

The Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies
under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Erlan Karin

**THE SOLDIERS OF THE CALIPHATE:
THE ANATOMY OF A TERRORIST
GROUP**

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The Book of the well-known Kazakhstani political scientist Erlan Karin, “The Soldiers of the Caliphate: the Anatomy of a Terrorist Group”, provides answers to the numerous questions about the Jund al-Khilafah group known from 2011. During research the author was able to systematize not only the available information about the group but also retrieve undisclosed data that has never been published before.

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INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, the sudden emergence of a new mysterious and radical group with a combative and intimidating name, “Soldiers of the Caliphate”, immediately raised numerous questions not only among experts but also among common people. For many of us, the threat of terrorism had always seemed very distant, ghostly, and almost virtual. Perplexity and anxiety were further aggravated by the lack of clear and accessible information from authorities who hadn’t confirmed the fact of the existence of such groups in the beginning. Later, when the reality of the existence of this group was recognized, authorities provided little data, lacking in thorough information regarding the location of the group, its founders and what goals it pursued. For instance, the leaders or representatives of this group were not confirmed as mass media or social networks had named different figures. Many experts, both now and then, have expressed their doubts regarding the existence of this group or its ability to pose a serious threat to the state and the public – and it had certain grounds. Various information and data, which had become known later, was extremely controversial. Even now, it is believed that this group was coined by special services. Also, it is believed that the degree of threat from this group was greatly exaggerated.

This study was undertaken in order to analyze the facts behind the events of Autumn 2011, and find out who was hiding under the masks of the so-called “Soldiers of the Caliphate”. I confess that until the last moment I had many doubts and worries about the rationale not only of the study, but even more about publishing it as a book. This topic is quite specific, and not all conclusions or statements should be disclosed to the public. How-

ever, the author was guided by a simple idea: one of the major goals of terrorism is to spread panic and fear in societies; ignorance and lack of competent analysis are both supporting factors in realizing this aim. This is why I decided to collect this information; systematize and analyze it; and publish it in this book. In other countries, you can find dozens or even hundreds of publications thoroughly scrutinizing similar events: chronicles of the 9/11 tragedy, Bin Laden's biographies, destruction of the Kursk submarine, airplane crashes, and countless others. The main purposes of this work are to update the problems of combating terrorism and warning young people from possible involvement in radical movements.

The study was carried out in several phases. Mass media material was analyzed alongside the files of criminals convicted of "terrorism", including Jund al-Khilafah members. To obtain objective data, not only did we analyze criminal files, but we also had personal meetings with the convicts, their relatives and friends. Eventually, the collected data was used to compile a detailed chronology of the terrorist threat unfolding in Kazakhstan from 2002 to 2013, to classify terrorist groups and to paint the portraits of their leaders, etc. The research of terror threat evolution in Kazakhstan is to be published in a separate issue. Thus, the materials about Jund al-Khilafah have been presented in a separate study. While researching the history of this group, it became clear that collecting materials within Kazakhstan alone is not sufficient. This group, though quite small, was very much international. Its traces lead to numerous places around the world. During the research, trips were undertaken to Afghanistan, Turkey, France, Spain, as well as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Most videos and transcripts of messages broadcast by the group were

examined in the USA, where specialized centers that monitor the activities of different extremist groups collect and store archives with documents of this type.

I would like to convey special thanks to my colleagues and friends, all those who helped me in gathering and analyzing the collected materials – well-known American expert and analyst of the Jamestown Foundation, Jacob Zenn (Washington, USA); CNN security expert, Paul Cruickshank (New York, USA); journalist and writer of the book on the Toulouse terrorist attack, Eric Peltier (Paris, France).

This book summarizes the facts and data on the hierarchy and structure of this terrorist group, its mechanisms of planning and carrying out informational campaigns and its interaction with other structures. It provides analysis of the radical network created in Kazakhstan and the creation of autonomous cells, which were activated later. It separately reviews various international terrorist organizations in the zone of the Afghan-Pakistan border. Additionally, it presents a comparative analysis of the Jund al-Khilafah activities with the same Central Asian structures. I hope this research material will be useful for students, journalists, experts and specialists who are also investigating the contemporary issues of security and combating terrorism in theory and practice.

1. THE SOLDIERS OF THE CALIPHATE: EPISODE ONE

In 2011, Kazakhstan faced direct threats of terrorism for the first time. Throughout the year, various parts of the country witnessed a number of terrorist acts, which later attracted wide public attention. In the beginning, the Kazakhstani authorities and special services refused to acknowledge the events as acts of terrorism and denied the affiliation of individuals arrested or liquidated during raids with terrorist groups. However, a series of various events clearly showed that radical groups have emerged in the country. Below are a few facts

April 2011 – The *Sunkar*, an elite special unit of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, carried out an undercover operation against an extremist group in Almaty. Two suspects were liquidated and eleven Sunkar officers were injured during the raid. The injured leader of the group blew himself up with a hand-grenade when the officers tried to seize him.

May 17 – a suicide bomber, allegedly, from an extremist organization, detonated himself inside the building of the Department of National Security Committee of Aktobe Region.

May 24 – a car was blown up in front of a temporary detention facility of the Department of Committee of Astana. A powerful sheath-less explosive device killed two people in the car.

July 1 – two police officers were killed in the village of Shubarshi in the Temir District of Aktobe region. According to special services, the murder was committed by members of a religious extremist organization. The subsequent operation of searching and blocking the radical group members lasted several days. Two other Special Forces officers were killed during the

search operations. The suspects were found a few days later and were liquidated during the arrest.

July 11 – sixteen inmate prisoners attempted to escape from the AK-159/21 Colony in Balkhash, killing one colony officer and wounding four other officers. During the operation, prisoners blew themselves up. According to unofficial sources, the prisoners who attempted an escape were followers of a radical Islamic movement. A similar incident occurred the previous year. In June 2010, prisoners, allegedly, members of an extremist organization, were also able to escape from the Mangystau Region’s strict regime colony. Mass media and experts immediately noted the high organization and audacity of the escape.

Moreover, part of the escapees refused to surrender voluntarily and blew themselves up when they were found and blocked.

Although enforcement authorities later classified many of the incidents and events as terrorist attacks, experts did not come to a common assessment of the events. Many experts and researchers pointed out that none of the known extremist or terrorist organizations initially claimed the responsibility for these incidents. Some observers described the 2011-2012 attacks as “bizarre”, because “they were not specifically targeted at anyone: there was neither target nor particular organization claiming responsibility”¹.

It is nonetheless fair to point out that the quantitative analysis of terrorist attacks around the world shows that terrorist groups do not always claim responsibility for the attacks they commit. According to the analysis of the Global Terrorism Database conducted by experts at the University of Maryland, ter-

¹ Sultan Khan Akkuly. A year later, the outbreak of terrorism in Kazakhstan was called strange // http://rus.azattyq.org/content/smertnik_terrorizm_makhatov_narmambetov_duvanov/24580222.html

rorists declared their involvement only in 14 percent of 45,000 attacks perpetrated in the world from 1998 to 2013².

Nonetheless, after the terrorist act in Atyrau (when two explosions blasted in November 2011: one in a garbage bin next to the regional administration building and the other classified as a suicide attack in which the bomber died), a previously unknown group called Jund al-Khilafah or “Soldiers of the Caliphate” unexpectedly claimed responsibility for the act. The Soldiers of the Caliphate loudly announced themselves for the first time in October 2011, when they threatened Kazakhstan with violence if the authorities did not cancel The Law about Religion that was under discussion at the time. Initially, the Kazakhstani special services questioned the very existence of this group. For example, the Deputy Head of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, Usser Mizanbaev, when asked by journalists about Soldiers of the Caliphate, commented “... we are investigating whether the group exists or not. There are too many impostors. We can provide the information later”. Regarding the suicide bomber Sultangaliev, who blew himself up in Atyrau, Mizanbaev simply said, “There is no data on his involvement in any religious sect”³. (Albeit, judging by later events, the special services seemed to apportion information intentionally, for the sake of the investigation. Most likely, in August-September 2011 the Kazakhstani special services already possessed the information on this particular group, including the data on when and by whom it was created. Then, they carried out assiduous operations to have it split and destroyed.

² Brian Palmer. Do Terrorists Usually Claim Responsibility for their Attacks? http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/explainer/2014/03/malaysia_airlines_flight_370_do_terrorists_claim_responsibility_for_their.html

³ Tengrinews, 2.11.2011 // http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/knbkazahstana-izuchaet-svedeniya-o-soldatah-halifata-200596/

However, after the Soldiers of the Caliphate claimed responsibility for the Atyrau attack in November 2011, the special services finally admitted their existence. A while later, on the 25th of November 2011 the Court of Atyrau made a decision that this was a terrorist group and its activities were prohibited in the country⁴.

A month later, in December that year, Soldiers of the Caliphate claimed responsibility for the crossfire in Boraldai, a village near Almaty, when members of the radical group were liquidated during the special operation. In their message, the group promised to avenge the death of their fellow combatants, menacing to continue the fight in Kazakhstan. Additionally, they threatened Russia as well. The next news the Soldiers of the Caliphate used to raise their public profile was the Zhanaozen Events that took place in December 2011. Just as in earlier cases, they commented on these well-known events and continued threatening Kazakhstan.

Versions of the origins of this group were different. There were certain opinions that the Soldiers of the Caliphate were possibly a division of the Islamic Movement of Turkestan⁵.

Some experts though, questioned the existence of this group. Thus, for example, Joanna Lillis, an independent journalist and expert on Central Asia, expressed an opinion that the message of the Soldiers of the Caliphate conveyed after the Atyrau terrorist attacks was very strange, as it is was full of mistakes regarding the content of the new Law about Religion discussed at that time in Kazakhstan. Well-known Kazakhstani human rights activist Sergei Duvanov even asserted that the Soldiers of the Ca-

⁴ <http://meta.kz/novosti/kazakhstan/278981-sud-atyrau-priznal-soldatovkhalifata.html>

⁵ “KazTAG” news agency. November 2, 2011.

liphate existed only in the Internet and could be fabricated by the special services⁶.

Here is how the Kyrgyz observers describe their vision concerning the absence of a common opinion among experts on the emergence and intensification causes of the new organization: “Some people believe that the Soldiers of the Caliphate is a subsidiary of the IMU-IPT, associated with Al-Qaeda, Taliban and other similar international groups, having its headquarters at the Afghan-Pakistani border. Others believe that Jund al-Khilafah is a mythologized structure that primarily operates in the context of the Kazakhstani internal power struggle and political dynamics. For instance, on their videos the representatives of the group criticized the policy of Astana. According to the Soldiers the President’s Office Akorda has taken inadequate measures against religious opponents and suppressed their activity by means of special services and the Muftiyat.

Some even think that Kazakhstani opposition was involved in the creation of Jund al-Khilafah, particularly pointing to Mukhtar Ablyazov, an oligarch who is demonized and disfavored in Kazakhstan, and who, for example, harshly criticized the authorities after the Taraz terrorist attacks. However, these suppositions seem to be more speculative, and related to conspiracy theories⁷.

It is not surprising that the statements made on behalf of Jund al-Khilafah group stirred the Kazakhstani society, which had never experienced events of such resonance and emergency. The media headlines illustrated the sentiment of the time:

⁶ Sultan Khan Akkuly. A year later, the outbreak of terrorism in Kazakhstan was called strange // http://rus.azattyq.org/content/smertnik_terrorizm_makhatov_narmambetov_duvanov/24580222.html

⁷ Aty-baty, shli “soldaty”..., Word of Kyrgyzstan, 26.07.2013 <http://slovo.kg/?p=24276>

“Extremists Threaten Kazakhstan with Acts of Violence Because of the Law about Religion”;

“The Soldiers of the Caliphate Threaten Citizens’ Security”;

“The Soldiers of the Caliphate were created by a Kazakh”;

“The Soldiers of the Caliphate Keep Threatening Kazakhstan”;

“Are the Soldiers of the Caliphate Hunting for Nursultan Nazarbayev?”

International fame came to Jund al-Khilafah after they claimed responsibility for the attack in the French city of Toulouse perpetrated in March 2012. However, at that time the French authorities denied that the Toulouse gunman was a member of this group. Although, some materials indicated that Mohammed Merah had certainly participated in trainings at least with members of the Soldiers of the Caliphate⁸.

Later, Soldiers of the Caliphate disappeared from the informational arena and were out of sight for a long time. Although there were more than enough occasions to reappear. This was not the only obscure moment in the life of the Soldiers of the Caliphate.

Firstly, no analytical materials or anti-terrorist reports had mentioned any similar groups before.

Secondly, terrorist activity, especially if regulated from abroad, requires an extensive underground network and significant organizational and material resources. Taking this into consideration, there were significant doubts that a little-known and relatively small organization, allegedly operating outside Kazakhstan, would be able to plan and organize such acts within

⁸ Paul Cruickshank. Investigations shed new light on Toulouse terrorist shootings. <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/13/investigations-shed-newlight-on-toulouse-terrorist-shootings/>

Kazakhstan. Moreover, if this group was indeed involved in arrangement of terrorist attacks, there would be many questions about the effectiveness of the Kazakhstani special services, law enforcement authorities, and an overall state of the national security system.

Thirdly, it is quite interesting that the Soldiers of the Caliphate made their statements in Russian. It would have been more logical if they had recorded their video messages in Arabic or at least in Kazakh.

Fourthly, there is some confusion around the names of the leaders in this organization. According to the information reported by the General Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Autumn 2011, the Soldiers of the Caliphate was created by the citizens of Kazakhstan: Rinat Habidolla, Orynbasar Munatov, Damir Znaliyev and others. Their leader was named Rinat Habidolla. At the same time, a foreign website posted an interview with Ravil Kussaiynov, the alleged leader of the Soldiers of the Caliphate. According to other sources the true leader of Jund al-Khilafah was Moeziddin Garsallaoui, a Belgian of Tunisian origin who was killed by American drone missile strike in October 2012.

The main question of the involvement in planning and perpetrating the 2011-2012 terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan by this group was not answered. Some American researchers believe that the Soldiers of the Caliphate were responsible for at least three terrorist attacks – in Atyrau, Taraz and Almaty, whereas in 2012 their main operation was related to the massacre in France perpetrated by Mohammed Merah⁹. Moreover, following these events, when analyzing the terrorist threat in Central Asia, the Soldiers of the Caliphate were mentioned alongside such terrorist organi-

⁹ Speech by the Jamestown Foundation analyst Jacob Zenn a “paramilitary danger in Eurasia” before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, February 27, 2013.

zations as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Turkestan Islamic Party and Islamic Jihad Union¹⁰.

In December 2012, the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan acknowledged that the Soldiers of the Caliphate posed a real threat to the security of the Kazakhstani citizens. During a meeting of the Committee of International Relations, Defense and Security of the Senate of the Parliament, the Deputy Head of the NSC, Kabdulkarim Abdikazimov, stated, “Considering that a number of Kazakhstani citizens are members of the Soldiers of the Caliphate, and reorientation of them in order to commit terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan, we believe that the threat is real. Another issue is that we need to minimize these threats, prevent this organization from expanding and disorient their activities. This is the direction we are working at the investigation. We must work on this issue as that external threat does exist”¹¹.

In December 2012, the department for public relations and mass media of the State Committee of the National Security of Kyrgyzstan reported that, by the decision of the Pervomaisky District Court in Bishkek dated 24 October 2012, the list of terrorist organizations included Jund al-Khilafah alongside the Kyrgyz group of Jaishul Mahdi.

Later, in April 2014, the Chinese special services also stated that they were worried about the intensification of such organizations as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad, East Turkistan Islamic Movement, as well as the new terrorist organizations, such as the Soldiers of Caliphate and Salafia Movement in Central Asia¹².

¹⁰ Mendikovich N. Post-Soviet allies of the Taliban //Afganistan.ru <http://afghanistan.ru/doc/64205.html>

¹¹ KazTAG, December 4, 2012.

¹² The SCO member states are considering the possibility of establishing the Centre for Combating challenges and threats to security <http://ecrats.org/ru/situation/status/3927>

However, many experts continue questioning the very existence of this group, or at least deny their involvement in the above events, believing that the organization was predominantly virtual. For instance, well-known political scientist and orientalist Alexander Knyazev believes that Jund al-Khilafah sounds more like a myth than a reality, as there was no specific data on it¹³.

Therefore, the questions - who were/are the Soldiers of the Caliphate? Does this group exist nowadays? Did it ever really exist? If so, by whom and for what purpose was it created? In this paper, we will attempt to answer these questions.

¹³ <http://www.avesta.tj/security/25404-terroristicheskie-gruppirovki-naprostorah-sredney-azii-i-kazahstana-ekspertnoe-mnenie.html>

2. VIRTUAL WAR CHRONICLES

In October 2011, Kazakhstani news media agencies announced the existence of Jund al-Khilafah for the first time. A previously unknown group posted a video message addressing the Kazakhstani government on an extremist website demanding the cancellation of the new Law about Religion, which had been adopted that month. The video was dated October 21, but it was first mentioned in headlines on October 26th. The video showed a man wearing a mask who read a message threatening Kazakhstani authorities. Behind the man, in front of black flags with Arabic inscriptions, there were four masked men holding rifles and grenade launchers. The video and reports on a new radical group threatening Kazakhstan literally blew up the mass media. The representatives of the law enforcement authorities were not able to provide any comments promptly and experts were at loss, too. Considering that all of this was happening parallel to other reports on attacks and special operations in different parts of Kazakhstan, the impression of the growing large-scale terrorist threat became more vivid.

Earlier, in May 2011, the Afghani Taliban members disseminated online threats to Kazakhstan, if the government decided to send troops to support the international coalition forces in Afghanistan. The reason was that the Mazhilis (a lower house of the Parliament) of Kazakhstan had recently passed draft law “On Ratification of the Agreement between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on the Participation in Activities of International Security Forces for Security in Afghanistan”. Although the Kazakhstani Ministry of Foreign Affairs explained that the law did not envisage sending any troops,

and only four officers were to be seconded for communication purposes, the Senate (an upper house of the Parliament) later rejected the legislation. Thus, most experts suggested that those messages were interrelated. Besides, some people think that the October video message was the first appearance of the Soldiers of the Caliphate in the wide media space. However, the start of the informational campaign of the Soldiers should be counted from summer 2011.

The Chronology of Public Messages

September 2011

The First Jund al-Khilafah's video



In Shumukh al-Islam Forum, one of Al-Qaeda's informational channels, the video by Minbar Media Project mentioning the Soldiers of the Caliphate for the first time was posted. The video contained the information on a successful attack on an American base located in the province of Khost in the southeast of Afghanistan close to the Pakistani border. The attack happened

on July 2011. The video showed the movement of militants, preparing weapons and launching two missiles. Overall seven militants were in the video. It did not provide any other details, such as how many people participated in the attack and what damage was inflicted. The faces of some militants were hidden. The video duration was 4 minutes 23 seconds.

September 25, 2011
The message from Jund al-Khilafah to Kazakhstani Authorities

In fact, it was the first message of the group to Kazakhstani authorities¹⁴. However, it did not create the anticipated resonance, because the text was sent by e-mail to one of the employees of the Atyrau regional administration. In the letter titled Waziristan, a man identified as Rinat Habidolla wrote on behalf of Jund al-Khilafah demanding that Kazakhstani authorities should free a number of radicals detained in Atyrau in August 2011. “... *neither (Al-Qaeda), nor Taliban has nothing had against (Kazakhstan), although we could punish you at any time for your treachery, but our enemies are America and Europe as they are waging war against Islam and Muslims; if you wage war too, we will not spare you, we will strike whatever is related to Kazakhstan; we are writing this not to frighten you, no, we want you to take the right path, the right policy towards Muslims; leave us alone and we will leave you alone; we and you understand well that Kazakhstan is not in a position to challenge Al-Qaeda*”.

The letter was sent by a user nicknamed “muslim muslim”. The email subject contained words “Kazakh_soldiers”.

¹⁴ This letter was mentioned in the criminal case of Munatov U.Zh. №11230004100067 - October 2013

*October 18, 2011
The Second Video*



The second video reported on a missile attack on the US base in June 2011. One missile fell in the distance from the base missing the target, while another missile struck a military vehicle. The video showed two militants preparing and launching two missiles. The missile launcher had a simple design propped up by rocks. Like in the first video, this second one showed several armed men, some of whom had their faces hidden in a similar way. Altogether, there are five militants on the video and three of them were preparing the attack. The video was released by Minbar Media Project and lasted for five minutes.

October 24, 2011
The Third Video



It was the first video with direct threats against Kazakhstan. The video was shot on October 21, but was posted online in Shumukh al-Islam Forum only on October 24. Some experts suppose that possibly during these three days the filmmakers had been making Arabic subtitles, because the video message was announced in Russian. The militants in the video demanded the cancellation, as it had already been said, of the adopted the Law about Religion. The governmental policy of Kazakhstan was called similar to that of Tunisia, Libya and Egypt, where the so-called Arab Spring occurred. The video showed five militants holding Kalashnikovs and RPGs. The video duration was two minutes fifty seconds.

October 31, 2011

The Message on the Atyrau Terrorist Attack

On that day, the message on behalf of Jund al-Khilafah was posted on the Shumukh al-Islam Forum, in which the group claimed responsibility for the explosions in Atyrau which happened in the morning that day. The message said that the attack was a warning to the government.

“We deny that the last attack was a self-explosion. It seems that the bomb exploded by accident, which led to the martyrdom of the carrier. We ask Allah to accept him among the martyrs. Notice that these two explosions were just a warning to the government, and we consciously did not seek for deaths and injuries due to fear of causing harm to more people. However, in the future, if we see that our demands are not met, then we swear by Allah, who raised the heavens without any columns, that the next attack will bring rivers of blood”¹⁵.

November 9, 2011

***The Interview with the Representative of
Jund al-Khilafah***

On the Shumukh al-Islam Forum an interview with the leader of Jund al-Khilafah, Ravil Kussainov conducted by Haydar al-Khorasani from Minbar Media Project was posted. In the interview, the leader of the group said that Jund al-Khilafah was comprised of fighters from different countries, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and others. The goal of the organization was to revive

¹⁵ <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/jund-al-khila481fahregarding-the-bombings-in-kazakhstan.pdf>

the Islamic Caliphate. He said that there was a Charter, which was not publicized yet.

Kussainov said that, in addition to fighting in Afghanistan, his group was closely watching what was happening in Kazakhstan. Significant resources were vested in that activity because it was one of the group's priorities. He said that the governmental policy of Kazakhstan was wrong because it violated Muslim rights. The leader of Jund al-Khilafah also commented on the terrorist attack in Atyrau, saying that the action was done not in haste, but operatively. We heard the statements from the authorities, and they sounded skeptical, arrogant, demonstrating contempt for the Mujahideen. They did not express any desire to abandon the unjust decision of the government.

During the interview, he also stated that the group was given the name of Jund al-Khilafah in order to remind Muslims that they had a "duty" to restore the global Islamic Caliphate, under Sharia or the Islamic law.

Al-Zahir Baibars Battalion was mentioned as a separate unit of the group for the first time.

November 15, 2011
The Message on the Taraz Attack

The message with Jund al-Khilafah claiming responsibility for the attack in Taraz was posted online in the Shumukh al-Islam Forum.

"No one should think that the death of a soldier in our brigade could stop or hinder our movement, because one will be replaced by dozens and hundreds of lions ready to pounce on the ruins of the regime. You saw with your own eyes in Taraz

surprised by the lions of Islam, and the heroes were standing in front of them, showing patience, waiting for the divine reward, being confident in the promise of the God and yearning to meet Him. They sent two of them to their sinister fate and killed them ... and as a result, the treachery forces surrounded their location and shelled them for four hours with different kinds of missiles until the martyrdom of five brothers”.

The message also contained a threat against Russia. In particular, the Russian authorities were accused of allegedly inciting hatred against Muslims. It also mentioned the Syrian situation for the first time: *“We are addressing to the Kremlin in Moscow: cease your incitement against the people who crave liberation. You are doing it in Syria without shame and now you call for reprisals against the Kazakh people. You create hostility against your own living troops”.*

December 17, 2011

The Video Message on Zhanaozen events



The video was posted in the Shumukh al-Islam Forum again. The members of Jund al-Khilafah members expressed their solidarity with the protesting oil workers and promised that the incident would not be forsaken.

“We urge you to support your revolution against the regime because this regime wants to destroy the values of the Kazakhs. From today, we are not simply demanding the abolition of unjust laws; we are demanding the overthrow of the current regime and its henchmen in the government”¹⁶.

The text was read in Russian with Arabic subtitles. There were seven militants in front of the cameras. The duration of the video was two minutes forty seconds.

***December 20, 2011
The Fifth Video***



¹⁶ <http://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2011/11/jund-al-khilc481fahcommenting-on-the-recent-speech-from-president-nazarbayev.pdf>

The video mentioned the shelling of a military base by fighters in the Khost province, Afghanistan. According to the video, the attacks took place on July 9, 2011. During the attacks, five foreign militants were killed; twelve were wounded.

The video showed the territory of a foreign military base from the distance, then preparations for launching missiles and two shots. The missile launcher resembled that of the first video. The video featured the movements of nine men, and the missile launch preparation of another five men. The duration of the video is five minutes thirty seconds. It was posted by the Minbar Media Project.

March 22, 2011

***The Message on the Terrorist Attack in Toulouse,
France***

Jund al-Khilafah claimed responsibility for the terrorist act in this message. Terrorist Mohammad Merah was identified in the message as Yusuf al-Firansi. As in the previous threats to the government of Kazakhstan, the group demanded that the French government should reconsider its policy toward the Muslim world.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
الحمد لله وحده والصلاة والسلام على الشريف المرسلين
”يٰٓهٰٓؤُلَآءِ اَنْتُمْ اَنْتُمْ عَلٰى حٰجَرَةٍ تَجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذٰبِ اٰلِمٍ يُؤْتُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وِرْثُوْهُ وَلِحٰدِثُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْرٍ اَنْتُمْ وَالْمَسْكُوْمُ“
”تَتَلَفَّوْا حَتّٰى تَكُوْنُوْا اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ“

في يوم الثلاثاء الـ 19 من مارس انطلق احد فرسان الاسلام وهو اخونا يوسف الفيرنسي” نعال له ان يتقبله، في عملية هزت اركان الصهيونية في العالم كله وملاّت قلوب اعداءه له ربما نحن اذ نعلن مسؤوليتنا عن هذه العمليات المباركة، فاننا نقول بان لا تقوم به اسرائيل من جرائم في حق اهلنا على ارض فلسطين الظاهرة، في غزة على وجه التحديد، لن يمر بدون عقاب. والمجاهدون في كل مكان عازمون على التار لكل نقطة دم اريقت ظلما وعدوانا في فلسطين والعراقستان وغيرها من بلاد المسلمين.

ا ا اعداء الاسلام ولا تن يهدأ لنا بال ولن يغفوا لنا حتى نعال منكم كما نلتم منا، وحتى نلتقم لاعراض الحرائر من اخواتنا الشاهيات في سجون اليهود وفي البلاد الاوروبية

اننا ندعو الحكومة الفرنسية الي اعادة النظر في سياساتها تجاه المسلمين في العالم والى التخلي عن نزعتها العدوانية ضد الاسلام وشريعته، لان مثل هذه السياسة لن تجلب لها الا الويل والدمار

“On Tuesday, March 19, one of the knights of Islam, our brother Yusuf al-Firansi, (we are pleading Allah to accept him), went to the operation that shook the Zionist-Crusader strongholds in the whole world and filled the hearts of the enemies

of Allah with fear. While we claim our responsibility for these blessed operations, we say that the crimes that Israel is committing against our people in the pure land of Palestine, particularly in Gaza, will not remain without punishment. Mujahideens everywhere are determined to avenge for every drop of blood that was shed unjustly and aggressively in Palestine, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries”¹⁷.

The message was posted online in the Shumukh al-Islam Forum but an hour later, it was deleted by the moderator. Then, in a short time, the message was re-posted in the Ansar Al-Mujahideen Forum by a user nicknamed Jund al-Khilafah.

April 1, 2012

***The Memoirs “of Jund al-Khilafah” Representative
Dedicated to Mohammad Merah***

A group member identified as Abu al-Qa’qa ‘al-Andalusi posted dedicated his memoirs to Toulouse gunman Mohammed Merah in an internet forum. The message was titled “Yusuf Al-Firansi as I Knew Him”. The author explained that the purpose of the publication was to refute slanders of the Western mass media geared toward young people trying to portray Mohammed Merah as a “reckless” and “destructive” man. According to the author, Merah was a true believer who initially tried to join the Afghan Taliban as he learned about the jihad duty. The text described Merah’s travels to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Tajikistan, then his arrest in Afghanistan. After his release, Mohammed Merah returned to France and then set off to Pakistan, where he allegedly joined Jund al-Khilafah. An important detail in the post

¹⁷ <http://jihadology.net/2012/03/22/minbar-media-presents-a-newstatement-from-jund-al-khilafah-on-the-french-operations/>

was that, according to the author, Merah had another operational task but he changed his mind for some reason. Regarding the terrorist act, al-Andalusi stated, *“The Almighty has given him (Mohammad Merah – ed.) success in this operation, which has become a powerful blow to the crusading France for its boasting that the Mujahideen will not be allowed in its territory. He was disappointed in France and in its racist and hostile policy to Allah”*¹⁸.

The author mentioned in the text that Merah knew little Arabic, so they had communicated in French.

***April 13, May 1 and May 31, 2012
Series of Articles Defending “Jund al-Khilafah”***

There is no confidence that the texts were posted by the group representatives. However, it is worth noting an important aspect: these posts were made in response to Jund al-Khilafah criticism posted on another Islamic site. There are serious reasons to consider that this correspondence may belong to the Soldiers. Moreover, some international experts attribute these publications to Jund al-Khilafah as well¹⁹.

The material consists of a series of publications on the site of Umma News, which is closely related to structures of the North Caucasus Emirate. A user nicknamed Jihad.kz responded to the critical remarks published on April 1, 2011 at Islam.ucoz.net by a user called Abu Jafar, trying to refute the criticisms and

¹⁸ zelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/abc5ab-al-qaqc481-al-andalusc4ab-22yc5ab-suf-al-fransc4ab-muelb8a5ammad-mirc481e1b8a5-merah-as-i-knewhim22-en.pdf

¹⁹ Debate surrounding kazakhstans Jund al-Khilafah //Islam, Islamism and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER), №57, 1 June 2012 http://csis.org/files/publication/120601_Hahn_IIPER_57.pdf

accusations against Jund al-Khilafah stating that this group violated the Sharia principles and Jihad rules²⁰.

July 1, 2012

The Message on Eve of Astana Day in Kazakhstan

At www.kavkazcentr.com, a website supported by the North Caucasus Emirate, somebody posted a message in Arabic on behalf of al-Zahir Baybar's Battalion, a structural unit of Jund al-Khilafah, with threatens the authorities of Kazakhstan. The message was timed to coincide with the celebration of Astana Day in Kazakhstan. It is considered to be the last Jund al-Khilafah threat.

October 15, 2012

The Report on Jund al-Khilafah's Leader's Death

Shumukh al-Islam Forum was, as always, used to post messages by Abu al-Laith al-Vaziri, who wrote about the death of Moez Garsallaoui "Moezuddin al-Qayrawani killed by an American drone missile". The message said that Garsallaoui was a Tunisian fighter based on the Afghan-Pakistani border, a member of the jihadist forums of Jund al-Khilafah and al-Qayrawani, and that he participated in the abduction of Swiss journalists. Importantly, the message said that Garsallaoui had trained some Kazakh fighters, so they would possibly return to Kazakhstan and wage jihad with the support of those who were ready to act under the banner of Jund al-Khilafah.

²⁰ Abu-Jafar, "Voina 'virtual'nogo' khalifata ili 'oproverzhenie oproverzheniy'," Islam.ucoz.net, 20 April 2012, 18:32, http://Islam.ucoz.net/news/voinam_virtual-nogo_khalifata_ili_oproverzhenie_oproverzhenij/2012-04-20-110.

October 16, 2012

The Obituary of Moez Garsallaoui

Moez Garsallaoui's short biography was posted in the Minbar al-Ansar chat room²¹. The message said, among other details,



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
 الشَّلَاةُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللَّهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

قال تعالى : (وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أُوْحُوا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مُرْتَدُونَ (169) فِرْعَوْنُ بِمَا كَانَهُ اللَّهُ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ وَيَسْتَشْفِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَنْقَلِبْ لَهُمْ مِنْ (وَأَعْلَانِهِمْ أَلَّا يُخَوِّفُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ وَلَئِنَّ اللَّهَ وَالْقَوْمَ لَآتِيهِمُ الْغَارِقُونَ (170) يَسْتَشْفِرُونَ بِعَمْرٍو كَيْدُ اللَّهِ وَالْقَوْمِ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُتُونَ (171)

كان له السبيل في كل خير ، عرفناه من خلف الكويرات ، غميراً على دينه وعلى إسلامه فحياً للجهاد والمجاهدين ، فخرحبا لإخوانه ، ثم يترك ساحة إلا وعمل بما ؛ فكم نسر إخوانه بنفسه وماله ، ثم فكم نفسه وبخيسه في سبيل الله على أرض أفغانستان الطاهرة نقبالاً غير مدبر ، اغتاله أيدي جبانة حادثة قسماً مع ريرة ، من صحبه وإخوانه

كانت لنا معه صحبة زوانة في العمل المهادي الإعلامي أذكر من خلالها فقد كان مشرفاً في غرة منبر الأنصار منذ نشأها الأولى وكانت له حوارات جميلة دافع فيها عن الجهاد وأهله ، دتب من خلالها عن المجاهدين ، ونظرت معه الفكرة فأسس الشبكات الإعلامية المهادية إذ كان مرهلاً متفكراً لتعلمه إضافة

that Garsallaoui had been married to Malika El-Arud, a Belgian with Moroccan origin and a well-known jihad ideologist. The message also invoked other aliases that Garsallaoui used in a number of Internet forums.

The post refused the view that Garsallaoui only played the role of the media personality. It said that from the very beginning he had been ready to do more than merely participate in informational campaigns. Thus, allegedly, Garsallaoui promptly responded to the call and became a Jund al-Khilafah Emir in Khorasan, conducting a large number of military trainings.

The General Analysis of the Informational Campaigns Held by the Soldiers of the Caliphate

The whole period of the informational campaign undertaken by Jund al-Khilafah lasted from September 2011 to October 2012. Over this period, they published sixteen pieces: five videos,

²¹ <http://jihadology.net/2012/10/17/new-statement-from-ghorfah-minbaral-anşar-on-the-departure-of-the-commander-and-scholar-from-the-flag-of-jihadmuiz-al-garsalawi-al-qayrawani/>

five messages, and four articles. In addition, there were two reports of the death of the Jund al-Khilafah leader.

No	Release date	Format	Subject	Source and media
1.	8 Sep 2011	Video	Military attack in Afghanistan	Shumukh al-Islam, Minbar Media Project
2.	25 Sep 2011	Message on behalf of Jund al-Khilafah	Demands to release the detained radicals	e-mail to Atyrau region Akimat by user "muslim muslim"
3.	18 Oct 2011	Video	Military attack in Afghanistan	Shumukh al-Islam, Minbar Media Project
4.	24 Oct 2011	Video message	Demand for Kazakhstani authorities to cancel the Religion Law by	Shumukh al-Islam, Minbar Media Project
5.	31 Oct 2011	Declaration	Terrorist attack in Atyrau	Shumukh al-Islam, Jund al-Khilafah
6.	9 Nov 2011	Interview with Jund al-Khilafah leader	Goals and structure of the group	Shumukh al-Islam , Minbar Media Project, Haydar al-Khorasani
7.	15 Nov 2011	Declaration	Terrorist attack in Taraz	Shumukh al-Islam,
8.	8 Dec 2011	Declaration	Special operation in Boraldai village	Shumukh al-Islam, Minbar Media Project
9.	17 Dec 2011	Video message	Events in Zhanaozen	Shumukh al-Islam
10.	20 Dec 2011	Video	Military attack in Afghanistan	Shumukh al-Islam, Minbar Media Project
11.	22 Mar 2012	Declaration	Terrorist attack in Toulouse	Shumukh al-Islam (was deleted later)
12.	1 Apr 2012	Internet forum post	Recollections on Mohammad Merah	Abu al-Qa'qa' al-Andalusi
13.	13 Apr, 1 May, 31 May 2012	Series of articles	Response to Jund al-Khilafah criticism	Ummanews, Jihad KZ
14.	1 Jul 2012	Message on behalf of al-Zahir Baibars Battalion	Eve of Astana Day	Kavkaz Center
15.	15 Oct 2012	Message	Death of Moez Garsallaoui	Abu al-Laith al-Waziri
16.	16 Oct 2012	Message	Obituary of Moez Garsallaoui	Minbar al-Ansar

Out of five videos, three showed missile attacks on military bases in Afghanistan which occurred in June and July 2011. The first video was made in June but released only in September. The first video addressed to the Kazakhstani authorities was also made on October 21, but posted on the forum three days later. The purpose of the December video, which referred to the July raid of the group, was most likely to maintain the informational presence of the group.

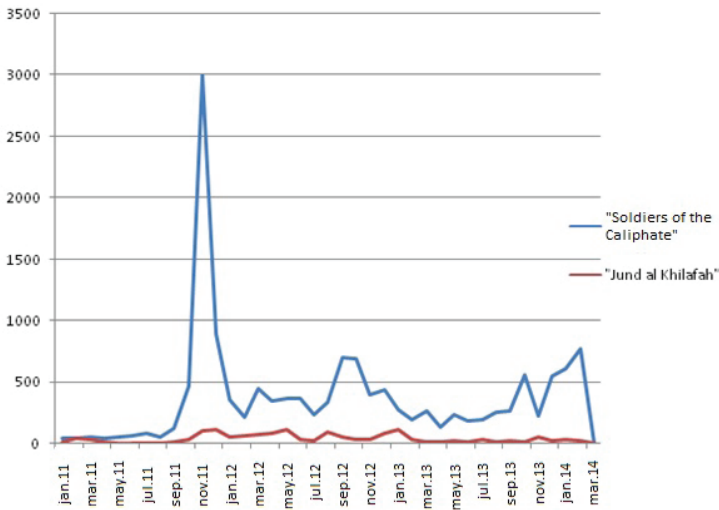
Remarkably, these two video messages were recited in Russian rather than in Kazakh, but were subtitled with Arabic translation. The main disseminator of the materials was Minbar Media Project which posted messages only about Jund al-Khilafah and no other group. Neither before nor after the active phase of Jund al-Khilafah did this group manifest itself in any way.

The most active informational period of the group was from September to December 2011. The first long pause was from January to March 2012. After spring 2012, there was a significant decline in its informational presence. An especially interesting fact is that from April to July the materials were posted on websites that are closely linked to the North Caucasus Emirate: Umma News and Caucasus Center. After October of the same year, Jund al-Khilafah completely disappeared from informational space. The analysis also shows that most of the messages posted on behalf of the group were authored by Moez Garsallaoui who wrote under names al-Khorasani and Jund al-Khilafah. When Garsallaoui was killed in October 2012, the Soldiers of the Caliphate were generally no longer mentioned in the informational resources.

The dynamics of the group mention rate is very interesting. The mention rate analytical data is as following:

The Soldiers of the Caliphate were relevantly mentioned 8000 times; 6000 times on Kazakhstani sites; 2000 times on foreign sites. Jund al Khilafah: the total number of responses amounted to 3000, of which 1439 were on foreign sites.

Mention rate of the Soldiers of the Caliphate in Russian and Jund al-Khilafah in English (Yandex)



The mention frequency rate was the highest in November 2011, when the group declared its responsibility for the attack in Atyrau. The next surge was recorded in October 2012, when news agencies reported the death of Jund al-Khilafah leader Moez Garsallaoui in Pakistan. Most mentions of Jund al Khilafah materials related to videos and messages connected with the events that happened in Kazakhstan. Even the declaration of responsibility for the Toulouse terrorist act was not as frequently mentioned as the materials related to Kazakhstan. An important detail in the

analysis of the group's informational activity is that most materials were posted online at the jihadist Shumukh al-Islam forum, which is considered to be one of the main information channels of Al-Qaeda. (Some other experts suppose that Shumukh al-Islam cannot be regarded as an exclusively Al-Qaeda media resource; it could have also been used by different individuals who had had ties with the administrators of the site. It is possible that Garsallaoui posted Jund al-Khilafah materials on this particular platform because of his personal connections). In other words, that group was supported by some Arab radical groups because posting material on this site requires authorization and access. In this connection, it is worth noting that Jund al-Khilafah's declaration of responsibility for the Toulouse attack perpetrated by Mohammad Merah was deleted by the Shumukh al-Islam Forum moderators. Two explanations seem plausible: first, there could have been doubts about Jund al-Khilafah's involvement in the terrorist attack - even among Al-Qaeda members; second, the group might have gone beyond its objectives and the Toulouse operation was not authorized by the Al-Qaeda operational center. Therefore, Jund al-Khilafah's involvement in the Toulouse terrorist attack is one of the most important details in the history of the whole group. In this context, the role of Moez Garsallaoui in Jund al-Khilafah is also questionable: the analysis of posts and messages shows that he acted as a coordinator for the informational campaign of the group and had personal involvement with Toulouse gunman, Mohammed Merah.

3. THE EMIR AND HIS SOLDIERS

From the very beginning, when the Soldiers of the Caliphate emerged and challenged the Kazakhstani government, there was some confusion around the names of this organization's leaders. Special services identified certain people as leaders, whereas online forums and sites of radical groups posted interviews and various messages mentioning other names.

On November 9, 2011, the General Prosecutors Office of Kazakhstan reported on the disclosure of the Atyrau terrorist attack and detainment of three people involved in explosions: Meyrambek Usabekov (born in 1986), Mirhat Kalkamanov (born in 1988) and Alimzhan Sagenov, (born in 1983)²². According to the investigators, the terrorist group was formed in 2009 under the influence of Said Buryatskiy, a jihad ideologist of an armed underground structure in North Caucasus. In September 2011, the group established links with the Soldiers of the Caliphate, which was created by the Kazakhstani citizens Rinat Habidolla, Orynbasar Munatov and Damir Znaliyev. According to the Kazakhstani special services, the main goal of the group was to organize jihad in Kazakhstan. Thus, the General Prosecutor's Office admitted the existence of this group and the fact that their leaders were Kazakhstani citizens who were hiding near the Afghan-Pakistani border and participating in armed hostilities. The Office made a special mention of the role of Rinat Habidolla as the organization's leader: "... the leader of this organization, a citizen of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Rinat Habidolla, posted online messages with threats to Kazakhstan on October 25, and November 1, 2011, and then acknowledged responsibility for the attacks

²² The speech of the official representative of General Prosecutor's office, Suidikov Nurdaulet, at the briefing on November 9, 2011. <http://www.nomad.su/?a=13-201111100012>

in Atyrau. Investigation has confirmed the involvement of Jund al-Khilafah (the Soldiers of the Caliphate) in the Atyrau explosion. According to the testimony of the detainees, they received instructions from Jund al-Khilafah members to commit terrorist attacks in the territory of Kazakhstan, including Atyrau²³.

Data on the Soldiers of the Caliphate Leaders

No.	Individuals mentioned	Source	Date
1	Rinat Habidolla, Damir Znaliyev, Orynbasar Munatov	Report of General Prosecutor Office of Kazakhstan	November 9, 2011
2	Ravil Kussaiynov	Interview on Shumukh al- Islam website	November 9, 2011
3	Moeziddin Garsallaoui (al-Khorasani, al-Tunisi)	Post on Shumukh al- Islam website	October 17, 2012

However, on the same day, November 9, 2011, the interview with the Jund al-Khilafah leader was posted in the Shumukh al-Islam Forum where the group leader was called Ravil Kussaiynov. The interview transcript was posted the next day, November 10. The interview described the structure of the group and its goals in detail. Ravil Kussaiynov also mentioned the goal of the Atyrau attacks.

A year later, on October 18, international and Kazakhstani informational agencies referred to extremist website monitoring agencies, reporting that in Pakistan a US drone missile had killed Moeziddin Garsallaoui²⁴, who, according to the messages, was the leader of Jund al-Khilafah.

²³ The speech of the official representative of General Prosecutor's office, Sundikov Nurdaulet, at the briefing on November 9, 2011.<http://www.nomad.su/?a=13-201111100012>

²⁴ Tengrinews.kz. The leader of "Soldiers of the Caliphate", who was preparing Kazakhstanis to the terrorist attacks, was killed.http://tengrinews.kz/world_news/ubit-gotovivshiy-kazhstantsev-k-teraktam-lider soldathalifata-222028

A user named Abu Leith al-Waziri posted a message on the death of Garsallaoui in the Shumukh al-Islam Forum. The post was titled “Martyrdom of Commander Abu Moez al Tunisi, the activist with the username Jund al Khilafah or al Qayrawani”.

As it is known, the earlier materials were posted on behalf of the group under these usernames. Additionally, the text said that Garsallaoui had been training a group of fighters from Kazakhstan so they could wage jihad under a Jund al-Khilafah banner when they returned to their country. Thus, it appeared that the true leader and mastermind of the group was a Belgian citizen of Tunisian origin Moeziddin (Moez) Garsallaoui, a red-flagged man wanted by Interpol, according to French journalists, and one in the top 20 list of the Central Intelligence Agency²⁵.

Moez Garsallaoui



There is little information on the early biography of Jund al-Khilafah leader²⁶. He was born in 1968 in Tunis. In the 1990s, he moved to Syria. In May 1997, after two years of illegal stay in

²⁵ Yannick Vely. Moez Garsallaoui mentor de Mohamed Merahse raitmort //Paris match, 17.10.2012 <http://www.parismatch.com/Actu/International/Moez-Garsallaoui-Le-mentor-de-Mohamed-Merah-serait-mort-157112>

²⁶ Le Point.fr. Mort du Moez Garsallaoui, mentor présumé de Mohamed Merah http://www.lepoint.fr/monde/mort-du-moez-garsallaoui-mentor-presumedede-mohamed-merah-17-10-2012-1517967_24.php

Italy, he applied for political asylum in Switzerland, where he later lived near Bern. In the beginning of his stay there, he worked on a construction site, and then as an informational specialist.

In December 2003, Moez Garsallaoui got married according to Muslim traditions to Malika El Arud, a Belgian of Moroccan origin, widow of Dahmane Abdesattar, who was also known as Abu Obeida, one of those who killed the Afghani field commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. The leader of the Northern Alliance Ahmad Shah Massoud was killed on September 9, 2001, two days before 9/11. Pretending to be journalists, two suicide bombers detonated a bomb disguised as a video camera. One of those two suicide bombers was Malika's first husband – Abu Obeida, a member of Al-Qaeda.

Being a suicide-bomber's widow and an activist of the jihadist movement, Malika earned the reputation of Al-Qaeda's living legend and the nickname of Black Widow. According to some European and American journalists, who studied Garsallaoui's biography, Malika El-Aroud strongly influenced the transformation of her husband from an ideologist to a militant. They were acquainted in Brussels where she made a presentation of her book "The Soldiers of the Light" that described the life of her dead husband.



In 2004, Garsallaoui and El Aroud moved to Fribourg, Switzerland. In the same year, they opened several websites with radical content, among which the main site was Minbar-SOS. This site was used to post videos showing the attacks of fighters in Iraq, scenes of execution and even technical guides on improvising explosive devices. Apparently, by that time Garsallaoui had already collaborated with various radical groups including those in Pakistan. This is evidenced by the following episode. “On August 3, 2004, a Pakistani court warned the Federal Judicial Police in Bern: the video of failed attack on the Pakistani Minister of Economy, Shaukat Aziz, was posted on a site hosted in Switzerland. On September 10, the provider shut down the site²⁷. Minbar-SOS was administered by Garsallaoui personally.

The files of the Belgian judicial authorities clearly specified that Garsallaoui was the administrator of this informational resource:

2.2.2.1 Starting and administrating MINBAR website. As his wife, defendant El Aroud, he created and controlled the site MINBAR (of which he was the administrator) aimed at preaching armed Jihad, as well as finding and recruiting potential fighters (in his case, at least, some people who were identified as El Alami and Othmani he had met in Savoy, France);

Among two of them, he had the necessary skills for launching, developing and providing informational content of the site. He financed the site before his departure to Turkey on December 13, 2007.

He had power over the group Rafidayn Center, which translated Al-Qaeda’s propaganda texts, because the defendant

²⁷ Titus Plattner, Daniel Glaus. Devenu terroriste par amour de la veuve // Le Matin, 21.10.2012 <http://www.lematin.ch/monde/devenu-terroristemour-veuve-noire/story/18453051>

Beyayo affirmed that he had spoken to him before agreeing to accept this group at the GIMF (Global Islamic Media Front) of Al-Qaeda (C27, Sf4, pc18).

On February 22, 2005, a special unit of the Federal Judicial Police arrested Garsallaoui and Malika. Ten days later, due to the lack of evidence, they were released but put on a suspect list by the cantonal police. By February 2006, he had restored all his websites.

Nonetheless, he re-appeared on the law enforcement's sight. Garsallaoui was sentenced to four months in prison for posting materials with extremist content in June 2007. However, he served only three months, was released, and with his wife returned to Belgium.



In November or December 2007, fearing prosecution, Garsallaoui left Europe. Passing through Turkey and Iran, he reached the tribal areas in the Afghan-Pakistan border region. In

May 2010, he was sentenced in absentia to eight years in prison by the Brussels court for ferrying young volunteers from Belgium and Turkey to the Afghan-Pakistani border.

Garsallaoui's wife was sentenced to imprisonment via court decision in the same year.

In May 2012, Garsallaoui was wounded by an American drone. He miraculously survived, but was not able to walk because of a serious injury. In August that year, he was in the firing zone again, but escaped. American special services, however, did not stop hunting him. Finally, on October 10, Garsallaoui was killed in another drone attack on the militant camp in Mir Ali, North Waziristan.

The Role of Garsallaoui in Activities of the Soldiers of the Caliphate



According to American journalists, one of the reasons that Moez Garsallaoui moved to the Afghan-Pakistan border region

and later re-trained into a fighter was his desire to impress his wife: it is alleged that Garsallaoui was constantly trying to show her that he was as a selfless and brave warrior as her late husband, the suicide bomber. In June 2008, he sent her his famous photo from Afghanistan where he was posing with a portable missile launcher. Malika El Aroud replied from Brussels that she admired him²⁸.

Later that year, on July 5, he sent another message, in which he boasted that he became a real warrior: he asserted to have killed five Americans in Afghanistan the day before. A few days later, he wrote again that he had killed a Canadian. On May 11, 2009, after a long silence, Garsallaoui posted a new message on the Minbar-SOS website. He stated that he had been participating in raids against US troops: “If you thought you could put pressure on me by arresting my wife, you were wrong ... he laughs best, who laughs last”²⁹.

Of course, this somewhat romanticized interpretation of Garsallaoui’s terrorist activity is more typical for journalist publications. Nevertheless, in March 2012, when Mohammad Merah committed a terrorist attack in Toulouse, Garsallaoui posted a message on the Al-Qaida website where Jund al-Khilafah claimed the responsibility for this operation, where it was mentioned that action was a retaliation for arrests and detention of Muslim women in European prisons: “Thus, behold, enemies of Islam, we will not rest or close our eyes until we get you, how you got us, un-

²⁸ Titus Plattner, Daniel Glaus. Devenu terroriste par amour de la veuve/noire //Le Matin, 21.10.2012 <http://www.lematin.ch/monde/devenu-terroristemour-veuve-noire/story/18453051>

²⁹ Eric Peller. Moez Garsallaoui, mentor presume de Merah, aurait ete tue//Le Express, 17.10.2012 http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/monde/moez-garsallaouimentor-presume-de-merah-aurait-ete-tue_1175897.html

til we avenge the honor of the free women who are imprisoned by Jews and Europeans”³⁰. Perhaps, Garsallaoui tried to exhibit the Toulouse attack as an act of retaliation for the arrest of his wife, Malika. In any case, while Garsallaoui stayed in Pakistan, he definitively transformed from a propaganda disseminator into a militant with skills of an instructor and coordinator of terrorist operations.

From the files of the Belgian Judicial Authorities:

2.2.2.4 Participation in battles against pro-government forces in Afghanistan

It is established that the defendant Garsallaoui has officially joined Al-Qaeda on his arrival to Waziristan by signing the above-described form.

Additionally, it is established that before leaving his group and entering the war zone together with the defendant Bu’aale Zriuil, he had received religious education on jihad and had been trained to use the weapons provided by Al-Qaeda.

Later, in his email conversations with his wife, Garsallaoui boasted that he:

- was at the front and escorted his wounded brother (June 12, 2008);*
- risked his life during the bombardment which cost the life of Abu Leith al-Libi, al-Qaeda member (June 2008);*
- handled a grenade launcher (June 14, 2008);*
- participated in an attack with a group of twelve people that killed “five Americans” (June 25, 2008);*
- participated in the “ruthless battle” against American*

³⁰ SITE Intel Group. 3-22-12. JK France shootings.PDF

troops and Afghan soldiers, which ended up in the death of three “brothers” (July 5, 2008);

- *“added a Canadian to his hit list” (July 14, 2008);*
- *acquired anti-aircraft missiles and a car (July 14, 2008, the defendant Beyayo confirmed these facts (C27, 6 Sf4, pc53) ;*
- *had bombs and an automatic rifle (July 11, 2008).*

There are serious grounds to believe that it was Garsallaoui’s idea to create Jund al-Khilafah.

Firstly, while working as an extremist website editor in Europe, he already had close ties with the key Al-Qaeda members, at least, with those in charge of propaganda, with whose help he received and posted materials on terrorist attacks in Iraq and Pakistan. Perhaps, with the support of these contacts, Jund al-Khilafah’s messages and videos were broadcasted through the online Al-Qaeda channel from the very first day. Not all radical groups have access to these sites. All of these resources have systems for the authentication of materials, administration of comments and messages.

Secondly, as it was already mentioned in the section describing the informational activity of Jund-al-Khalifa, the video messages of the group were produced and disseminated by a studio called, “Minbar Media Project”, the name of which echoed the name of the first website of Moez Garsallaoui called Minbar-SOS. The involvement of this studio in the promotion of other groups is not proven: neither before nor after Jund al-Khilafah ceased its activities, were any other materials of the Minbar Media Project studio posted online.



Thirdly, one should also take into account Moez Garsallaoui's experience of working as an informational specialist and editor of websites. Most probably, this experience, in particular, enabled him to make Jund al-Khilafah a new recognizable terrorist brand within the shortest possible time. The group was active mostly in the virtual sphere and the only attacks they planned for Almaty and Atyrau were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, the videos and messages of the group triggered a wide resonance in both cases.

It is known that Garsallaoui was in charge of recruiting and training new fighters as an instructor in Pakistan, which apparently enabled him to select members for the future group. In his case, the group was ethnically quite mixed - Jund al-Khilafah consisted of Kazakhs, Tajiks and Turks, whereas larger jamaats (societies) and groups were mainly based on ethnic backgrounds (for example, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Party of Turkestan). Perhaps, by creating Jund al-Khilafah, Garsallaoui wanted to express himself in the role of a planner and an organizer of operations, rather than being only an ideologist.

From the files of the Belgian Law Enforcement Authorities:

2.2.2.3 Commanding the cell that he created

It is established that in Waziristan the defendant Garsallaoui saw himself worthy of a group “commander” status (or he assumed so).

That moreover, he funded the purchase of weapons for every group member in a constant manner (1,000 Euros per person).

That he entrusted various missions to the defendant El Aroud, who served as the “logistic base” for his group. These missions were:

- reporting coordinates of the Turkish association capable of providing assistance in the case of problems occurring at the time of illegal crossing of the Turkish border.

Lastly, the role of Moez Garsallaoui as Jund al-Khilafah leader has been confirmed by the messages he posted on sites and forums under the nicknames Jund al-Khilafah and al-Khorasani, which were also mentioned in his obituary. The last time Garsallaoui posted messages on extremist websites using these usernames was in the beginning of April 2012. In May that year, he was seriously injured in a missile attack. Therefore, the informational surges of the Soldiers of the Caliphate coincided with the specific events in Garsallaoui’s life. Most probably, because of Garsallaoui’s injury, the last Jund al-Khilafah’s statement was posted in July 2012 on the website of the North-Caucasus Emirate “Kavkaz Center” instead of Al-Qaeda’s website Shumukh al-Islam. Perhaps the followers of Garsallaoui had no connections with the Al-Qaeda leadership or there had been a conflict between Garsallaoui and the functionaries of that organization. Moreover, before that, in March 2012, a Jund al-Khilafah mes-

sage that Garsallaoui posted on Al-Qaeda's website Shumukh al-Islam was deleted an hour later by the website administrator. The final proof of Moez Garsallaoui's key role in Jund al-Khilafah activities was that the group practically disappeared and never manifested itself after his death in October 2012. With his death, the history of this group was over.

Is Garsallaoui a mentor of the Toulouse Gunman?



As it already has been mentioned, upon his relocation to Pakistan, Moez Garsallaoui started acquiring other functions within the structure of international terrorist organizations. According to various sources, when based in the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region from 2008, he coordinated several channels for recruitment and the smuggling of jihadists from Europe: mainly from Belgium and France. One of such volunteers was probably Mohammed Merah, who perpetrated a brutal terrorist attack in Toulouse and Montabane, shooting three soldiers,

a rabbi and three Jewish children. The Toulouse events became a real tragedy for France. The attack stirred up the entire French society. Everyone was trying to understand: who had influenced this young man, and how had he been influenced, to commit this brutal massacre? According to a widespread version, the attack was just another operation of Jund al-Khilafah.

Mohammed Merah was born in Toulouse on October 10, 1988, in a family of Algerian natives³¹. He was considered to be a difficult teenager at school and had trouble with the law in his youth. By the age of 24, he already had a record of 18 offenses. In 2007, he was sentenced to 18 months in prison on charges of involvement in robbery with violence. Later, after a series of interviews with the relatives and friends of Mohammad Merah, journalists concluded that his views were radicalized in prison. At least, after he was released, he began to frequently express his opposition to the presence of the French troops in Afghanistan³².

Merah professed Islam, but he had not been sighted in radical circles in his youth. His peers and friends claimed that he would often go to nightclubs with them. He even tried to join the Foreign Legion, but his application was not accepted. According to another version, he did pass the first round of selection, but suddenly left the first gathering of the candidates to legionnaires.

For the first time Merah got into sight of the French special services in the end of the 2000s when he had travelled several times to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Released from prison, Mohammad Merah traveled as a tourist to Algeria, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Tajikistan. The purpose of his visits to these countries is not known for certain, based on his statements; it seemed he had attempted to find some local cells of some form

³¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toulouse_and_Montauban_shootings

³² Paul Cruickshank. CNN, 13.06.2012 // <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/13/investigations-shed-new-light-on-toulouse-terrorist-shootings/>

of an international terrorist network. According to some reports, he was even arrested in Kandahar for keeping equipment used to create bombs.

In March 2012, Mohammed Merah committed a series of attacks. At first, his actions were described as acts of a serial killer. On March 6, 2012, he stole a scooter. On March 11, he shot a French soldier. On March 15, riding the motor scooter, he killed two more soldiers. On March 19, near a Jewish college in Toulouse, Merah killed a rabbi and his two sons and the principal's daughter. Two days later, he went to the France 24 journalists and confessed that he was an Al-Qaeda member. He stated that the crimes were committed in retaliation for Palestinian children killed by Israel. He also said that all his murders were captured on camera in order to post them online in the future. That same night, he was blocked by the French police. Merah refused to surrender voluntarily. His own mother refused to participate in negotiations too, saying that it would be impossible to persuade Mohammed Merah. The siege lasted for 32 hours. When the building was stormed, he had tried to escape through one of the windows, got under the fire of the police snipers and was killed.

A few days later, on March 22, the Shumukh al-Islam website posted a message of Minbar Media Project, in which Jund al-Khilafah claimed responsibility for the attack. In the message, Merah was mentioned as Yusuf Firansi.

“On Tuesday, March 19, one of the knights of Islam, our brother Yusuf al-Firansi [from France], we plead Allah to accept him, went on an operation that shook the foundations of the crusaders all over the world and filled the hearts of the enemies of Allah with fear. Although we claim responsibility for this blessed operation, we say that the crimes that Israel is committing

against our people in the pure land of Palestine and particularly in the Gaza Strip will not pass without punishment. Mujahideen everywhere are determined to avenge for every drop of blood that was shed unjustly and aggressively in Palestine, Afghanistan and other Muslim countries”³³.

Further, the text mentioned Muslim women imprisoned in European countries. The text ended with the same demands to France as in the messages addressed to Kazakhstan:

“We call upon the French Government to reconsider its policy towards Muslims in the world and to abandon its hostile tendencies towards Islam and its Sharia because such a policy would bring only grief and destruction”.

The message was signed by Tariq ibn Ziyad Battalion, a Jund al-Khilafah brigade. As it was noted earlier, the post attributing responsibility for the Toulouse attack to Soldiers was removed from the Shumukh al-Islam website an hour later. In parallel, it became known that when besieged, Merah had talked with the negotiators for 17 hours. The transcript was published in the French press later³⁴. In particular, he informed the negotiator that he had been in the territory of the Pakistani free tribes in September 2011, where he had contacted a group of Al-Qaeda fighters. He said he had met one of the Al-Qaeda leaders there, who had visited France before and instructed him to return to his homeland and commit terrorist attacks there. During the negotiations, Merah also stated that he planned the attack on his own. He said that his Emir was Abu Yahya al-Libi, one of Al-Qaeda’s

³³ <http://jihadology.net/2012/03/22/minbar-media-presents-a-new-statement-from-jund-al-khilafah-on-the-french-operations/>

³⁴ Exclusif – Transcription des conversations entre Mohamed Merah et les négociateurs //Liberation, 17 juillet 2012 http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/07/17/transcription-des-conversations-entre-mohamed-merah-et-lesnegociateurs_833784

leaders in Pakistan. However, he had not met him personally. He only met other Emirs who obeyed al-Libi. The first Emir, who received him, was Pakistani. Later he was received by another Emir from Al-Qaeda. It was then that he joined the group.

By analyzing and comparing these details with the materials from the extremist websites, analytics of special services concluded that the man who sent Mohammad Merah to France for organizing jihad was Moez Garsallaoui³⁵.

Most probably, Moez Garsallaoui and Mohammed Merah met in September 2011 when the new recruit was undertaking military and ideological training at the camp of fighters in Miran-shah, Pakistan. According to European journalists, Garsallaoui conducted a number of courses in the training camp, for example, on “burglary and robbery, electronics, use of snipers and anti-aircraft missiles, murders, kidnapping, counterfeiting, producing toxic substances, and use of instructions to make bombs”³⁶. Garsallaoui was also involved in recruitment and smuggling of young jihadists from Europe. This way, he was able to select suitable recruits for himself. During the talks with the negotiators, Merah also said that, in Pakistan, he traveled outside the city for half-day trainings, where he learned to assemble and disassemble weapons, to fire all types of guns, such as rifles, pistols, machine guns, grenade launchers, etc.³⁷

From the files of the Belgian Law Enforcement Authorities:

³⁵ Thibalaut Raisse. Le pacte secret de Merah avec un lieutenant de BenLaden // Aujourd’hui en France, 21 mars 2014

³⁶ Titus Plattner, Daniel Glaus. Devenu terroriste par amour de la veuve // Le Matin, 21.10.2012 <http://www.lematin.ch/monde/devenu-terroristemour-veuve-noire/story/18453051>

³⁷ Exclusif – Transcription des conversations entre Mohamed Merah et les négociateurs // Liberation, 17 juillet 2012 http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2012/07/17/transcription-des-conversations-entre-mohamed-merah-et-lesnegociateurs_833784

2.2.2.2 Recruiting fighters and creating secret paths for smuggling to Waziristan

It is established that the defendant Garsallaoui gathered around at least six potential jihadists, to whom he offered the possibility to arrive in Waziristan by finding secret paths, the coordinates of which he conveyed to them in Istanbul, before he went to Pakistan himself to “check the ground”;

That the investigation revealed that he contacted and personally selected candidates (except for the defendant Arissi); that he instructed them to arrive in Istanbul and to gather secretly there; that leaving Istanbul, he told them how to find the smuggler who could help them to arrive in Waziristan;

In this regard, there is no doubt that it was him who found and contacted Sen Ibrahim who showed the group a secret path commonly used by Al-Qaeda’s Turkish fighters (see para. 2.2.8 below);

That he also became friends with a person named Aziri in order to induce him to join his group, and with the help of the major defendant, Malika El Aroud, he was informed on the “candidates”: a man named as El Morabi and the wife of a man named as Tayomiye;

That he also wished to recruit a person nicknamed Ab Duayd, whom the defendant Beyayo was not able to contact before his departure (see message sent to the address jeanscbastien119 dated November 24, 2007 at 18:02);

That a person named El Alami e-mailed him on November 21, 2007, saying that he was going to arrive in Istanbul together with Abu Jahid, specifying in the letter that “we are going with you”, and adding that the brother of this Abu Jahid had already arrived in Afghanistan via Iran;

According to a person named Vinas, he also participated in the arrival of two Arab fighters in a “gray zone”;

That it seems highly probable that he had sponsored the travel expenses of each member of his cell, because none of them seemed to be able to bear such expenses (at least, 2500 Euros per person for one-way travel);

That a person named Othmani stated, that the defendant Garsallaoui provided the defendant Beyayo with the whereabouts of the smuggler in Turkey and a “good pack” of cash to pay for his services (C2- Sf8- pc 11/1);

That, the contending the latter circumstance, the defendant Beyayo confirmed after all that the defendant Garsallaoui had about 15 000-20 000 Euros in Turkey (hearing dated April 2009);

That the defendant Beyayo summarized the situation, saying “I would not go without Moez” (C27, Sf4, pc43); the defendant El Ganuti declared the same (C29, Sf pc38).

In any case, Mohammed Merah had contacted Jund al-Khilafah group when he was in Pakistan.

This is re-confirmed in messages posted by a user named Abu al-Haq Al-Andalusi on Islamic forums on April 1, 2012. Presumably, it was a nickname of Moez Garsallaoui himself. In the message, he wrote, “*I knew the brother (Merah) closely and accompanied him in many situations, and it was me who guided him for a short while*”. According to him, Merah visited many countries including Iraq, Egypt, Pakistan and Tajikistan. They became friends because they spoke the same language. According to the message poster, Mohammad Merah had a typical southern French accent. As it is known, Moez Garsallaoui spoke French perfectly, so, most likely, the posted recollections on Merah were authored by Merah himself. “When I asked him about his native language, he said French. So I spoke to him in the language that he knew better ... He was happy ... He started to talk and asked me to help him to translate the meaning of the words in other lan-

guages. Because of his southern accent, I supposed he was from Marseille, but he said he was from Toulouse. Our relations grew stronger since then, and he came to see me every day. All this helped me to know him better ...”³⁸.

Thus, it is not surprising that Garsallaoui knew Merah quite well. In a Jund al-Khilafah message, referring to its responsibility for the Toulouse terrorist attack, Mohamed Merah was mentioned as Yusuf Firansi. Paul Cruickshank, an American journalist, believes this detail to be another important point in the case of Mohammad Merah. According to him, the brother of Mohammad Merah, Abd-el-Kader told the French investigators that he liked to be called Yusuf and this name was known only in his family. Besides, the investigation established that Merah had previously opened an account in social networks under this name³⁹.

In Moez Garsallaoui’s memoirs, it was mentioned that Mohammed Merah had another task to do (most probably, blasting a bomb), but for some reason he changed his plan: *“in order to do a self-sacrifice operation ... using an explosive belt, effective penetration with a gun and a bomb ... he (Merah) was very happy with this idea and insisted on showing him the storage place late at night in order to see the explosive belt that he should use in his mission. When he wore it, he shined with happiness; his face brightening up ... Martyrdom was his only goal and hope... A day later, the plans changed for reasons that couldn’t be discussed and Yusuf returned to France, promising to do what he could...”*⁴⁰.

During the talks with the negotiators, Merah himself confessed too that plans changed. He said that he had been given

³⁸ zelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/abc5ab-al-qaqc481-al-andalusc4ab-22yc5ab-suf-al-fransc4ab-mue1b8a5ammad-mirc481e1b8a5-merah-as-i-knewhim22-en.pdf

³⁹ Paul Cruickshank. CNN, 13.06.2012 // <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/13/investigations-shed-new-light-on-toulouse-terrorist-shootings/>

⁴⁰ zelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/abc5ab-al-qaqc481-al-andalusc4ab-22yc5ab-suf-al-fransc4ab-mue1b8a5ammad-mirc481e1b8a5-merah-as-i-knewhim22-en.pdf

a task in Pakistan to kill an Indian diplomat in Paris. Later, the investigation established that the telephone number Mohammad Merah used in North Waziristan was used for communication with the terrorists of Kharakat al-Mujahideen, a Kashmiri group closely associated with Al-Qaeda. The members of this group are believed to be involved in the terrorist attack in Mumbai. This could explain why Merah was given the task to kill an Indian diplomat.

During the talks, Merah also said that he had been instructed to commit a suicide bombing. However, according to Merah, when he was at the camp in Pakistan, he refused to learn how to make explosive devices because it was difficult for him to import to France or to export the devices and components required making those “hell machines” from other countries. For the same reason, he said he was not trained to shoot a Kalashnikov: because it would be difficult to find this type of gun in France. The fact that Merah insisted on using automatic weapons in his training was also mentioned in the article by Garsallaoui.

This implies that Merah was not prepared enough. Maybe he deviated from the plan, or his operation was not authorized by the Al-Qaeda leadership. This assumption is based on the earlier mentioned fact that the message of the Soldiers of the Caliphate claiming responsibility for the Toulouse attack was removed from the Al-Qaeda website almost immediately. As it was mentioned, Merah captured the murders he committed on camera and even had time to send this footage to a number of websites, although they had not been published.

It is unlikely that Mohammad Merah was a Jund al-Khilafah member. Neither he nor material from Jund al-Khilafah mentioned specifically whether he belonged to this group or not. Indeed, the Soldiers of the Caliphate themselves were not a coherent group. It was a loose gathering of fighters, who were

not accepted by any other jamaats, or, for whatever reasons, had abandoned other groups. Therefore, it was hard to consider Mohammad Merah as a Jund al-Khilafah soldier. Most probably, he stayed in the settlement where they were and attended various trainings and exercises with them. Mohammad Merah's visits to Syria, Egypt and even Tajikistan were probably motivated by his desire to contact some radical group. His brother Abdelkader Merah later said to investigators that possibly "Mohammad was looking for a way to find contacts. He wanted to join Al-Qaeda and meet an Emir who could decide what he should do. To commit the acts that he did, one needs to be authorized by a sheikh or emir"⁴¹. The man most likely was Garsallaoui, who, as in the case of the fighters from Kazakhstan, decided to use Mohammed Merah for his own purposes. This is how Garsallaoui described his role in preparing Merah: "*And because I got to know the brother closer and sat with him on many occasions, and I was one of his mentors for a short while, I see that it is my duty to defend the honor of the brother... and seek to separate the fantasy from the truth that was in his mind, and the motives that pushed him to do the operations in France*"⁴².

In 2013, one of the three Kazakh activists of Jund al-Khilafah, Orynassar Munatov, was arrested and sentenced to a long-lasting custody. In order to find out the connection between Mohammad Merah and Moez Garsallaoui, French investigators interrogated Munatov. Some interrogation details were later published in the French press. In particular, "Munatov recognized Mohamed Merah when he was shown the photo No. 18 in a series

⁴¹ Paul Cruickshank. CNN, 13.06.2012 // <http://security.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/13/investigations-shed-new-light-on-toulouse-terrorist-shootings/>

⁴² zelin.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/abc5ab-al-qaqc481-al-andalusc4ab-22yc5ab-suf-al-fransc4ab-mue1b8a5ammad-mirc481e1b8a5-merah-as-i-knewhim22-en.pdf

of 22 photos. He never met that French man but he had seen that his chief Moez Garsallaoui had the same picture. “It was him that he showed me and he told me his second name was Yusuf”. The Toulouse gunman used this name for “warfare”. He lived with Moez in Miranshah for some time. Moez said Mohamed Merah participated in the Toulouse terrorist acts in France, where he was shot during his arrest”.

“Moez said that he had an agreement with Yusuf. If Yusuf had succeeded, Moez would have claimed responsibility for everything, as if the operations had been organized and carried out under his leadership”⁴³.

The French special services compared Munatov’s information with other materials, and concluded that Garsallaoui and Merah indeed contacted each other and most importantly planned the operation in France: “According to the messages, Moez had an agreement with Yusuf that if Yusuf took actions, Moez had to take the responsibility for the actions as if they were organized under his leadership. This hypothesis is considered to be more reliable because it is confirmed by many evidences, indicating that Merah was indeed in that camp for twelve days in 2011. He bragged about that during a raid to his apartment”⁴⁴.

The French journalist and expert Eric Pelletier analyzed the links between Muhammad Merah and Garsallaoui and concluded that each one pursued his own goal: “Deal with the Devil or mutually beneficial arrangement – this is how one can describe the relationship between Merah and his mentor Garsallaoui. Merah, a petty criminal, a loner, who wanted to get an approval / permission to murder in the name of Al-Qaeda. In the mean-

⁴³ Eric Pelletier. Les coulisses du djihad de Mohamed Merah au Pakistan enfin dévoilées

⁴⁴ Aujourd’hui en France, 21.03.2014

while, Garsallaoui wished to foothold on the international arena of jihadism”⁴⁵.

Some experts describe Mohammad Merah as a lone terrorist comparing him with the Norwegian shooter Breivik. They even use the term “self-radicalization”, meaning that his transformation from a street criminal into a dangerous radical evolved under the influence of many various social factors. However, some details of his biography still raise questions. For example, who has prompted him to and how has he managed to travel to countries such as Algeria, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan? Such distant journeys require substantial finance and simple, but still very important, organizational support – picking up, seeing off, providing shelter, contacts... Another question is, where and how did he obtain guns, especially when he was supervised by the police and internal intelligence service? According to the investigation, Merah was armed with a light machine gun UZI and a pistol Colt 45 ACP that he allegedly bought from illegal gun dealers. These details may indicate that Merah had been involved in a radical network even before visiting Afghanistan and Pakistan. The main question, whether Mohammad Merah acted under somebody else’s instruction or he committed all the murders on his own, still requires a complete and in-depth investigation. However, his personal fate and history of radicalization show how dangerous it is to underestimate the young Europeans involved in new conflict hot-beds - the war in Syria, etc.

In May 2014, the French RTL radio reported that Mohammad Merah’s sister, Suad Merah, set off to Syria to join her boy-

⁴⁵ Eric Pelletier. Les coulisses du djihad de Mohamed Merah au Pakistan enfin dévoilées //L’Express, 07.04.2014 http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/enquete/les-coulisses-du-djihad-de-mohamed-merah-au-pakistan-enfin-devoilees_1506683.html

friend, who had already departed from Toulouse and France. Earlier, Suad had already been arrested twice for inciting terrorism when she had recorded a message, in which she stated that she was proud of her younger brother. According to various sources, currently, around 3 thousand Europeans are fighting in Syria within various radical Islamic groups. For example, the latest reports state that in Syria there are 348 Belgian fighters⁴⁶. The questions - who are they, where will they return, and what will they do when the war is over - must concern the European governments now. After all, many of these people will be far better trained than Mohammad Merah was.

⁴⁶ Belgians Syria Fighters – An Overview of 2012 and 2013.<http://jihadology.net/2014/01/25/belgiums-syria-fighters-an-overview-of-2012-and-2013-ii/>

4. EMERGENCE OF RADICAL NETWORKS IN KAZAKHSTAN

At first glance, it seems that Jund al-Khilafah's story began the moment the first natives of Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries arrived at the Afghan-Pakistani border zone in 2008-2011. However, the start of the group's history should be traced from an earlier point: 2002. It started with the first penetration of specially trained infiltrators of the international terrorist organizations Ittihad Islami Jihad or Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) into Kazakhstan.

Experts usually apportion little attention to the role of the IJU in the structure of international terrorism⁴⁷. It is believed to be a small group that in 2002 split from the larger union of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; the difference between these two groups is not in the number of fighters, in fact, currently, the number of IJU fighters is almost equal to the number of IMU fighters. The difference between these two structures is that IJU and IMU follow different strategies of promoting terrorist ideologies and achieving their goals. In particular, the IJU leaders believe that the IMU followers are too focused on the military campaign in Afghanistan, do not try to expand their action zone and are insufficiently active in Uzbekistan, therefore the IJU called for broader goals and objectives. The IJU leaders adhered to a more transnational approach in their selection of recruits – in addition to immigrants from Central Asia, the group welcomed volunteers from Pakistan, Turkey, Germany, etc. It is not surprising that researchers, who studied the IJU, often called them Uzbek-Turkish Al-Qaeda.

⁴⁷ What is the “Islamic Jihad Union”: An imagination of special services or “off-shoot” of “Al Qaeda”? <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/6311>

Central Asia is a Target of the Islamic Jihad Union

According to the experts, the IJU founder and chief strategist is Najmeddin Jalolov, native of the Andijan region, Uzbekistan. Suspicious of participating in the Tashkent bombings of February 1999, he was declared wanted by the police from March that year. In November 2000, he was sentenced in absentia by the Supreme Court of Uzbekistan to 18 years in prison. Along with the leaders of the IMU - Juma Namangoni and Tahir Yuldashev, he was listed as a terrorist by Interpol and the United Nations⁴⁸.



Najmeddin Jalolov, leader of the Islamic Jihad Union

Jalolov's right hand was Sukhail Buranov (Sulaiman Abu Hudhayfah), born in Tashkent, who, at the age of 20, was able to occupy a leading position in the structure of the radical organization. Perhaps, his education had helped him: Buranov spoke five languages; Arabic in particular. According to the European experts, Sukhail Buranov coordinated the IJU operation in Germany.

⁴⁸ What is the "Islamic Jihad Union": An imagination of special services or «off-shoot» of "Al Qaeda"? <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/6311>

The man in charge of IJU from Al-Qaeda was Libyan Abu Laith al-Libi who was one of the most well-known Arabian field commanders in Afghanistan. Being in a high position in Al-Qaeda, Abu Laith al-Libi had patronized the migrants from Central Asia and had helped them to integrate into the Arab structures. According to the experts, different IJU messages and materials mention Abu Laith al-Libi as nobody less than a Sheikh, which once again emphasizes his special role in the organization.

In his interview taken in May 2007, Jalolov said that the IJU was founded in 2002 to combat the regime of Islam Karimov in Uzbekistan. However, he stressed that they did not intend to limit their activity only to Uzbekistan. He said, “One of the goals of our Union is to wage jihad on the path of the one God, to call the whole world to the true religion and to free our Muslim brothers in the countries that we specified from tyranny of unbelievers (Kaffeerlers), thereby guiding our brothers to the liberty of Islam. Our jihad will continue until Allah’s religion is fully established”⁴⁹. In the same interview, Jalolov also admitted that the IJU cooperated with radicals from the North Caucasus radical structures. Apparently, it was connected with Jalolov’s fleeing from Uzbekistan and, according to some sources, his joining the Caucasus Mujahideen and participating in military actions in the territory of Chechnya⁵⁰. Initially, the group consisted of about 10 fighters; two years later, it had two hundred fighters in its ranks. Alongside ethnic Uzbeks, the IJU was joined by Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Uyghurs, Chechens, Turks, and Azerbaijanis. As a conclusion, if compared to the IMU, which mostly consisted of ethnic Uzbek fighters, the IJU turned into an international entity bringing together the representatives of Central Asia, Caucasus, Turkey and even Europe. After the death of Jalolov, the leader of

⁴⁹ Guido W. Steinberg. *German Jihad*. New York: Columbia University, 2013. P.90

⁵⁰ Guido W. Steinberg. *German Jihad*. New York: Columbia University, 2013. P.90

IJU was Davron (Raushan) Akhmadjanov. In September 2010, Akhmadjanov was liquidated and IJU was headed by Ilimbek Mamatov (Hanif, Hamidullah Abdulaziz). He was born in Kyrgyzstan in 1976, and remarkably, he was an ethnic Kyrgyz.

The split between the IMU and IJU happened in 2001-2002⁵¹. The reasons for the split and creation of the IJU are the following:

- Discontentment with the tough management style of the IMU leadership, especially, Tahir Yuldashev;

- Disagreement over the IMU tactics, which ignored the “the Uzbek orientation” and focused all its resources on the war in Afghanistan.

Yuldashev did not deny that military invasion in Uzbekistan was necessary, but he thought that in the beginning it was essential to achieve the establishment of the Caliphate in Afghanistan in cooperation with the Taliban. Thus, having created a stronghold, the area of their actions could be expanded. Jalolov’s position was different: it was currently required to organize attacks against Uzbekistan without waiting for military campaign success in Afghanistan. However, the IMU leaders insisted on their grounds: they believed that the sporadic terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan would squander their resources and would not provide the desired results. Moreover, they feared that the Uzbek authorities would tighten up the security regime impeding the recruitment of the new followers. It should be noted that the disagreements between the IMU and IJU leaders were not confined to verbal disputes and discussions – sometimes, they even had physical clashes and armed conflicts. As a result, due to the growing conflict, Yuldashev’s threats to kill, and financial issues, the IJU leader was compelled to join to Al-Qaeda and develop a new strategy of “global jihad”.

⁵¹ Guido W. Steinberg. *German Jihad*. New York: Columbia University, 2013. P.90

After the US invasion in Afghanistan and the beginning of large-scale anti-terrorist operations, as well as the fall of the Taliban, the IMU had to leave their bases in northern Afghanistan and retreat to the Pakistani tribal areas. The new place for the IMU command center was the town of Wana in South Waziristan.

The IJU leaders contrarily moved to North Waziristan, choosing the town of Mir Ali for their headquarters. This town was also a refuge for diverse Al-Qaeda groups. Another ally of the IJU in North Waziristan was a so-called Haqqani network, one of the biggest rebel groups in Afghanistan. It is believed to have some informal agreement on mutual non-aggression with the Pakistani army. At least, the Pakistani army did not conduct large raids in areas controlled by the Haqqani network. Moreover, it is believed that the Haqqani is a tool for securing the Pakistani interests in Afghanistan. At every convenient occasion, the Pakistani intelligence uses the resources of the Haqqani network to carry out their covert operations. The founder of the group, Jalaluddin Haqqani, controlled these territories back in the period of the Soviet-Afghan War and maintained close ties with Arab volunteers, in particular, with Osama bin Laden. The IJU, therefore, automatically became part of an international radical network by choosing Mir Ali. Perhaps, the IJU even acquired immunity against the counter-actions of the Pakistani army, whereas the IMU often had to repel the attacks by the Pakistani army in South Waziristan. In any case, it is apparent that the geographical position of the IJU in North Waziristan played a significant role in the process of its internationalization.

In 2007, according to the German secret services, the IJU fighters “were planning a series of explosions in the territory of Ramstein, a US air base in the land of Rheinland-Pfaltz, and also in airports, cafes, restaurants and discotheques of large cities,

namely, Cologne, Stuttgart, Munich, Dortmund, Dusseldorf, and Frankfurt. Among the supposed targets was also the Uzbek embassy in Berlin”⁵². Najmeddin Jalolov, the IJU leader, personally coordinated the operation.

In March 2008, an IJU member, Juneyt Cifci, an ethnic Turk born in Germany, committed a suicide bombing at the US military base in the Afghan province of Khost. The attack killed two US soldiers and two Afghan soldiers. Before joining the IJU in Pakistan, 28-year-old Cifci had lived in the Bavarian town of Ansbach. Therefore, the mere fact that a German national conducted a suicide attack against American soldiers shocked many people in Europe. However, after this incident, intelligence services and experts started to pay special attention to the Islamic Jihad Union, which was actively trying to assert itself in the international arena.

It is difficult to say for the time being how well the IJU succeeded on its way to the global level, but in contrast to the IMU, it had well-established and sustained interaction with other major international organizations: “For Al-Qaeda and Taliban, the Islamic Jihad Union is a much more preferred ally than the IMU, because the IJU unquestionably supports their joint struggle against foreign troops in Afghanistan as well as the global jihad of Al-Qaeda. The link between Al-Qaeda and the IJU was established by Abu Laith al-Libi, one of bin Laden’s major field commanders who was killed in early 2008. The IJU confirmed that Libi (the jihadists called him their Sheikh) was killed in a missile attack alongside other IJU members. Libi maintained especially close relations with the Taliban and was a sort of “Al-Qaeda’s

⁵² Terrorists from the IJU told about the Uzbek group of gunmen //http://antiterror-today.com/ru/baza-dannykh/terroristicheskie-i-ekstremistskiegruppировki/soyuz-islamskogo-dzhikhada-gruppa-islamskogo-dzhikhada/397-frgterroristy-iz-sid-rasskazali-ob-uzbekskoj-gruppe-boevikov

designated representative for Central Asia”. He belonged to the new generation that contributed to strengthening of Al-Qaeda after 2005. It seems that it was Libi, who supervised and directed the IJU activities from the end of 2006⁵³. According to the American analyst Jacob Zenn, “in the 2000s, the international agenda of the IJU gained popularity among the IMU fighters, who eventually ceased to regard the liberation of the Fergana Valley as their top priority. Since the IMU was based in Pakistan, the authorities of Uzbekistan under the leadership of President Islam Karimov were less of a threat for them than the Pakistani army and the international forces fighting in the region”⁵⁴.

Thus, if the IMU focused more on military goals in Afghanistan, the IJU planned to focus on conducting operations abroad; and, of course, Central Asia being its first target.

The Deployment of the Terrorist Network in Kazakhstan

In 2002, the Islamic Jihad Union seconded two of its members, namely Zhakshybek Biymurzaev (“Aman”) and Ahmad Bekmirzaev (“Molik”) to Kazakhstan. Both had been in the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in the 1990-s, had been trained in Tajikistan and Afghanistan and had participated in the so-called Batken events of 1999-2000 when numerous IMU detachments tried to penetrate through Kyrgyzstan to Uzbekistan. Later, Bekmirzaev and Biymurzaev were transferred to Afghanistan together with the IMU core group where they were received by Al-Qaeda instructors, who trained them on espionage and subver-

⁵³ Guido Steinberg. Islamic Jihad Union. About internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism // http://germania-online.ru/uploads/media/651_IslamSWP4__1_.pdf

⁵⁴ Jacob Zenn. Central Asian Islamic groups (goals and objectives). <http://pro-kg.com/2014/04/19/3194/>

sion activities⁵⁵. The head of the Kazakhstani cell, Biymurzayev, was among the 20 best-trained fighters of Al-Qaeda. According to his own words, he gave the oath of allegiance to Mullah Omar himself, the leader of the Taliban.

In other words, Bekmirzaev and Biymurzayev were the most experienced IJU infiltrators. They were tasked to create a network of underground terrorist cells, to recruit citizens of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for organizing subversive activities against the Uzbek government. Their activities were coordinated by one of the IJU leaders, Jalolov Najmeddin (“Usmon”). This group was called, “Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat”. Within two years, the organization recruited 50 Uzbeks and 20 Kazakhs. This organization carried out its activities in four countries: Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia.

After arriving in Kazakhstan in summer 2002, Biymurzayev and Bekmirzaev settled in Taraz, the Zhambyl region. They were hired as workers to build a house for local residents, Abduvaliev and Azizov, who became their first recruitment targets. From autumn 2002 to summer 2004, by the recommendations of Abduvaliev and Azizov, the terrorist group recruited new members: A. Shayusupov, M. Valiev, M. Ibragimov and citizens of Kyrgyzstan B. Batyrbekov, N. Ismanaliev, R. Berdaliev, K. Abdraimov, and Zh. Nurmanbetov, whom Biymurzayev and Bekmirzaev brought into the so-called Taraz Jamaat.

Later, in spring 2003, Biymurzayev and Bekmirzaev invited more volunteers from among the residents of the South Kazakhstan region: A. Kadirahunov, E. Mammatkulov, M. Tazhibaev, M. Alimzhanov, as well as A. Zulpikarov from Uzbekistan and Arsabiev from Russia, who were brought into Shymkent Jamaat.

⁵⁵ Gulmira Mathalikova. Echoes of explosions in Tashkent // Express-K, №218(15625), November 12, 2004

In his turn, Kadirahunov later recruited the members of Uzbek extremist groups hiding in Kazakhstan: R.Kulbekov, F.Yusupov, and N.Alimov.

In 2003-2004, Biymurzayev and Bekmirzaev had the previously recruited residents, Semey Eruov and Iskakov, from Semipalatinsk Jamaat. Semipalatinsk Jamaat was joined by: K.Satbayev, K.Eserkenov, E.Kadirsiozov, G.Sarsenbekov, V.Izbotchenko, D.Bayguanyshev, S.Zhanuzakov, B.Tuganbaev, and R.Adikov.

The members were recruited either individually or by small groups of 2 or 3, using the strictly validated methodology:

- First, out of those who received primary knowledge of religion, they selected the ones who were ready for an in-depth study;

- The recruit was given tasks to read the religious dawats (callings, propaganda), to study the religious canons and to follow them with no exception. At the same time, it was stressed that non-compliance with the rules and principles was unacceptable;

- Gradually, the recruits were given examples of countries (Israel, Palestine, Chechnya, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan) that supposedly oppressed Muslims. To that end, they were demonstrated audios, videos and images from terror-promoting websites. Then they were called to help Muslim brothers;

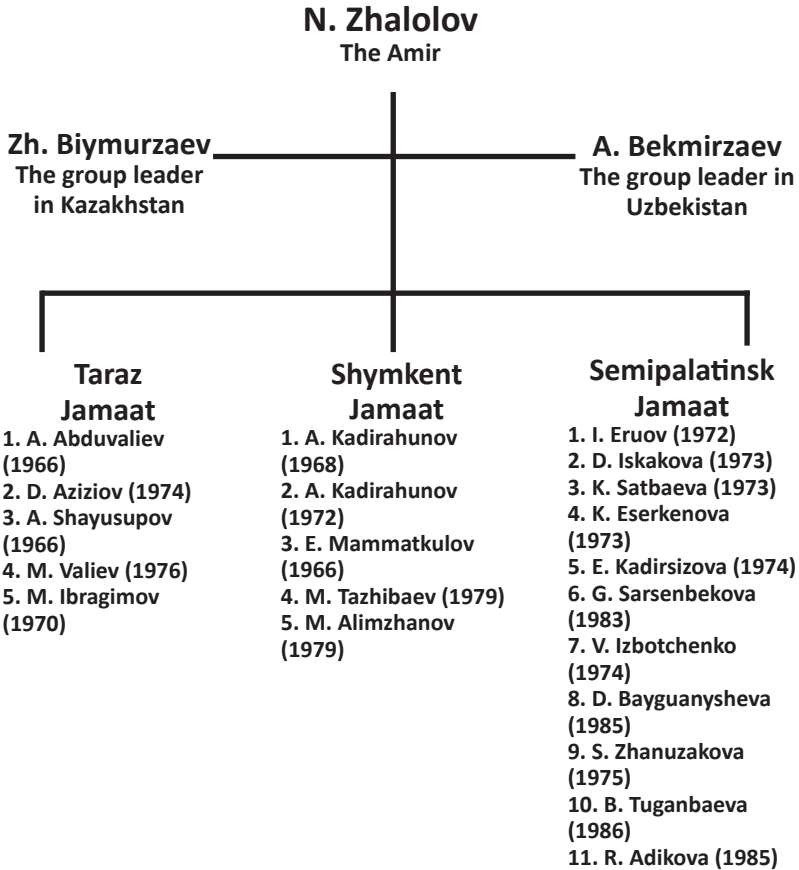
- Once the recruited persons started to share the above opinions and agreed to help Muslims, they were given a detailed explanation of the nature and purpose of jihad. In which case, the focus was made on the fact that participation in the “holy war” was the duty of every Muslim.

- When the recruit was showing readiness for jihad, he was called for “shahidism”, i.e. self-sacrifice for religion.

All these stages took around 1.5 or 2 months to brainwash somebody into becoming a potential suicide bomber. This was the task of Biymurzaev and Bekmirzaev – to form a group of suicide bombers. It should be noted that the IJU was the first group to use the suicide-martyr tactic in Central Asia. However, in addition to recruiting local residents, Bekmirzaev's and Biymurzaev's group also smuggled the recruits to the Afghan-Pakistani border area for training in the IMU camps. The first groups, mainly consisting of Uzbeks, were smuggled in autumn 2002 along the route Tashkent-Shymkent-Aktau-Baku-Iran-Pakistan. In autumn 2003, these groups began arriving in Shymkent one after another, from where they were sent to Uzbekistan. It is known that from January 2003 to March 2004, they sent 18 people along this route. Others were trained in Kazakhstan.

Thus, within eighteen months, the Islamic Jihad Union emissaries, Biymurzaev and Bekmirzaev, were able to create a highly secretive and extensive terrorist network in Kazakhstan. It should be noted that the network they created had a clear specialization system – the members of the group were divided into explosive specialists and recruiters. In addition, there were people in charge of forging documents and smuggling new recruits to Pakistan. For example, the leader of the Kazakhstani subgroup, Zhakshybek Biymurzaev, had three passports – Kazakhstani, Kyrgyzstani and Uzbekistani, and six underground aliases. Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat was a saboteur group that was created using an exact pattern and structure. The group had a predetermined leader and had concrete goals and objectives. In parallel, the group was engaged in robberies and looting. On February 28, 2004, Bekmirzaev, together with Eruov and Kadirsizov, robbed the house of entrepreneur Narezhny. During the burglary, they murdered the businessman and his family and stole 4000 USD.

The Structure of Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat



Although Bekmirzaev and Biymurzayev were sent by the same organization, each of them had separate objectives. In the first phase, Bekmirzaev dealt with the planning of operations in Uzbekistan, while Biymurzaev was instructed to form a group in Kazakhstan, and train new members. According to the investiga-

tion, the main goal of the group was to assassinate the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov⁵⁶.

The Chronicle of the Terrorist Attacks

The planning and preparation of the first operations started in autumn 2002. Their active phase started in early 2004. The first operation was supervised by Ahmad Bekmirzaev; the second was planned by Zhakshybek Biymurzayev, prepared only within three months.

The Terrorist Attacks in Tashkent in March 2004

The first operation did not achieve its objectives because the group accidentally revealed itself. On March 28, 2004, due to mishandling explosive components while they were being manufactured, all eight group members died in an explosion in a house of Kahraman village, Bukhara region.

Bekmirzaev had to start realizing his plans ahead of time with an incomplete group. The next day, on March 29, at 01.00, he and other members of the group took possession of a car by killing a taxi driver and, an hour later, attacking four police officers in Tashkent.

At 07.00, the participant of A. Bekmirzaev's group, M. Abdullaeva, committed a suicide bombing in the "Children's World" store in Tashkent. As a result, she and three Uzbek police officers died. An hour later, at 08.10, D. Kholmurodova also blew herself up at a bus stop near the "Chorsu" market. As a result, she and her minor daughter died.

⁵⁶ National Security Committee of Kazakhstan defeated "Jamaat Mujahideen of Central Asia" // *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, №257-258, November 12, 2004

The next day, on March 30, 2004, in the morning, the members of Bekmirzaev's group, Eruov and Tursunov blew themselves up in a car near a police checkpoint of Kibray district, Tashkent region. As a result, the bombers, three police officers and a taxi driver died.

Half an hour later, at 08.30, near House No. 26, Karamurt str., Kibray district, Tashkent, Ibrahimova detonated her explosive device when the police tried to arrest her. She was Biymurziev's wife, a citizen of Kazakhstan from Taraz.

On the same day, March 30, 2004, at 09.00, Ahmad Bekmirzaev and part of his group were killed in an exchange of fire when besieged by the Uzbek police in the town of Salar, Kibray District, Tashkent Region. At 10.00, another group of Bekmirzaev (four people) committed a suicide bombing at House No.14, Okhunboboev str., Kibray District, Tashkent region. All of them died.

The attacks continued on the next day. On March 31, at 19.30, another member of Bekmirzaev's group, K. Azimbekov committed a suicide attack at House No. 12, Chimboy str., Tashkent.

On April1, the last member of Bekmirzaev's group, F. Akramova detonated an explosive device during the arrest at her home at Kahraman village, Romiton district, Bukhara region. As a result, she and a minor girl died.

With the attacks perpetrated by Ahmad Bekmirzaev's group, 23 citizens of Uzbekistan were killed including 9 police officers. In addition, 92 people were injured, including 39 police officers.

Although, Bekmirzaev's group did not reach its goals, and the operation was generally failed, these events were a serious challenge for the Uzbek security services.

According to Guido Steinberg, who researched the IJU activities, “these terrorist suicide attacks happened in Central Asia for the first time, causing shock waves throughout the region, which had a hard time recovering from the several IJU attacks in 1999 and 2000. The attacks were a complete surprise for the Uzbek authorities, in fact, their first reaction was to blame the Islamic Liberation Party (Hizb al-Tahrir)”⁵⁷. Later, the IJU claimed responsibility by disseminating a message in Arabic, in which they said that the attacks had been a retaliation for arrests, tortures and executions of believers in Uzbekistan. In the message, the IJU also demanded that the Uzbek authorities immediately release arrested and imprisoned Muslims in Uzbekistan.

The July Terrorist Attacks in Tashkent in 2004

After Bekmirzaev’s failed operation, the IJU leaders instructed Zhakshybek Biymurzaev to organize new terrorist attacks: to bomb the embassies of Israel, the US and the UK in Tashkent. Biymurzaev was personally engaged in the planning, selection, and preparation of martyrs. His ideas were to organize the attacks simultaneously in several locations. However, whereas the first operation was mainly carried out by Uzbek natives, in the second operation, Bekmirzaev involved Kazakhstani citizens: residents of Taraz - A. Shayusupov and M. Valiyev, a resident of Semey, D. Isabekov.

On July 30, 2004 at 16.45, Shayusupov blew himself up in the lobby of the main building of the General Prosecutor’s Office in Uzbekistan. Consequently, he was killed and 7 people were injured.

At 16.55, Issabekov detonated his “shahid belt” in front

⁵⁷ Guido W. Steinberg, *German Jihad*. New York: Columbia University, 2013. P.95

of the US Embassy building in Uzbekistan. Besides the suicide bomber, the explosion also killed three and injured two Embassy security workers.

At 17.00, Valiev blew himself up near the Embassy of Israel in Tashkent. The attack killed three and injured two Embassy security officers.

Overall, the July terrorist attacks organized by Zhakshybek Biymurzaev's group resulted, alongside three "shahids", in the death of four employees of embassies and injury of 11 people.

In contrast to the previous operations, with the July attacks the IJU tried to demonstrate their participation in the global jihad for the first time – now, the targets were foreign entities in the territory of Uzbekistan rather than the Uzbek ones. Experts noted that the IJU combined the struggle against the "close enemy" with the attacks on the "remote enemy", "These were the first attacks against the Western targets in Central Asia, and the selection of the American and Israeli embassies echoed the targets selected by Al-Qaeda and other Arab jihadists. The message was clear: in Central Asia there was an organization that supported the global agenda of Al-Qaeda"⁵⁸. As in the first case, the IJU also declared its responsibility by posting a message on the Arabic forum Islamic Minbar: *"A group of young Muslims conducted martyrdom operations that instilled fear in the apostate government and its non-believer allies, Americans and Jews. The Islamic Jihad Mujahideen attacked the US and Israel embassies, as well as the court where the trial of a large number of brothers from the group had begun. These martyrdom operations will not cease, if God wills. This is done in order to eradicate the injustice of the apostate government and to support the jihad of our Muslim brothers in Iraq, Palestine, Afghanistan, Hijaz and other Muslim*

⁵⁸ Guido W. Steinberg. *German Jihad*. New York: Columbia University, 2013. P.96

countries ruled by atheists and apostates”⁵⁹. At the same time, it should be admitted that some experts and observers thought that the IJU might not be involved in the Tashkent terrorist attacks in May and July 2004. For example, Mambetov Nurdin, Deputy Director of the Kyrgyz analytical center “Reasonable Solution” questioned the participation of the Islamic Jihad Union in the terrorist attacks that happened in Uzbekistan in 2004 because, logically thinking, such action required considerable material and human resources in combination with informational support. Among the terrorist groups operating in the region, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan had these capabilities and they were the most interested in destabilizing the situation. However, the creations of small, autonomous groups, which are more mobile, are more effective against the military structure of any country cannot be excluded”⁶⁰.

There are also hypotheses that these terrorist attacks could be organized by the Uzbek security services themselves to justify and find a pretext for a new round of repressive policies. Nonetheless, such opinions and hypotheses are mostly not supported by any facts or evidence. In any case, many experts believe that the IJU is the first to use suicide-bombers in Central Asia⁶¹.

The Influence of the Tashkent Terrorist Attacks on Relations between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan

After the liquidation of the group and the detention of its leader, Zhakshybek Biymurzaev, during its investigation, the

⁵⁹ Guido W. Steinberg. *German Jihad*. New York: Columbia University, 2013. P.96

⁶⁰ Mambetov N. “Islamic Jihad Union”: Myth or a threat? www.analitika.org, 2011.01.04

⁶¹ What is the “Islamic Jihad Union”: An imagination of special services or «off-shoot” of “Al Qaeda”? <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/6311>

group denied that they had targets in Kazakhstan. Kazakh suicide bombers were used in attacks forcedly. The reasons were the lack of preparation of other shahids and the conspiratorial goals. Moreover, Biymurzayev reiterated that he was even prohibited from involving the citizens of Kazakhstan in direct participation in the operations without an urgent need.

However, it is possible that Kazakhstani citizens were purposely recruited by the organizers of the terrorist attacks in Tashkent as suicide bombers for a number of reasons:

- Firstly, to destroy the image of Kazakhstan as a stable state in the region where terrorism had not been an issue previously.

- Secondly, to spoil the relations between the neighboring countries, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and to make them tense. To some extent, they unfortunately succeeded.

In summer 2004, Tashkent officially stated the claim to the Kazakhstani side. From March 28 - April 1, 2004, during the terrorism court trial in Tashkent and the Bukhara region, the representative of the Prosecutor's Office stated that the defendants and their associates had visited the border areas of Kazakhstan, which had terrorists' training camps. During the trial, the defendants admitted that they had received subversive training in special camps in Pakistan, in the province of South Waziristan, and in the neighboring Kazakhstan. According to them, instructors were Arabs supervised by Mullah Omar, who prepared fighters for Al-Qaeda. They also testified that the camps in southern Kazakhstan were used to smuggle terrorists through Azerbaijan and Iran to Pakistan. Moreover, the defendants identified Avazkhan Shayusupov, the terrorist who blew himself up in front of the General Prosecutor's Office of Uzbekistan on July 30th 2004. Later, it was confirmed that the other suicide bombers were also

Kazakhstani citizens. Kazakhstani special services initially denied the facts, just as all other previous allegations, voiced by the Uzbek authorities regarding the existence of terrorist training bases in the territory of Kazakhstan. Joint investigation with the Uzbek intelligence services did not reveal any training camps in the south of Kazakhstan but confirmed that the members of the terrorist group wanted by the Uzbek authorities indeed had been hiding in Kazakhstan.

On November 11, 2004, the First Deputy Head of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan (the NSC of Kazakhstan), Vladimir Bozhko made an almost sensational statement on liquidation of the terrorist organization, which was alleged to be part of Al-Qaeda. The terrorist group was called Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat. He said there were nine Kazakhstani and four Uzbekistani citizens among the arrested. Besides, according to him, they detained four female residents of South Kazakhstan region trained to be suicide bombers. The First Deputy Head of the NSC of Kazakhstan also said that the group was controlled by the members of the IJU, namely Ahmad Bekmirzaev and Zhakshybek Biymurzaev, who were specially sent from Pakistan. According to Bozhko, the group was directly involved in preparing and committing a series of terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan in spring and summer 2004. In particular, the terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan in March and April 2004 were organized by Bekmirzaev. One of the suicide bombers, who blew herself up in Tashkent, was Bekmirzaev's wife, a Kazakhstani citizen, Makhira Ibrahimova. Three terrorist attacks that were committed in Tashkent on July 30th 2004 were organized by Zh. Biymurzaev. In addition to that, Bozhko stressed that the liquidated terrorist group Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat acted primarily against Uzbekistan, which, according to the terrorist group members violated the rights of believers.

As anticipated, after some time, several Uzbek media outlets published materials criticizing the Security Forces of Kazakhstan. Tashkent officials seemed outraged with the fact that commenting on the liquidation of the terrorist group, the Kazakhstani special services stressed that their activities were directed against the current regime in Uzbekistan. It seemed as if the NSC officials had been implying that only Uzbekistan conditioned the development of terrorism. According to the Uzbek side, the targets of terrorist attacks could be anything and anybody.

Therefore, it is not surprising that Tashkent regarded this statement as an indirect criticism of the country's policy. In an interview, the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov personally commented on the statement of the Deputy Head of the NSC of Kazakhstan Vladimir Bozhko, "He declared that all these people – shahids, extremists – acted not against Kazakhstan but against Uzbekistan in particular. This is because Kazakhstan, as it is presented, maintains freedom of religion and all democratic standards, so radicals have nothing against them. But, Kazakhstan signed dozens of documents where it pledged not to create in its territory conditions posing threats to its neighbor. Apparently, the general has forgotten it. Overall, the logic is strange: extremists are against us because we persecute them and do not let them be deployed. Well, it is something to be welcomed, not judged! In the meantime, the impression is that the high general expresses this official point of view. And it is very alarming"⁶².

Later, the Director of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Vyacheslav Kassymov, delegated to the organization from Uzbekistan, joined the accusations that Kazakhstan harbored terrorists and declared

⁶² Islam Karimov: "We were considered as second-class citizens in the time of Empire" "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" №3 (3399), 14.01.2005.

“there are even land plots purchased by firms belonging to “bin Ladens”. In response to this, on February 9, 2005, the MFA of Kazakhstan made a statement that it “regarded the sayings of the Head of the SCO Antiterrorist Structure as irrelevant, running counter to the spirit and regulations of the major documents signed by the highest officials of the SCO member states. Statements of this sort are incompatible with the status of the head of an important international organization and cast a shadow on the reputation and position of the SCO in the contemporary world”. The dispute about who inadequately fight against terrorists and how they fight grew into a genuine diplomatic squabble. Both sides forgot the causes of the dispute and started blaming each other for everything. In particular, the Uzbek media spread a message that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, allegedly, considered rejecting the initiative of the President of Kazakhstan to establish the Union of Central Asian States because it was ungrounded. However, in a telephone conversation with Nursultan Nazarbayev, the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov said that the MFA of Uzbekistan had nothing to do with those comments of news agencies⁶³.

Nonetheless, Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat was promptly uncovered and liquidated by the Kazakhstani intelligence services. Zhakshybek Biymurzayev was arrested in Bishkek in October 2004 and later was sentenced to 25 years in prison. On April 20, 2006, the UN Security Council added Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat to the consolidated list of terrorist organizations of the United Nations upon the initiative of Kazakhstan.

After the Sauerland Operation, when the IJU again became known in attempts to organize attacks on Americans, the CIA

⁶³ “Kazinform” news agency. 23.02.2005

started a real hunt after its leaders. On September 14, 2009, the leader of the Islamic Jihad Union, Najmoddin Kamolov (“Usmon”), who had organized the Tashkent attacks in spring and summer 2004, was killed by an American missile strike near Mir Ali, Pakistan. At the same time, an American drone killed Jalolov’s proxy, Sukhail Buranov.

Although the intelligence services repeatedly stated that Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat had never planned terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan, the group most likely was not going to limit itself to Uzbekistan. Judging by the scale and nature of its activities, it had wider objectives. Recruitment and involvement of Kazakhstani citizens in terrorism already meant that their foothold was being created within the country. As subsequent events showed, this was the first serious attempt of international terrorist organizations to penetrate Kazakhstan. The virus of radicalism and terrorism generated by international terrorist groups penetrated Kazakhstan and started to spread. And the first virus carriers were the members of Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat created by the Islamic Jihad Union.

The Emergence of the Autonomous Terrorist Cells in Kazakhstan

The core members of Biymurzaev-Bekmirzaev’s group were detained by the law enforcement structures and, broadly speaking, the group was disarmed and liquidated. However, some members of the group managed not only to escape but also to continue their terrorist activities. The key figures who escaped punishment were Meyram Alimzhanov and Oktyabr Baytugelov, who continued pursuing their Emir’s goals in the following areas: recruitment, propaganda and creation of terrorist groups.

Their activities resulted in radical ideologies spreading within the country, attracting new supporters of extremist movements, some of whom later became involved in creating Jund al-Khilafah.

Meyram Alimzhanov joined Biymurzaev's group in summer 2003, becoming a member of Shymkent Jamaat. After the group was exposed and Biymurzaev detained in summer 2004, Alimzhanov started to hide from the authorities. In the period of 2004 to 2006, he continued his activities while planning the creation of his own Jamaat, which only held meetings.

From November 2006 to January 2007, Alimzhanov was in Baku wanting to join the North Caucasus structures of Doku Umarov. However, later he decided to return to Kazakhstan. According to some reports, in Baku, Alimzhanov was appointed Emir of all Jamaats in Kazakhstan. When he returned to Kazakhstan in January 2007, Alimzhanov started creating terrorist groups in the territory of Almaty city and Almaty region.

His main goal was to promote "jihad" among believers, encourage donations for financing the terrorist organizations of the Caucasus Emirate and illegal paramilitary groups waging "holy war" in North Caucasus of the Russian Federation under the leadership of Doku Umarov. In total, 46,000 US dollars were sent to Baku for these purposes from 2009 to 2011.

On May 6, 2011, Meyram Alimzhanov was detained in Almaty during a counter-terrorist operation. When he was detained, he had a Kalashnikov with three feed hoppers, F-1 grenade, TT pistol with a silencer, ammunition and money. From May to June 2011, some other active members of Alimzhanov's terrorist cell also were detained; their RGD-5 grenades confiscated.

There was another member of Baytugelov's group, who had known Zhakshybek Biymurzaev from early 2004 and had been his assistant. Like Alimzhanov, he had been hiding from

investigation, but, a while later resumed his activities and tried to restore the liquidated network. One of its first members was Meyram Makulbek, who had religious education and was fluent in Arabic. According to some reports, Makulbek and Alimzhanov went to a mosque in Almaty together. Makulbek was the one whom Baytugelov instructed to go to Atyrau and start a local Jamaat there. On June 17, 2004, Baytugelov and Makulbek registered a religious association called, “Darus-Salam”, for which Makulbek was elected leader in August that year.

From 2004 to 2007, Makulbek preached in the Al-Taqua mosque in Atyrau and in his sermons, he turned to the ideas of jihad. However, he caused discontentment among the city residents who began complaining to the relevant state authorities. Consequently, on July 11, 2007, by the decision of a special inter-district economic court of the Atyrau region, the registration of Darus-Salam was acknowledged as illegal and its activities were banned in the country.

After the outrage within the Muslim community and aggravation of the relations with the official clergy of the Atyrau region, Makulbek moved to Shymkent, where he also tried to create a radical network, but after a while, he was spotted by the law enforcement structures again. Ultimately, he was arrested and convicted.

The jihadist ideas of Makulbek affected a large number of young believers, who, subsequently, while studying in foreign religious centers, began nurturing concrete plans to go to camps of international terrorist organizations (especially in Egypt). The definitive radicalization and recruitment of the first supporters and activists was happening abroad.

According to investigation materials, some of the young people who were affected by Makulbek were the following residents of Atyrau:

1. Arman Batyrhaiyrov, born in 1980;
2. Rustem Zhumabaev, born in 1986;
3. Damir Znaliev, born in 1989;
4. Orynbassar Munatov, born in 1987;
5. Marat Utegaliev, born in 1988;
6. Rinat Habidolla, born in 1987;
7. Ussen Chilmanov, born in 1989.

Some of these people would later actively participate in the establishment of the community of migrants from Kazakhstan to the Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone. Thus, in 2009, Kazakhstani citizens, under the leadership of Rustem Zhumabaev, created a so-called Kazakh Islamic Jihad in the free tribal zone in Pakistan. One of the members of this group, namely Habidolla Rinat, subsequently took part in the creation of Jund al-Khilafah. This way, the story of the Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat clearly shows what danger can be created by the efforts of specially trained people. Just a couple of well-trained terrorists organized a highly conspiratorial network of radical cells that kept on functioning after the liquidation of the command center. However, the most frightening fact is that it continued to expand, involving new people into its criminal network.

5. THE KAZAKHSTANI FIGHTERS IN THE AFGHANISTAN-PAKISTANI BORDER ZONE

One of the first cells of the radical network in Kazakhstan was a group called the Kazakh Islamic Jihad, established in Atyrau in 2008. Its core was constituted of young people who were affected by the extremist propaganda of Meyrambek Makulbek. Having settled in Atyrau in 2004, in spite of the prohibition of the Spiritual Muslim Administration of Kazakhstan, he created an unregistered religious association, the Darus-Salam. The propaganda of jihadist ideology was carried out in the Al-Taqua mosque that became an extremist underground center in the region. After a while, the city residents began to complain to local authorities and law enforcement agencies on the activities of the Darus-Salam. Fearing criminal prosecution, Makulbek left Atyrau and moved to Shymkent. However, his followers did not give up their convictions. The seed was sown in a fertile soil: the followers continued engaging new supporters on their own. The main idea of participation of their propaganda was jihad on the side of the Muslim Brotherhood in the war zones of the Northern Caucasus and Afghanistan. A number of groups were formed from among the most active supporters to be sent to the combat zone. The sympathizers were invited to provide organizational and financial assistance to the “volunteers” and their families. A number of structural cells were created for effective fundraising.

The KIJ Structure

The Atyrau cell involved around fifty people, all of whom joined the following subgroups:

Group 1 - Ittihad Al-Muslimeen. Myrzabek Nurashev was appointed Emir of the group. Ermek Habidolla was appointed his proxy. The group comprised the members in charge of Aktau and Almaty and responsible for bombing and fighting.

Group 2 - The Top Ten. The Emir of the group was Ruslan Boyandinov, who later was replaced by Yerlan Amirgaliev and Maksat Taurov. The structure of the Top Ten was formed taking into account the close residence of the Jamaat members in the districts of Atyrau (micro-district Avangard, village Zhumysker, district Zhilgorodok, market and old airport areas).

Group 3 – Li’s Team. The Emir of the group was Sergey Li. The group mainly consisted of members in charge of bombing and fighting operations.

Group 4 - Baurzhan Sultangaliev’s Group. It was created later and mostly operated in the period of the Soldiers of the Caliphate.

Ittihad Al-Muslimeen 22 members	Li’s Group 6 members	Sultangaliev’s group 6 members	The Top Ten 19 members
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The analysis of biographical data shows that over 66% of the Atyrau group consisted of young people aged 21-25. The average age of the group members was 25, while the youngest at the time of committing a crime was 18 years old and the oldest was 43.

More than 46% of the group members had only received secondary education. For example, one of them finished only 4 grades of secondary school. Some group members were expelled or had left school voluntarily. More than a third of the group participants received secondary special and higher education (20% - higher education, while 17% secondary special education). It is also worth noting that around 13% of the members were not able to graduate from a university for reasons, inter alia, the lack of

money to pay for tuition fees. At the same time, only a small portion of the group members (5%) attended madrassahs (religious schools), including those abroad, namely in Cairo, Egypt.

Most members of the terrorist groups were unemployed (73%). However, over 17% were self-employed entrepreneurs. Around 10% were employed in security firms and local companies. One of the group participants was the director of his own security company.

80% of the terrorist group participants were married and had families. Most of them married at the age of 18-19 and had from two to five children. As a rule, the wives of most of them also observed religious customs.

It should be noted that some of the young people involved in the radical activities were from incomplete families: around 26% of the group members had divorced parents or did not have a father who either died when the member was a small child or later from a grave disease.

Many of them became religious at the age of 17-19. Most of them had practiced religion for about a year or a year and a half by the time of the known events.

As it was previously mentioned, the network was expanded mainly with the purpose of increasing the donations from sympathizing people. In total, from 2009 to 2011, the leaders and members of the radical groups Ittihad al-Muslimeen, The Top Ten and Li's Team fundraised 21 412 775 KZT. It should be noted that some people did not know for what purposes they have raised money.

In fact, the structure of the radical movement was based on the principles of network marketing. The groups were broken into small cells, the members of which made their contributions. At the same time, in order to ensure secrecy, members of one cell did not know and did not see members of the other cells. Group

leaders often took advantage of the opaque nature of relationships within their groups and the use of unclear reporting mechanisms in order to squander the money they were raising.

In addition to donations, the private money of the activists and leaders of the extremist movement was also used to fund radical groups. Just as in the case with other groups, such as the Central Asian Mujahideen Jamaat, the cell members often resorted to criminal actions in their search for money: burglary, thefts and armed robberies. On August 2, 2011, the members of the terrorist cell Ittihad al-Muslimeen, Askhat Aubekеров, Aslanbek Sagyndykov and Nauryzgali Ulzhabaev planned an attack on a military detachment. In order to buy the missing components for their explosive device, they robbed the “Satti” grocery store in the outskirts of Atyrau. They stole 8000 KZT from the cash register, 24 mobile payment cards, etc. A week later, they were arrested by the police.

The Departure of Kazakhstani Citizens to Afghanistan

In the middle of 2000-s, Kazakhstan faced the problem of radical movement members departing for participation in major combat zones. They primarily wished to go to the North Caucasus. The process was facilitated by frequent meetings and contacts between Kazakhstani radicals and their North Caucasus counterparts, geographical proximity, common language and active online propaganda. Then, media started reporting more frequently on people from Kazakhstan involved in terrorism abroad.

After the terrorist attack in the city of Beslan, which happened in September 2004, the media referred to the General Prosecutor’s Office of the Russian Federation reporting that one of the terrorists liquidated during the assault was a Kazakhstani citizen. Kazakhstani special services were not able to comment

on this information promptly. According to the Head of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, Nartai Dutbaev, there was no reliable information to confirm that Kazakhstani nationals were among the terrorists who had seized the school building in the North Ossetian town of Beslan. Dutbaev also stated, “according to one of the presuppositions, actually, the participant of the terrorist act was an ethnic Kazakh of Ukrainian nationality who resided in Russia. During the first Chechen war, he served on the side of the federal army but later joined the Chechen fighters. According to some recent, more exact, data, the man was of Chechen origin nicknamed Kazakh”⁶⁴. Although the Russian intelligence did not provide any direct evidence on involvement of Kazakhstani citizens in the Beslan terrorist attack, the question remains open.

Later, there was more information on the participation of Kazakhstanis in the Caucasian illegal armed groups.

In July 2009, during a special operation in Dagestan, eight people were killed, and – according to law enforcement officials - five of them had Kazakhstani passports. However, the Embassy of Kazakhstan in Russia did not confirm that information.

On July 19, 2009, the Kyrgyz special services arrested 18 people on suspicion of being involved in terrorist activities in Bishkek and in the south of the country, among which there were citizens of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

On September 19, 2010, in the course of a special operation in Rasht Valley, Tajikistan, the Tajik police found a passport belonging to a Kazakhstani citizen, Arthur Nabiyeu, who was killed during the operation.

In October 2010, the Russian Federal Security Service liquidated a resident of Aktau Yerlan Yusupov during a special operation in Makhachkala.

⁶⁴ “Kazinform” News Agency, 09.09.2004

On January 19, 2011, the MFA of Kazakhstan confirmed the detention of a Kazakhstani citizen on suspicion of organizing terrorist attacks in Bishkek.

The flow of reports increased. In February 2011, two Kazakhstani citizens suspected of participating in illegally-armed groups were detained in Makhachkala. They were Albert Abdikarimov, born in 1989 and Rainbek Erzhanov, born in 1990. In March that year, during a special operation in Makhachkala, a fighter was killed, who was of Kazakhstani origin. A month later, on April 20, 2011, during crossfire in the village of Khushet (Dagestan), the special services killed a fighter from Kazakhstan, who was later identified as Sabitbay Amanov.

In spite of the proximity of Northern Kazakhstan to the borders of Central Asia, Afghanistan remained the most popular and safest route for radicals.

From 2008 to 2009, the leaders, and most active members of the Atyrau cell, in particular, Rustam Zhumabaev, Yeldos Kunshugarov, Usen Chilmanov, Rinat Habidolla and Nurlan Alipovand, as well as others, departed to the Afghan-Pakistan border to join the terrorist groups based in North Waziristan. Before that, they had attempted to join the armed formations in North Caucasus. But knowing that the Russian intelligence was watching all transit corridors closely, and fearing to be intercepted, they selected the Afghan route.

The analysis of the criminal cases identifies two main transit routes for Kazakhstani citizens recruited by terrorist group members to enter the Afghan-Pakistan border zone for participation in “jihad” against the international coalition forces. The remarkable fact is that in both cases, the key link was the territory of Turkey that has a visa-free agreement with Kazakhstan.

The first route is through the distant foreign countries.

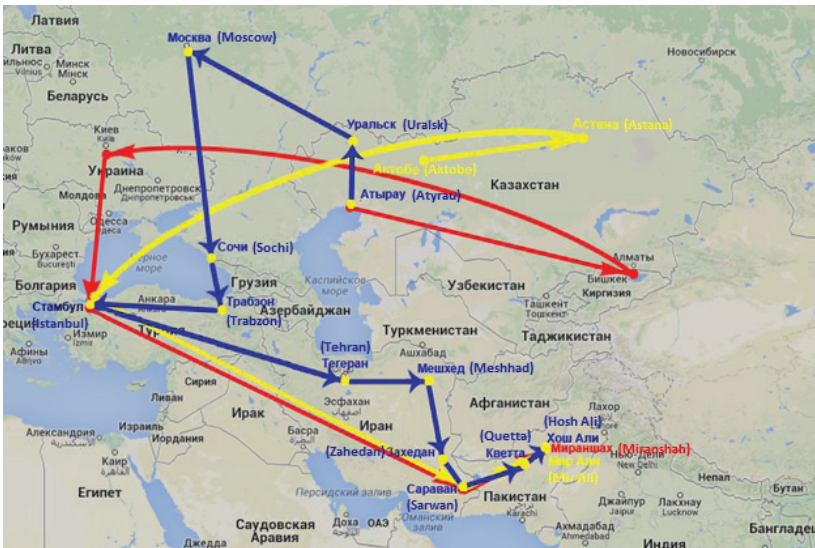
When choosing this route, the recruited initially departed

to one of the Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Syria or Egypt) for alleged purposes of receiving advanced religious education; after which they traveled to Turkey and then to North Waziristan in Pakistan.

The second route is through the neighboring countries.

In this case, the recruited traveled via one of the following routes:

- 1) Atyrau - Uralsk - Moscow (Russia) - Sochi (Russia) - Trabzon (Turkey) - Istanbul (Turkey) - Tehran (Iran) – Mashad (Iran) - Zahedan (Iran) - Sarwan (Iran) - Quetta (Pakistan) – Hosh Ali (North Waziristan province, Pakistan);
- 2) Atyrau - Almaty - Kiev (Ukraine) - Istanbul (Turkey) - Sarwan (Iran) - Miranshah (North Waziristan Province, Pakistan);
- 3) Aktobe - Astana - Istanbul (Turkey) - Sarwan (Iran) - Quetta (Pakistan) - World (North Waziristan Province, Pakistan).



Along these routes, it took the Kazakhstani citizens to travel from 30 to 45 days. There were special people in each location

who were in charge of meeting and supervising their departures at airports and train stations as well as accommodating the arrived people in rented houses and apartments. The key transit points were Istanbul (Turkey) and Sarwan (Iran). The recruited individuals remained in those locations for 10-15 days waiting for forged passports, visas and the guides who would ensure further safe transit. Borders were crossed illegally, so some of the recruited were stopped by the border police on either the Iran-Afghan or Iran-Pakistan borders.

All the costs (transportation, food and accommodation) amounting to 1,500-3,000 USD were covered by the recruits themselves. Therefore, quite often, those who wished to depart on the “extreme tour” had to collect the required money for several months, even half a year or sometimes a whole year. Young people often borrowed the money from their relatives, families and friends using various pretexts, explaining it was needed for urgent personal matters. Sometimes money was donated by other Jamaat members.

Broadly, the first recruits from Kazakhstan started to appear in the Afghan-Pakistani zone earlier. Back in the early 2000-s, the mass media started reporting frequently on detained or killed citizens of Kazakhstan in Afghanistan and Pakistan. After the fall of the Taliban and the defeat of its major forces in Afghanistan in 2001, many of its participants were taken captive by the US military and imprisoned in Guantanamo. Among them, there were also Kazakhstani citizens; namely, Ilkhomzhon Botayev, Sukhrat Arupov, Aytu Abykanov and Dolkyn Kerimbakiev. Later, many of them were released and repatriated to Kazakhstan.

On July 17, 2005, there was an armed clash between the military and a terrorist group in Miranshah, the administrative capital of North Waziristan, Pakistan. In the crossfire between the

soldiers of the international coalition and fighters, 17 people were killed and 16 were seized. The Pakistani soldiers first reported on four Kazakhstani citizens among the militants. A week later, they officially announced that all the killed terrorists were Kazakhstani. The Embassy of Kazakhstan in Pakistan did not confirm the information that the liquidated terrorists were Kazakhstani citizens. The Spokesman of the National Security Committee, Kenzhebulat Beknazarov, said that they had not received any information about Kazakhstani fighters killed in Pakistan.

However, the information about Kazakhstanis fighting in Pakistan and Afghanistan continued reappearing later. Furthermore, their appearance was reported in vastly different regions. In March 2013, the Kunduz police reported that, in Imam Sahib, they arrested a Kazakhstani citizen who possessed propagandistic materials of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan; maps and other documents showing his intent to prepare a terrorist attack. According to a Deutsche Welle journalist, Vitaly Volkov, who first reported on this incident in the provinces of Badakhshan, Takhar and Kunduz in Afghanistan, several IMU fighter units were present, which were consistently replenished by the fighters from Kazakhstan. A few months later, in October 2013, the media reported again that natives from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were fighting in the Afghan province of Badakhshan. According to Ahmed Rashid, an expert on Central Asia, based in Pakistan, the involvement of Kazakhstani nationals in the armed conflicts of Afghanistan was a very alarming trend.

However, there was no reliable information on the exact number of Kazakhstani natives in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone. Some media reported, referring to Afghan journalists that the Taliban-controlled Madrassah in Waziristan trained up to 700 Kazakhstani citizens, who were later selected as volunteers for

militant groups. Experts, who studied the situation in Afghanistan, gave their assessments – according to their data, in Afghanistan, as part of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, there were around 200 fighters of the so-called Kazakh Jamaat.



In June 2013, the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan confirmed that the issue of controlling the movement of terrorists is one of the vital tasks of the Kazakhstani special services. During the Kazan meeting of the highest officials of the special services of the CIS countries, the Head of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, Nurtai Abykayev, said, “it seems to be one of the most painful issues, because abroad, in the Pakistan-Afghanistan region there are more than 100 Kazakhstani natives”. According to Abykayev, they had departed under various pretexts. However, thanks to the joint work carried out together with the special services of other states, they even had a list of their exact names. Additionally, the head of the Kazakhstani special services reported that most Kazakhstani citizens ar-

rested in Waziristan had arrived after having being recruited by the fighters from North Caucasus. Thus, the problem of radicals from Kazakhstan departing to other hotspots had become grave within a few years.

Upon arriving at the place, the “volunteers” were allocated among different groups. Most often, the Kazakhstani nationals, alongside other representatives of the Central Asian republics, joined the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan or Islamic Union of Jihad. An important role was played by their common culture and language, so the newly arrived fighters could soon integrate into terrorist groups. North Waziristan is an uncontrolled territory sheltering all kinds of radical organizations and structures. According to certain data, currently, in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border zone, there are from 5 to 15 thousand foreign fighters and mercenaries from more than 70 countries around the world.

Largest Groups in North Waziristan

No.	Name of Community	Leaders	Ethnic composition and Membership (in 2010-2011)	Location
1.	Taliban	Mullah Omar (allegedly killed in 2011. However the reports of his death have not been confirmed)	Mainly Afghans, around 20-30 thousand people	Afghanistan and Pakistan
2.	Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (so-called Pakistani Taliban)	Baitullah Mehsud (killed in 2009) Hakimulla Meksud (killed in 2013)	Pashtuns, no data on their numbers	South Waziristan
3.	Al-Qaeda units	- Ayman Zawihiri - Abu Yahi al-Livi (killed in June 2012) - Abdel Rahman al-Huseynnan (killed in December 2012)	Mostly from Arab countries	Waziristan

4.	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	Tahir Yuldashev (killed in August 2009) Usman Odil (killed in April 2012) Usman Ghazi	Mostly from Central Asia: Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Tatars, Kazakhs, some Europeans, their number is from 300 to 2000 people	Waziristan
5.	Islamic Jihad Union	- Najmiddin Jalolov (killed in 2009) - D. Akhmadjanov	Mainly Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Kazakhs, around 300 people	North Waziristan
6.	Islamic Party of Turkestan	- Hassan Mehsum (killed in 2003) Abdul Haq al-Turkestani (killed in 2010) - Abdul Shakoor al-Turkistani (killed in 2012)	Uighurs, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, around 200-300 people	Waziristan
7.	Independent and autonomous Jamaats: - Bulgarian, Azeri, Tajik, Turkish, Bazaar (unrecognized fighters)		Turks, Azeris, Tajiks, the Caucasians,	Waziristan

After having arrived in the group, the new fighters would first receive “a young fighter training course” in the training camps. On average, it lasted from one to three months. Accommodation was provided in Mir Ali and Miranshah, usually organized into 10-15 persons in each barrack.

Each Mujahideen was given an average of 50 USD per month. However, guns were not provided in all the groups. In most cases, Mujahideen had to buy them with their own money. Different arms - pistols, machine guns, grenade launchers and grenades – were given mainly when a group was going out on a raid to attack US military bases in the territory of Afghanistan. These raids were mostly carried out in summer. During the rest of the year, Mujahideen were busy training. There was a selec-

tion process for participation in raids. Because of the dominance of Uzbekistanis in the IMU and IJU, the preference was given to Uzbeks. Therefore, the Mujahideen from Kazakhstan were often rarely involved in combats.

The Relationship between the Kazakh Jamaat and the Islamic Jihad Union

Due of his discontentment with the dominance and leading position of Uzbek groups in the IJU, Rustem Zhumabaev left the group in the second half of 2009 and organized his own Kazakh Islamic Jamaat with other fighters mainly from Kazakhstan. Another cause of conflict between the IJU and Kazakhstani groups were disagreements with the IJU leadership regarding the living conditions and accommodation of fighters. The members of the Atyrau cell attempted to bring their families from Kazakhstan. To that end, they organized a transfer route through Kyrgyzstan. However, when their families tried to cross the Kazakh-Kyrgyz border at Kordai, they were all detained by the law enforcement officers. The Kazakh Mujahideen appealed to the IJU leadership with a request to help them in their release, but their requests were rejected. Moreover, the Kazakhstanis started suspecting that the IJU leaders had colluded with the Central Asian and Iranian special services, accusing them of leaking information on the planned transit of the fighters and their families.

Another reason for conflict between these groups was the reluctance to share money contributions from Kazakhstan with community members. The Kazakhstani fighters believed that the IJU functionaries used them as “cash cows”, attempting to take all the money they received. Another reason for conflict was caused by the nationalistic insults by Uzbekistanis, who took advantage

of their dominant position and behaved contrary to the doctrine of unity and equality within Muslim brotherhood, discriminating against the Kazakh fighters due to their ethnic background.

These conflicts and disagreements resulted in a number of Kazakhstani fighters leaving the IJU and creating their own group in August 2009. They elected Rustem Zhumabaev as their Emir, and Yeldos Kunshugurov as his proxy. However, the newly created group of Kazakh Mujahideen was not recognized by international terrorist groups, so they did not have access to arms, ammunition, finance and training bases. The IJU leaders confiscated the weapons from their former fellow fighters: pistols, machine guns and grenades, and even stopped giving them food, which meant that tensions and disagreements within the organization were quite serious. Nevertheless, other contacts between the IJU and the Kazakh community had not been entirely suspended.



Zhumabaev Rustem Oralgaliyevich
11.02.1986



Kunshugurov Eldos Maratovich
01.03.1988

The so-called Kazakh Jamaat included not only members from Atyrau but also people from other regions of Kazakhstan, namely those of Akmola and South Kazakhstan. At the same time, some people from Atyrau, namely, Marat Utegaliev, Ussen Chilmanov and others, remained in the Islamic Jihad Union.



Utegaliev Marat Baktygalievich
10.03.1986



Chilmanov Ussen Konstantinovich
13.02.1989

To provide the group with the necessities, it was vital to find new sources of funding. Therefore, Zhumabaev instructed her members of the group to get in touch with their supporters in Atyrau and arrange regular money transfers. The money was raised not only from Atyrau communities but also from other regions of Kazakhstan. Thus, the Kazakh Islamic Jihad and its cells in Atyrau were organized primarily from autonomous fundraising with the aim of becoming recognized by other international terrorist groups. Besides this, the KIJ members designed their own route for transferring recruits from Kazakhstan. With the steady financial inflow, the Kazakh Jamaat members began acquiring arms and ammunition, so they could also participate in joint raids in Afghanistan. At the same time, despite the cash inflow, the Kazakh community did not have enough resources to organize trainings. Especially, trainings on explosives and assembly and installation of mines and bombs. The Kazakh Jamaat did not have their own instructors; the Uzbek group members refused to train them and the Arab's instructors were too expensive. Thus from January to February 2011, Zhumabaev arranged the rejoining of the Kazakh Jamaat to the IJU. As it was said, one of the reasons was the need for a better training of the group on the usage of the heavy arms during the summer raids in the territory of Afghanistan. Thus, the Kazakhstanis were in a constant search for new financing channels, trying to gain a certain amount of independence all the time. However, these attempts were unsuccessful: the fighters had to return again and again to more powerful unions with other flags.

6. THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE ACTIVITIES OF THE SOLDIERS OF THE CALIPHATE

In early June 2011, an American drone shot a missile in the direction of the training camp in Northern Waziristan and killed the leader of the Kazakh Islamic Jihad, Rustem Zhumabaev, who, by that time, had rejoined the IJU. After his death, without a strong leader, the so-called Kazakh Jamaat finally broke up. Some group members returned to the IJU while others tried to continue on their own. Trying hard to become recognized by the other terrorist structures, some fighters from Kazakhstan, who had not joined any group, started to seek the patronage of natives of the Arabic countries - militants of Al-Qaeda. This was the time when they were first acquainted with an instructor from the camp in Miran-shah, a Belgian citizen of Tunisian origin, Moeziddin Garsallaoui (religious name Moez al-Tunisi), under whose advice and direct participation, and with the active assistance of the Kazakhstani citizen, Rinat Habidolla, created a terrorist group called, “Jund al-Khilafah” or the “Soldiers of the Caliphate” in the zone of the free tribes of North Waziristan in August 2011.

The Structure of Jund al-Khilafah

The fact that Garsallaoui was the initiator of the group was stated in a message dated October 15, 2012 posted on the online forum Shumukh al-Islam by the user Abu al-Leithal-Vaziri after the death of Moez Garsallaoui: “Our brother Abu Moez, may Allah be merciful to him, opened a center for all brothers and, in particular, he taught them how to use explosives. **He also gathered several Kazakh brothers and taught them some arts, so**

upon their return to their homeland they should carry out jihad there”. However, the person with whom Garsallaoui coordinated his efforts to create the Kazakh group is unknown. Perhaps Garsallaoui spoke on behalf of Al-Qaeda, being quite an influential figure there, but at the same time he was trying to maintain control over the group. Most European experts believe this to be the case⁶⁵.

Moez Garsallaoui did not only act as an advisor and external consultant; in fact, he was the leader of the group. In the message posted on the website of Shumukh al-Islam, he was titled the Emir (leader) of Jund al-Khilafah. Besides, the obituary posted on the Minbar al-Ansar chat forum describes Garsallaoui's role and position as follows: *“He was not merely playing the role of a media Mujahideen, who undoubtedly was at the front, because he knew that he was expected to do something majestic and great. This is why he responded to the call from the jihad arenas and became the Emir of Jund al-Khilafah on a glory arena in the proud land of Khorasan, and he conducted many military trainings”*.

According to the investigation, Garsallaoui also paid monthly salaries to the group members. This detail was also mentioned in the obituary posted on the Minbar al-Ansar website: *“He (Garsallaoui) enormously helped his brothers with his life and money”, and “we believe that he had fulfilled his duty of preaching the religion of Allah and that of jihad using his life, family and money until Allah doomed him to martyrdom”*.

At the same time, it is known that Garsallaoui personally worked out the plan for the promotion of his group in mass media. He authored the concepts of their first videos and wrote tran-

⁶⁵ Eric Pelletier. Les coulisses du djihad de Mohamed Merah au Pakistan enfin dévoilées //L'Express, 07.04.2014 http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/enquete/les-coulisses-du-djihad-de-mohamed-merah-au-pakistan-enfin-devoilees_1506683.html

scripts. This was also mentioned in the messages that referred to Khorasani, Garsallaoui's alias, on jihadist sites.

In various expert opinions and comments, Jund-al-Khilafah is in the same row as such organizations as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Islamic Party of Turkestan. In April 2014, at the 9th Meeting of the Security Council Secretaries of the SCO member states in Dushanbe, the minister of the Public Security of China Guo Sheng Kong stated, "well-known organizations, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad, Islamic Movement of East Turkestan, are rapidly re-emerging in the region. Simultaneously, new terrorist organizations are appearing and becoming active, such as the Soldier of the Caliphate, "Sala-fia" Movement and many other religious extremist organizations, which are becoming more open and bold"⁶⁶.

Moreover, some experts noticeably exaggerated the scale and number of the members of the group. For example, Russian experts asserted that "Jund al-Khilafah has more than five thousand supporters within Kazakhstan. The group was part of the Islamic Movement of Turkestan and, most likely, its members participated in the battles in the Afghan province of Badakhshan"⁶⁷.

In fact, Jund al-Khilafah was quite a small group. Initially, it consisted of the natives of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Arab countries. The total number of its fighters was twelve (not including the group leader Abu Moez Garsallaoui). In particular, it consisted of three Kazakhstani citizens, five people from Tajikistan, two Turkish citizens, one Saudi Arabian citizen and one French

⁶⁶ The SCO member states are considering the possibility of establishing the Centre for Combating Challenges and threats to security <http://ecrats.org/ru/situation/status/3927>

⁶⁷ Alexander Gorbenko. Gunmen from Kazakhstan appeared in Afghanistan: they will fight there and return back, October 15, 2013 // <http://www.odnako.org/blogs/v-afganistane-poyavilis-boeviki-iz-kazahstana-povoyuyut-i-domoy/>

citizen. The oldest member of the group was 25 years old; the youngest was only 20.



**Znaliev
Damir
Amangeldievich**
06.07.1989



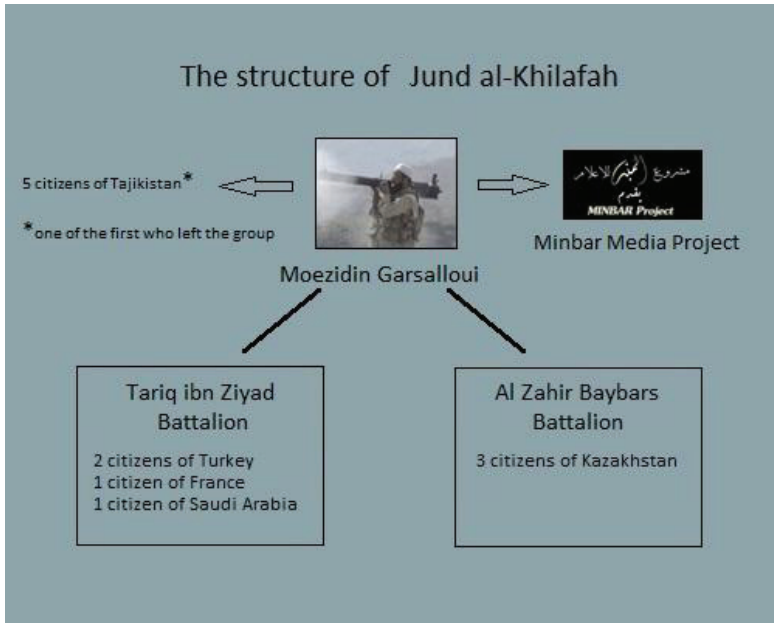
**Habidolla
Rinat
Rashidovich**
10.02.1987



**Munatov
Urynbasar
Zholamanovich**
30.11.1987

In terms of their number, the fighters from Kazakhstan did not dominate there, although they were the most active members. Generally, the group became a temporary refuge for the Mujahideen, who were undecided or did not want to join other larger groups for some other reasons. Rinat Habidolla played an active role in the group. He arrived in the Afghan-Pakistani border region in December 2010. In the beginning, he was a member of the KIJ too, but he had to leave the Kazakh Jamaat soon because of the constant disagreements and conflicts with Zhumabaev about the allocation of money and because of his unrealized leadership ambitions. For some time, he was even in the Azerbaijani Jamaat. Later he disjoined it and became a so-called “free Mujahideen”. Therefore, seeking to actualize and assert himself, Habidolla eventually came to an agreement with Garsallaoui. Znaliev and Munatov left the IJU in August 2011.

Nonetheless, as it was already noted, although the natives from Kazakhstan did not dominate in numbers, they were the most active group members and formed their own separate unit within the group - Al Zahir Baibars Battalion.



The choice of this name was generally explained in the interview allegedly given by Ravil Kussainov, who was in his turn presented as the leader of the al-Zahir Baibars Battalion. As it was already mentioned, Kussainov did not exist, and the interview transcript was made up by Garsallaoui and the Kazakh fighters. In this interview, they asked themselves why this name was chosen for the battalion and then they explained: “The Mujahideen commander’s name Al-Zahir Baibars, may Allah be merciful to him, was chosen because this great leader had impressive capacity for fighting against the Tatars, whom he defeated in Ayn Galut and completely cleared Levant from the remnants of the Crusaders and because of his great mercy towards the Kazakh state, which he helped to convert to Islam by persuading the governor of the West, Birkha Khan, to adhere to the Islamic faith. An additional factor was his ethnic origin, which goes back to the

same area in the west of Kazakhstan. This underlines the depth of the relationship between the Kazakh people, Islam and jihad. Al-Zahir Baibars was a great Mujahideen and commander, and he was one of the most important pillars that propped the Islamic caliphate, may Allah be merciful to him”⁶⁸.

Referring to some historical figures who played a role in the development of the Arab Caliphate or establishment of the Islamic religion in various regions is a usual ideological approach used by radical organizations of this type. For example, the message of Jund al-Khilafah, claiming their responsibility for the Toulouse attack in March 2012, was signed by a Tariq ibn Ziyad Battalion. Tariq ibn Ziyad was a prominent military leader and commander of Arabs in the Middle Ages. Under his command, the Arab troops disembarked at the Cape of Gibraltar in 711 and invaded the Iberian Peninsula. In the Arab maps, the Iberian region was called, “Al-Andalus”, or “Andalusia”, so most likely the idea of choosing this name also belonged to Garsallaoui Moez. It is known that the code-name, “Al-Andalus” was often used as a web administrator. At the same time, it should be noted that the division into battalions was only nominal.

According to Orynbassar Munatov’s testimony, at the beginning, Jund al-Khilafah was not a part of any organization and was not even recognized by the Taliban or Al-Qaeda. Although some experts suggested that the Soldiers of the Caliphate could be a structural division of the Islamic Party of Turkestan, in fact, they were a group no one recognized. The Jamaat was armed with Kalashnikovs, each having 4 additional feed hoppers, and F-1 grenades.

Considering that the Atyrau cell was left under nobody’s control or coordination, and that the leaders of Jund al-Khila-

⁶⁸ Site Intel group, 9.11.2011.

fah did not want to lose control over the money coming from supporters in Kazakhstan, they decided to re-subordinate the terrorist groups Ittihad al-Muslimeen, Top Ten, Li's Team, and Sultangaliev's Group. In September 2011, the Soldiers contacted the Atyrau Jamaat member, Alimzhan Sagenov, and asked him to collect money from the Jamaat members for Jund al-Khilafah needs. Remarkably, at the same time, they requested the funding of Marat Utegaliev's Team, which was still part of the IJU, to stop. This fact reconfirms that one of the main reasons for creating the group was the struggle between different fractions of the Kazakh community over the control of the cash flows coming from Kazakhstan.

To their chagrin, on August 28, 2011, the Kazakhstani law-enforcement and special services arrested the members of the terrorist groups Ittihad al-Muslimeen, Top Ten, Li's Team in Atyrau. These groups were spotted by the Kazakhstani intelligence after a series of unsuccessful actions and criminal offenses.

The Detection and Liquidation of the Kazakhstani Cells

Starting on February 2010, one of the Kazakhstani cells of Jund al-Khilafah, the Ittihad al-Muslimeen, began improvising explosive devices using materials from the Internet.

In June and July 2011, the group members were preparing an attack on the Border Guards' military unit. They planned to use a suicide bomber in the attack.

On July 28, 2011, during a regular Internet conference with Rinat Habidolla who was then in Pakistan, the group informed him about their readiness to commit a terrorist act. To commit the act, they needed some additional components, but they did not have enough money to buy them. Therefore, the group members

began thinking about some criminal ways to seize money and property, like robberies and assaults.

On August 2, 2011, several members of the group robbed the grocery store “Satti” in one district of Atyrau. They stole 8000 KZT and 24 mobile services payment cards (costing 20350 KZT) and 5 packs of chewing gum (costing 350 KZT). This unsuccessful burglary resulted in the group being revealed. Ultimately, a few days later, from August 4 to August 8 2011, the two members were detained by police officers on suspicion of robbing the shop.

On August 16, 2011, Rinat Habidolla ordered another group to organize the murder of a prominent religious figure because he had publicly expressed views regarding the dangers and harms of armed “jihad”. For this purpose, one of the members had traveled to Almaty, learning of this figure’s agenda and location. Fortunately, the attempt was failed.

On August 20, 2011, four members of another group, headed by their leader Sergey Li, tested explosive devices outside the city, preparing for an attack. They brought 4 IEDs to an open remote location to prepare the attack. While they were preparing to test the second explosive device, the police patrol officers approached them in a car. In response to their request to inspect and verify their documents, the group members threatened to blow up an F-1 hand grenade, managing to escape from the police. Subsequently, special services intensified their efforts of detecting and liquidating radical cells.

On the 28th thru the 29th of August 2011, the joint operation of the Ministry Internal Affairs and National Security Service resulted in detaining all the members of the Atyrau groups. When they were arrested, one of the group leaders, Sergey Li, blew himself up in spite of the proposal that he surrender voluntarily and the participation of his relatives in the talks.

The liquidation of the Atyrau cells interrupted and impeded all the plans of the Soldiers of the Caliphate: all the fundraising channels they wished to control were blocked at once.

In this connection, the group decided to commit a series of terrorist attacks in Kazakhstan to avenge the arrest of their terrorist group member. The attacks were also aimed at drawing more attention and gaining greater recognition for the group among other Jamaats of Waziristan. Moez Garsallaoui promised that if they would succeed in generating resonance and attracting attention, he would help them to contact Al-Qaeda as well as ensure the financial support from Arabic groups.

The Anatomy of the Terrorist Attack: The Unsuccessful Attempts in Almaty and Atyrau

The Almaty Operation

In early September 2011, the leaders of the Soldiers of the Caliphate called, via Skype, the head of the Atyrau group B. K. Sultangaliyev and its members A. B. Sagenov and M. A. Usabekov.

On September 9, 2011, Sultangaliyev, Sagenov and Usabekov, fulfilling the orders of Jund al Khilafah leaders, departed from Atyrau by train and arrived in Almaty on September 11, 2011.

On September 12, 2011, Damir Znaliev contacted Sultangaliyev via the Internet and instructed him and the members of his group to prepare a bomb for a terrorist attack in Almaty.

On September 27, 2011, Rinat Habidolla sent an e-mail letter from Pakistan to the Atyrau region administration (Akimat) with the following contents:

“I am, Rinat Habidolla, writing to you on behalf of the organization (JUND AL-KHILAFAH) in the connection with the events in the west of Kazakhstan. We have already sent a letter (to the MFA) and demanded that they should release the Muslims who were detained in late August in Atyrau. Neither AL-QAEDA nor TALIBAN had anything against (KZ), although for your treachery, we could punish you at any time, but our enemies are (AMERICA and EUROPE) because they are waging the war against Islam and Muslims. If you wage war too, we will not spare you, we will strike everything that is related to KAZAKHSTAN. We are writing this not to frighten you; we want you to take the right path and the right policy towards Muslims. Leave us along and we will leave you alone. You and we understand well that KAZAKHSTAN not in a position to challenge (AL-QAEDA). I want to tell you that the Jihad will continue until the Judgment Day, so we do not hurry. We will be prepared for that, and if we fail, others will come later, and they will do it. I hope you will change your mind and release everyone to the last person and thereby you will prevent the bloodshed, otherwise we will be compelled to take action.”

Thus, the above letter demanded that the Kazakhstan authorities release the arrested members of Ittihad al-Muslimeen, Top Ten, Li’s Team, under the threat of a terrorist attack.

On October 3, 2011, from 04:00 to 05:30, Sagenov and Sultangaliyev set an improvised explosive device near the entrance of the administrative building of the Consular Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan. However, at 06:30, a street sweeper who worked for the National Bank of Kazakhstan accidentally discovered the explosive device. He thought it was garbage and threw it into the garbage bin behind the building of the Consular Service of the MFA.

Around 09:00, Sultangaliyev returned to the administrative building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan to detonate the bomb, but the signal did not work. After the operation was failed, Sultangaliyev, together with Sagenov and Usabekov, left Almaty by Almaty - Atyrau train at 09:20.

The Atyrau Terrorist Attack

On October 27, 2011, the leaders of the Soldiers of the Caliphate contacted Sagenov's group members again and ordered them to make more bombs. They were needed for terrorist attacks in Atyrau. At the same time, the Soldiers demanded that Sagenov's group place the explosive devices in crowded places: the terrorists wanted numerous victims among the civilian population. However, Usabekov and Sultangaliyev refused this plan and placed the bombs in other places.

On October 31, 2011, at around 8:20, Sagenov met with Usabekov and gave him even more powerful explosives.

Meanwhile, dressed in a public utilities worker light green vest, Sultangaliyev left the explosive device in the administrative building of the Atyrau Prosecutor's Office at 09:27.

Usabekov, in his turn, also dressed in the same style light green vest, installed a bomb in the backyard of the Atyrau Administration building (Akimat) and transported another bomb to the construction site of the Interregional Vocational Center for Oil and Gas Industry Personnel Training of the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan located in the Nursaya district.

At 09:43, Sagenov remotely detonated the bomb, which had been planted by Usabekov next to the garbage bin in the backyard of the Atyrau Administration building.

At 09:44, Sultangaliyev, for unknown reasons, removed the explosive device previously installed at the building of the

Atyrau Prosecutor's Office. Three minutes later, at 9:47, the bomb held by Sultangaliyev detonated in the Sary-Arka residential area. Sultangaliyev was killed by the explosion.

Sagenov escaped from scene of crime. However, on November 4th 2011, the law enforcement officers arrested him in Atyrau when searching through the area.

According to investigation materials, after the Atyrau terrorist attack, the leadership of the Islamic Jihad Union, one of the largest organizations in the area of the Afghan-Pakistani border region, requested information from Garsallaoui and Kazakhstani members as to whether these actions had been planned by members of Jund al-Khilafah. It implies that, probably, the operation had not been coordinated with international structures. Considering that having received an affirmative answer, the IJU leaders did not prohibit their actions to be continued in Kazakhstan. This implies that they preferred to see the situation develop further in Kazakhstan. International terrorists wanted to know how well the special services and the Kazakhstani government were prepared to handle the threat posed by a small group. Will this group have supporters? Will there be new cells within Kazakhstan?

The Planning and the Conducting of the Informational Campaign

Since Moez Garsallaoui was more Internet-savvy than others were, he personally composed all the messages of the Soldiers. Garsallaoui's role in the media promotion is described in detail in his obituary posted on the Minbar al-Ansar forum on November 16th: "We shared company and brotherhood in the jihadist media with him [Garsallaoui], thanks to which we remember him. He was the moderator of the Minbar al-Ansar chat from the beginning and sustained beautiful dialogues, in which he defended the

jihad and its people, supported the Mujahideen. He had the idea, then he found the jihadist media network, he was a professional programmer in addition to his fighting in the media front”.

The fact that Garsallaoui personally led the group’s media campaign is confirmed by the French investigators who interrogated one of Jund al-Khilafah members on his involvement in the Toulouse terrorist attack in 2012: *“For Garsallaoui, the informational war played a major role ... This group would post communiqués and videos on the Internet, thereby emphasizing the spread of information rather than the number of its recruits”*⁶⁹.

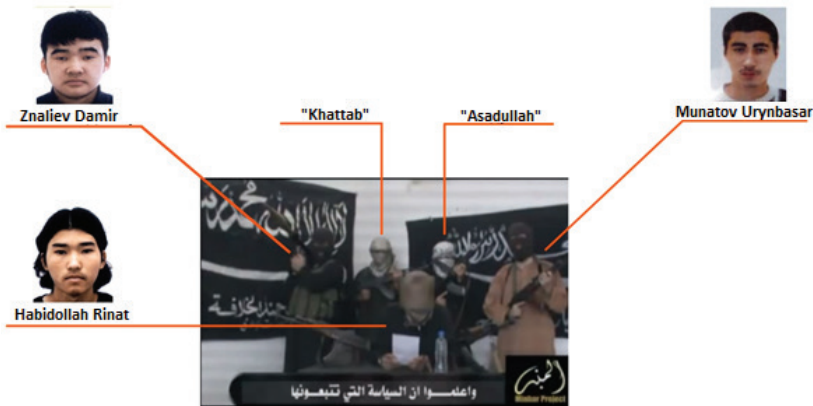
The first two videos were most likely prepared under Garsallaoui’s initiative. They were probably shot before Kazakhstani nationals joined the group because the video showing the attack on the US base in Afghanistan does not identify natives from Kazakhstan. Moreover, in the beginning, Garsallaoui’s group mostly consisted of Tajiks who had repeatedly participated in combats on the border with Afghanistan against the US troops. Most likely, the first two videos showed Tajiks participating in one of those attacks.

The video addressed to the Kazakhstani authorities was prepared after the arrests of the local Jamaat members in Atyrau for money from contributions that Znaliev’s group and Garsallaoui were going to use for supporting Jund al-Khilafah activities. The arrest of the Atyrau cell members spoiled the plans of the Soldiers, so it was decided to post a video online, demanding the release of the arrested fellows. Another objective of the video was to publicize the existence of the group. In other words, the target was not limited to Kazakhstani or international audienc-

⁶⁹ Eric Pelletier. Les coulisses du djihad de Mohamed Merah au Pakistan enfin dévoilées //L’Express, 07.04.2014 http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/enquete/les-coulisses-du-djihad-de-mohamed-merah-au-pakistan-enfindevoilees_1506683.html

es; the video was aimed at boosting the reputation among other gangs based in Waziristan. Jund al-Khilafah had not been recognized by other large associations for a long time. Therefore, the logic behind many actions of the group members was around self-assertion among radicals. In fact, the establishment and further activity of the Soldiers of the Caliphate was a result of various internal conflicts within the structure of international terrorist organizations.

The preparation of the first video message addressed to the Kazakhstani authorities took 10 days. The text of the message was prepared by Moez Garsallaoui and then translated by Rinat Habidolla. It is no secret that he only spoke Arabic among all the members from Kazakhstan. The video was filmed in a former girls' school in Miranshah, in the room where Tajiks lived. Since the group was poorly equipped, several AK- and grenade launchers were rented for the video shooting.



Rinat Habidolla himself read the text. Behind him were the other members from left to right: the one holding a grenade launcher was Damir Znaliyev, next to him, with AKs are two citi-

zens of Turkey: Khattab (born in 1987) and Asadullah (born in 1980), and the one dressed in brown at the right flank was Munatov Orynbasar. The photos and video were taken and prepared by Garsallaoui himself. Later, he posted the video from a computer club in Miranshah. As it is known, earlier, before joining Jund al-Khilafah, the Kazakh Jamaat members used to shoot their videos themselves, but sent the footage to Kazakhstan for editing. In Kazakhstan, their associates refined the videos and posted the edited materials on YouTube. However, those materials were not as widely spread as expected. This time, in addition of producing the videos, Garsallaoui also ensured the promotion of the videos and messages of the group on Al-Qaeda's informational channels.

After the release of the first video message to Kazakhstani authorities, Garsallaoui proposed that the group should arrange an attack in Kazakhstan to show how serious the threat was. This action was supposed to strengthen the new positions of the Soldiers among other jihadist structures.

The famous interview with the alleged leader of the Soldiers of the Caliphate disseminated on foreign websites was also Moez Garsallaoui's idea. The group members themselves proposed using the character's name, Ravil Kussaiynov, as well as the idea to name the Battalion after al-Zahir Baibars. The contents of the messages were generally composed by Garsallaoui. Most often, he personally prepared the informational material for the group with the direct assistance of Rinat Habidolla who was keeping him informed on different events in Kazakhstan as well as other country-specific facts.

The Ideological Stance of Jund al-Khilafah

Although the Soldiers of the Caliphate loudly announced themselves by posting videos and messages, as compared to the

propaganda of other organizations, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Party of Turkestan, they generally failed to present their clear position in the ideological arena or to explain their goals and objectives. Although the known messages of the group are insufficient to reveal its ideological platform, these materials, however, provide a rough estimate of the general stance of the group.

In spring 2012, online debates between the supporters and opponents of Jund al-Khilafah intensified on a number extremist websites. The debate started when, on one of those Islamist websites, a user named Ismail posted an article titled “Jund al-Khilafah is a promotion of shirk, kufer, bad sins, practices of Ahl al-Kitab and blasphemy against the religion of Allah⁷⁰. Then, another user called Abu Jafar joined the criticism⁷¹. In response, some supporters of the Soldiers of the Caliphate posted a series of three articles to defend the group against the posted accusations. US experts analyzed the texts and suggested that the articles and comments defending the group’s actions were written by a supporter of Jund al-Khilafah rather than the Emir or some Mujahideen of this group. The answers had vague signatures, such as *Jihad KZ*⁷². However, in fact, the analysis of Jund al-Khilafah messages shows that materials may not always be posted with user names mentioning the group’s name. On the contrary, the posters

⁷⁰ “Jund al Khilafah” - promotion of shirk, kufr, a big sin, likening “Ahlal-Kitab” and mockery of the religion of Allah http://www.kztoday.com/news/dzhundul_khalifat_propaganda_shirka_kufra_bolshikh_grekhov_upodoblenija_akhl_al_kitab_i_izdevatelstvo_nad_religiej_allakha/2012-04-05-103

⁷¹ To the Warriors of “virtual” caliphate or refutation of refutations “http://www.kztoday.com/news/voinam_virtualnogo_khalifata_ili_oproverzhenie_oproverzhenij/2012-04-20-110

⁷² Islam, Islamism and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER), #57, 1 June 2012. “Debate surrounding Kazakhstanis “Jund al-Khalifa “mujahedin” http://csis.org/files/publication/120601_Hahn_IIPER_57.pdf

often used random names and titles. What should be noted is the time of posting the articles: all three articles were posted on ummanews.com from April to May 2012 when the group was generally passive and actually starting to disintegrate. However, at that time, Garsallaoui was with a Kazakhstani native, Orynassar Munatov, whereas Znaliyev and Habidolla had already left the group, therefore they could remotely keep in touch. Nothing prevented them from writing their messages. The involvement of the group's members in writing the articles posted online on behalf of the Soldiers is evidenced by the fact that Toulouse gunman Mohammed Merah was frequently mentioned as being linked to Jund al-Khilafah, whose participation in the group has remained unclear for many people. Albeit, it is clear that these articles were written by very knowledgeable and convinced defenders of the group.

The criticism of the user called Ismail against Jund al-Khilafah was formulated in six main arguments:

1. Jund al-Khilafah is falling into shirk by committing terrorist attacks among civilians in countries that do not wage war against Islam, because they put themselves on a par with Allah, believing that they can do the judgment on their own, without Sharia laws. Jund al-Khilafah does not follow the law of Allah, which requires judicial investigation before punishment.

2. Monotheists must not intervene in the political struggles led by people for the division of power and property, let alone favoring a political side to discredit and overthrow the government”.

3. Killing an infidel who concluded a peace treaty with Muslims is a sin because, according to the Islamic law, breaching a treaty is as sinful as adultery, theft, usury and alcohol drinking.

4. Jund al-Khilafah uses the methodology of “ahl al-kitab”

(People of the Scripture) by making a call to Muslims to force them to commit a Takfir or Irji.

5. Jund al-Khilafah ridicules Muslims, Mujahideen, the Arabic language and Islamic attributes by using Arabic texts in their videos as well as hiding their faces behind masks.

6. The terrorist attack perpetrated by Mohammed Merah is an example of breaching the treaty he had concluded with his ruler, because, by becoming a French citizen, he voluntarily subjected himself to the French government. Breaching a treaty and denying the Islamic law Fiqh is disbelief (kufr akbar).

Essentially, the Soldiers of the Caliphate's supporter's answer was the usual denying of the existing order: no state structure follows the Sharia, so a judicial verdict was not needed to destroy them. On the same grounds, according to them, the law of any country is "invalid", therefore, they cannot be accused of violating a treaty. Perhaps, the most important point in the polemics was that the Jund al-Khilafah supporter described the current situation in the world and in the country as being in a state of a war. All those who did not share their values, just like during a war or armed conflict, may be destroyed as enemies without prior permission of the court.

Later, a user named Abu Jafar intervened in the debate between the opponents and supporters of Jund al-Khilafah. He began by criticizing the arguments of Ismail for being "toothless" and abundantly accused the supporters of Jund al-Khilafah of being narrow-minded and ignorant. In turn, Abu Jafar's arguments were based on two main ideas (in all cases, quoting various Islamic scholars to prove their point):

- Only scholars, judges of Sharia courts, or muftis have rights to judge on the sacrilege and apostasy, and only Muslim

rulers have the right to execute punishments imposed by Sharia;

- Decisions on military operations, armistice and punishment can be made only by a Khalif, a Muslim ruler. If there is no Caliphate and the Umma is weak, then such provisions are temporarily suspended.

Furthermore, Abu Jafar also commented on a few specific issues that became the subject of the discussion. He argued:

1) The Jund al-Khilafah supporters had no right to refer to the government of the country as “infidels” (“kefirs”), because this decision can be made only by Islamic legal scholars. Besides, if a person does not deny the Sharia, does not consider it false, does not equate other laws and governance systems to the Sharia, then everything else – like use of other laws instead of the Sharia, creation of their own laws or constitutions, etc. – is in the category of small disbelief (Kufr Asghar). Accordingly, these things did not prevent a person from being Muslim. Therefore, saying that Muslims who do not agree with them are disbelievers, thus thinking it to be lawful to take their property and life, is the characteristic of Kharijites. In the same way, Jund al-Khilafah had no right to determine whether the state institutions were Taghuts, i.e. whether they violated the religion, if they did not have an authorization for that.

2) Sabotage against state institutions and killing their officers cannot be considered jihad because Islam rejects such actions in principle. Referring to the words of Sheikh Saalih al-Fawzaan and Abdur-Rahman al-Barak, Abu Jafar maintained that actions, such as murdering and bombing infidels, were not acceptable among Muslims who were obliged to abstain from war and to pray, moreover, it was a prohibited ungodliness. Elaborating on this idea, Abu Jafar rejected the Jund al-Khilafah supporters’ view that Mohammad Merah could be considered Shaheed

because he murdered innocent people rather than being killed in a battle (reference to Sheikh Ibn al Kayim).

3) Jund al-Khilafah acted on the basis of an incorrect and erroneous premise that Kazakhstan was Darul-Kafir (land of infidels), whereas (references to Sheikh Ibn ‘Uthaymeen, Sheikh al Islam Ibn Taymiyyah, and Sheikh al-Albani) – a country, even if its leadership does not adhere to Islam, is considered Darul-Islam provided most of its residents are Muslim and if Islamic rituals are respected in this country (reciting the adhan, regular prayers, observing Friday and holiday prayers, fasting, Hajj). Additionally, Abu Jafar brought up the argument that Jund al-Khilafah violated the norm that prohibits Muslims from entering into a conflict with their ruler because this kind of confrontation could bring about worse troubles for believers and destroy Muslim unity.

But the main claim of Abu Jafar was that Jund al-Khilafah specially violated the Sharia by electing their own leader and establishing their own governance system: “By the usurpation of the caliph powers”, Abu Djafar wrote, “their leader plans crimes from them”, “decides when, how and whom to attack”, and «orders that they should attack Muslims”. “Thus, if somebody were to be proclaimed as a disbeliever, then this would be the Jund al-Khilafah leader”, Abu Jafar argued⁷³.

In response to Abu Jafar’s criticism, Jund al-Khilafah advocates repeated the same arguments they had employed while polemicizing with the user named Ismail. In their arguments, Jund al-Khilafah supporters continued accusing the Kazakhstani government of ignoring the Sharia and insisting that they were fighting to establish the Sharia and the Caliphate, thus recogniz-

⁷³ Islam, Islamism and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER), #57, 1 june2012. «Debate surrounding Kazakhstanis «Jund al-Khalifa «mujahedin» http://csis.org/files/publication/120601_Hahn_IIPER_57.pdf

ing that Jund al-Khilafah had begun its armed fight without a Sharia court verdict. Remarkably, in the end, the authors of the article defending Jund al-Khilafah admitted that their formula was illogical. The main argument was the same endlessly repeating idea that, as jihad was a *war*, therefore, as in a war, casualties among civilians and Muslims were inevitable and killing the enemy in a war cannot be considered a sin. The combative rhetoric, unlike the arguments written by their opponent Abu Jafar, was not backed up by any serious references to or quotes of prominent theologians or scholars. Three articles posted by the Jund al-Khilafah defenders were published with quite long pauses in between. The first article appeared in mid-April, the second was posted in early May, and the last one appeared in late May. In other words, the authors had enough time to think of counterarguments, to look for some new responses and to back up their ideas with needed references and quotes. However, during the debate, the supporters of the Soldiers of the Caliphate, in all their articles, were only able to provide references to Said Abu Saad's speech, one of the ideologists of the North Caucasus' terrorist underground movements, also known as Said Buryatsky (his real name was Alexander Tikhomirov). The message author referred to "Talbis Iblis" several times in his lectures. This fact illustrates two important aspects of the Soldiers of the Caliphate: first, they had insufficient knowledge of Islam; its foundations and laws as the Jund al-Khilafah supporters were not able to bring up any quotes from the sacred scriptures, especially, references to Islamic scholars, to support their arguments. Secondly, radical groups in Kazakhstan were formed under the strong ideological influence of the North Caucasus structures. Some US experts came to the same conclusion when they analyzed these materials: "Kazakh Mujahideen had special relations with the Caucasus Emirate and, in particular, had a special affinity with Alexander Tikhomirov-

better known as Sheikh Said Abu Sad Buryatsky – a new champion of jihadism and fight within the Caucasus Emirate... The first statements of the Kazakh Mujahideen appeared at athunafa.com, a website closely affiliated with the Caucasus Emirate and it was exactly when Said Buryatsky was based in Sunja region and conducted *istikhad* or suicide operations in Ingushetia and Chechnya in alliance with Riyad-Salikhyn's brigade of martyrs, the Caucasus Emirate suicide-bombers. As it is known, Hunafa.com had a page dedicated to Said Buryatsky, his video propaganda and ideological lectures, some of which were delivered in Kazakhstan. Thus, last year's suicide bombings and other attacks in Kazakhstan (the events that happened in Kazakhstan in 2011), and, perhaps, even the very emergence of *Jund al-Khilafah* was the product of the influence of Said Buryatsky. In particular, the messages of the user Jihad.kz referred to Said Buryatsky series of lectures "Talbis Iblis"⁷⁴.

Partially, conclusions on the ideological orientation of the Soldiers of the Caliphate can be drawn from the interview of Ravil Kussainov, who was presented as the leader of al-Zahir Baybar's Battalion. However, as it was mentioned earlier, this name of the group leader was fictional, the interview was fabricated in order to mislead the investigation and give a false idea of the scale, size and capabilities of the group. Of course, the group's overall objectives were repeatedly mentioned in the interview and messages. For example, "to expand Islam in order to break the backbone of oppressors among the rulers of the nations who occupied Muslim lands"⁷⁵. However, these formulations are typical for such documents and are too general in nature. Whereas the IMU and IJ leaders gave interviews under their real names regularly and

⁷⁴ Islam, Islamism and Politics in Eurasia Report (IIPER), #57, 1 June 2012. «Debate surrounding Kazakhstanis «Jund al_Khalifat «mujahedin» http://csis.org/files/publication/120601_Hahn_IIPER_57.pdf

⁷⁵ Site Intel group, 9.11.2011

explained their specific strategic and tactical objectives. Moreover, in the interview with somebody named Kussaiynov, instead of clarifying their own platform, the authors limited themselves to “childish pretexts”, said, “The group had a Charter which had not yet been publicized, but it could be published later, if Allah wished so. It was required for the organizational secrecy of its actions, its administrative structure and its leaders”. Therefore, they further declared, “we simply call for the revival of Islam and its open practicing and we are not forcing people into a certain ideology. Thus, in Jund al-Khilafah, there are those who follow the teachings of Imam Abu Hanifa, and there are those who follow Imam Malik, and those who were supporters of Hambalis, as well as Salafists, etc. We respect all the Schools of Thought and honor all the scholars and we do not have orders against them, starting from Imam Abu Hanifa Sheikh Ibn Abdul Wahhab”. The statement that they did not rigorously follow a particular course once again proved that the group was created as a temporary refuge for those, who did not participate in any other major militant organizations of fighters, some of whom probably left Jund al-Khilafah rather quickly because they did not hear any clear calls. At the same time, it seems unlikely that Jund al-Khilafah set any particular ideological tasks for themselves – such as to come up with some unique conceptual platform. It was a small structure more focused on realizing operational tasks. However, its brusque appearance at the forefront and very loud self-announcement, demonstrates the dangerous attractiveness of jihadist ideology, which is the ideology of total war, popularization of a warrior image and the heroic death cult. Hence is the choice of the name for the group with the emphasis on the word “Soldiers”, which implies a military duty; or naming the structural units, these so-called “battalions”, after warriors and commanders of the past. All these

ideological techniques created a militaristic, aggressive and suppressive image, which is very attractive for some young people.

The General Chronicles of Jund al-Khilafah

Jund al-Khilafah's history may be divided into several stages:

- 1) Formation of the group from July to September 2011.
- 2) Activation of the group from September to December 2011.
- 3) Decline of the group's presence from January to March 2012.
- 4) Attempts to revive the group from March to April 2012.
- 5) Another decline from May to October 2012.
- 6) Final disintegration of the group in November 2012.

The most active period was from September to December 2011, when the first video messages were posted and attempts were made to organize terrorist attacks in Almaty and Atyrau. However, the intensive presence of the group did not last for long: after three months of a loud media campaign, the Soldiers of the Caliphate suddenly took a pause. There were two long periods when the Soldiers of the Caliphate were silent: The first one was probably connected with the departure of Habidolla and Znaliyev from the group; the second pause, which ended in definitive disintegration of the group, lasted from April to October 2012. At that time, Garsallaoui was seriously wounded and he receiving medical treatment.

Many observers noted the coincidence between the group's media campaigns and the key political events in Kazakhstan. In particular, experts noted that the group's announcements were immediately after the presidential elections in Kazakhstan and its most active period coincided with the beginning of the parliamentary election campaign.

	September 2011	October 2011	November 2011	December 2011
Political Events in Kazakhstan	Mass media Started public discussion Of the Potential early parliamentary elections. Parliament passes the law On religion And religious associations (29. 09)	The President of Kazakhstan Signed the Law on Religion and religious associations (11. 10)	Deputies Asked the President To dissolve The Majilis (8. 11). Parliament dissolved (10. 11)	Start of election campaign. (16. 12)
Appearance Of Jund al-Khilafah online	Video showing Attacks in Afghanistan (8. 09) Letter to Atyrau Akimat (25. 09)	First video Message to Kazakhstani authorities (24. 10) Statement on Atyrau terrorist attack (31. 11)	Interview with Group leader (9. 11). State menton Taraz terrorist attack (15. 11)	Statement On special Operation in Boroldai (8. 12) Video Message on Zhanaozen events(17. 12)

The Soldiers of the Caliphate became less active with the end of the parliamentary elections held in January 2012. The new parliament was elected on January 15 and held its first session on January 20. From this period (January 2012), the group did not comment on any political events in Kazakhstan and remained silent until its final disintegration and the death of its leader Moez Garsallaoui, whereas all subsequent messages were released on the terrorist attack in France. The coincidence of the messages of the Soldiers of the Caliphate with key political events in Kazakhstan may be explained by the desire of the Soldiers of the Caliphate to achieve maximum promotion through a series of highly resonant statements. Therefore, they used every informational occasion and claimed responsibility for the attacks to which they

had no relations. Perhaps, it was done so due to the informational war skills and knowledge possessed by Moez Garsallaoui, who, as it was discussed earlier, had long worked as an IT specialist. Another important factor was the active participation of Kazakhstani natives, who probably informed Garsallaoui on the political processes taking place in Kazakhstan.

Notably, although, in some cases, video and text messages of the group, for some reasons, appeared 2-3 days after major political events, in two cases, they responded on the same day when the event happened in the political arena in Kazakhstan: the terrorist attack in Atyrau and Zhanaozen events. Regarding the Atyrau terrorist attack, the group issued a statement that it did not require any special preparation. As for the Zhanaozen events, the group posted a video message on the following day, thus demonstrating unprecedentedly remarkable efficiency. It is important to remember, in this context, that the first video was made on October 21, 2011 but posted on the Shumukh al-Islam forum only 3 days later on October 24.

There are allegations that some group members, after learning that Garsallaoui had been spotted by some American and Central Asian special services, immediately left the group. They knew that the fate of their Emir was already decided, and being next to him was a great risk of becoming a target for missile attacks. Albeit, the group's disintegration started two or three months after they loudly announced themselves. The first to leave were Tajiks.

Later, in early 2012, Rinat Habidolla left the group and went to Syria through Turkey. One of the other possible reasons for his departure to Turkey was the need to find new sponsors. On March 30, 2012, at the request of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan, he was detained by Turkish law enforcement agents, while illegally crossing the Iranian-Turkish border.

Damir Znaliyev left Jund al-Khilafah in April 2012 (according to some reports, he left the group in January), rejoining the IJU.

During the final stage of the group's activity, its members were a Kazakh (Munatov), a Turk (Khattab), an Arab (Habashid) and a French native (Suleiman).

The US special services declared a real hunt for the leader of the Soldiers of the Caliphate, Moez Garsallaoui. In 2012, Garsallaoui was attacked several times - in May and August. In both of the cases, he miraculously survived in spite of serious injuries.

THE GENERAL CHRONICLE OF THE GROUP "JUND AL-KHILAFAH"					
JUNE - AUGUST 2011	SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER 2011	JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2012	MARCH - APRIL 2012	MAY - OCTOBER 2012	NOVEMBER 2012
The formation of the group	Period of intensification	First pause. Outgo of some group members	Second period of intensification	Second pause. The dissolution of group	The final dissolution of group
First raid in Afghanistan, missile attack on US bases	Planning terrorist attacks in Almaty and Atyrau	Withdrawal of people from Tajikistan and D. Znaliyeva	Terrorist attack in Toulouse	Battle injury of Garsallaoui. Withdrawal of other group members	Death of Garsallaoui
First video about attack in Afghanistan	Other videos. First statements. Interview with R. Kusainov		Letter of Responsibility on terrorist attack in Toulouse		Report about the death of Garsallaoui

On October 10, 2012, under the attack of a drone, group leader Moez Garsallaoui was liquidated near Mir Ali in North Waziristan. Until the moment of his death, Munatov and Suleiman were with him. The fact that the revivals and declines in the group's activities coincided with important cases and events in Garsallaoui's life, and that the group ceased to exist after his death, proves once again that Moez Garsallaoui played a key role in Jund al-Khilafah and was its mastermind and leader.

In February 2013, while trying to enter Syria, the last remaining group member, Orynbassar Munatov, was arrested. He

was extradited to Kazakhstan on June 19, 2013. In November 2013 by the decision of the Atyrau Court, he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

That is how the short story of a great adventure ended. This dramatic story involved selfish interests of some people, personal problems of others, conflicts and disagreements between people who thought they could start a big and complex game, but in the end, found out that they were merely pawns in somebody else's well-calculated and cynical game. The price of these illusions, deceit, intrigues and crafty plans is a miserable life and in the end, death; broken destinies of hundreds of people in all corners of the planet. The story of this terrorist group and the fate of these young people, who set themselves on the path of violence, should be a warning for other hotheads and for the entire society: crime does not pay and never will.

7. THE SOLDIERS OF THE CALIPHATE: EPISODE TWO

Although, the story of Jund al-Khilafah is just a brief chronicle of an unknown small group that lasted only for a few months, suddenly appearing and disappearing, it is, nevertheless, a good example of a typical terrorist organization's life cycle. Its involvement in many aspects resembles the involvement of most terrorist groups in the world. Experts of the Global Terrorist Database at the University of Maryland (USA) analyzed more than 2000 individual terrorist groups and estimated their lifespan from the moment of their first strike to the last known attack. The analysis showed, "nearly 75% of terrorist organizations, listed in the GTD lasted less than a year. Most terrorist groups resemble most business startups (if compared to a civilized example): they are likely to disappear within the first year of their activity"⁷⁶.

Hence, the Maryland University experts concluded that, despite the stereotyped view that most terrorist organizations are able to survive for a very long time, which, in its turn, is based on the longevity of some resonant organizations (such as Al-Qaeda, Tamil Eelam Liberation Tigers, or Irish Republican Army), a typical average terrorist group, in fact, disappears in less than a year. Therefore, the story of Jund al-Khilafah can also be characterized as quite ordinary or, as it was said, typical for a terrorist group. The story of Jund al-Khilafah is the story of a criminal startup launched by a group of "outsiders" marginalized by their peripheral position in the community who were seeking attention while craving to prove themselves among their peer groups, and collecting financial support in order to participate in criminal adventure. This adventure eventually turned into failure and the group broke up as initially their participants were united

⁷⁶ Global Terrorism Index, 2011

under the premises of opportunistic and temporal interests. Nonetheless, the short existence of groups such as the Soldiers of the Caliphate and their fiasco should not in any case comfort us; the extent of the threat of terrorism must not be underestimated. Although the group was disintegrated; their leader liquidated, the background factors which have contributed to the radicalization of these young people still remain. Therefore, there is always a risk that similar events to those which Kazakhstan and other Central Asian countries confronted in 2011-2012 may be repeated. In addition, the terrorism threat is constantly evolving; terrorists improve their skills, change their strategy and tactics, arm themselves with new knowledge, and actively explore informational technologies. Today's inexperienced amateur radicals may tomorrow grow into a new, mobile, well-trained and coordinated force posing very serious threats.

If we believe that the Soldiers of the Caliphate were just one of several outsider groups - a failed project started by some ambitious functionary - we may miss an important detail. The short lifespan of the group, their loud self-promotion, and a series of unsuccessful acts were sure signs of failure for the group mission: the group was allegedly doomed to fail from the very beginning, proceeding to their final and inevitable dissolution. However, it is possible that the group had not been expected to realize very important and long-term tasks: it lasted as long as it was needed in accordance with its agenda. It should not be excluded that beside some subjective reasons and factors such as the disagreements between various members and the desire of certain functionaries to assert themselves, to gain recognition, etc., the creation of Jund al-Khilafah may also be connected with a certain kind of strategic calculation. In other words, larger organizations could have their own plans for Jund al-Khilafah, which is evidenced by the following details:

- The group used the informational channels of Al-Qaeda;
- Its members had access to the training camps of Al-Qaeda and the IJU

- The group members received monthly salaries from group leader Moez Garsallaoui, who, in turn, could receive money from other sources (although, according to some reports, Garsallaoui had received money from his supporters in Europe, who were later subsequently arrested, therefore breaking his channel of financial support);

- Last but not least, the fact that the group was under the leadership of an Al-Qaeda functionary (although he was of lower rank) who was exercising certain influence in this organization (according to the testimony given by Munatov, they could always consult with him [group leader Moez Garsallaoui, who was respected and honored by Al-Qaeda members⁷⁷], also indicated the connection between the group and major international terrorist organizations on an international scale.

According to some European experts, Jund al-Khilafah could not act on its own: “This group was under the influence of Al-Qaeda, but wanted to remain autonomous in its actions”⁷⁸. It should be noted here that this pattern of interaction – being under the auspices of a larger structure but still enjoying freedom of action – is not something uncommon or strange, but rather a characteristic of modern terrorism.

⁷⁷ Eric Pelletier. Les coulisses du djihad de Mohamed Merah au Pakistan en fin dévoilées //L'Express, 07.04.2014 http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/enquete/les-coulisses-du-djihad-de-mohamed-merah-au-pakistan-enfin-devoilees_1506683.html

⁷⁸ Eric Pelletier. Les coulisses du djihad de Mohamed Merah au Pakistan en fin dévoilées //L'Express, 07.04.2014 http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/enquete/les-coulisses-du-djihad-de-mohamed-merah-au-pakistan-enfin-devoilees_1506683.html

In contrast to many of the terrorist organizations of the sixties and seventies of the 20th century, modern organizations do not have vertical organizational structure or centralized governance. As a rule, they are fragmented into smaller, autonomous cells. “In recent years, terrorist organizations have mostly been transforming into network organizational forms adapting to the needs of terrorist groups. Terrorist organizations abandon hierarchical and linear organizational models and transform into networking structures. This tendency is visible even in the cases of previously hierarchical organizations and structures (such as Hezbollah, or, for example, as seen in the traditional and centralized Fatah in the form of a horizontally-integrated appendix, built on what is called a “network principle” and capable of joining other international terrorist networks, such as Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade⁷⁹)”.

Transformation from a traditional hierarchical structure to a networking structure provides autonomy of the actions of various terrorist groups and freedom in decision-making in rapidly changing situations, thus making them more unpredictable. Marc Sageman, a well-known American expert on the subject, explains the advantages of this structure in his book “Terror Networks”, as follows:

“When a terrorist network starts a new major operation, the participants do not know exactly how they are going to implement it. Roles are not being specified beforehand. Every mujahideen starts to act, bearing in mind an idea of what is required of him, and while implementing, improvises together with other Mujahideen. Terrorist operations are not so frequent that they could become a common issue, otherwise the security forces would be already familiar with them and could prevent them. These operations have a lot of uncertainty and many unforeseen obstacles.

⁷⁹ Solovyov E.G. The transformation of terrorist organizations in the context of globalization. M.: LENAND, 2006. p. 18.

Such situation requires the maintenance of the link between the interdependent Mujahideen. This means that everyone has the information and resources that are important to the other, and none of them has them in abundance to be able to operate in isolation from the others”⁸⁰.

The network structure enables terrorist organizations not only to maintain a high level of conspiracy, but can continue to operate without any serious harm even if a cell or terrorist group has been destroyed – “...each of the nodes adjusts its programmatic settings on its own and usually adjusts its goals, implementing different acts of intimidation and terror without the center’s control. The absence of direct hierarchical subordination and horizontal nature of links is not a defect, but rather an inherent property of the network, giving it more flexibility and stability. Each of the nodes in the network is almost completely autonomous. Together they represent a kind of voluntary “coalition of participants”. So, even abandoning the fight, neutralizing one node or even the core of the organization is theoretically not sufficient to paralyze the operation of the network on the whole”⁸¹.

Therefore, Jund al-Khilafah must not be considered an offshoot of Al-Qaeda or the Islamic Jihad Union, but as one of their independently operating cells. These kinds of cells could be created on their own, spontaneously, acting autonomously, planning their operations independently, but each of them, in any case, is a part of a single network. Therefore, they could emerge unexpectedly, often having time to commit just one or two attacks, and then quickly disappear without causing serious harm to the function of the entire network. The emergence and activity of the Soldiers of the Caliphate is an example of launching such auto-

⁸⁰ Sageman M. Network structures of terrorism. - M .: The idea Press, 2008.p.214.

⁸¹ Solovyov E.G. The transformation of terrorist organizations in the context of globalization. M .: LENAND, 2006. p. 18.

mous cells in Central Asia. At the same time with the Soldiers of the Caliphate a sudden announcement was made by other groups, such as Kyrgyz group Jaishul Mahdi and Tajik group Jamaat Ansarullah.

The Other Soldiers: “Jaishul Mahdi” and “Jamaat Ansarullah”

For a long time, a terrorist threat in Central Asia was mainly associated with the operation of larger groups, such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union. Sometimes, along with them, media mentioned Hizb ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Party of Turkestan (known as the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement). Hizb ut-Tahrir was officially banned in some Central Asian republics and listed as a terrorist and extremist organization; however, experts do not have a consensus on its terrorist specifications. Nonetheless, the ideas of building a unified caliphate preached by Hizb ut-Tahrir are congruous to those stated objectives of many other terrorist groups. In other words, Hizb ut-Tahrir’s activities facilitated the work of ideologists of terrorist groups in their search for potential recruits and propaganda of fundamental objectives of the “Holy War”. Therefore, experts ranked the terrorist threat in Central Asia according to the efforts of the above-mentioned groups and organizations, and all kinds of scenarios and speculations were actually based on one major idea – the probability of external infiltration or invasion of armed radical groups in the territory of the Central Asian states.

In fact, special services and expert communities were generally worried that the threat of the so-called Batken events, which happened in 1999-2000 in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, could happen again, when their respective territories were invaded by a large group of fighters from the Islamic Movement of Uzbeki-

stan. Even now, analyzing destabilization risks after the Coalition forces withdrew from Afghanistan, major scenarios include the possibility of the IJU detachments invading the border areas of the Central Asian states. No doubt, these scenarios may happen again, especially considering the fact that during these years, the influence and weight of the IMU, IJU and IPT have significantly been reinforced. These groups could try to establish footholds in Central Asia again, organize small but regular sorties and acts in the neighboring territories. However, the analysis shows that the attention should be focused not only on these international terrorist organizations, but also on the emergence of smaller autonomous groups or cells of radicals, who may try to coordinate their activities with other larger foreign structures. Moreover, there were precedents. Before the Soldiers of the Caliphate, who created an impression that terrorism has only Kazakh roots, Kyrgyz and Tajik groups had been loudly announcing themselves as well. It should also be noted here that the character of their development, duration of their activity, immaturity, propaganda and style of attacks were very similar. Therefore, their activities are worth a separate discussion.

In 2010, a group called Jaishul Mahdi (in Arabic, it means “the Army of the Righteous Ruler”) emerged in the Kyrgyz Republic. The group began to form back in 2007 under the jihadist influence of Said Buryatsky. It should be stressed that the radical groups in Kazakhstan, the active members of which would later take part in the creation of Jund al-Khilafah, were also created under the influence of propaganda disseminated by Said Buryatsky. Three years later, in 2010, Jamaat finally transformed into a terrorist group. In the same period, the group started to actively acquire firearms, ammunition, weapons, military uniforms, sleeping bags and other items with the purpose of perpetrating crimes. According to the law enforcement materials and

journalistic investigations, the members of the group got their automatic weapons during the April revolution of 2010, when, as mass protests and armed clashes between protesters and the police resulted in the overthrowing of President Kurmanbek Bakiyev. Subsequently, many firearms belonging to the Presidential Security Service and Special Forces were stolen or lost; some of them falling into the hands of extremists.

The group elected Sovetbek Islamov (named Baro or Shura) as its leader. He was born in 1972 in the village of Ak-Tuz of Kemin district in Chui region. The group members gave an oath to devote themselves to wage jihad with him against “infidels”. At the time of the crime, Islamov was 38 years old, married and had no permanent job. According to investigation materials, he had been convicted earlier for drug possession and served a three-year term. While in prison, he began practicing Islam. It is believed that other inmates may have influenced him, particularly those charged with extremist accusations. In the same colony, where he served his time, there were a number of convicts accused of participating in the so-called Batken events of 1999-2000, when armed groups of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan raided the territory of Kyrgyzstan.

At the first stage, the group actively recruited new supporters. In October and early November 2010, in the house of one activist, the group was joined by eight people, three of whom were elected as the group leader’s assistants.

During the night from the 19th to the 20th of December, when the group was active, there was another meeting of group members, where the name Jamaat of Kyrgyzstan “Jaishul Mahdi” was decided upon. Four more people joined the group, and Sovetbek Islamov was re-elected as Emir of the newly-established organization. Each member of the group gave an oath again.

According to special services, there were fifteen people in

the group (thirteen people were charged and convicted later). The personal data analysis of the group members showed the following information:

Firstly, the group members' average age was 30. The oldest group member was 39 years old and the youngest was 23. Most group members were married and had 2 or 3 children.

Secondly, only three group members had received university education, five of them had secondary education. Two of them had incomplete secondary education.

Thirdly, most members did not have permanent employment. Those who had a job mainly worked in markets or in construction.

Remarkably, the group was represented only by the Kyrgyz - born in, and residing in the northern regions of Kyrgyzstan - contrary to a common belief that extremist structures mainly recruit people from the south of Kyrgyzstan.

As it was established by a later investigation, "in order to attract attention and funding from international organizations" the Jaishul Mahdi members recorded a video, where they wore masks and held guns, announcing the creation of a terrorist organization in Kyrgyzstan and the start of an armed jihad, and giving an oath of allegiance, which they posted on the internet⁸².

The video was recorded on the same day as the Jaishul Mahdi foundation meeting was held, i.e. on December 20th 2010. The footage was recorded in a bedroom of a residential house. There was a poster on the wall with Arabic inscription "Kalimat Taukhit", meaning, "there is no God but Allah, Prophet Muhammad is His slave and messenger". The group leader sat in the front randomly surrounded by others. The newly recruited group members also participated in the footage.

The video of the group was somewhat different in its con-

⁸² <http://www.paruskg.info/2011/01/17/38346>

tent from similar videos of other groups. If, for example, the video message of the Soldiers of the Caliphate contained demands to the government of Kazakhstan, Zhayshil Mahdi's video did not have any specific demands or any clarifications on the group's goals and objectives. The notable feature of the video was Bayati, or the oath of allegiance given to the leader of the Taliban movement, Mullah Omargiven, by the group members. The message was first recited in Russian and then almost the same message was recited in Kyrgyz. The video was first posted on December 20th 2010. In March 2011, the video was posted on the Unjust Media website. The duration of the video was slightly more than 2 minutes.



Attacks Chronicle:

- September 9, 2010, the group members set off an explosion in the front yard of the synagogue in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) with the purpose of manifesting their attitude protest against Jews, intimidating and killing the Synagogue goers. The bomb was improvised by the Emir himself.

- November 30, 2010, near the Sports Palace, where the trial was held with those who were accused of shooting demonstrators during the so-called April Revolution of 2010, they detonated a bomb planted in the sewerage.

- December 20, 2010, at night, in front of the US Embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, they shot a man by the name of A. L. Alferov dead in a car;

- December 24, 2010, the Jaishul Mahdi members attacked US citizen Norton Genille Richard and his family, in order to seize his Land Rover Discovery;

- December 25, the group members installed an explosive device in the car they had stolen before, and drove it to the building of the Municipal Department of Internal Affairs in Bishkek in order to blow it up. However, the explosive devices was detected and neutralized.

- January 4, 2011, the group members murdered three district police officers from Oktyabrskiy Department of Internal Affairs in Bishkek.

- January 5, 2011, the wanted Jaishul Mahdi members were detected and blocked in the village Bozboltok in Alamedin district. During the special operation for their detention, the agent of the Alpha special unit of the State Security Committee of Kyrgyzstan, Lieutenant J. Babaraimov, died from severe wounds. Under the backfire shot by the Special Forces, two group members - Sovetbek Islamov and Azim Sultankulov – were liquidated.

- October 24, 2012, the Pervomaisky district court of Bishkek banned Jaishul Mahdi in the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic. In July 2013, the Oktyabrsky district court of Bishkek sentenced three members of the group to life imprisonment, the rest were sentenced to serve in prison from 4 to 23 years. However, currently, the criminal case is being reviewed by the judicial authorities because the convicts made an appeal over the verdict.

At the same time, it should be noted that despite the harsh verdict in the case of Jaishul Mahdi, the above events triggered very intensive debates in the Kyrgyz society. Many experts, public figures and politicians expressed an opinion that the case was actually fabricated, doubting the actual existence of this group. In particular, “Jashasyn Kyrgyzstan” party leader Toktaim Umetaliev said, “it is just a fictional organization created by the Security Forces. The criminal case against this terrorist organization came to a dead end”⁸³. Later it was established that some of the arrested Jaishul Mahdi members, at the time of the incident, also participated in a special group created by the Interim Government of Kyrgyzstan for assisting the victims of the riot which happened in Osh in June 2010. Marat Islamov, the brother of the group leader, Sovetbek Islamov (who had been killed during the special operation), as well as one of the arrested members of the group, Edil Abdrakhmanov, had temporary mandates signed by the head of the Interim Government, Emil Kaptagaev. The Kyrgyz media published copies of all these documents. Accordingly, the Kyrgyz human rights activists and experts suggested that the terrorist attacks may have been designed by the Kyrgyz authorities in order to obtain US aid for their “war on terror”, and Jaishul Mahdi was just a product of Kyrgyz Security forces’ poor fantasy⁸⁴.

Some experts were less categorical. However, they implied that the real threat posed by the Jaishul Mahdi was far exaggerated. Thus, for example, the Akykat party leader and former head of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, Alibek Jekshenkulov, said, “Currently Jaishul Mahdi is a small organization compared to other radical movements operating in the country, such as Hiz-

⁸³ An extremist group “Jaishul Mahdi” is intensifying in Kyrgyzstan <http://central-asiaonline.com/ru/articles/caii/features/main/2011/11/14/feature-01>

⁸⁴ MK-Asia: The terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan were planned by government? <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/6889>

but-Tahrir. Of course, they would not be able to undermine the security situation. However, we cannot ignore them, because we had better not allow them to build up their capacity and we need to eradicate their activity completely”⁸⁵.

Experts had their doubts regarding the activities of the group that emerged so suddenly. The major question was connected to the name of the group Jaishul Mahdi. In particular, the experts questioned the usage of the name Mahdi – the last successor of Prophet Muhammad, a kind of messiah, who should appear before the doomsday. In Islam, Mahdi’s coming is associated with the nearing of the Judgment Day or revival of the faith. According to theologian Aman Saliev, “References to Mahdi are not typical for Sunni terrorist groups and organizations. As it is known, Mahdi was never mentioned in the names of any Sunni terrorist and radical groups”⁸⁶. However, one of the most infamous paramilitary Shiite groups that emerged in Iraq in 2003 had the same name of “Jaish al-Mahdi”.

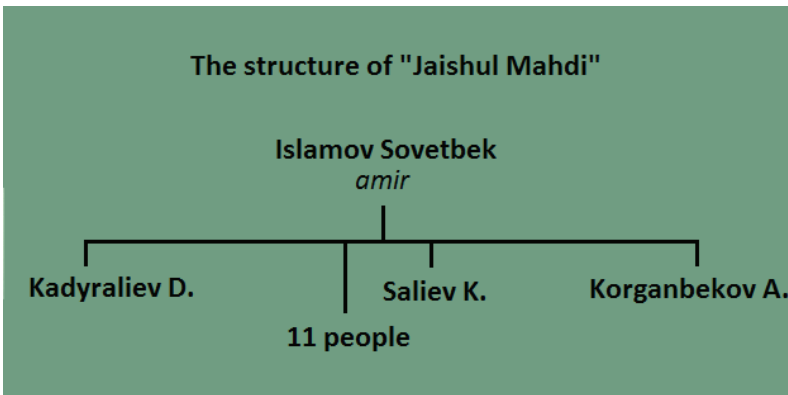
The point is that Sunni and Shiite have different interpretations of Mahdi’s coming. The Sunni Mahdi is an uncertain person, the time of his coming is unknown and the events related to his coming will happen by the will of God. Therefore, Sunni Islam does not propagandize Mahdi’s coming. Shiites believe that Mahdi’s coming is associated with the return of the “hidden Imam” and the restoration of the justice on Earth. Shiites associate their future with Mahdi, so the coming of the Messiah in Shiite Islam is a kind of culmination, a D-Day, a turning point. Thus, the Kyrgyz experts wondered about the origins of the Mahdi Army in the Sunni Kyrgyzstan. Recognizing that the situation around this

⁸⁵ MK-Asia: The terrorist attacks in Kyrgyzstan were planned by government? <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/6889>

⁸⁶ Saliev A. Who is behind the “Jaish al-Mahdi”? // <http://www.materik.ru/problem/detail.php?ID=11833&print=Y>

Kyrgyz terrorist group was confusing, experts restrained from giving a definitive answer: “Possibly, somebody badly desires to give a Shiite flavor to the terrorist acts in Kyrgyzstan, or it was just a happenstance of several failed or forethought terrorist attacks. Perhaps, the name of the group was chosen randomly by its members, “out of the blue” as they say.” Nonetheless, organizing a terrorist group or a cell, especially on an ideological basis, implies deep ideological preparation. The reason this group positions itself as adhering to a Shiite component in its ideology remains unclear”⁸⁷.

However, according to the Anti-Terrorist Center of Kyrgyzstan of the State Security Committee, this group did have some real terrorist characteristics. Furthermore, according to the Kyrgyz special services, the Jaishul Mahdi represented a new formation of terrorist and radical organizations. It was allegedly established under the influence of extremist ideas spread on the Internet⁸⁸.



⁸⁷ Saliev A. Who is behind the “Jaish al-Mahdi”? // <http://www.materik.ru/problem/detail.php?ID=11833&print=Y>

⁸⁸ Complicated case of “Jaishul Mahdi” // http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_sarygulova/24974316.html

It is worthy to note that during the investigation, some of the accused persons testified that their group had attempted to contact radical cells in other Central Asian countries, including Kazakhstan. In particular, a group member named Abu Musa allegedly traveled to Almaty, Kazakhstan, and had a meeting with the Kazakh radical group members to discuss joint attacks on the American airbase Ganci in Bishkek and on the Russian airbase in Kant. There were other contacts as well, concerning the acquisition of illegal firearms from Kyrgyzstan by Kazakhstani criminal groups. This detail shows how radical cells could interact and even plan joint actions. Later, the Kyrgyz special services stated that they had discovered some new circumstances concerning the Jaishul Mahdi case. On June 8, 2012, the Pervomayskiy court of Bishkek sentenced somebody called Karasov to four years in prison. He had been trained in Afghanistan in 2011 as a member of an international terrorist organization. He arrived in Kyrgyzstan upon the invitation of one of the Jaishul Mahdi leaders, Kairat Saliev, (who had earlier been hiding from security forces), and contacted the members of this group. It remains unclear whether he acted on his own or was following the orders of international terrorist organizations.

Previously, it was believed that Jaishul Mahdi was a terrorist organization created in the territory of Kyrgyzstan and consisting of locals only. It should also be noted that Kairat Saliev, was suspected by the special services for the active participation in the Jaishul Mahdi group. Saliev disguised himself in Egypt and then went to Afghanistan. Some suggest that he is currently in Syria. Albeit, Saliev posted a video message on the Internet where he denied these accusations and stated that the Jaishul Mahdi case was fully fabricated. He said that all charges against him and others were made up by the special services.

In August 2014, some militants were detained in Bahorak, the northeastern Badakhshan province of Afghanistan, and according to the Afghan authorities, some of the suspects were members of the so-called Kyrgyzstan Kalkany group (Shield of Kyrgyzstan). The information on the date of the establishment and the name of the creator of this group was not provided.

Tajik group Jamaat Ansarullah (Society of Allah's followers) announced itself in 2010, claiming responsibility for the terrorist attack that happened on September 3, in Khujand, when a suicide bomber blew himself up near the building of the district office of the Internal Affairs and three police officers were killed. The suicide-bomber, was a local – Akmal Karimov (religious name – Abdullah), who, according to extremist sites, attacked the police building having pulled up in a Gaz-24 car with explosives. According to some reports, Karimov had previously been trained in the camps of the IMU in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Later, the Tajik special services reported that this group had its own website and it was structurally part of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

In Autumn 2010, in Rasht Valley, when the forces were pursuing the escapees, the column of Tajik military vehicles was shelled and 25 soldiers were killed. Subsequently, the government conducted a large-scale special operation for the liquidation of the paramilitary groups, during which, one of the group leaders, former commander of the united Tajik opposition, Mullo Abdullo (Abdullo Rakhimov) was killed. When the agents were examining the place of the special operation, they allegedly found the banner of Jamaat Ansarullah. Later, the law enforcement authorities officially accused the killed Mullo Abdullo of being involved in Jamaat Ansarullah's operations.

A year later, in September 2011, somebody posted a video message on the Internet on behalf of Jamaat Ansarullah, which

said that the group was operating within the country, and called Muslims to conduct jihad against the government's policy.

On May 3, 2012, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan decided to ban the Jamaat Ansarullah group in the republic.

In September 2013, the group posted a message addressed to the parliament and government of Tajikistan, demanding that they should not ratify the agreement on the location of the 201st military base of the Russian Federation in Tajikistan. *“Any agreement with any non-Muslim country, which allows this country's soldiers and military equipment to enter the territory of Tajikistan or transgress its borders, breaches the inviolability status, and any agreement on providing the land and sky of Tajikistan to kafeers for killing Muslims will be condemned by Jamaat Ansarullah and will not be recognized by us officially”.*

On September 24, 2014, the Tajik TV showed three of the convicted members of the IMU and Jamaat Ansarullah who confessed that they were planning to explode several bombs in Dushanbe before the presidential elections of November 6th.

On October 13, 2013, somebody posted a message on behalf of Jamaat Ansarullah on the website of the North Caucasus radicals “Kavkaz center”. The message denied that Jamaat Ansarullah was a branch of the IMU. The clarification was presented with all the details regarding the regional and local policy: *“Jamaat Ansarullah respects and has brotherly relations with all jamaats that fight on the path of Allah, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. But, as we have said earlier, Jamaat Ansarullah is not related to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from the perspective of its formation; it is not its branch and never was. The rumors and information that we belong to the IMU are spread by the special services of Tajikistan and the mass media, which is used to spread this full of lies propaganda. By disseminating this lie, the special services pursue two goals. The first one*

is to show that Jamaat Ansarullah is a small group, which obeys another jamaat. The second one is that considering the historical and political tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the special services are trying hard to communicate this: O, people, behold, Ansarullah joined the Uzbeks who want to destroy your country!”

The goal of the message was to unlink the group from the previously detained radicals headed by somebody called Alimurad Makhanov, whom the Tajik special services accused of planning terrorist acts in the republic. In this message, Jamaat Ansarullah did not recognize Makhanov’s group as their members and declared that they were possibly related to the IMU, and in accordance with some agreement previously concluded between different groups, they were allegedly unable to act independently and plan operations in Tajikistan without prior notification of Jamaat Ansarullah.” The transcript of the message was later posted on this group’s website.

Unlike Jaishul Mahdi or Jund Al-Khilafah, who managed to survive a few months, Jamaat Ansarullah turned out to be a tougher group. Besides, alongside the IMU, it became one of the most active groups around the south borders of the Central Asian region. According to the MIA of Tajikistan, in 2013 they detected and detained 48 members of terrorist organizations in the republic: 31 members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and 17 member of Jamaat Ansarullah. In July 2014, the government of the Afghan province of Badakhshan declared that during an operation conducted against the leader of the local Taliban cell, two leaders of Jamaat Ansarullah had been liquidated.

If in the early 2000-s the terrorist threat in Central Asia was generally connected with the operations of such large associations and the IMU and IJU, from 2010 to 2013, some small country-specific ethnic terrorist groups emerged.

Emergence of these groups made some experts believe that the terrorist threat was being institutionalized in the country. It is still unknown whether these groups had independent roots or were part of some strategic plan of large international terrorist organizations. However, the analysis of their activity clearly shows similar details (it should be noted, that Jamaat Ansarullah is not comparable to the Soldiers of the Caliphate in all aspects, because it stemmed from a paramilitary Tajik opposition, which waged war with the Tajik government in the 1990-s).

Firstly, Jaishul Mahdi, Jamaat Ansarullah and the Soldiers of the Caliphate were very active on the Internet, made videos and broadcasted video messages. Regarding to the activity on the Internet, the Kyrgyz special services ranked all these groups at the same level. In 2012, at the meeting in the Anti-terrorism Center, the then head of the State Security Committee of Kyrgyzstan, Shamil Atakhanov, remarked, “among the organizations that operate online, spread ideology and recruit supporters, the most noticeable are the Muslim Resistance Committee, Jaishul Mahdi, the Soldiers of the Caliphate, Hizb ut-Tahrir, Islamic Jihad Union... However, Jamaat Ansarullah went even further in its Internet strategy by creating its own website”.

Secondly, the groups’ establishment also had some common features. The Jaishul Mahdi and the Soldiers of the Caliphate members were in one community before the creation of their groups. Their radicalization was happening under the influence of jihadist ideas of one of the North Caucasus radical movement leaders, Said Buryatsky.

Thirdly, the first attacks and operations of these groups: Jaishul Mahdi, Jamaat Ansarullah and Jund Al-Khilafah, were mostly aimed against the police and special services. In particular, they bombed the buildings of local police departments and prosecution offices.

Fourthly, the group members were poorly trained, had poor equipment and lacked skills and experience of sabotage. The first planned operations of Jaishul Mahdi and the Soldiers of the Caliphate had failed because the improvised bombs did not detonate or detonated unexpectedly. Foreign experts believe those are the signs of immaturity of such groups.

Fifthly, the group members commented on internal political events: electoral campaigns, governmental actions and state policies. For example, Jaishul Mahdi drew attention when the group organized an explosion near the building where the court trial against the former Kyrgyz political authorities was conducted. The Soldiers of the Caliphate timed their first act to the adoption of the new law on religious associations, which, according to them, violated the rights of believers. Jamaat Ansarullah started its informational campaign by criticizing the policy of the state.

However, the similarity of the above-mentioned groups is also noted by other experts, in particular, Kyrgyz observers: “No matter how numerous speculations are, it is especially important to note that these self-proclaimed groups are an ordinary phenomenon for such republics as Uzbekistan or Tajikistan, whereas their emergence in less Islamic Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, headed by and comprised of young citizens, was unexpected. Both the Kyrgyz group, Jaishul Mahdi, and the Kazakh group, Jund Al-Khilafah, had a lot in common in terms of their organization, propaganda and ideology. It made many experts think that both the Soldiers of the Caliphate and Messiah’s Army had common roots, or were even sponsored by the same source. It is known, for example, that the activists of both of the groups were followers of the well-known Russian jihad ideologist, Said Buryatsky (Alexander Tikhomirov). The liquidated preacher from North Caucasus held personal meetings with his fellows in Kazakhstan. Albeit, in December 2012, upon the initiative of the

Kyrgyz special services, the Soldiers of the Caliphate were listed as prohibited radical organizations along with Jaishul Mahdi and Jamaat Ansarullah.

Jaishul Mahdi and Jund Al-Khilafah announced themselves loudly in the beginning, but their activity was short-term. Only after a few months, the leaders of these groups had been liquidated and their groups disintegrated and disappeared from the informational space. Whereas Jamaat Ansarullah, supported by larger organizations, such as the IMU and IJU, developed its operations further, recruiting more people. According to some reports, the fighters of this group are currently involved in combats in Syria and Iraq.

Thus, the emergence of small mobile country-specific terrorist groups became a determinant trend in the terrorism threat evolution in Central Asia from 2010 to 2013. However, this trend was not noted by most of the experts, whose attention was still focused on large international terrorist organizations, such as the IMU and IJU. Meanwhile, the emergence of these groups proves that the countries of the region had new factors and pre-conditions for the emergence of radical ideologies and movements; until 2010-2012, the terrorism threat was predominantly viewed as an external danger, correspondingly, the counter-terrorism preventive and protective measures were mostly related to reinforcing the borders, migration control, improving military factors, etc. At the same time, however, it cannot be excluded that some of those groups were coordinated to some extent by large international terrorist organizations, which, most probably, monitored and analyzed the actions of these small groups and tested the possibility of creating footholds in the region for their future operations. The Soldiers of the Caliphate is possibly one of these groups.

The road to Syria

The story of Jund al-Khilafah is a story of continuous speculations and endless manipulations. An unverified piece of information on this group once appeared online, and then it was quoted as a proven fact without any references to sources or other supporting evidence. Subsequently, the myth of the Soldiers of the Caliphate grew into a real mythology. In September 2014, the so-called Center of Eurasian Strategic Intelligence based in London, published an analytical article on its website regarding the risks for the political regime in Kazakhstan, bringing forward a number of unverified “facts” on the Soldiers of the Caliphate: “The Jund al-Khilafah extremist organization had recently grown more active in Kazakhstan. Earlier, in 2011, this organization’s members perpetrated a series of terrorist attacks in Atyrau. The group is located in the Khost province, Afghanistan, near the Pakistani border. Active propaganda is being spread in the eastern regions of the country to attract more supporters among Kazakhs. It is known for sure that the Soldiers of the Caliphate is a division of the well-known Islamic Movement of Turkestan (formerly, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan). In accordance with the concept of creating security buffer zones, Russia might deploy its troops in Kazakhstan to combat Jund al-Khilafah or other radical Islamic groups. This scenario means gaining control over the entire territory of Kazakhstan, the compact Russian-speaking population and practical liquidation of statehood in the country”⁸⁹. Thus, one prognostic article blended different topics together and, to sound more credible, provided unverified information and sheer fabrications.

⁸⁹ Kazakhstan-risks for Nazarbayev’s regime are growing <http://eurasianintelligence.org/news.php?new=61&num>

After the disintegration of Jund al-Khilafah and its eventual disappearance from the media space, the problem of departure of Kazakhstani nationals to “hot spots”, in particular to the Afghan-Pakistani border region faded down. The very problem of fighting terrorism lost its momentum. Law enforcement agencies were able to reverse the situation: major cells of radical organizations had been identified and liquidated; the entire system of counter action to the threats of terrorism and extremism was reconsidered; a new strategy for prevention of radicalism that would combine the efforts of both the government and civil society was adopted. However, the monitoring and analysis of the websites of various radical structures shows that people from Kazakhstan continue fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Messages and videos about Kazakhstani nationals who have been killed in the Afghan-Pakistan border region regularly appear in social networks.



The latest messages dated 2013-2014:

- Extremist sites posted information on a Kazakhstani citizen, Abdul Haq Kazakhstani, who committed a suicide bombing at a military base in Waziristan on September 20, 2012.

- On December 5, 2012, a Kazakhstani citizen, mentioned as Abdul Aziz Kazakhstani, perpetrated a terrorist attack in the Pakistani city of Van.

- On December 10, 2012, somebody called Asadullah Kazakhstani and Usman Kazakhstani committed a suicide bombing in the building of the Pakistani special services.

- In February 2013, two more Kazakhstani nationals were reported to have blown themselves up at a military base in Pakistan.

- On March 23, 2013, somebody called Harun Kazakhstani committed a terrorist act by using a truck in the “Isha” base in Waziristan.

These are but a few reports on some Kazakhstani citizens who died in the Afghan-Pakistan border region. It is noteworthy that in many cases people who were making videos showing preparations for terrorist acts also speak Russian and Kazakh. If earlier most of those who departed for Afghanistan or Pakistan were young “dreamers” who went to fight following the call of their friends, peers or the Internet propaganda, today we witness the emergence of “ideological fanatics”, who seek to build the Islamic Caliphate.

The destinations have changed to Syria and Iraq now, which attract radicals from all over the world eager to participate in the holy war alongside major terrorist organizations such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant and Jabhat al-Nusra. Some former Soldiers of the Caliphate members also found their refuge

in Syria. In April 2014, the French media announced that somebody named David Daud Drugeon, who had been associated with the Soldiers of the Caliphate, arrived in Miranshah, North Waziristan in June 2010, where he became a close friend of Moez Garsallauoi, joining the Soldiers of the Caliphate.

According to CNN, the information on the involvement of Drugeon in the Soldiers of the Caliphate partly comes from the interrogation conducted by the French special services of one of the group members who was serving his prison sentence in Kazakhstan⁹⁰.

As it is reported, Drugeon was born in Vannes, Bretagne, in 1989. His father was a bus controller and his mother worked at a poultry farm. His parents divorced when he was 13. At the age of 14, he and his older brother converted to Islam, and he was known as Daud since then. According to *L'Express*, “David filled the void left by the dissolution of his family with an extremist form of religion. It was right after 9/11. The quarter where David lived was inhabited by Salafis”⁹¹.

From 2008 to 2010, Drugeon made three trips to Egypt to improve his knowledge of Islam and Arabic. The training lasted from three to six months. The last time his family saw him was on April 17, 2010.

According to the French special services, after the Soldiers of the Caliphate disintegrated, Drugeon remained in Waziristan, and later left to Syria. There he became a leading specialist in explosives while working for the Khorasan group associated with

⁹⁰ The article “French bomb-maker with Khorasan radicalized over ‘several years’” <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/10/31/world/meast/syria-khorasan-bomb-maker/>

⁹¹ The article «Sur la piste de David Drugeon, le Français d’Al-Qaïda En savoir plussur» - http://www.lexpress.fr/actualite/societe/sur-la-piste-du-francais-d-al-qaeda_1613834.html

Al-Qaeda and the Syrian group of Jabhat Al-Nusra. In September and October 2014, Drugeon was reported by a number of American and French media to be a priority target for the United States because the Khorasan group was suspected of planning terrorist attacks in American cities. In some American media outlets, it was speculated that Drugeon was an agent of the French intelligence and Special Forces, who later joined the radical side. In November 2014, he was killed by US drones in Northwest Syria. According to various sources, around 200 to 400 Kazakhstani citizens are currently fighting in Syria and Iraq alongside several hundred representatives from other Central Asian republics. As in Pakistan and Afghanistan, the Central Asians are uniting again and setting up their groups, such as Imam Bukhari and Sabiri Jamaat. The Tajik group Jamaat Ansarullah created in Pakistan is now operating in Syria. The Islamic Jihad Union resumed recruiting and smuggling people from Central Asia to Syria. Naturally, the questions regarding the motives and the future of the fighters come up: why young people give up their families, jobs and homes, leave their country and fight in somebody else's war for the interests of others. Will they ever try to come back? If so, will they be already infected with the virus of the war? Will they continue jihad in their homeland? What if somebody will try to use them against their own country and compatriots, as it was in the case of the Soldiers of the Caliphate? There are many topical and vital questions on the international agenda. But all of them are the subject for another separate and full-scale research project.

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