanistan-centred fight, and prefer the jihadists to focus their efforts in Afghanistan. After Abu Laith's death there have been few signs of global ambitions, but if someone with similar ambitions is capable of taking his place, the IJU is poised to create more cells in Germany. Such a development may also give al-Qaida a foothold among radicals of the Turkic peoples.

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## **Preface**

The bulk of this research report was written by Einar Wigen during his internship with the FFI in summer 2008. The manuscript has been updated by the author and is now being published as part of FFI's Terrorism Research Project ("Jihadi movements in transition" TERRA IV).

## 1 Introduction

Although Turkish, Uzbek and Uyghur fighters are known to have been active in Afghanistan, there is little evidence, prior to 2007, of a more widespread Turkic<sup>1</sup> interaction with al-Qaida or involvement in al-Qaida-style international operations. An exception may be the 2003 Istanbul bombings that was supposedly carried out by Turks affiliated with al-Qaida.

An emerging group to have gained some notoriety in the recent past might have altered this trend. The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) broke away from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in 2002. It first came to light when it launched a bombing campaign in Uzbekistan in 2004, attacking, among other targets, the Israeli and American embassies. In 2007 it returned to the spotlight when an IJU terrorist cell in Germany, the so-called “Saarland Cell”, was uncovered in the final phase of a bomb plot. The intended targets were American and Uzbek interests in the country. Four people were arrested; two German converts and two Turks. A Turkish IJU member from Germany has also carried out a suicide attack against an American base in Afghanistan. The group has several training camps in Mir Ali, on the Afghan-Pakistan border, attracting recruits from far afield. All members of the Saarland cell received training in these camps. IJU appears to be well-connected with al-Qaida, through its supposed liaison, the Libyan Abu Laith al-Libi, who was one of bin Laden’s most important field commanders before he died in January 2008.

In the landscape of globally oriented Jihadism, people from Turkic ethnic groups have been few and far between. The handful of Turks who went to Afghanistan in the 1980s never played any significant role, neither there nor upon their return to Turkey. The group behind the 2003 Istanbul bombings is an exception, but was possibly led by Arabs.<sup>2</sup> This contrasts markedly from the role of the Arab jihadists, whose networks and experiences formed in Afghanistan came to play a vital role in the Islamist struggles in their home countries upon their return, and later in the global jihadist movement. With its 150 million<sup>3</sup> members, the Turkic peoples make up an important part of the Islamic Ummah. Islam has been used as a rallying point against neighbouring enemies and invaders, but Turkic individuals have only to a very limited extent joined the Jihadist cause. The propaganda effort of the IJU is directed mainly through a Turkish-language website called *Şehadet Zamani*. The Turks of Turkey and the Turkic peoples of Central Asia speak languages which are, to an extent, mutually intelligible. However, Turkish from Turkey is more widely

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<sup>1</sup> The generic term Turkic includes the ethnic groups speaking languages closely related to Turkish, i.e. Turks, Azeris, Uzbeks, Khazaks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, Tartars, Uyghurs and various smaller groups.

<sup>2</sup> Dominik Cziesche, Juergen Dahlkamp and Holger Stark, “Syrian Terror Suspect: Aladdin of the Black Forest”, *Der Spiegel*, 15 August 2005, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,371214,00.html> (accessed 18.07.2008).

<sup>3</sup> This number is disputed, as many of them live in countries unwilling or unable to count their Turkic populations. What is beyond doubt is that the number of Turkics is high, and that their role in Islamic history is significant. For more various estimates, see: “Ethnic People Groups of the Turkic Peoples Affinity Bloc”, *Joshua Project*, <http://www.joshuaproject.net/affinity-blocs.php?rop1=A015> (accessed 28.08.2008) or “Ethnologue Report for Turkic” in Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, [http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_family.asp?subid=90010](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=90010) (accessed 28.08.2008)..

understood. Intentional or not, the use of Turkish as their main language for communication means that the IJU is able to attract primarily Turks, Kurds and Central Asians. That way, the IJU is becoming the first Turkic jihadist group with a wide geographic reach. IJU may be able to provide al-Qaida with a foothold among the Turkic-speakers of Central Asia and among the Turks of Europe, which it has failed to achieve on its own.

This report will address three questions. First of all, who are the IJU? Second, what are their ideology and their goals? Third, is IJU al-Qaida's key to the Turkic World?

## 2 Militant Islamism among the Turkic Peoples

### 2.1 Turkish Volunteers

The wars in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya attracted many volunteer fighters, among them Turks. The high number that went to Afghanistan in the 1980s was enough for them to form their own Turkish guerilla bands. Sources pertaining to this involvement are scarce. However, from what has been written on the subject, it appears that the majority died there or resettled in Pakistan when the civil war in Afghanistan started.<sup>4</sup> The Turks who went to Chechnya and to Bosnia appear to have gone with a motivation slightly different from that of other foreign fighters. Both Bosnia and Chechnya have been Ottoman lands, and whole villages moved to Anatolia when the areas changed hands. In these villages, many family patriarchs told their young to go and fight in Bosnia and Chechnya for slightly more secular reasons: kinship solidarity with the "home" village. They found the Wahhabi religiousness of many Arab fighters unsettling, and mixed more with the indigenous than with the foreign fighters.<sup>5</sup>

From 1994 onwards, Turkish Islamists started enrolling in Islamic universities in Pakistan and, according to scholars Brian Glyn Williams and Feyza Altındağ, this number ran in the several hundreds.<sup>6</sup> Some went across to Afghanistan to get what Williams and Altındağ term "hands-on education", and in 2001 a group of Turkish jihadists had coalesced around the Turkish leader Habib Akdaş. The group relocated to Turkey before the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and many were apprehended following the 2003 Istanbul bombings.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ferzede Kaya, "Turks who fought in Afghanistan", *Turkish Daily News*, 17 October, 2001, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/archives.php?id=25480> (accessed 22.07.2008).

<sup>5</sup> Brian Glyn Williams and Feyza Altındağ, "Turkish Volunteers in Chechnya", *Terrorism Monitor*, 3, no.7 (2005), <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2369571> (accessed 29.08.2008).

<sup>6</sup> Brian Glyn Williams and Feyza Altındağ, "El Kaide Turka: Tracing an al-Qaida Splinter Cell", *Terrorism Monitor*, 2, no.22 (2004), [http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=400&issue\\_id=3148&article\\_id=2368888](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=400&issue_id=3148&article_id=2368888) (accessed 22.07.2008).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

The ultimate leadership of the group appears to have been in the hands of Arabs, possibly the Syrian Louai al-Sakka, a central figure in the Zarqawi Network.<sup>8</sup> In addition to this group, there are two Turkey-based violent Islamist groups; the İBDA-C (Great Islamic Eastern Raiders Front) and the Kurdish-dominated Hizbullah (a Sunni organisation entirely separate from their Shia namesake in Lebanon). None of them appear to have significant global networks, nor do they appear to be capable of launching operations outside Turkey. Their capabilities inside Turkey are also uncertain. Williams has expressed his belief that there might be sleeper cells in Turkey, consisting of “Chechen-Turks”, who are ready to carry out more attacks.<sup>9</sup>

## 2.2 Islam in Central Asia

Like Turkey, Central Asia is dominated by Sufi interpretations of Islam, and most scholars adhere to the Hanafi school of Islamic law. It was the sedentary population of Central Asia which first embraced Islam; the Uzbeks and the Tajiks. The Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Kazakhs were largely nomads up until they were forcefully settled by the Soviet authorities in the 1930s. As nomads, they were less under the control of religious authorities. Their interpretation of religion is also more heterodox than that of the sedentary populations, and they follow fewer of the proscriptions and prohibitions of Islam. Islam was first oppressed as an enemy of the Tsarist state’s Christian ruling principle, and later as a feudal enemy of the Soviet Union. During the civil war that followed the Russian Revolution many Muslims fought against the Communists in Central Asia, using Islam as a rallying point. Widespread emigration of people from the region followed when the resistance was defeated. Many emigrants ended up in Mecca and Medina, which they saw as a place fit for taking refuge. The Saudi dynasty welcomed these refugees as useful settlers and through the years a large majority of these so-called Turkestanis came to adopt their hosts’ interpretation of Islam and became Wahhabis.<sup>10</sup> Although a respected part of the Saudi population, they do not appear to have given up their identity as Turkestani, and live in neighbourhoods comprised of members of their own ethnic group.<sup>11</sup> When the Soviet Union fell and the Central Asian republics got their independence, Turkestanis from Saudi Arabia came to play an important role in the spread of Islamism and radicalisation of Uzbeks. A senior al-Qaida figure, Abu Musab al-Suri, claims that this diaspora financed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Chris Gourlay and Jonathan Calvert, “Al-Qaida Kingpin: I Trained 9/11 Hijackers”, *The Times*, 25 November 2007, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article2936761.ece> (accessed 18.07.2008).

<sup>9</sup> Brian Glyn Williams, “Turkey’s al-Qaeda Blowback”, *Terrorism Monitor*, 2, no. 8, (2004), [http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue\\_id=2937](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=2937) (accessed 29.08.2008).

<sup>10</sup> Bayram Balci, “Central Asian Refugees in Saudi Arabia: Religious Evolution and Contributing to the Reislamization of Their Motherland” *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, 26, no. 2 (2007):17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Umar Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri) *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, (in Arabic) (Place and publisher unknown, December 2004), p. 787. For a biography of al-Suri, see Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The life of Al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

### 2.3 Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was established in 1998 by the former Soviet paratrooper Juma Namangani and the Islamist ideologue Tohir Yuldashev. Namangani converted to the cause of the mujahedin while fighting for the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. This was not uncommon among the Muslim soldiers sent to Afghanistan by the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> In 1991, Namangani and Yuldashev established a radical Islamist group called Adolat, meaning “justice”. They started by building mosques and madrassahs with Saudi money in the Uzbek town of Namangan in the Fergana Valley.<sup>14</sup> Their group was heavily influenced by the Saudi Wahhabism and some of their group went to Saudi Arabia, where they received religious instruction. In the spring of 1992, Adolat took over control of the town of Namangan for several weeks and ruthlessly imposed Sharia law.

Following their defeat at the hands of the Karimov regime, much of the group fled to Tadjikistan. There, they took part in civil war, and fought on the side of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) led by a charismatic Tajik Islamist. Namangani was entrusted as commander of active UTO units in the field, which boosted his position in the movement and added to his already considerable combat skills.

When the UTO signed a peace deal resulting in a power-sharing with the government in 1997, Namangani and Yuldashev ignored it and continued fighting. They had always been at the extremist fringe of the UTO. After a bit of persuasion they ended their hostilities, and for a while settled down for a peaceful life. Namangani got a large farm in Garm in Tajikistan, and started a transport company. Because of religious persecution in Uzbekistan, many supporters kept turning up at the farm in Tajikistan which became a centre for Uzbek militant Islamism. At the same time Namangani’s transport company was making him quite wealthy, probably through smuggling.

While the rest of the UTO lost much of their radical Islamist zeal, Namangani and Yuldashev became further radicalised. Dissatisfied with the moderation of the Islamic Renaissance Party, they created the IMU in 1998 with the explicit goal of overthrowing the regime of Islam Karimov and introducing Sharia in Uzbekistan, and soon started guerrilla attacks. The IMU became a group most focused on the “near enemy”, a socio-revolutionary jihadist group similar to the Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

In late 1999, the Tajik government came under pressure to expel the group, following IMU raids into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. An agreement was reached whereby the IMU group was forced to relocate to Kunduz in northern Afghanistan, in addition to a camp already set up in Mazar-e Sharif. In northern Afghanistan the group had the freedom of operation from the Taliban, in

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<sup>13</sup> This section relies heavily on Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press 2002), 6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

return for contributing to the fight against the Northern Alliance. However, the raids into Uzbekistan continued after the relocation.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.4 The Emergence of the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)

The IMU already had non-Uzbeks among their fighters when they arrived in Kunduz, but was further diversified when the Taliban used them as a deniability factor. First, China started pressuring the Taliban to stop training Uyghurs at the Rishkor camp outside Kabul. As a response, Taliban sent the Uyghurs to join the IMU, thus claiming to not have any Uyghurs as part of their armed forces. The same pattern was repeated a few months later when Pakistan wanted a number of leading Pakistani militants (presumably from Sipah e/Sahaba and Lashkar e-Taiba) extradited; the Taliban sent them north to the IMU. Finally Russia started pressurizing the Taliban about the Chechen fighters, who had been sent from the Kabul front to the IMU camps up north.<sup>16</sup> This may indicate that pluralisation within the IMU came about by coincidence, rather than a deliberate plan by the IMU to attract a wider following. Along with it came a shift in ideology.

The Pakistani writer Ahmed Rashid's account offers a good insight into how the character of the IMU altered. At the siege of Taloqan in the summer of 2000, where the Taliban attacked Ahmad Shah Masood's headquarters, the IMU had participated with 600 militants.<sup>17</sup> While in northern Afghanistan, the IMU had grown in numbers from 600 to 2,000 fighters, it now comprised of Kyrgyz, Chechen, Uyghur and Tajik fighters along with the original Uzbeks. At Taloqan they fought alongside 5,000 militants from Pakistan and 600 Arab fighters, and after this battle they got increasingly involved in operations involving foreign fighters in Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup>

The language aspect may still be an important part of the pluralisation process, as the Uzbeks were able to speak both Russian and their Turkic native language Uzbek. This is likely to have facilitated social integration and military coordination between the core Uzbeks, the Turkic-speaking Uyghurs and Kyrgyz, as well as the Chechens and Tajiks, the majority of whom speak Russian as a second language. The way Rashid writes about it, it appears as if all the fighters became an integrated part of the IMU, and that it was fast becoming a pan-Central Asian Islamic movement.<sup>19</sup> However, it is not entirely clear whether all these fighters actually joined the group, or maintained separate organisations while being based in the same place. It is especially difficult to imagine Pakistanis integrating into the IMU. Be that as it may, the added fighters are likely to have brought with them new ideological impulses to the group, probably adding more of an internationalist dimension to their ideology. It is not certain whether this internationalist trend was resisted by the leadership, nor how much this was discussed. But the fact that it split into two groups in 2002, may indicate that the group was under ideological strain. They still maintained an

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<sup>15</sup> Mariam Abou Zahab and Olivier Roy, *Islamist Networks: The Afghan-Pakistan Connection*, (London: Hurst, 2004), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Rashid, *Jihad*, 176.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

Uzbekistan-focused ideology, whereas their fighters came from all over Central Asia and the Caucasus. The split in 2002 gave rise to the IJU. The new group espoused a more internationalist, global jihad-oriented approach, apparently as a result of the ideological strife that had emerged within the movement.

The French scholars Mariam abu Zahab and Olivier Roy believe that the organisation went through an important change in 2001. Although they write that the organisation also changed its name, this has later been denied by the IMU itself.<sup>20</sup> They point to the three perceived goals of “de-Uzbekising” the IMU with the goal of expanding its recruitment base; to integrate in to the jihad waged by al-Qaida and Taliban; and to undermine rival Islamists Hizb ut-Tahrir in Central Asia.<sup>21</sup> It shifted its focus away from Uzbekistan, instead calling for the establishment of a Caliphate consisting of Khazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China’s Xinjiang province.<sup>22</sup>

Zahab and Roy claim that the IMU was almost entirely integrated into al-Qaida, and cite sources saying that Namangani and Yuldashev were two of the six members of the Majlis al-Shura of al-Qaida, but point to the difficulty of confirming such claims.<sup>23</sup> The claims are probably exaggerated, as the leaders of the IMU were not among the signatories of the communiqué proclaiming the foundation of the bin Laden-led International Islamic Front in 1998.<sup>24</sup> They also appear to overlook the fact that the IMU was and still is primarily an Uzbek group with Uzbek goals. The IMU, and its successor The Islamic Movement of Turkestan, appear not to have any global aspirations. And after the breaking away of IJU, this is likely to be the case, since Uzbeks and other Turkic people with a globally oriented jihadi bent are likely to join the IJU rather than the IMU.

The senior al-Qaida strategist Abu Musab al-Suri, although not claiming that the three organisations integrated, writes that he had extensive contacts with the IMU leadership in mid-2001, and that he frequented their headquarters to lecture.<sup>25</sup>

The IMU actively took part in the defence of the Taliban regime in October 2001. Rashid writes that Juma Namangani was commanding the Taliban forces in Taloqan at this point, but he is probably referring to the foreigners under Taliban command and not Taliban itself.<sup>26</sup> Al-Suri

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<sup>20</sup> In 2001 it was widely believed that the movement changed its name to Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT) or Islamic Movement of Turkestan, that a centrally placed figure in the organisation gave an interview to Radio Free Europe to dismiss the rumour. See Didier Chaudet, “Islamist Terrorism in Greater Central Asia: The ‘Al-Qaedaization’ of Uzbek Jihadism”, *Russie.Nei.Visions*, no.35, Russia/NIS Center, 2008, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Zahab and Roy, *Islamist Networks*, 7.

<sup>22</sup> B. Raman, “Attacks on Uzbeks in South Waziristan”, *International Terrorism Monitor Paper*, No.208 (2007) <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/%5Cpapers22%5Cpaper2180.html> (accessed 20.07.2008).

<sup>23</sup> Zahab and Roy, *Islamist Networks*, 51.

<sup>24</sup> Fawaz A. Gerges, *The Far Enemy: Why Jihad Went Global* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 39.

<sup>25</sup> Umar Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri) *The Global Islamic Resistance Call* (in Arabic) (Place and publisher unknown, December 2004), 787-788.

<sup>26</sup> Rashid, *Jihad*, 4.

corroborates this claim, stating that Namangani became the leader of “Brigade 21”, a brigade which gathered the non-Afghan fighters in one brigade under the command of the Taliban.<sup>27</sup> According to al-Suri, Namangani died before the fall of Mazar-e Sharif, which was in November 2001.<sup>28</sup> He also says that many Uzbeks, probably referring to IMU fighters, died in northern Afghanistan, in the defence of Kabul, and in Shah-i Kot valley on the border with Pakistan. The survivors went to Pakistan, where many were killed or captured.<sup>29</sup> After the death of Namangani, the leadership of the IMU passed solely to Yuldashev.<sup>30</sup>

According to the terrorism analyst Ronald Sandee at the Nefa Foundation, the split between the IMU and what was to become the IJU, was the direct result of a 2002 IMU Leadership Council (Shura) decision. The IMU leaders judged that the time was not ripe for a resumption of operations in Uzbekistan. Part of the group disagreed and formed in March 2002 a breakaway faction, called the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), which was the precursor to the IJU.<sup>31</sup> In other words, what was to become the IJU split from the IMU while in South Waziristan, and subsequently relocated to a new base near Mir Ali.

Although the IJU was established in 2002, it took a while before it became known to the outside world. In March 2004 it conducted its first known attack; its suicide bombers attacked the Uzbek cities of Tashkent, Bukhara and Chorsu.<sup>32</sup> Ronald Sandee has given the following detailed account of these events<sup>33</sup>: The attacks took place early on 29 March 2004. The night before, at ten in the evening, an explosion had gone off in a house in the village of Qahramon, in the Romitan District of Bukhara. The house was reportedly the headquarters of the local IJG cell, and was used as a bomb making factory for the group. Nine people died in the blast.<sup>34</sup> The leader of the Bukhara cell was a Lutfullah Ramazanov, who had attended a training camp in Kazakhstan in the spring of 2003 and smuggled detonators and military equipment into Uzbekistan on his return.<sup>35</sup>

At five in the morning on 29 March 2004 IJG fighters attacked police check-points near a tractor factory in Tashkent, killing three policemen and wounding one. Later the same morning, between

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<sup>27</sup> Umar Abd al-Hakim (Abu Mus‘ab al-Suri) *The Global Islamic Resistance Call*, (in Arabic) (Place and publisher unknown, December 2004), 787-788.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Zahab and Roy, *Islamist Networks*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> The following section on how the IJG/IJU broke off from the IMU, and their early attacks, rely heavily on: Sandee, Ronald, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, NEFA Foundation Special Report, 14 October, 2008, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefaijuoct08.pdf> (accessed 31.12.2008).

Sandee in turn draws mostly upon sources from Central Asian, and particularly Uzbek, news agencies.

<sup>32</sup> The French scholar Didier Chaudet has identified four attacks that occurred prior to 2004 and which have been attributed to the group. These included an explosion in Bishkek’s biggest clothing market in December 2002, the murder of 19 Chinese in March 2003, and two bomb attacks in the Kyrgyz city of Osh in May 2003. See Chaudet, “Islamist Terrorism in Greater Central Asia”, *Russie.Nei.Visions*, no.35, 21. See also Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York: Viking, 2008), 343.

<sup>33</sup> Ronald Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, The NEFA Foundation, 14 October 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 4

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 4

nine and ten, two female suicide bombers, Dihnoza Kholmadova and Shahnoza Inoyatova, attacked the Chorsu Bazaar. The exact number of casualties is not known. Several policemen were killed when one of the two blew herself up outside a mosque in the Bazaar. The same day, a 24 year old man, Furqat Yusupov, was arrested while taking 10 homemade bombs to Tashkent. Yusupov was reported to have helped 14 persons to training camps in Pakistan and Kazakhstan.

The next day, more attacks took place in Uzbekistan. Two cars were stopped on the outskirts of Tashkent. One of the cars carried two women, one of whom stayed in the car and blew herself up, along with the car. It is not known whether she wore a suicide belt, or whether the car itself had been rigged with explosives. Several male IJG fighters took shelter in a nearby house, and a shoot-out ensued with security forces. The security forces surrounded the house using armored personnel carriers, and the fight ended when one of the IJG fighters set the house on fire. Most of the fighters appear to have perished in the episode. The same day, a minibus exploded close to a dam outside Tashkent, but did not damage the dam itself. Had the dam been damaged, Sandee claims that the city of Tashkent would have been flooded. The next day, a man reportedly blew himself up in his own house in the Sobir Rahimov district. However, it is unclear whether this incident was related to the other IJG attacks.<sup>36</sup>

An estimated 47 people were reportedly killed in the 29 -31 March attacks, 33 of whom were IJG fighters and 10 policemen. The female suicide bombers were employees at the Egyptian Embassy's cultural centre in Tashkent, and Sandee suggests the possibility that they had been recruited there.<sup>37</sup> A few days later the IJG sent an email claiming responsibility for all the attacks "against the government of Uzbekistan and its civil servants, who administered the policy of violence against the people of Uzbekistan". They considered "that all these actions are proof of compliance guidance [sic] of Allah". "Our goal of these actions is to give the words of Allah a higher meaning and retaliate against the enemies of Islam in response to their cruel punishment on the people and for the arrests and torture of our brothers and sisters".<sup>38</sup>

In June 2004, the group issued a new statement that additional attacks would be carried out against the Karimov regime.<sup>39</sup> According to Uzbek news sources, the key person behind the March attacks was Ahmad Bekmirzayev, who appears to have been one of the co-founders of the IJG in 2002.<sup>40</sup> He may even have persuaded his own wife to blow herself up in the attacks.

15 people pleaded guilty to the charges brought before them related to the first round of attacks, when the case came up in Tashkent in July 2004. As court proceedings began, the group struck again on 30 July 2004. Three male suicide bombers attacked three different targets almost simultaneously: the U.S. Embassy, the Israeli Embassy and the office of the Uzbek General Prosecutor in Tashkent.<sup>41</sup> The exact death toll appears not to be entirely clear, but most of the

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 5

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Ronald Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, The NEFA Foundation, 14 October 2008, p. 6

<sup>39</sup> Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union*, The NEFA Foundation, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

victims were security guards protecting the entrances of the buildings. Two local employees of the Israeli Embassy were killed, but no Israeli citizens.

The attacks appear to have been coordinated from Kazakhstan, by the emir of IJG Kazakhstan, Jakshibek Biymurzayev. A native Kyrgyz and resident in Kyrgyzstan, he was arrested in November 2004, in possession of passports from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan.<sup>42</sup> According to the Russian news agency Interfax, Biymurzayev was reportedly married under Islamic law to two women, both of whom he had convinced to become suicide bombers.<sup>43</sup> As they appear not to have blown themselves up, this is by no means certain, and could be either a boast by Biymurzayev or an exaggeration by the news agency.

Six people stood before court charged with involvement in the July attacks. One of them claimed that she had been tricked into complicity, and that she had agreed to leave her country to earn a living, and was a victim of the circumstances. When the IJG soon after the attacks claimed responsibility, the message was that “[These attacks] were an answer to the injustice of our apostate government and an expression of support for the jihad of our Muslim brothers in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Hijaz, and other Muslim lands”.<sup>44</sup> In November 2004, Kazakh security forces arrested a group of nine Kazakhs, four Uzbeks and four others. They were allegedly preparing for suicide attacks, and among the arrested was the alleged emir of IJG Kazakhstan, Biymurzayev.<sup>45</sup> On 13 May 2005 there was an attempted attack on the Israeli Embassy in Tashkent. This happened to coincide with Israel’s Independence Day. The suicide bomber was killed before he could detonate the bomb, as he approached the embassy without heeding calls to stop.<sup>46</sup>

According to Sandee, following the spate of failed attacks and arrests, the IJG was forced to reconsider its strategy in the middle of 2005. Henceforth there appears to have been a shift away from the “Uzbekistan first” strategy the group had thus far pursued. This shift, involving the recruitment of Turks and Germans, reportedly came as an assignment from al-Qaida’s external operations unit. (The sources for this information are not known, however). The many arrests and deaths that resulted from the attacks may also have destroyed important infrastructure in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, making it difficult to continue operations there. Regardless of how this shift came about, it is beyond doubt that the strategy changed, as there has been a marked decline in attacks in Central Asia. The group’s strategy appears to have more of a focus on using Mir Ali as an operational base as well as a training area. Along with this strategic shift, there was a name change, and from May 2005, the group became known as the *Islamic Jihad Union*.

Initially the authorities blamed the IMU, al-Qaida and another regional Islamist organisation –the Hizb-ut-Tahrir.<sup>47</sup> Then a group calling itself “Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan” posted a

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Ronald Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, The NEFA Foundation, 14 October 2008, 8

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 344.

communiqué online in May 2004, claiming responsibility for the attacks.<sup>48</sup> This is an early name for the IJU, which at this point was entirely unknown. As fifteen people suspected of planning the March bombings were put on trial on 30 July 2004, three more explosions rocked Tashkent, this time striking the U.S. and Israeli embassies, as well as the state prosecutor's office.<sup>49</sup> Some doubted the veracity of Uzbekistan's official version of the events. According to the British ambassador to Uzbekistan at the time, Craig Murray, it was all a lie.<sup>50</sup> He claims to have been at the sites of the alleged bombings soon after the explosions, and in his view the sites did not bear signs of explosions at all, especially as the body of one of the alleged suicide bombers was intact. One may question Murray's forensic expertise, but he appears convinced and is adamant that the IJU is entirely a fabrication by the Uzbek authorities. Until the Saarland cell was discovered in Germany in 2007, there was little evidence to refute his claims, as nearly all other evidence originates in the not entirely unbiased courtrooms of Uzbekistan. However, the steady flow of information about the group since 2006 seems to invalidate Murray's conclusion.

### 3 Who are the IJU?

#### 3.1 Allies and Allegiance in Waziristan

North and South Waziristan are both part of the semi-autonomous Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. FATA is governed through the age-old tribal structure in the area, and what goes on there is often beyond the control of the Pakistani government. This made it a safe haven for jihadists fleeing the invasion of Afghanistan, and there are now more than 50 Taliban-affiliated groups operating in FATA and its adjoining areas.<sup>51</sup>

The IMU first arrived in Wana in South Waziristan after fleeing Afghanistan, but the IJU appears to be based in the town of Mir Ali in North Waziristan. This happens to be the place pinpointed by Pakistan's former President Pervez Musharraf as the most likely hiding place for Osama bin Laden.<sup>52</sup> Whether or not Musharraf is correct, Mir Ali is an important centre for foreign fighters in the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The IMU and the IJU appear not only to be located in different areas, but also to operate entirely separately. It is difficult to tell whether the fighters who formed the IJU came directly to Mir Ali from Afghanistan, or if they split off from

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<sup>48</sup> "Unknown "Islamic Jihad Group" Assumes Responsibility for Uzbekistan Attacks", *Muslim Uzbekistan*, 12 April 2004, [http://www.muslimuzbekistan.com/eng/ennews/2004/04/ennews12042004\\_1.html](http://www.muslimuzbekistan.com/eng/ennews/2004/04/ennews12042004_1.html) (accessed 02.07.2008) and "Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan' claims responsibility for U.S., Israeli Embassy bombings", *Jihad Watch*, 31 July 2004, <http://jihadwatch.org/archives/002693.php> (accessed 02.07.2008).

<sup>49</sup> Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*, 344.

<sup>50</sup> Craig Murray, "The Mysterious Islamic Jihad Union", *www.craigmurray.org.uk*, 8 September 2007, [http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2007/09/the\\_mysterious.html](http://www.craigmurray.org.uk/archives/2007/09/the_mysterious.html) (accessed 01.09.2008).

<sup>51</sup> Mohammad Amir Rana, "The Taliban Consolidate Control in Pakistan's Tribal Regions", *CTC Sentinel*, 1, no. 7 (2008), <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/CTCSentinel-Vol1Iss7.pdf> (accessed 13.08.2008).

<sup>52</sup> Hasbanullah Khan, "Pakistan Fighting Kills 250 as Civilians Flee", *Mail & Guardian*, 9 October, 2007, <http://www.mg.co.za/article/2007-10-09-pakistan-fighting-kills-250-as-civilians-flee> (accessed 07.07.2008).

the IMU after arriving in South Waziristan. Ronald Sandee's account of these events indicates the latter, but he does not state this clearly.<sup>53</sup>

The IJU appears to have two main allies in North Waziristan. The German scholar Guido Steinberg asserts that the IJU has blended with the so-called Haqqani Network, and that the intensification of the IJU's activities which started in 2006 was masterminded by the Libyan al-Qaida associate Abu Laith al-Libi.<sup>54</sup> Both of these are important allies with a lot of influence in the area.

Jalaluddin Haqqani leads a group of militants allied to the Taliban. He played a leading role in the battle against the Afghan communist forces under Muhammad Najibullah in Khost in March 1991, and before that in the USSR-Afghan war. Taking his sizeable local following with him, he later became allied with and integrated into the Taliban, and became one of Mullah Omar's ministers.<sup>55</sup> As he is in his late 70s, his network's daily operations are run by his son Sirajuddin Haqqani. The Haqqani Network is based in a village near Miramshah in North Waziristan, about 10 miles from the Afghan border.<sup>56</sup> The senior Haqqani has hardly been seen since he slipped across the border to Pakistan following the defeat of the Taliban in 2001, leading to speculations that he was dead. However, he appeared in a video in April 2008, undermining such speculation.<sup>57</sup> In this video the elder Haqqani claims responsibility for Cüneyt Çiftçi's suicide attack on 3 March 2008 using the same footage as the IJU used when it claimed responsibility.<sup>58</sup> This may indicate a high degree of integration between the IJU and the Haqqani network, or that Haqqani gets the credit for operations carried out by his guests, the IJU, without participating in the operation.

Jalaluddin's son Sirajuddin is considered a new generation leader of the Taliban, and acts as a link between militants on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border.<sup>59</sup> From their traditional zone of operations in eastern Afghanistan, the Haqqani network has now started expanding into the central and southern regions.<sup>60</sup> Sirajuddin also claims credit for the Serena Hotel bombing in Kabul in January 2008.<sup>61</sup> However, in an interview in July 2008, Sirajuddin makes it clear that

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<sup>53</sup> Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, NEFA Foundation Special Report, 2.

<sup>54</sup> 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. <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2008/Jul/steinbergJul08.pdf> (accessed 09.07.2008).

<sup>55</sup> Imtaz Ali, "The Haqqani Network and Cross-Border Terrorism in Afghanistan", *Terrorism Monitor* 6, no.5, (2008), [http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue\\_id=4431](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=4431) (accessed 09.07.2008).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Taliban welcome back an old friend", *South Asia Times*, 4 April 2008, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/JD04Df02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JD04Df02.html) (accessed 20.07.2008).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. and "Abu MUSLİM Kurdi den İstihadi Operasyon....", *Şehadet Vakti*, 06 June 2008, [www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detayb42b.html?haber\\_id=1924](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb42b.html?haber_id=1924) (accessed: 26.06.2008).

<sup>59</sup> Ali, "The Haqqani Network and Cross-Border Terrorism in Afghanistan", *Terrorism Monitor*, 6, no.5.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Syed Saleem Shahzad, "Taliban welcome back an old friend", *South Asia Times*, 4 April 2008, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/JD04Df02.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/JD04Df02.html) (accessed 20.07.2008).

his group is busy with their fight in Afghanistan and prefers his fighters to fight the Americans there.<sup>62</sup>

The IJU's other influential ally was the Libyan Abu Laith al-Libi, one of bin Laden's most important field commanders. Abu Laith died in an American attack in Mir Ali in January 2008. Mir Ali being an IJU base, the attack also killed some of its members. Steinberg quotes a no longer available IJU communiqué, in which Abu Laith is called "our sheikh", indicating a strong affinity.<sup>63</sup> Since IJU operations have continued to cooperate with both the Taliban and al-Qaida, the bond appears to have been maintained after his death. Steinberg credits Abu Laith for the IJU's recent rise to prominence, and considers it likely that he was the mastermind behind the Saarland plot.<sup>64</sup> Sandee draws a similar conclusion, arguing that the connection between Abu Laith and what was then the IJG goes back to 2002, just after the group moved to Mir Ali.<sup>65</sup>

The FATA areas are governed through a system of tribal elders and the Uzbeks who have gotten sanctuary there have been drawn into the tribal politics by their hosts. The first round of major inter-tribal fighting erupted in South Waziristan in March 2007, which involved many Uzbeks, but probably no IJU fighters. Pakistan has tried to use this as a propaganda stunt, saying that they had succeeded in getting the tribes to expel the foreign fighters.

The number of Uzbeks in the tribal areas is, like so many aspects of this are, uncertain. Numbers as high as 10,000 fighters<sup>66</sup> are bandied about, however this figure is most probably wildly inflated. According to the British scholar John Daly, "most analysts" estimate the number of Uzbeks in Pakistan at 1,000-2,000.<sup>67</sup> These are not all IJU fighters, as the majority belongs to the IMU, and there might be additional splinter groups. According to Steinberg, the IMU is still much larger than the IJU.<sup>68</sup> The IMU appears to remain a fully combat ready force, mainly involved in fighting the Pakistani army.<sup>69</sup>

### 3.2 Leadership

The main source of information about the leadership of IJU is the press release from the U.S. Treasury Department in which they are designated as terrorists. According to this, the leader of

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<sup>62</sup> "Interview with Taliban Commander Sirajuddin Haqqani", *NEFA Foundation*, August 18, 2008, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/multimedia-intvu.html#Sirajuddin> (accessed 01.09.2008).

<sup>63</sup> 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. <http://www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/si/2008/Jul/steinbergJul08.pdf> (accessed 09.07.2008).

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, NEFA Foundation Special Report, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Massoud Ansari, "Taliban 'invite' 10,000 Uzbeks to Helmand", *Sunday Telegraph*, 25 March 2007, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1546626/Taliban-%27invite%27-10%2C000-Uzbeks-to-Helmand.html> (accessed 20.07.2008).

<sup>67</sup> John C. K Daly, "Uzbek Fighters in Pakistan Reportedly Return to Afghanistan", *Terrorism Focus*, 4, no.7, <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?articleid=2370289> (accessed 09.07.2008).

<sup>68</sup> Steinberg, "A Turkish al-Qaida...", *Strategic Insights*, July 2008.

<sup>69</sup> Igor Rotar, "Terrorism in Uzbekistan: A Self-Made Crisis", *Terrorism Monitor* 2, no.8 (2004), [http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue\\_id=2937](http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/article.php?issue_id=2937) (accessed 29.08.2008).

the IJU is an Uzbek named Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalolov.<sup>70 71</sup> Jalolov was born in Andijan, Uzbekistan in 1972. US authorities credit him with the founding of the organisation in 2001, after leaving the IMU. He is also the man behind the *nom de guerre* Ebu Yahya Mohammed Fetih. The latter part of the name alludes to Mehmet the Conqueror, the Ottoman sultan who conquered Constantinople in 1453. This is immediately recognisable by Turks, and appears to be an attempt to draw on Ottoman and Turkish mythology. The use of such a name by an ethnic Uzbek, together with the Turkish-language website, may indicate that the organisation's propaganda is geared towards Turks rather than Uzbeks.<sup>72 73</sup>

US authorities claim that the deputy leader of the IJU is called Suhayl Fatilloevich Buranov, who they say is also responsible for communications.<sup>74</sup> Buranov is an ethnic Uzbek and was born in Tashkent in Uzbekistan in 1983.<sup>75</sup> As the deputy leader, responsible for communications and having the first name Suhayl, Buranov is a good candidate for the "Sule" signature used by a Pakistan-based figure directing the Saarland plot.<sup>76</sup> In 2005, he reportedly prepared suicide bombers from among new IJU members. Buranov is also thought to have been involved in the 2004 bombings in Tashkent.<sup>77</sup>

The founders were Nadzhmiddin Kamoldinovich Jalolov (a.k.a. Abu Yahya), Mugammad Fatih (a.k.a. Commander Ahmad) and Suhayl Fatilleovich Buranov (a.k.a Mansur Suhail/ a.k.a. Abu Huzaifa). Jalolov became emir and Buranov his deputy. Two other persons were involved in the founding of the organisation, Kij. Ismoilov and Ahmad Bekmirzayev.<sup>78</sup> Jalolov has allegedly received explosives training by al-Qaida and was one of the organisers of the 1999 attacks in Uzbekistan, acting as an IMU member. He was also allegedly close to Osama bin Laden, Mullah Omar and the leader of the Uyghur Islamic Radicals, Abu Muhammad Xinjiang.

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<sup>70</sup> "Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group", *U.S. Department of the Treasury Press* hp-1035, 18 June 2008, <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1035.htm> (accessed 01.07.2008).

<sup>71</sup> He was also named as IJU leader by the defendants of the 2004 Tashkent bombing trial in Uzbekistan.

<sup>72</sup> Another possible explanation is that the IJU recruited a Turk who happened to edit the website already, or that they "inherited" it in some other way. The choice of Turkish as the language of communication is not necessarily intentional.

<sup>73</sup> This makes little sense when a statement by another central IJU figure is taken into account. Although not claiming to speak on behalf of the IJU, a man speaking under the *nom de guerre* Seladdin Türki launched a virulent attack on the Turkish mujahedin in July 2008, calling them spineless and unwanted on the fields of jihad. Türki is probably a Turk himself, but it is uncertain what role he plays in the organisation. His access to the propaganda outlet *Şehadet Zamani* indicates that he has some clout in the group, but his message's contrariness to the apparent recruitment efforts of the IJU appears odd.

<sup>74</sup> "Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group", *U.S. Department of the Treasury Press*.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Matthias Gebauer and Yassin Musharbash. "Berlin's Worst Nightmare: Germany's First Suicide Bomber in Afghanistan?", *Der Spiegel*, 15 March, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,541714,00.html> (accessed 20.07.2008).

<sup>77</sup> "Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group", *U.S. Department of the Treasury Press*.

<sup>78</sup> Huquq, Tashkent, in Uzbek, 5. January 2005, p.6, quoted in Ronald Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, The NEFA Foundation, 14 October 2008, p.2

### 3.3 Recruitment and Fighters

The number of IJU fighters has been estimated at between 100 and 200 the bulk of which comprises Uzbeks, who remain relatively anonymous.<sup>79</sup> As described, the leadership is also Uzbek, and as all the recruits being touted on the Şehadet Zamani website are Turks, Kurds or Germans, one may wonder whether any of the Chechens, Uyghurs, Tajiks or Kyrgyz described by al-Suri and Ahmed Rashid are part of the IJU at all. However, they may be part of the group but anonymously like the Uzbeks.

There is very little publicly available information regarding the organisation of the IJU. Spokespersons and leadership frequently speak of “Martyr Brigades”, although it is difficult to tell how many individuals this refers to. What appears to be quite convincing is that the group has a brigade of Uzbek children, who now appear to have finished their training.<sup>80</sup> Some are possibly as young as ten or twelve years of age. A video published in July 2008 show some of their training. It also showed that one of them had been martyred.

A new arrival to the Pakistan camps who has featured prominently on the website of the IJU is the German Eric Breininger, who is referred to by the nom de guerre Abdulgaffar el-Almani.<sup>81</sup> The 20 year old Muslim convert is from the German town of Neunkirchen in Saarland, whence the Saarland Cell got its name.<sup>82</sup> Breininger converted to Islam as recently as 2007.<sup>83</sup> German authorities believe he and another German citizen, Hossain al-Malla, arrived in the Waziristan training camps in early December 2007 by way of Egypt, Dubai and Iran.<sup>84</sup> Federal investigators also believe that the two had contact with the Saarland Cell.<sup>85</sup> On the way to Pakistan, Breininger and al-Malla visited a radical cleric in Cairo who has ties to Germany.<sup>86</sup> It is not clear from publicly available sources who this cleric is. Sandee points out two potential candidates, but this is difficult to ascertain.<sup>87</sup> Breininger has appeared in a video together with Abu Muslim, who later carried out a suicide attack in Pakistan.<sup>88</sup> The fact that Breininger has appeared unmasked,

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<sup>79</sup> Yassin Musharbash, “Behörden fürchten baldigen Anschlag von Eric B.”, *Der Spiegel*, 14 June 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,559608,00.html> (accessed 01.09.2008).

<sup>80</sup> “İslami Cihad İttihadi “ŞEHİTLERİMİZ” Video”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 22 July 2008 [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1938](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1938) (accessed 22.07.2008).

<sup>81</sup> “Abdulgaffar El Almani İle Roportaj.....: İSLAM DİNİ BATI BASININDA TERÖRİZM OLARAK GÖSTERİLMEKTE. MÜSLÜMANLARIN KORKU VE DEHŞET SALMAK İSTEDİKLERİ İDDİA EDİLMEKTE”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 23 May 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1921](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1921) (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>82</sup> “Authorities Fear German Islamist About to Commit Suicide”, *Der Spiegel*, 16 June 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,559707,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>83</sup> Gebauer, Matthias; Yassin Musharbash, “German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video”, *Der Spiegel*, 29 April 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,550583,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>84</sup> “German Islamists Suspected of Planning Attack in Afghanistan”, *Der Spiegel*, 4 April 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,545410,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Sandee, Ronald. *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, NEFA Foundation Special Report, 14 October, 2008, <http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefaijuoct08.pdf> (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>88</sup> “İslami Cihad İttihadi Mücahidleri ile ROPORTAJ”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 28 April 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1914](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1914) (accessed 15.07.2008).

revealing his identity, indicates that he has no immediate plans of a return to a regular life. That he has also appeared in a video together with a now deceased suicide bomber has spurred speculation that he will commit a similar act.<sup>89</sup> However, as his identity is now revealed, and his picture posted on all European Union points of entry<sup>90</sup>, one may assume that such an attack is not planned to take place on German soil. It appears as if the German Federal Criminal Police Office has been searching for Breininger in Afghanistan for several months.<sup>91</sup> On 16 June it was reported in the German weekly *Der Spiegel* that it had been weeks since they last had any idea about his whereabouts. Security officials believe him to either have been selected as the next suicide bomber, or that he is waiting for his mission.<sup>92</sup> Breininger has since turned up in yet another video, denying that he has any plans to attack Germany or that he has been away from the group.<sup>93</sup>

Eric Breininger is believed to have been recruited by Daniel Schneider, one of the core members of the Saarland Cell.<sup>94</sup> The two lived together before the arrests in 2007. German security officials think the Bavarian Turk Cüneyt Çiftçi is a role model for Breininger, and that Breininger may seek to follow in his footsteps.<sup>95</sup> In one of the videos in which Breininger appears he praises Çiftçi's attack, saying that it was a good deed and that many infidels were sent to hell.<sup>96</sup> He further states "to his brothers in Germany" that they should join Jihad, because it is the way to Paradise. The video is highly militaristic, and shows Breininger carrying an automatic weapon, wearing camouflage clothing and with an ammunition vest. Breininger is barely audible due to the wind, and he also appears to mumble and speaks a surprisingly broken German. There has been speculation in German media that he was under the influence of narcotics at the time of recording.<sup>97</sup>

The Lebanese-born Hossain al-Malla who travelled to Waziristan together with Eric Breininger has been overshadowed by his German-born brother in arms.<sup>98</sup> Al-Malla is 24 years of age and holds a German passport. Little has been revealed as to how Breininger and al-Malla met, or how their connections to the Saarland Cell or the IJU came about. According to German federal

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<sup>89</sup> "Authorities Fear German Islamist About to Commit Suicide", *Der Spiegel*, 16 June 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,559707,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>90</sup> Matthias Gebauer and Yassin Musharbash, "German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video", *Der Spiegel*, 29 April 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,550583,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>91</sup> "Authorities Fear German Islamist About to Commit Suicide", *Der Spiegel*, 16 June 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,559707,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>92</sup> Gebauer and Musharbash, "German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>93</sup> Yassin Musharbash "German Islamist Resurfaces by Video from Afghanistan" in *Der Spiegel*, 22 October 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,585730,00.html> (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>94</sup> Stefan Nicola, "Germany Terrorism Suspects in Afghanistan", *United Press International*, 1 May 2008, [http://www.upi.com/Emerging\\_Threats/2008/05/01/Germany\\_terrorism\\_suspects\\_in\\_Afghanistan/UPI-52671209647348](http://www.upi.com/Emerging_Threats/2008/05/01/Germany_terrorism_suspects_in_Afghanistan/UPI-52671209647348) (accessed 03.07.2008).

<sup>95</sup> Gebauer and Musharbash, "German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>96</sup> "İslami Cihad İttehadi Mücahidleri ile ROPORTAJ", *Şehadet Vakti*, 28 April 2008, [http://www.sehadezamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1914](http://www.sehadezamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1914) (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>97</sup> Musharbash, "German Islamist Resurfaces by Video from Afghanistan", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>98</sup> "German Islamists Suspected of Planning Attack in Afghanistan", *Der Spiegel*, 4 April 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,545410,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

investigators he was arrested by Pakistani secret service agents while trying to cross the border between Iran and Pakistan together with a member of the Saarland Cell in 2007.<sup>99</sup> He was interrogated and detained a few days before he was deported back to Germany. Upon arrival in Germany he soon planned his return to Pakistan.<sup>100</sup> Al-Malla has not been seen, at least not identified, in any of the IJU communiqués nor in any of their videos. According to German investigators al-Malla is considered a leader who dominates the young German convert, and they suspect that a third, undisclosed man may be involved.<sup>101</sup>

According to a “high-ranking German intelligence official” quoted in the *New York Times*, “al-Qaida” has started to recruit people from Europe for use against German targets.<sup>102</sup> It is speculated that the IJU uses the publicity generated by people like Cüneyt Çiftçi and Eric Breininger to recruit new extremists from among frustrated young men in Germany.<sup>103</sup> It is not unlikely that Germans or German interests in Afghanistan will be targeted by Breininger, and he refers to Germany as a target in his statements on *Şehadet Zamani*. Breininger and his travel mate al-Malla were in early April 2008 spotted together in Peshawar, a Pakistani city adjacent to the Afghan border.<sup>104</sup> From Peshawar Breininger sent an email to his family in Germany, in which he said that he would not return to Germany, but would carry out his *final mission* in combat.<sup>105</sup> There are also reports that Breininger, although possibly not al-Malla, have been spotted in the Afghan capital Kabul a few days later.<sup>106</sup> His email combined with his unmasked appearances in IJU propaganda gives the impression that Breininger does not intend to return to Germany, and in fact makes an attack there highly unfeasible.

Two interviews with the presumably Turkish IJU jihadist Ebu Yasir El Turki have been published on the *Şehadet Zamani*-webpage, in April and July 2008. In the first, he points out that one cannot believe the news broadcasted by the “hypocrites”, which he sees as part of the propaganda war.<sup>107</sup> He goes through the living conditions in the camps in, and contrasts it with how things are in Turkey. Although the conditions are simple, he claims that he is more satisfied because he knows

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Matthias Gebauer and Yassin Musharbash, “German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video”, *Der Spiegel*, 29 April 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,550583,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>102</sup> Souad Mekhennet and Michael Moss: “Europeans Get Terror Training Inside Pakistan”, *The New York Times*, 9 September 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/europe/10germany.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/europe/10germany.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&oref=slogin) (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>103</sup> Stefan Nicola, “Germany Terrorism Suspects in Afghanistan”, *United Press International*, 1 May 2008, [http://www.upi.com/Emerging\\_Threats/2008/05/01/Germany\\_terrorism\\_suspects\\_in\\_Afghanistan/UPI-52671209647348](http://www.upi.com/Emerging_Threats/2008/05/01/Germany_terrorism_suspects_in_Afghanistan/UPI-52671209647348) (accessed 03.07.2008).

<sup>104</sup> “German Islamists Suspected of Planning Attack in Afghanistan”, *Der Spiegel*, 4 April 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,545410,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>105</sup> Gebauer and Musharbash, “German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video”, *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> “Ebu Yasir El Türki'den Türkiyeli Kardeşlerine...: İslami Cihad İttihadi Mücahidlerinden Ebu Yasir El Türki Kardeşimiz İle Gerçekleştirdiğimiz Roportajımız”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 14 April 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1907](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1907) (accessed 15.08.2008).

that he is doing a good deed. He then goes on to pleading to the religious community to help them with more money. He states that each fighter only receives the equivalent to \$20 per month.

As regards the goal of the jihad, Ebu Yasir conveys a markedly different message from that of Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih and Seladdin Türki; the goals are not geographically limited, they will continue to fight until the only religion in the world is Islam or until they become martyrs. Whereas the jihad in Afghanistan will end, victory is to enter the Garden of Eden. The fight appears to be a vehicle for becoming a martyr, not of any earthly goals. Rather, his purpose for fighting appears to be a concrete wish to be able to tell God that he has served Him properly.

The topic of the second interview with Ebu Yasir is the Turkish jihadists in Afghanistan.<sup>108</sup> This goes contrary to all that the propaganda effort appears to be aimed at. He launches a scathing attack on Turkish jihadists in general, whom he describes as faint-hearted and easy quitters. He calls them braggarts who come for a holiday rather than a vocation, and that they only come to the fields of jihad to get good stories they can tell back home. Turks, he says, are not very valued in Afghanistan. He estimates that at the time of the interview there were 150 Turkish mujahedin in Afghanistan (presumably including the Pakistani borderlands). According to him, the Turks were the group with the highest number of volunteers after the Taliban government was deposed in 2001/2002, and he estimates there to have been “more than 2000” Turks arriving in this period. Of these, only 50 or 60 have been martyred, and the rest have gone home. Ebu Yasir, who may sound like the leader of the IJU’s Turkish contingent, is frustrated that the Turkish volunteers are not hardier, and that they arrive for what he calls *emotional reasons*, and *private and social problems*, rather than religious persuasion. Without the proper indoctrination (Ebu Yasir calls it “religious education”), it appears as though the Turks return after a few operations. Because they are “too weak”, they cannot deal with their personal problems after they join the jihad either. Of the 17 Turks who arrived in his group the previous year, all had returned to Turkey, although one had to come to Afghanistan again because he faced “safety issues” in Turkey. In his mind, they had all joined jihad to gain social status amongst their friends in Turkey. Apparently, the Turkish mujahedin are not wanted. The underlying message is that the fight is not for glory in this life, but in the next.

According to Ebu Yasir, they ask the newly arrived mujahedin to take a vow to stay at least one year. In the beginning, the jihadists all speak negatively about their home country. Then, they start wanting to go back. The way Ebu Yasir sees it, the problem arises when the jihadists return to Turkey. Instead of saying that they could not make it, they start saying that the commander sent them back to recruit. Using this as a pretext, they then become leaders of small cliques, and their followers then start coming to the jihad by way of smugglers. According to Ebu Yasir, no group wants these Turks and Azerbaijanis who come by their own accord. Ebu Yasir divides the arriving Turks into three categories, saying that there are those who have been influenced by action films such as *Kurtlar Vadisi: Irak*, and who want action and adventures. A second category

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<sup>108</sup> “Mücahid Ebu Yasir El TURKÎ ile Söyleşi.....: İSLAMÎ CİHAD İTTİHADÎ MÜCAHİDLERİNDEN EBU YASİR ET-TÜRKÎ İLE TÜRK MÜCAHİDLER ÜZERİNE SÖYLESİ”, *Şehadet Zamanı*, 23 July 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1942](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1942) (accessed 15.08.2008).

is those who flee to escape various family and social problems. The third includes those who want to show off their “superiority” to their friends from the Quran school. The problem with the Turks, according to Ebu Yasir, is that they grew up in a democratic environment. Therefore they all think of themselves as commanders, and cannot submit to someone else’s command. They will argue and express their opinion on any subject.

This appears to clash with the propaganda profile of the IJU: if the Turkish jihadists are unwanted, why run campaigns obviously directed at Turks? The reasons for releasing such an interview could be many, and it may be that Ebu Yasir tried to hurt the pride of potential recruits so that they will try to prove him wrong, or that he tried to attack specific Turkish jihadists who have returned to Turkey. Taken at face value, the interview vents a deep frustration with what must be considered Ebu Yasir’s own nationals’ contribution to the jihad in Afghanistan.

While preparing for an operation on the 10 September 2008, three, seemingly IJU members, are announced as martyrs. The three were of Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Turkish origin.<sup>109</sup> Between 17 and 20 November 2008, the IJU appears to have been suffering casualties in the US bombing campaign against bases in Waziristan. At least seven IJU members were among the dead, two of whom have been reported as “Antepli”, in other words from the ancient city of Gaziantep in southern Turkey.<sup>110</sup> This gives further indications of a Turkic membership in the organisation, and that there are several Turks playing more anonymous roles. According to Sandee, the Makki Mosque in Zahedan in eastern Iran is an important centre in IJU logistics. It is through here, with the help of a Zahedan resident called Gafur Salimov that the IJU moves persons coming to Mir Ali for training.<sup>111</sup> Zahedan is a town near the border between Pakistani border, and its mountainous geography makes this part of the border difficult to keep under surveillance by security forces. Among the people who came through here were members of the Saarland Cell.

## 4 Operations

### 4.1 In Afghanistan

The IJU majority of operations officially announced by the IJU are “conventional” guerilla attacks against American and Afghan National Army (ANA) bases and convoys inside Afghanistan.<sup>112</sup> Although it is probably not possible to create a complete list of IJU attacks using

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<sup>109</sup> “İslami Cihad İttidahi Şehitlerimiz...”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 10 September, 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1984](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1984) (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>110</sup> “Şehitler Kervanına Yeni Yiğitler Katıldı...”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 20 November, 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=2009](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2009) (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>111</sup> Ronald Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, The NEFA Foundation, 14 October 2008, p. 11

<sup>112</sup> Some of the attacks announced:

“İslami Cihad İttidahi Operasyonları...”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 28 June, 2007

[http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1356](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1356) (Accessed: 02.09.2008);

“İslami Cihad İttidahi Operasyonları...”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 29 April, 2008

[www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detayced3.html?haber\\_id=1916](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayced3.html?haber_id=1916) (Accessed: 26.06.2008);

“İslami Cihad İttidahi Mayıs Ayı Opr...” *Şehadet Vakti*, 23 May, 2008

open sources, the IJU appears to be hungry for attention, and are therefore likely to publish most of their attacks. The pattern indicates that the IJU sends fighters on campaigns into Afghanistan carrying out series of attacks followed by lull of several weeks. Nearly all the attacks claimed by the IJU have been in concert with either the Taliban or Al-Qaida.<sup>113</sup> The conventional attacks are made in the provinces Paktia and Paktika, both of which border the Pakistan province of North Waziristan, where the IJU has its base. These areas also correspond to Haqqani's power base.

Considering the lull in their operations lasting weeks or months, it is likely that the IJU does not have a permanent presence in Afghanistan, but that they are making brief excursions. Whether these excursions are made together with Taliban soldiers based in Pakistan, or they link up at a meeting point in Afghanistan is not possible to deduce from the given sources. The fact that the IJU never claim to act alone may indicate that the IJU either lacks capacity or authority to launch its own operations.

None of the officially announced targets for the conventional attacks have any relation to Uzbekistan or Uzbeks, nor has the IJU claimed responsibility for any attack on German contingent of the ISAF forces or interests in Afghanistan. This could quite simply be for geographic reasons, as Uzbekistan is rather difficult to attack from Pakistan's tribal areas, and the German troops are stationed in the north of Afghanistan, far from the IJU's regular area of operations.

## 4.2 Suicide Bombers

Although the IJU frequently mentions its martyr brigades in communiqués and interviews, it has only claimed responsibility for three suicide bombings since the 2004 attacks in Uzbekistan. All of them have been carried out by non-Uzbeks. On 3 March 2008 a 28 year old Turkish man from Germany, Cüneyt Çiftçi, carried out a suicide attack on an American base in the Sabari district of Khost province in Afghanistan. After the explosion, which left dozens of American soldiers trapped under the rubble, fighters armed with AK47s tried to storm the facilities, but were fought back by the US soldiers.<sup>114</sup> According to Western sources, two American soldiers and two ANA

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[www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detay072a.html?haber\\_id=1918](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay072a.html?haber_id=1918) (accessed 26.02.2008);

"İslami Cihad İttihadi Operasyonları...", *Şehadet Vakti*, 06 June, 2008

[www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detayb532.html?haber\\_id=1925](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb532.html?haber_id=1925) (accessed 26.02.2008);

"İslami Cihad İttihadi Operasyonları", *Şehadet Zamani*, 4 August, 2008

[http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1950](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1950) (accessed 11.08.2008);

"İslami Cihad İttihadi 17 Ağustos Operasyonları...", *Şehadet Zamani*, 21 August 2008

[http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1970](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1970) (accessed 02.09.2008);

"İslami Cihad İttihadi Operasyonları...", *Şehadet Zamani*, 25 August, 2008

[http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1972](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1972) (accessed 02.09.2008);

"İslami Cihad İttihadi OPERASYONLARI", *Şehadet Zamani*, 7 October, 2008,

[http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=2000](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2000) (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>113</sup> Except: "Britanya İşgal Güçlerinin Üssüne Havan Saldırısı", *Şehadet Zamani*, 3 January 2008,

[http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1814](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1814) (accessed 02.09.2008).

<sup>114</sup> Gebauer, Musharbash and Stark, "Berlin's Worst Nightmare...", *Der Spiegel*.

soldiers were killed in the attack.<sup>115</sup> This is far lower than the death toll given in the video released on the *Şehadet Zamanı* website.

Çiftçi, who lived in the Bavarian town of Ansbach, is the first known suicide bomber from Germany. He was a known Islamist while he lived in Germany, and considered dangerous by German authorities since the arrests of the Saarland Cell in 2007.<sup>116</sup> However, by the time of the Saarland arrests, Çiftçi had left the country, taking his wife and two children with him. Having worked as a clerk in a German municipality, he took the somewhat unusual step of notifying the registrar's office that he was leaving.<sup>117</sup>

On 31 May 2008 a man who went by the *nom de guerre* Said Kurdi attacked an unspecified target in the fourth district of Jalalabad at noon using a Suzuki vehicle with an alleged one tonne of explosives. According to the communiqué issued by the IJU, two Hummers were completely destroyed and the "Crusader-occupiers" were faced with mangled corpses and heads severed from their bodies.<sup>118</sup> Reports in Western press tell of a suicide bombing in Jalalabad that day, but it appears unclear whether one or two ISAF troops were killed in the attack.<sup>119</sup>

On 4 June 2008 Hasan Alpfidan (*nom de guerre* Abu Müslim Kurdi) attacked the centre of Zaşi Meydan Ulus Vali and the Afghan Intelligence in the province of Khost at 11.30 using a black Toyota jeep allegedly loaded with one tonne of explosives. According to the IJU, the explosion "totally destroyed" the Afghan Intelligence Centre and the Ulus Vali. In addition more than 100 "Crusader-occupant" soldiers and Afghan functionaries were killed. 60 more were taken to hospital, many severely injured.<sup>120</sup> In reality, it is doubtful that the damage was on such a large scale. The IJU has not released any footage supporting their claims, and no casualties have been reported in the press.<sup>121</sup> The name Kurdi indicates that the man was a Kurd, and since he speaks Turkish in a video in which he appears together with Eric Breininger, one may reasonably conclude that his family is from Turkey. Whether he himself grew up in Germany, Turkey or any other place, is difficult to tell.

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> "Said KURDI'den İstihadi Operasyon" *Şehadet Vakti*, 06 June 2008  
[www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detayb5ad.html?haber\\_id=1923](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb5ad.html?haber_id=1923) (Accessed: 26.06.2008).

<sup>119</sup> "Suicide Bombers Target Military Convoy in Eastern Afghanistan", *VOA News*, 31 May 2008,  
<http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2008-05/2008-05-31-voa13.cfm?CFID=34099989&CFTOKEN=32773792>, (accessed 01.09.2008);  
*iCasualties: Operation Enduring Freedom: Fatality Details*, <http://icasualties.org/OEF/Afghanistan.aspx> (accessed 01.09.2008).

<sup>120</sup> "Abu MUSLİM Kurdi den İstihadi Operasyon...", *Şehadet Vakti*, 06 June 2008  
[www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detayb42b.html?haber\\_id=1924](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb42b.html?haber_id=1924) (Accessed: 26.06.2008).

<sup>121</sup> According to website monitoring NATO casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq, there were no NATO deaths in Afghanistan on that date. Nor were there any corresponding deaths the day after. *iCasualties: Operation Enduring Freedom: Fatality Details*, <http://icasualties.org/OEF/Afghanistan.aspx> (accessed 01.09.2008)

In addition to these three, there may have been one in the planning in 2007. In the middle of that year a 28 year old Russian convert from Siberia, André Vladimirovich Bataloff, was arrested at a checkpoint in Gardez, Afghanistan.<sup>122</sup> He was riding in a truck carrying around 500 kg of explosives, and Afghan and American officials suspect him to be an intended suicide bomber.<sup>123</sup> Bataloff says he went to Mir Ali in North Waziristan to learn more about his new faith. This is incidentally the same town where IJU runs a training camp, but Bataloff denies having met any militants. According to his American interrogators he had admitted to having attended a training camp there.<sup>124</sup> He claimed he had been forced to do so by local militants, after having been met by a Russian-speaking guide.<sup>125</sup> The area of operation, the place of training, the presence of Russian-speakers and the similarity to Cüneyt Çiftçi's attack bears no evidence to contradict the involvement of the IJU. Nor can it be confirmed.

On 21 November 2008 the Azerbaijani jihadist Ebu Ömer Lezgi carried out a suicide attack against the Dvam district of Khost province in Afghanistan. This was done with what must have been a truck, as the report claims the attack was carried out with three tonnes of explosives. According to the report published by the Şehadet Zamani more than 100 enemies of Islam were killed and the Town Hall was completely destroyed.<sup>126</sup> However, no reports of such death tolls have found their way to Western newspapers. Although it is made clear that Ebu Ömer Lezgi was an IJU member, the operation appears to have been carried out in cooperation with Taliban. The only matching attack was carried out "in Khost", at the gates of a government building on the 20 November. In this, three Afghans died and two American soldiers were wounded.<sup>127</sup>

### 4.3 In Europe

The only known attempt by the IJU to set up an international terrorist network outside Central Asia is the Saarland Cell.<sup>128</sup> On 4 September 2007 police arrested three people in a vacation house in Oberschledorn in Westphalia, allegedly involved in plans of the deadliest attack in post-

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<sup>122</sup> David Rohde, "Foreign Fighters with Harshers Bent Bolster Taliban", *The New York Times*, 30 October 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/30/world/asia/30afghan.html?\\_r=1&ref=todayspaper&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/30/world/asia/30afghan.html?_r=1&ref=todayspaper&oref=slogin) (accessed 22.07.2008).

<sup>123</sup> The IJU has carried out several attacks in Gardez during the last years. Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> "İslami Cihad İttihadi Operasyon Raporu...", *Şehadet Zamani*, 4 December, 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=2013](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=2013) (accessed 31.12.2008)

<sup>127</sup> "Regional Command East," *Afghanistan Update: November 2008*, [http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?documentid=4426&programID=39&from\\_page=../friendlyversion/printversion.cfm](http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?documentid=4426&programID=39&from_page=../friendlyversion/printversion.cfm) (accessed 31.12.2008).

<sup>128</sup> For more information, see: Petter Nesser, "Jihadisten Fritz: En analyse av terrorkomplottet som ble avslørt i Tyskland i september 2007". Speech held at *Konsortium for forskning på terrorisme og internasjonal kriminalitet*, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), 31. oktober 2007, [http://www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00101/Jihadisten\\_Fritz\\_101556a.pdf](http://www.mil.no/multimedia/archive/00101/Jihadisten_Fritz_101556a.pdf) (accessed 29.08.2008) or Petter Nesser, "Lessons Learned from the September 2007 German Terrorist Plot", *CTC Sentinel* 1, no.4, (2008), <http://ctc.usma.edu/sentinel/CTCSentinel-Vol1Iss4.pdf> (accessed 29.08.2008).

war German history.<sup>129</sup> Police found 45 military grade detonators, along with 750 litres of hydrogen peroxide. The plot was to build three bombs consisting of up to 250 kg of explosives and attack the U.S. Air Force base at Ramstein, as well as the Uzbek and American Consulates.<sup>130</sup>

German authorities had been tipped off by the CIA nearly a year earlier, and had commenced a surveillance operation resulting in the investigation of at least 45 people.<sup>131</sup> The three arrested in Saarland were two German converts, Daniel Schneider (21-years-old) and Fritz Gelowicz (28-years-old), and one Turk resident in Germany, Adem Yılmaz (28-years-old).

The leader of the group, Fritz Gelowicz, was a man with a regular middle class background from Ulm in Baden-Württemberg. He is said to have converted to Islam sometime between the ages of 15 and 18.<sup>132</sup> After his conversion he started spending a lot of time at the Multi-Kultur-Haus (MKH) in Ulm, where he was radicalised by the Egyptian militant Islamist Yehiya Yousif.<sup>133</sup> This has been a centre for militant Islamism in southern Germany, which has attracted attention beyond the rank-and-file youth of German Islamism. Mohammed Atta supposedly visited the Neu-Ulm mosque before he led the 9/11 hijackings, and became an inspiration for the MKH scene.<sup>134</sup> Another man with ties to the MKH, named Reda Seyam, allegedly financed of the Bali bombing.<sup>135</sup>

A fourth group member, the Turk Attila Selek, was arrested in Turkey two months after the three others. He had met Fritz Gelowicz at the MKH in his hometown Ulm in 2004, where they became Yousif's "footsoldiers".<sup>136</sup> In December 2004 they caught the attention of the police when they were seen at 1 a.m. on a snowy night burning a book in front of a factory. This sparked a major raid against the Multi-Kultur-Haus in early 2005, which ended with it being closed.<sup>137</sup> Yousif has now fled the country. In March 2006 Gelowicz and his two closest accomplices reportedly spent

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<sup>129</sup> Simone Kaiser, Marcel Rosenbach and Holger Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH: How the CIA Helped Germany Foil Terror Plot", *Der Spiegel*, 10 September 2007

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,504837,00.html> (accessed 30.06.2008).

<sup>130</sup> Gebauer and Musharbash, "German Islamist Appears in New Jihad Video", *Der Spiegel* and "İslami Cihad İTTEHADİ Basın Açıklaması", *Şehadet Vakti*, 11 September 2007,

[http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1587](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1587) (accessed 27.06.2008).

<sup>131</sup> Kaiser, Rosenbach and Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH...", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>132</sup> Nicholas Kulish and Souad Mekhennet, "In Plot Suspect, Germany Sees Familiar Face", *The New York Times*, 7 September 2007,

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/07/world/europe/07fritz.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/07/world/europe/07fritz.html?_r=2&oref=slogin&oref=slogin) (accessed 16.07.2008).

<sup>133</sup> Holger Stark, "Suspect in German Bomb Plot Tells His Story", *Der Spiegel*, 15 November 2007,

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,517609,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>134</sup> Roger Boyes, "German terror suspect 'met 9/11 hijacker'", *The Times*, 7 September 2007,

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article2407656.ece> (16.07.2008).

<sup>135</sup> John Crewdson and Viola Gienger. "2 firms linked to Al Qaeda, Saudi intelligence agency", *Chicago Tribune*, 31 March 2004 <http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-0403310198mar31,1,4214947.story?coll=chi-newsnationworld-hed> (accessed 16.07.2008)

<sup>136</sup> Stark, "Suspect in German Bomb Plot Tells His Story", *Der Spiegel* and Kaiser, Rosenbach and Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH...", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>137</sup> Stark, "Suspect in German Bomb Plot Tells His Story", *Der Spiegel*.

time in a training camp belonging to the IJU in Pakistan's tribal areas.<sup>138</sup> In the summer of 2005 Gelowicz attended a language course in the Syrian capital Damascus, and from there he travelled secretly to Pakistan in March 2006 to attend an IJU training camp.<sup>139</sup> In the camp, he is believed to have formed a close relationship with the leadership of the IJU.<sup>140</sup> Selek travelled to Damascus at the same time as Gelowicz, and German investigators believe the core of the cell formed while they were there.<sup>141</sup> A further suspect, a Turk named Zafer Zari, from Saarland in Germany, also went to a camp in Waziristan during the summer 2006, after attending a language school in Syria.<sup>142</sup> As many of the mails between the group and its leaders in Pakistan are signed by "Zafer", he has been suspected of being involved in communication between the IJU and the Saarland Cell.<sup>143</sup>

One of the three arrested in Germany, Adem Yilmaz, was employed in the security division of the German rail operator Deutsche Bahn from 1997 to 2002. For a while he had been working at the railway station of Frankfurt airport, which has led to speculation that this airport would be a target for the group.<sup>144</sup> German authorities believe Yilmaz helped others in arranging trips to "hot fronts of jihad", and that he kept contact with the IJU leadership, as devout Muslims kept disappearing from his hometown Langen and turning up in Pakistan.<sup>145</sup>

The chemical the group intended to use in their bombs, hydrogen peroxide, is readily available in low concentrations. A similar chemical was used by the London bombers and by a number of al-Qaida-affiliated terrorists worldwide. The hydrogen peroxide the Saarland Cell was able to get hold of was of 35% concentration, too weak for bomb-making. To make it potent, they "enriched" it by adding starch.<sup>146</sup> Theoretically it could have created an explosive force equivalent to 500 kilograms of TNT.<sup>147</sup>

On the wiretaps listened to by the police, targets such as airports, American barracks and nightclubs were discussed.<sup>148</sup> Federal police appear to have had the group under control and waited for the right moment to move in, but two local police officers hastened the raid by intervening unwittingly. While stopping Gelowicz, Yilmaz and Schneider for irregular use of headlights, local police officers exclaimed loudly "Oh, they're on the BKA [federal police] list!"

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<sup>138</sup> Nesser, "Lessons Learned from the September 2007 German Terrorist Plot", *CTC Sentinel*.

<sup>139</sup> Stark, "Suspect in German Bomb Plot Tells His Story", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>140</sup> Souad Mekhennet and Michael Moss, "Europeans Get Terror Training Inside Pakistan", *The New York Times*, 9 September 2007, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/europe/10germany.html?\\_r=2&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/world/europe/10germany.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print&oref=slogin&oref=slogin) (accessed 08.07.2008).

<sup>141</sup> Kaiser, Rosenbach and Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH...", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>142</sup> Mekhennet and Moss, "Europeans Get Terror Training Inside Pakistan" *The New York Times*.

<sup>143</sup> Kaiser, Rosenbach and Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH...", *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>144</sup> "Terror Suspect Worked at Frankfurt Airport", *Der Spiegel*, 17 September 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,506190,00.html> (accessed 15.07.2008)

<sup>145</sup> Kaiser, Rosenbach and Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH..." *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>147</sup> Nesser, "Lessons Learned from the September 2007 German Terrorist Plot", *CTC Sentinel*.

<sup>148</sup> Kaiser, Rosenbach and Stark, "OPERATION ALBERICH...", *Der Spiegel*.

This was in fact so loud that it could be heard by the agents listening to the wire tap they had placed in the car, and federal police moved in.<sup>149</sup>

The detonators for the planned attack were smuggled from Istanbul, in the soles of a pair of shoes, by a 15 year old German-Tunisian, referred to as “Aladin T.”<sup>150</sup> German investigators believe this was the work of Attila Selek.<sup>151</sup> The detonators were from Syrian stocks, and getting hold of such military grade equipment requires connections with quite powerful networks. This indicates that either the IJU or Selek personally had connections with terrorist groups in Turkey.

Determining whose idea the attack was would give an important clue as to the ambitions of the IJU. Apart from the training and possibly the connections necessary for getting detonators, there are indications that the IJU gave direct orders from Pakistan via email correspondence. During the last days of August 2007 the group was contacted by a person using the pseudonym “Jaf”, whom investigators believe to be a member of the IJU.<sup>152</sup> In a message sent from Iran, he urged that the “test” should be “taken” soon. On 24 August Adem Yilmaz told Gelowicz that “The boss thinks we have to do this thing within 15 days, otherwise we have to go back.”<sup>153</sup> This pressure from above, gives indication that this was not a “leaderless jihad” as described by Marc Sageman<sup>154</sup>, but rather an integrated effort between the IJU and the Saarland Cell.

## 5 Ideology and Identity

One way of classifying Islamist groups is according to their rationale – their mid-term political aims and strategies.<sup>155</sup> Thomas Hegghammer offers a comprehensive model for classifying Islamist groups based on their rationales for mobilising to action. The typology is based on five rationales, only two of which are relevant for the groups described here: “state-oriented”, “Umma-oriented”. State-oriented Islamism seeks to change the character and organisation of the state while Umma-oriented Islamism is characterised by the desire to protect the Islamic community as a whole from external threats. State-oriented Islamism has its violent manifestation as socio-revolutionary activism, an example of which would be Egyptian Islamic Jihad.<sup>156</sup> Umma-oriented violent Islamism comes in two forms, called classical jihadism and global jihadism. While the former is directed at defending Muslim countries under occupation or foreign rule, the latter is focused on fighting the “Crusaders” wherever they can be found, unrestrained by

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Marcel Rosenbach and Holger Stark, “Teenager Smuggled Bomb Plot Detonators to Germany”, *Der Spiegel*, 8 October 2007, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,510010,00.html> (accessed 16.07.2008).

<sup>151</sup> Stark, “Suspect in German Bomb Plot Tells His Story”, *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>152</sup> Rosenbach and Stark, “Teenager Smuggled Bomb Plot Detonators to Germany”, *Der Spiegel*.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Marc Sageman, *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

<sup>155</sup> Thomas Hegghammer, “Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism” in Roel Meijer (ed), *Global Salafism*, (London/New York: Hurst/Columbia University Press, 2009), 14-15.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 16.

geographical boundaries. The former is exemplified as Arabs going to Chechnya or Afghanistan to fight the invaders there. The latter is typical for operations by terrorist cells taking the fight to the West, such as al-Qaida.<sup>157</sup>

As these are all analytical types, few groups fit squarely into one category but are a mix of several. The IMU and its earlier incarnations went from having a state-oriented and morality-oriented rationale in their early days, to becoming a more classical jihadist group when they fought alongside the Taliban. As global jihadism gained an ideological foothold within the IMU, this part appears to have broken off to form the IJU. The IJU maintains Uzbekistan as a central part of its ideology, but the West plays a much greater role in its imagery than it does in IMU's. The IJU seldom mentions the presence of Christian U.S. soldiers in Saudi Arabia, the situation in Palestine, or the apostate rulers in the Middle East – areas often focused upon by the al-Qaida. Turkey, which one might reasonably have assumed to figure prominently on its Turkish-language website, is also hardly ever mentioned in IJU communication.

Rather than delivering a well-coordinated message to the outside world, the IJU communicates its ideology through a smatter of voices. These are given outlet through the IJU website *Şehadet Zamani*,<sup>158</sup> which plays a central role in how the group spreads its message. The website and the IJU appear to be symbiotic, although it is difficult to establish whether its administrator is part of the IJU.<sup>159</sup> Various personalities associated with the group appear from time to time in interviews, or the website posts official communiqués issued by the group. The leadership as well as high-profile foreign members of the group have been interviewed, but do not give a consistent message. There appears to be a lag between the date of the communiqués of the IJU and the date when they are published on the website. This may indicate that the person(s) running the website is located in a different place than the IJU, or that the group wants to give such an impression. The website appears not to speak *on behalf of* IJU, but rather relaying its message. Although the site relays other jihadist news, they only have special access to news directly pertaining to the IJU. The media groups Elif Media and Bedr-i Tevhid, which produce the videos released by the IJU, are also part of the same propaganda effort. As video footage requires physically going to see the IJU it differs from the task of making a website, and the people making the videos are likely to be closely affiliated with or part of the group.

The IJU communicates its ideology through its target selection as well as through written statements released online. When looking at its choice of targets it is difficult to decide whether to call it a socio-revolutionary or a global jihadist group. Of the 2004 Tashkent attacks, four were against Uzbek targets and two were against “far enemy”-targets – the American and Israeli Embassies. The plot in Saarland conveys a similarly mixed message – the intended targets of the plot were the American and Uzbek Consulates, as well as the American Air Force base at

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Until the end of June 2008, it went by the name *Şehadet Vakti* ([www.sehadetvakti.com](http://www.sehadetvakti.com)) and was hosted in Turkey. After it was closed down, it reappeared as *Şehadet Zamani* ([www.sehadetzamani.com](http://www.sehadetzamani.com)) and is hosted in Germany. The names are synonymous and mean “time for martyrdom”.

<sup>159</sup> Early postings relate more to Chechnya and Iraq, and there is little indication that the website at that point had the privilege of being the main outlet for propaganda and news from any specific group.

Rammstein. The IJU targets both near and the far enemy, and this has happened both at “home” and in the West. The IMU has by contrast never targeted “far enemy”-targets, except once taking a group of Japanese geologists’ hostage. And it never took the fight outside its core areas. IJU target selection in Pakistan and Afghanistan also delivers a mixed message. Most of their efforts seem to go into “conventional” guerrilla fighting in Afghanistan. In this, they target both Afghan and American soldiers. However, it may not be possible to target only Americans. It has also been involved in fighting with Pakistani security forces, the government of whom they decry as apostates. It may be that the IJU only has a limited role in choosing targets. As they are enjoying the hospitality of Haqqani in North Waziristan, they may be obliged to conduct or partake in operations decided by Haqqani. This way they may have been drawn into a conflict they have little ideological motivation for. The material situation in Pakistan’s tribal areas may override the ideological foundations of the IJU, and the selection of targets may not be a valid guide to IJU’s rationale for fighting.

Ronald Sandee argues that there was a change of strategy in 2005, from an “Uzbekistan-first” strategy to a more globally oriented one.<sup>160</sup> It may be that the shift away from the “Uzbekistan first”-strategy, which Sandee claims they were pursuing up until then, also took them away from explicitly “far enemy” targets, as these are more clearly identifiable in Uzbekistan than in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, almost any “far enemy” target is also simultaneously a representative for the occupation. However, if there is a shift from being a sociorevolutionary to a global jihadist organisation, their target selection makes even less sense as a means of classification.

In an IJU video the Turkish suicide bomber Cüneyt Çiftçi uses the analogy of five families living in houses next to one another, without having any contact. When one of the houses catches fire, the others have to help, to save their own houses. So it is with the Muslim countries in the world. If fire breaks out in one of them, the inhabitants of the others are forced to take part in order to rescue themselves.<sup>161</sup> This is an obvious reference to an internationalist perspective on the jihadi struggle.

On the website which functions as IJU’s propaganda outlet, there has been little or no mention of the Turkish state or Kemalism, its secular ideology, nor has there been much attention devoted to developments in Turkey. One thing that has been mentioned is the attack on the US Consulate in Istanbul on the 9 July 2008, where three Turkish police officers and three attackers died in a gunfight. The IJU states that the attack had nothing to do with them, but that they followed closely the campaign of torture which they claim have resulted from the attack. They go on to state that their goals are to first rid “our own areas” – presumably the Muslim world – and then the whole world of Jewish and Christian infidels, then establish a rule of the Sharia laws.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Sandee, *The Islamic Jihad Union (IJU)*, NEFA Foundation Special Report.

<sup>161</sup> “Saad Ebu Furkan ve Abu Muslim'in Vasiyetleri.....”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 28 April 2008, [www.sehadetvakti.com/media/video/ici/vasiyet.wmv](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/media/video/ici/vasiyet.wmv) (accessed 26.06.2008).

<sup>162</sup> “İslami Cihat Ittehadı Basın AÇIKLAMASI”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 20 July 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1931](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1931) (accessed 21.07.2008).

While the communiqué appears to have been prompted by events in Turkey, it did not directly involve Turkey other than that the group expressed concern for the welfare of the Muslims who had been tortured in the wake of the attack.

In an interview with the German IJU militant Eric Breininger the question “Why must Germany count on attacks from Islamic organisations?” is posed. Eric Breininger answers that Germany is taking part in the war that takes place in Afghanistan, and that they have built a base in Tirmiz in Uzbekistan. Furthermore, they help the Americans by allowing them to use bases in Germany from which they pursue their war on the Muslims. As long as this is the case, Germany and all other occupying powers must count on being attacked, he says. When asked about the financial status of the group, he says that they have a shortage of money but that recruits keep coming in and that their training is going well.<sup>163</sup> Breininger also claims that the group has assembled a group volunteers ready for martyrdom operations.

The leader of the IJU, Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih, says in a Şehadet Zamani interview that the group was established for the purpose of conducting jihad operations against the Karimov administration in Uzbekistan. It is the liberation of the Muslims of Uzbekistan from cruelty and tyranny which is the goal of the organisation.<sup>164</sup> This indicates an Uzbekistan-centred ideology, rather than a commitment to global jihad. This message is blurred however as he goes on to say that the group itself consists of mujahedin from all over the world, and that it does not operate on the basis of any tribe or nation. Fatih mentions that they are working together with Caucasian mujahedin who have common targets, but does not elaborate on who this may refer to. As the group continues to attack Afghan and American targets in Afghanistan rather than ones related to Karimov or Uzbekistan, there appears not to be a consistency between word and deed. In addition, one may wonder how many of these “mujahedin from all over the world” joined the group to fight Karimov. It is notable that while attacking ANA soldiers, the IJU makes no mention of the Karzai regime in any of their statements. The only tangentially relevant references are to the “accomplices of the Crusaders”, which occur frequently.

In a statement to “the Turkish mujahedin”, by a jihadist with the nom de guerre Selhaddin Türki – presumably a Turk – is utterly devoid of any reference to nation states. Neither Turkey nor Uzbekistan, nor the US for that matter, is mentioned by Selhaddin. The only identification of an enemy is the “Crusader-Sionists” and the “Occupant Crusader army and its comrades”. Selhaddin notes that the occupation of the Ummah is nothing new, and that the goal of the “Crusader-Zionists” is to crush the Ummah completely. He says that their leader is Ebu Yahya Muhammed Fatih, and that under his command together with the military council their operations were proceeding successfully. While the “Crusader army and its accomplices” are losing morale, they

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<sup>163</sup> “Abdulgaffar El Almani İle Röportaj... [sic]”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 23 May 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1921](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1921) (accessed 15.07.2008).

<sup>164</sup> “İslami Cihad İttihadi ile Röportaj...: İSLAMİ CİHAD İTTEHADİ Emiri EBU YAHYA MUHAMMED FATİH ile Röportajımız”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 31 May 2007, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1202](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1202) (accessed 15.08.2008).

(the IJU) are gaining strength and morale.<sup>165</sup> Altogether the statement is devoid of ideological finesse and reflection.

When the Saarland plot was exposed the IJU claimed responsibility for it in a communiqué posted on the usual website, explaining the reasons for the attempted attack.<sup>166</sup> They claim that the group was preparing attacks against the American Rammstein Base airbase and the Uzbek and U.S. Consulates in Germany. Exactly which of the consulates they were referring to is uncertain. As the reason for attacking American and Uzbek targets they point to the leading role these two countries play in the policy of “cruelty to Muslims”. It also appears that the attack was somehow intended to motivate the Germans to pull out of their base in Termiz, Uzbekistan. The statement also contains the unusual statement that if the infidels will not agree to peace, we will fulfill our obligation and put an end to their crimes – “True victory is the safety of the faithful”.<sup>167</sup>

The website associated with the group carries much Pakistan-related news, but hardly any from Palestine. Even jihadist struggles such as Somalia and Chechnya feature more prominently than Palestine. The presence of Christian troops on the Arab peninsula, often mentioned in Osama bin Laden’s early statements as a reason to fight, is entirely absent from IJU propaganda. This could indicate that the group is out of step with the wider globalist jihadist scene, but may also be due to lack of ideological refinement.

It appears to be important for the group to be identified as a group separate from the rest of the jihadist landscape. The first thing one notices when entering the group’s website is a *nasheed*, a religious hymn, going “we are the mujahedin who founded the Islamic Jihad Union...” The IJU uses many of its press releases to implicitly contrast itself vis-à-vis al-Qaida and Taliban. In always mentioning the Taliban and al-Qaida as partners in their attacks, the group makes a strong semantic distinction between the three entities. In a communiqué released on 1 September 2008, announcing that five brothers had become martyrs in an American air attack, a clear distinction was made between martyrs belonging to al-Qaida and those belonging to the IJU, who were from the IJU, even though they refer to Taliban and al-Qaida as “brothers”.<sup>168</sup>

It is also worthy of notice that the group appears not to be fully integrated into the lingo of the jihadi community. References are often made to “suicide operations”<sup>169</sup>, which is unheard of among other groups who refer to them as “martyrdom operations”. This may indicate that either the group or possibly the person responsible for the website is not thoroughly familiar with jihadi discourse and not fully socialised into the wider jihadi world.

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<sup>165</sup> “Selahaddin Türki’den Türk Mücahidlere”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 10 June 2008, [http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1926](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1926) (accessed 26.06.2008).

<sup>166</sup> “İslami Cihad İTTEHADİ Basın Açıklaması”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 11 September 2007, [http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1587](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1587) (accessed 27.06.2008).

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> “Afganistan'da 5 Kardeşimiz ŞEHİD İnş.”, *Şehadet Zamanı*, 1 September 2008, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1976](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1976) (accessed 01.09.2008).

<sup>169</sup> See e.g. “Said KURDI'den İstihadi Operasyon”, *Şehadet Vakti*, 06 June 2008 [www.sehadetvakti.com/haber\\_detayb5ad.html?haber\\_id=1923](http://www.sehadetvakti.com/haber_detayb5ad.html?haber_id=1923) (Accessed: 26.06.2008).

The Turkish used on the *Şehadet Zamani* website is quite poor. Indeed it is so poor that in one interview, probably originally conducted in Uzbek, a bizarre grammatical error is made so that the hated Uzbek President Islam Karimov is implicitly referred to as God.<sup>170</sup> In addition, the group's name as it is rendered in Turkish, *İslami Cihad İttihadi*, has at least two curiosities in it, which may indicate only rudimentary knowledge of Turkish. Using the Arabic-derived word for union – *İttihad* – which is no longer in use in Turkish, indicates a wish to connect with the bygone era of the Islamic Ottoman Empire. However, it also relates to the mystical union with God, an important part of Turkish religious life. This particular meaning is not encompassed in the neologism *birlik*, which merely means secular union. There is also the possibility that the group may not even be aware of all the implications, and has chosen it because it travels between the Turkic languages better than *birlik*.

The French scholar Didier Chaudet has argued that the differences between IMU and the IJU largely revolved around issues of personal loyalty. Rather than being explicitly about ideology, Chaudet thinks this is a case of organisational bickering that has since been legitimised by reference to ideology, and points to similarities in the two organisations' approach to global jihadism.<sup>171</sup> Still, it is difficult to ignore the difference in the two groups' target selection strategies and levels of activity, which undoubtedly signify different ideological approaches by the IMU and the IJU.

## 6 A Turkic al-Qaida?

The choice of the targets, especially the Israeli and U.S. Embassies in 2004 and American and Uzbek targets in 2007, give evidence of a globally oriented aspect of ideology of the IJU. IMU, from which the IJU is a break-away, completed many operations in Uzbekistan, but apart from kidnapping Japanese geologists, it hardly ever directed attacks at far-enemy targets. Meanwhile, the propaganda emanating from the IJU website gives a very mixed message. On the one hand, there is much talk of fighting the “Crusader-occupiers” generally, and Germany and the U.S. specifically. On the other, there is only evidence of one attempt to launch attacks in the West, as well as a few attempts at large scale attacks against Western targets in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. The group appears to occasionally give the impression of global aspirations, but its day-to-day operations are of classical jihadist format, launching “conventional” guerrilla attacks on targets in Afghanistan, similar to those of other foreign fighters there.

Although scholars have termed the IJU a “Turkish al-Qaida”, and considers it to be a globally-oriented jihadist group, there is scant evidence that the group's focus lies outside the “hot fronts” of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. It is possible that classified information about the IJU indicate a greater effort and more attempts. However, the fact remains that the IJU has sent at least three of

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<sup>170</sup> “İslami Cihad İttihadi ile Röportaj...: İSLAMİ CİHAD İTTEHADİ Emiri EBU YAHYA MUHAMMED FATİH ile Röportajımız”, *Şehadet Zamani*, 31 May 2007, [http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=1202](http://www.sehadetzamani.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=1202) (accessed 15.08.2008).

<sup>171</sup> Chaudet, “Islamist Terrorim in Greater Central Asia”, *Russie.Nei.Visions*, no.35, 19.

its suicide bombers on missions in Afghanistan, all of whom would presumably have been able to attack in Europe or Western targets in Turkey. Cüneyt Çiftçi had full access to Germany and hence the entire Schengen area. Had the group had global ambitions, one would expect to see more attempts at launching attacks in the West, and in Germany in particular. The amount of Turkish jihadists returning from Afghanistan, as described by the IJU figure Selahaddin Türki, present the group with an excellent opportunity. The IJU could have tried to enlist these returnees, especially when they become leaders of small nuclei of radicalised youths. By making the matter public and denouncing them, he gives the impression that the righteous fight is in Afghanistan and not in Turkey.

Other factors, besides ideological pluralisation within the IMU, may have contributed to the creation of IJU. The change of leadership in 2001 may be one such factor, in that personal loyalty to Namangani may have kept the group together. As the IMU and its predecessors have moved from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan and from there to Afghanistan and Pakistan, it has become increasingly more difficult to attack Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is more than 400km away from their present base in Mir Ali, across Afghanistan with its poor infrastructure and many enemies. It may well be that the IJU, and the IMU for that matter, have little other choice but to continue their fight for the sake of existence. As it seems now, the IJU is fighting for their host Haqqani. To their south, the IMU may be involved in a similar situation, mainly fighting for their host and protector, Baitullah Mehsud, rather than their primary enemy in Uzbekistan.

If one assumes that Steinberg is correct in his assertion that Abu Laith masterminded the Saarland plot, and takes Sirajuddin Haqqani's word that he prefers the foreign fighters to fight in Afghanistan, a pattern emerges. Up until Abu Laith's death there is little information about the group's activities, but there is evidence of one large-scale plot outside Afghanistan. After his death there has not been any. This may indicate a relative increase in Haqqani's sway over the group, and a more Afghanistan-focused strategy.

Although the group may bear the seeds of a Turkic or Turkish global terrorist network, it is too early to apply the label "Turkish al-Qaida". The group may inspire and train Turks and other Turkics something that may result in such a network, but the IJU appears not to take the initiative to create it. Some of the Turkish returnees, even though they have been branded as useless in IJU statements, may still be capable and motivated to create a terrorist network and carry out operations inside Turkey and in Europe.

Links with global jihadism notwithstanding, the message and priorities of the IJU are not clear-cut. Recruitment of Turks and Turkics appear to proceed successfully, but has so far not produced more than one instance of attempted al-Qaida-style attacks. Were they simply implementing Abu Laith's plans and wishes? In the absence of any follow-up to the operation, the IJU may only be implementers of a global jihadist strategy planned from above, and not the actual instigators themselves. It begs the question of whether another liaison with connections and commitment to global jihad could take Abu Laith's place.

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