



Dossier: Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)

(*Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyyah al-Muqatila*)

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Part I: Origins in the 1980s

On September 1, 1969, a small group of ambitious military officers led by Captain Muammar Qadhafi staged a coup d'état in the North African state of Libya, deposing the former monarchy and establishing in its place an Arab nationalist regime. Though Qadhafi claimed his revolution was aimed at achieving direct, popular democracy through "Islamic socialism," his regime nonetheless began to generate resentment among dissidents who questioned his true commitment to Islam and his compassion for the Libyan people. As Arab nationalism—the primary ideological foundation of Qadhafi's regime—began to wane in the 1970s and 1980s, Qadhafi faced increasing opposition from thriving conservative Muslim circles in Libya who considered his pragmatic integration of Islam and socialism as religious heresy. These Islamists were further emboldened by events in nearby Egypt, where hardline jihadist cells had succeeded in assassinating President Anwar Sadat in revenge for his diplomacy with Israel and the West.



Although the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) did not officially announce its formation until 1995, the roots of the movement are closely linked to the "first group" of Libyans who fought and declared their 'jihad' against [Libyan President Muammar] Qadhafi's regime during the 1980s.¹ During their early years of existence, distracted by "disagreements and rivalries,"² the Libyan mujahideen ("holy warriors") were not yet organized in a single group and engaged in only limited confrontations with forces loyal

¹ "The Roots of the 'Libyan Fighting Group' ... the story of the failure of the 'jihad movement' during the eighties." April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>.

² "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." [Jamestown Foundation](http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101). March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

to Qadhafi.³ The few confrontations they did manage to provoke often ended in misfortune. In 1986, following the assassination of a key official in the Libyan government, Qadhafi's security forces quickly rounded up all nine members of the Islamist cell responsible for the plot and sentenced them to death.⁴

Despite these disheartening failures, the Libyan mujahideen volunteers remained committed to their jihad against the "apostate" Qadhafi. Fighters began to band together under Commander Awatha al-Zuwawi, a student of Islamic law in Tripoli who formed an underground jihadist organization in Libya in 1982.⁵ According to Noman Benotman, a former member of the LIFG's Shura ("Advisory") Council, "most of the founding leaders and cadres of the Fighting Group" were members of Zuwawi's clandestine organization.⁶ By 1985-1986, "Zuwawi had many sophisticated and university educated people around him, in particular Abu Munther al-Saadi," who served as the LIFG's spiritual leader.⁷ In 1986, Zuwawi further bolstered his credentials by visiting mujahideen fighting in Afghanistan for several weeks before returning to Libya.⁸ Three years later, in 1989, Zuwawi was arrested in Benghazi by Libyan security forces and "his group was dismantled."⁹ Following Zuwawi's arrest in 1989 and the quelling of Islamist demonstrations in Benghazi, those Libyans who were drawn to the "jihadi way of thinking" migrated en masse to Afghanistan, where they "joined their Arab companions under the banner of Afghani mujahideen groups in fierce battles against... the central communist government in Kabul."¹⁰

At first glance, no one could have imagined the lasting significance of the Soviet military invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. Rather than achieving a quick victory against forces threatening the local communist regime in Afghanistan, the Soviets found themselves surrounded by a relentless guerilla adversary. Countless numbers of Afghans joined the Islamic resistance, which was organized into several native mujahideen organizations with headquarters in Peshawar, Pakistan. The Afghan cauldron also provided unprecedented opportunities to disparate transnational Muslim dissident groups for unification of thought, purpose, and infrastructure. It was then, while in exile in Pakistan and Afghanistan, that the LIFG began to morph into an identifiable organization.¹¹ Former LIFG Shura Council member Noman Benotman notes that by 1992 "the Muqatilah [LIFG] was well and truly established" and committed to "overthrow[ing] Mu'ammarr Qadhafi and replac[ing] his regime with a hard-line Islamic

³ "The Roots of the 'Libyan Fighting Group' ... the story of the failure of the 'jihad movement' during the eighties." April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>.

⁴ "The Roots of the 'Libyan Fighting Group' ... the story of the failure of the 'jihad movement' during the eighties." April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>.

⁵ "The Roots of the 'Libyan Fighting Group' ... the story of the failure of the 'jihad movement' during the eighties." April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>. See also: "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁶ "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁷ "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁸ "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁹ "The Roots of the 'Libyan Fighting Group' ... the story of the failure of the 'jihad movement' during the eighties." April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>.

¹⁰ "The Roots of the 'Libyan Fighting Group' ... the story of the failure of the 'jihad movement' during the eighties." April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>.

¹¹ "Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG." U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

state.”¹² Benotman explained, “Our organization was ruled by a Shura Committee and, according to its charter, the Shura Committee needed a quorum of 7 people for its decisions to be legally binding. Usually there were up to 15 people in the Shura at any given point in time.”¹³

Indeed, beyond merely fighting communist-led forces in Afghanistan, the gradually coalescing LIFG sought to “develop... fighting skills in anticipation of the day” they “would return to Libya to fight the Qadhafi regime.”¹⁴ According to credible mujahideen sources, the main base for Libyan fighters “was in the Salman al-Farisi camp in the area of Ghindaw... located in the Pakistani tribal zone along the border with Afghanistan.”¹⁵ In approximately 1986, the same Salman al-Farisi training camp frequented by the Libyans was “taken over” by associates of Saudi exile Usama Bin Laden following a joint decision made by founding Al-Qaida Shura Council members Abu Hassan al-Madani (a.k.a. Wael Jalaidan) and Abu Rida al-Suri (a.k.a. Mohammed Loay Bayazid). According to Abu Rida, “We would meet all the newcomers, explain the situation, give them information about the fronts and give them something useful to do.”¹⁶ Abu Hassan similarly recalled, “The training... was concentrated in the hands of Abu Mohammed al-Sudani, Issam al-Liby [the Libyan], and an Afghani officer... each brother specialized in a particular type of gun, so that they could later train others how to use it.”¹⁷

When Usama Bin Laden formed the Al-Qaida terrorist organization in Afghanistan in 1988, it was initially conceived as a loose confederation of regional Arab mujahideen movements active in Afghanistan and hailing from across the Middle East. According to the U.S. Congressional 9/11 Commission, Bin Laden “understood better than most of the volunteers the extent to which the continuation and eventual success of the jihad in Afghanistan depended on an increasingly complex, almost worldwide organization.”¹⁸ Though Bin Laden’s “affiliates” maintained their own leaderships and corporate infrastructures, they shared the same training camps as other Al-Qaida groups in Afghanistan and could be called upon to provide material resources for the benefit of Al-Qaida. Confessed former Moroccan Al-Qaida operative L’Houssaine Kherchtou testified in U.S. federal court that the LIFG played a key early role for Al-Qaida by serving as such an affiliate:

“Q. Any other countries besides Algeria that had a group within al Qaeda?

A. We have the Libyan Fight Group...

Q. Did you know who the representatives of the Libyan Fighting Group were within al Qaeda?

¹² “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101. See also: “Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG.” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

¹³ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

¹⁴ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

¹⁵ “The Roots of the ‘Libyan Fighting Group’ ... the story of the failure of the ‘jihad movement’ during the eighties.” April 11, 2006. <http://www.al-boraq.com/showthread.php?t=7247>.

¹⁶ Muhammad, Basil. *Al-Ansaru l’Arab fi Afghanistan*. The Committee for Islamic Benevolence Publications; ©1991. Page 119.

¹⁷ Muhammad, Basil. *Al-Ansaru l’Arab fi Afghanistan*. The Committee for Islamic Benevolence Publications; ©1991. Page 119.

¹⁸ The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. Page 55.

- A. Who is emir [commander]?
- Q. Yes.
- A. Saif al Liby.
- Q. Do you know any other members of the Libyan Fighting Group who also belonged to al Qaeda?
- A. I remember Abu Jaffar al Liby, and Abu Anas al Liby, and Hamzallah al Liby, and Abu Abdel Qader al Liby. This is what I remember now.
- Q. You mentioned this morning that there was a person named Hamzallah al Liby who worked in Pakistan helping you to get the passports and travel documents. Is that the same person who was a member of the Libyan Fighting Group?
- A. Yes.
- Q. You mentioned this morning a person named Hamas al Liby. Is that the same person who was a member of the Libyan Fighting Group?
- A. Yes.”¹⁹

In addition to receiving military training from Al-Qaida instructors, LIFG recruits were also indoctrinated in Afghanistan by influential jihadist clerics such as Al-Qaida co-founder Dr. Abdullah Azzam, whose jihadist writings were later posted on the LIFG’s Internet website.²⁰ Indicating the extent of that indoctrination, the LIFG website also contained audio and video recordings of Bin Laden himself, imprisoned Egyptian jihad leader Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman, the El-Mudzahid Brigade in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Shaykh Mohammed al-Mohaisany—a prominent Saudi cleric who was detained by Saudi security forces following September 11, 2001 when he admonished his followers, “direct your forces against America, the center of disbelief and corruption... Oh Allah, direct your forces against them... Oh Allah, disintegrate their country... Oh Allah, eradicate them with your power and omnipotence!”²¹ Simply stated, while their primary goal remained deposing Muammar Qadhafi and establishing an Islamic state in Libya, as their stay in Afghanistan lengthened, LIFG leaders increasingly embraced their fellow mujahideen brethren from across North Africa and the Middle East, including Usama Bin Laden.

Part II: Exile in the Sudan (1992-1995)

In January 1993, the Pakistani government—eager to put the Afghan jihad in the past—ordered the closure of Arab mujahideen offices in the northwestern frontier province (NWFP) and threatened official deportation to many illegal foreign fighters who attempted to remain in Pakistan. A month later, the FBI secretly recorded senior Egyptian jihad leader Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman offering over the telephone to send new volunteers to the Arab-Afghan training camps in northwest Pakistan. Rahman was told, “all of them [are] closed, Sheik, nothing is left open... even the Base [Al-Qaida] is closed completely and they all departed from here... except for special situations.”²² These displaced men faced a serious problem, because return to their countries of origin

¹⁹ Trial Transcript; February 22, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Page 1281.

²⁰ <http://www.almuqatila.com/audio&v/duroos/azaam.htm>. March 2001.

²¹ <http://www.almuqatila.com/audio&v/doros1.htm>. March 2001. See also: <http://www.almuqatila.com/audio&v/duroos/alruhayasane.htm>. March 2001. See also: <http://www.citylinkcomputers.com/duafull.swf>. August 2003.

²² FBI Transcript of conversation involving Omar Ahmad Ali Abdel Rahman, “Muhammad” LNU, and two unidentified males. March 20, 1993. United States v. Omar Ahmad Ali Abdel Rahman et al. S3 93 Cr. 181(MBM). Government Exhibit 7057. Page 11.

meant certain arrest, torture, and likely death. The choice was either to be dispersed among various other distant Muslim frontlines or else join Usama Bin Laden and the rest of the mujahideen in asylum in Sudan. Like their other Arab brethren, between 1992 and 1993, many Libyans left Afghanistan because “the Pakistanis began to make life difficult for foreigners in the border areas.”²³ While some were dispatched to aid allied militant groups in Algeria and Bosnia-Herzegovina, many other Libyan Arab-Afghans moved on to Sudan.

At that time, Sudan was controlled by self-styled Islamist leader Hassan al Turabi, who, in 1991, invited Bin Laden to move to Sudan so that the latter could use the country “as a base for worldwide business operations and for preparations for jihad.”²⁴ In Sudan, Bin Laden established an “Islamic Army Shura” that was to serve as the “coordinating body” for the international militant alliance he sought to form. The “Islamic Army Shura” was composed of Al-Qaida’s growing network plus “leaders or representatives of terrorist organizations that were still independent”—including almost twenty members of the LIFG.²⁵ While in the Sudan under the protection of Turabi and Bin Laden, LIFG members were “based at a Villa complex” in Khartoum, where LIFG instructors delivered lectures “on military theory, intelligence and tactics” in order to “deepen...understanding of guerilla warfare and security matters.”²⁶ Furthermore, the LIFG operatives based in the Sudan maintained “regular contact” with LIFG members in Libya. According to Noman Benotman, who spent time in Sudan with the LIFG, “we were all part of the same group, but the people inside [Libya] had their own military and organizational structure.”²⁷

Bin Laden’s efforts at forming his “Islamic Army Shura” in the Sudan only increased the networking between and among his various affiliates, particularly rising North African militant groups like the Algerian Armed Islamic Group (GIA), Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya, and the LIFG. In later years, the LIFG openly acknowledged having “support[ed] the Jihad against the apostates in Algeria” and “the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria... based on the clear and scrupulous path that this group adopted throughout the years.”²⁸ Moreover, according to the U.S. government, “middle-ranking” LIFG member Tahir Nasuf “was previously associated with senior UK-based Libyans tied to the Al Qaeda-affiliated Armed Islamic Group (GIA).”²⁹ Suddenly, in June 1996, the LIFG declared an indefinite hiatus in providing “support and assistance” to the GIA in a bitter quarrel over tactics and leadership.³⁰ Yet, just as they distanced themselves from the Algerians, LIFG representatives were also quick to add, “we will... [resume] supporting the Armed Islamic Group if it replaces its current leadership and changes its policy,

²³ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

²⁴ The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. Page 57.

²⁵ The 9/11 Commission Report. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. Pages 58, 62.

²⁶ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

²⁷ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

²⁸ “Communiqué #6 from the Islamic Fighting Group Regarding the Jihad in Algeria.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan6.htm>. June 6, 1996.

²⁹ “Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG.” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

³⁰ “Communiqué #6 from the Islamic Fighting Group Regarding the Jihad in Algeria.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan6.htm>. June 6, 1996.

because we know that there are good and righteous people among its ranks.”³¹ Among the key demands from the LIFG was for their brothers in the GIA to restore a command structure run strictly by those “who took part in the Afghan jihad... known for... their active role in firmly rooting the jihad in Algerian soil.”³²

Like other regional Islamist movements, the LIFG also found kinship with arguably the most dominant force among Afghan-trained extremists in North Africa: the Egyptian terrorist organization Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya. By the mid-1990s, supporters of Al-Gama`at in Europe and North America began distributing news updates regarding LIFG operations targeting the “apostate” Libyan regime.³³ Likewise, according to Al-Qaida deputy commander Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, LIFG propaganda magazines published corresponding statements received from representatives of Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya.³⁴ The LIFG has been a particularly vocal ally of Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya’s imprisoned spiritual leader, the blind Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman. In October 1995, Rahman was convicted in U.S. federal court of seditious conspiracy for inspiring an aborted wave of terrorism targeting New York landmarks (including the World Trade Center) and he was sentenced to life in prison. Yet, even after Rahman was found guilty, the LIFG continued to issue propaganda material in his defense. In May 1997, the LIFG released a new statement on Rahman’s behalf:

“Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman—may Allah set him free—refused to sell out his religion and decided to keep his words vivid and alive in the hearts of those who knew him and were raised on his teachings... His positions and efforts shall always be a model for those who are loyal to our banner and to the whole Islamic nation. Those who oppressed our Mujahid Shaykh and paid no heed to his senior clerical status, his age, and his blindness should know that by doing so they have offended the entire Islamic nation which admires Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman and considers him to be a true role model and leader. The Islamic Fighting Group declares its support for Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman and reminds Muslims everywhere about his predicament. [The LIFG] also warns the Americans to take heed of the growing anger among Muslims who have had enough with the American tyranny that has spread across the whole world.”³⁵

Others within the senior echelons of the LIFG sought to strengthen their ties directly with Usama Bin Laden and Al-Qaida. In 1992, just prior to leaving Afghanistan, top LIFG military commander Saif al-Liby and LIFG computer specialist Abu Anas al-Liby (a.k.a. 42-year old Tripoli native Nazih al-Raghie) enrolled in an elite course taught by another high-ranking Bin Laden associate on “surveillance, how to make surveillance of targets and how to collect information about these targets... for example... whether to go to see the target, then you take pictures of that target, then locate the target in a map, then if you can go in the target so as to see how many people are working there, if there are some people there or not... We trained how to use different cameras, especially small cameras.”³⁶ According to former Moroccan Al-Qaida operative L’Houssaine

³¹ “Communiqué #6 from the Islamic Fighting Group Regarding the Jihad in Algeria.” <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan6.htm>. June 6, 1996.

³² “Communiqué #6 from the Islamic Fighting Group Regarding the Jihad in Algeria.” <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan6.htm>. June 6, 1996.

³³ American Islamic Group. “Theater of Operation: MUSLIM LIBYA.” *Islam Report*. February 16, 1996.

³⁴ “Al-Sharq Al-Awsat Publishes Extracts from Al-Jihad Leader Al-Zawahiri’s New Book.” *Al-Sharq Al-Awsat*, December 2, 2001.

³⁵ “A Support Letter from the Islamic Fighting Group to Shaykh Omar Abdel Rahman.” <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/omarabdrahman.htm>. May 31, 1997.

³⁶ Trial Transcript; February 21-22, 2001. *U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al.* S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Pages 1143, 1281.

Kherchtou (who was present for the training course), “At the end, Abu Anas al-Liby brought two computers so as to teach us how to put all this information we collected. Instead of reporting you put them in the computer and just put them in a disk so as to be easy to carry.”³⁷

Afterwards, while in exile in Khartoum, Abu Anas al-Liby continued his close relationship with Al-Qaida, allegedly spending time at local Al-Qaida guesthouses and holding various meetings with Bin Laden’s personal secretary Wadih el-Hage.³⁸ Even after seeking political asylum in the United Kingdom, Abu Anas remained “in contact... by phone, and sometimes by e-mail” with his Al-Qaida instructor from Afghanistan.³⁹ Shortly thereafter, in 1993, Abu Anas al-Liby, his former instructor, and several other Al-Qaida operatives traveled to Nairobi, Kenya, in order to case local targets for possible terrorist attacks—including the French Cultural Center, the British Consulate, the local offices of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the U.S. embassy. According to court documents, these attacks were being prepared “in retaliation for the United States’ participation in Operation Restore Hope in Somalia.”⁴⁰



Abu Anas al-Liby (a.k.a. Nazih al-Raghie)

L’Houssaine Kherchtou later testified in court that he had personally seen Abu Anas al-Liby less than 500 meters away from the U.S. embassy in Nairobi while carrying a surveillance camera.⁴¹ Following subsequent terrorist attacks by Al-Qaida targeting U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998, U.S. federal prosecutors indicted a number of Al-Qaida operatives in connection with the bombings—including Abu Anas al-Liby, who was charged with “conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim at places outside the United States”; “conspiracy to destroy buildings and property of the United States”; and, “conspiracy to attack national defense utilities.”⁴²

Though Abu Anas allegedly distanced himself from Al-Qaida after LIFG operatives were forced to abandon their base in Sudan in 1995, Metropolitan police who searched his Manchester residence in the United Kingdom five years later in May 2000 discovered a 180-page computer file described as the “Declaration of Jihad Against the Country’s Tyrants: Military Series.”⁴³ In its introduction, the document explained twice in identical language, “The confrontation that we are calling for with the apostate

³⁷ Trial Transcript; February 21, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Page 1145.

³⁸ Trial Transcript; February 6, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Page 260.

³⁹ Trial Transcript; February 22, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Pages 1274-1275.

⁴⁰ Indictment. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Page 20.

⁴¹ Trial Transcript; February 21, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Pages 1190-1192; 1211-1212.

⁴² Indictment. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. See also: <http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/terrorists/teralliby.htm>. See also: Trial Transcript; February 6, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Page 325.

⁴³ Trial Transcript; May 1, 2001. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Page 5239.

regimes does not know Socratic debates, Platonic ideals, nor Aristotelian diplomacy. But it knows the dialogue of bullets, the ideals of assassination, bombing, and destruction, and the diplomacy of the cannon and machine-gun.”⁴⁴ The manual featured fairly complex and specific lessons on surveillance, hostage-taking, “assassinating enemy personnel as well as foreign tourists”, “blasting and destroying the embassies and attacking vital economic centers”, and “blasting and destroying bridges leading into and out of the cities.”⁴⁵ On October 12, 2001, Abu Anas al-Liby was finally named by the U.S. government as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) for links to “acts of terrorism that threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security, foreign policy, or economy of the United States.”⁴⁶



Cover of the “Declaration of Jihad Against the Country’s Tyrants: Military Series.”

Part III: The Libyan Theater (1990-1997)

The last year of LIFG presence in the Sudan—1995—saw the initiation of notable physical resistance to Qadhafi’s rule in neighboring Libya and the public unveiling of LIFG as a recognized military organization. According to LIFG propaganda materials, commander Abu Abdullah al-Sadek (wounded while fighting in Afghanistan during the late 1980’s) was instrumental in building that organizational structure in Libya.⁴⁷ Inside Libya, the LIFG worked to develop “the leadership skills of the people in charge of cells and units inside the country” and utilized “truly imaginative and innovative methods” to train operatives. For example, operatives would be tasked to travel to “rough areas in the big cities—places infested with gangsters and violent criminals... [and] get into knife fights and other situations involving extreme and life-threatening violence. The idea was for our people to develop their courage and diminish their sense of fear.”⁴⁸ Similarly, LIFG handlers “tasked some people to get as close to Qadhafi as possible. They thought they were preparing for an assassination attempt, whereas in reality there was no intention of assassinating Qadhafi at that time. The idea was for them to gain valuable experience in breaching security and learning to operate as secretly and covertly as possible.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the nascent LIFG struggled to gain momentum, as Libya’s security forces began aggressively targeting radical Islamists in 1994.

⁴⁴ Government Exhibit GX-1677. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York.

⁴⁵ Government Exhibit GX-1677. U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al. S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York.

⁴⁶ “31 CFR Chapter V (Appendix A): Blocked Persons, Specially Designated Nationals, Specially Designated Terrorists, Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and Specially Designated Narcotics Traffickers: Additional Designations of Terrorism-Related Blocked Persons.” Rules and Regulations; U.S. Treasury Department; Office of Foreign Assets Control. Federal Register. Vol. 66; No. 208. October 26, 2001.

⁴⁷ <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan15.htm>. December 3, 1999.

⁴⁸ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁴⁹ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

Aware of the limitations of launching “sporadic armed attacks here and there,” the LIFG spent years planning a “dramatic and decisive” large-scale operation “to secure certain locations, sites and institutions simultaneously” that would “topple the regime.”⁵⁰ According to former LIFG Shura Council member Noman Benotman, those plans were thwarted by an “amateurish and rogue operation in May 1995 to rescue a wounded member from a hospital.” Benotman states, “that operation and its immediate aftermath gave the security services important clues to the organization. Qadhafi personally ordered the security services to hunt down the perpetrators in a very short time. The security forces traced the perpetrators to a farm near Benghazi. This farm was an important training area and in there they found a former military officer who was a member of the organization. This gave the regime both the informational tools and motivation to deepen their investigations.”⁵¹ Meanwhile, in the months following the hospital fiasco, the LIFG launched a follow-up series of “significant attacks against regime targets, particularly near Benghazi and Derna.”⁵²

After a summer of unprecedented attacks aimed at destabilizing the Qadhafi regime, on October 18, 1995, the LIFG issued its first formal declaration acknowledging the existence of the group:

“The time has come for the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group to become a recognized movement, rather than a secret one, in light of the sensitive phase that the jihad project in Libya is currently engaged in. In addition, the Islamic Fighting Group hereby claims responsibility for the blessed jihad actions that have been taking place all over Libya since June. Confronting the evil dictators of this era, such as Qadhafi, has become one of the most important duties [upon Muslims] behind essential belief in blessed Allah... We send a brotherly, friendly, and loving word of peace to all the jihad movements that have stood up in defense of Islam and those oppressed Muslims across the Islamic world.”⁵³

Copies of this initial communiqué and all other subsequent statements, fatwahs (religious edicts), and reports published by the LIFG were later distributed online via the Internet website ALMUQATILA.COM.⁵⁴

The LIFG continued to intensify its military operations the following year in 1996, as major battles with Libyan security forces broke out in mountainous northeastern regions of the country. In a fall 1996 interview, LIFG spokesman and reputed co-founder Abu Bakr al-Sharif indicated that the Libyan Air Force had launched a bombing campaign targeting “mujahideen positions in the green mountain area” and that “10,000 soldiers” had gathered to “annihilate the Fighting Islamic Group.”⁵⁵ Despite suffering heavy casualties in those battles, the LIFG made at least two notable assassination bids on Qadhafi in 1996. Disgraced former MI-5 officer David Shayler has claimed that the first assassination attempt was partially financed by British intelligence, but the LIFG (among others) has blasted those accusations as a “stormy sea of lies,

⁵⁰ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁵¹ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁵² “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” Jamestown Foundation. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁵³ “Communiqué #1: The Declaration of the Establishment of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.” <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan1.htm>. October 18, 1995.

⁵⁴ <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat>. April 2001.

⁵⁵ “Interview with Abu Bakr al-Sharif, LIFG spokesman: ‘The Libyan Regime is Living in a Situation of Hysteria.’” Al-Nida’ul-Islam Magazine. October-November 1996.

deception, and discrepancies.”⁵⁶ In an official communiqué, the organization stated, “the Islamic Fighting Group stresses that it decisively and unequivocally denies that it has any ties with the British Intelligence.”⁵⁷ During the second assassination attempt on November 23, 1996, an LIFG operative “managed to throw a grenade between Qadhafi’s feet but it did not explode.”⁵⁸ Following these initial debacles, the group failed in 1997 and yet again in 1998 to kill “the despot Qadhafi.”⁵⁹

These failures were only compounded by the loss in September 1997 of Salah Fathi bin Suleiman (a.k.a. Abu Abdelrahman al-Khattab), a founder and leader of the LIFG who was killed in a battle with Libyan soldiers near Darna.⁶⁰ Libyan authorities had laid siege to Darna with as many as “30 thousand soldiers” and employed “heavy tanks, RPG launchers and other heavy weapons.”⁶¹ Aggressive Libyan government operations such as those in Derna and in other parts of the country eventually crippled the LIFG’s infrastructure within Libya and despite all the sacrifices being made, there seemed to be little public sentiment in favor of the Islamists armed struggle. In an interview with Al-Gama`at al-Islamiyya supporters in Australia, LIFG spokesman Omar Rashed complained, “we cannot say that the Libyan people in general have passed beyond the stage of sentiments to the stage of action... we are witnessing the absence of the role of the people from confronting Qadhafi and his regime despite their rejection of his rule and despite their enmity towards him.”⁶² By the late 1990’s, having been repeatedly frustrated in their efforts to spark a popular revolution against Qadhafi, the LIFG “abandoned Libya and continued its activities in exile.”⁶³

Part IV: A Return to Jihad in Afghanistan (1998-2001)

In mid-1995, seeking to quash the mounting threat posed by the increasingly aggressive LIFG, Muammar Qadhafi’s regime began to pressure Hassan al-Turabi and the Sudanese government to expel the influential LIFG contingent based in Khartoum alongside Usama Bin Laden.⁶⁴ Although the Sudanese publicly denied that any LIFG operatives were hiding in Sudan, they privately conveyed a message to Bin Laden and other Arab-Afghan leaders that the Libyan members of the Islamic Army Shura were “no longer welcome.”⁶⁵ Former Sudanese Al-Qaida member Jamal al-Fadl testified in U.S.

⁵⁶ “Communique #15: A Lengthy Warning Message.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan15.htm>. December 3, 1999.

⁵⁷ “Communique #15: A Lengthy Warning Message.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan15.htm>. December 3, 1999.

⁵⁸ “Communique #15: A Lengthy Warning Message.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan15.htm>. December 3, 1999.

⁵⁹ “Communique #12: Death to the Enemies of our People, and Glory to Those Who Seek Martyrdom.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan12.htm>. June 18, 1998. See also: “Interview with Omar Rashed, LIFG spokesman.” *Al-Nida’ul-Islam Magazine*. Issue 26; April-May 1999.

⁶⁰ <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan11.htm>. October 8, 1997.

⁶¹ <http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan11.htm>. October 8, 1997.

⁶² “Interview with Omar Rashed, LIFG spokesman.” *Al-Nida’ul-Islam Magazine*. Issue 26; April-May 1999.

⁶³ “Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG.” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

⁶⁴ Trial Transcript; February 22, 2001. *U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al.* S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Pages 1280-1282.

⁶⁵ “Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee.” *Jamestown Foundation*. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

federal court in 2001 about Turabi's decision to expel the Libyans at the behest of Qadhafi:

"There was a pressure from the Libyan government on the Sudanese government that all the Libyans must leave the country, and they informed Usama Bin Laden that if you have some Libyans you have to let them get out from the country. And Usama Bin Laden informed these guys and he told them that you have to leave, because if you don't leave, you will be responsible for yourselves, and if somebody caught you, I am not responsible. What I can do for you is I can give you twenty-four hundred bucks, plus a ticket with you and your wife if you want to live somewhere, but the Libyans, most of them, they refused the offer of Usama Bin Laden. They were very upset and angry because they couldn't protect them, and they had a meeting... [and] they gave a letter to Usama Bin Laden that they are leaving al Qaeda, and they took that money and tickets and some of them they left. Some of them [went to Libya]."⁶⁶

Those few LIFG members who remained in Sudan between 1995 and 1996 were instructed "not to instigate attacks" in Libya and "were only authorized to defend themselves against the regime's armed onslaughts."⁶⁷

Most of the LIFG activists who returned to Libya from Sudan did not stay for long. Upon their arrival, they were confronted by a major internal crackdown by Libyan security services and the LIFG leadership decided "to save as many people as possible. Therefore, the order was given to the most important people to leave the country [Libya] immediately."⁶⁸ Many LIFG members—such as Al-Qaida associate Abu Anas al-Liby—moved on to political asylum in the United Kingdom, where the organization established a robust underground support network. Others eventually fled "to various Asian, Persian Gulf, African, and European countries," as well as to Afghanistan.⁶⁹ By 1998, the nation of Afghanistan had once again become the preferred venue for LIFG recruits seeking extremist indoctrination and military training.

Upon their return to Afghanistan, LIFG leaders managed to put aside some of their past frustrations with Al-Qaida. Not long after the LIFG delegation in Khartoum was forced to leave Sudan, Hassan al-Turabi had likewise turned on Bin Laden and his Egyptian cohorts and angrily ordered them out. Despite their occasional quarreling, Al-Qaida and the LIFG had grown up from the same roots, had shared the same bases and training camps, and—in the process—had become remarkably kindred spirits. Not long after it re-appeared in familiar Afghan mujahideen haunts, the LIFG "expanded its goals to include anti-Western jihad alongside Al Qaeda," according to the U.S. Director of National Intelligence, John Negroponte.⁷⁰

Added to this assessment, the U.S. State Department noted that, by the late 1990s, the LIFG began to display a "close association with Al Qaeda. Some senior members of LIFG are believed to be or have belonged to Al Qaeda's senior command

⁶⁶ Trial Transcript, February 22, 2001. *U.S. v. Usama Bin Laden, et al.* S(7) 98 Cr. 1023 (LBS). United States District Court, Southern District of New York. Pages 1280-1282.

⁶⁷ "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." *Jamestown Foundation*. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁶⁸ "Interview with Noman Benotman, former member of the LIFG Shura Committee." *Jamestown Foundation*. March 15, 2005. http://www.jamestown.org/news_details.php?news_id=101.

⁶⁹ U.S. State Department. *Country Reports on Terrorism*. Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism. April 28, 2006.

⁷⁰ Testimony of John D. Negroponte, Director of National Intelligence, Before the Senate Armed Services Committee. February 28, 2006. http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20060228_testimony.htm.

structure.”⁷¹ One such individual is LIFG spiritual leader Abu Munther al-Saadi, who first joined the jihad in Afghanistan in 1988. A decade later, after fleeing the catastrophe in North Africa, al-Saadi returned to Afghanistan and established various educational and charitable enterprises on behalf of the ruling Taliban movement. In appreciation for al-Saadi’s efforts, Taliban supreme commander Mullah Mohammed Umar reportedly bestowed upon him the title of “the Shaykh of the Arabs in Afghanistan.”⁷² Al-Saadi was reputed for delivering stern speeches to Arab fighters training in Afghanistan, admonishing them to strictly follow the laws of the Taliban as long as they remained in the country.⁷³



Abu Munther al-Saadi

The LIFG and Al-Qaida increasingly came to share human and material resources during the second phase of their involvement in Afghanistan between 1997-2001. Captured 9/11 mastermind and former Al-Qaida operations chief Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has told interrogators that he provided assistance to the LIFG on “computer and media projects” between 1997 and 1998.⁷⁴ Using propaganda outlets like *Al-Fajr Magazine*, the LIFG helped widely distribute writings from influential Al-Qaida associates, including Abu Musab al-Suri (a.k.a. Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, Omar Abdel Hakeem).⁷⁵ Meanwhile, according to U.S. military sources, Al-Qaida also used the LIFG’s “black market contacts” in Pakistan to obtain false travel documents for terrorist operatives.⁷⁶

On August 21, 1998—in response to Al-Qaida’s embassy bombings in East Africa—the U.S. military launched retaliatory missile strikes on suspected training camps in southern Afghanistan, including the Salman al-Farisi base frequented by LIFG operatives. Four days later, the LIFG issued a statement in response to the missile strikes. Rather than distancing themselves from Al-Qaida, the group instead boasted:

“The arrogant American government has committed a historic act of stupidity... This act strengthens the feelings of hostility and hatred among Muslims as well as the desire for revenge against this arrogant American bullying that deals with others only by means of force. The blatant American attack against Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan, the killing of the innocent, the spread of fear terror among those who are safe, and the targeting of civilian and industrial facilities without any solid proof or evidence, confirms that the American Administration has chosen the path of hostility toward our Islamic nation, and

⁷¹ “State Department Announces Steps to Reduce Terrorist Threat.” U.S. State Department. December 28, 2004, <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2004/Dec/29-379809.html>.

⁷² “The Shaykh of the Arabs in Afghanistan Al-Saadi who was handed over to Libya by the Americans.” *Al Hayat* (London). February 16, 2005.

⁷³ “The Shaykh of the Arabs in Afghanistan Al-Saadi who was handed over to Libya by the Americans.” *Al Hayat* (London). February 16, 2005.

⁷⁴ *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. Page 489.

⁷⁵ “ABUMUSAB.CJB.NET: About this site.”

<http://www.carriagehouseglass.com/peepingcam/peeping/index.php>. January 2005.

⁷⁶ “Testimony of Detainees Before the Combatant Status Review Tribunal.” U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on March 3, April 3, and April 19, 2006. Page 3127.

http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/Set_46_3096-3129.pdf.

has decided to adopt a policy of open confrontation. The Islamic Fighting Group strongly condemns this barbaric attack, and announces its support for Muslims in Sudan and Afghanistan. At the same time we would like to present some facts to the Islamic nation, in order to prove that America is not only the enemy of the Mujahid Shaykh Usama Bin Laden and the Islamic movements, but rather the enemy of the entire Islamic nation. America has stood behind the Jews and against the Islamic nation since their state was established and continues to do so until this very day... America is the country whose warplanes attacked Libya, not in order to get rid of Qadhafi, but rather in order to destroy Muslim homes in Libya. It imposed an oppressive embargo on the Libyan people, and the Muslims are the ones who suffer from its rancor... In face of this American tyranny, the Islamic nation in general—and this Islamic movement in particular—have no choice but to seek confrontation in defense of their religion, their land, and their dignity. The Islamic Fighting Group calls upon Muslims to confront this American aggression in order to respond to this bellicose attack against the people of our Islamic nation... Whereas the American Administration relies on its fleets, its warplanes, and its missiles, we rely on Allah alone.”⁷⁷

In a follow-up interview in April 1999, LIFG spokesman Omar Rashed warned of a “direct confrontation” between the West and “the Islamic movements”: “The American missile attacks against Sudan and Afghanistan gives you an indication of the size and nature of any future confrontations. The United States no longer relies on its agents to constrict the Islamic tide; it has taken this role upon itself. For this reason, all future developments as far as we can see, will turn around that plane, with all that it involves of policies, plots, and conspiracies.”⁷⁸ By this point, the evolution of the LIFG from a regional North African jihadist organization to an integral ally of Al-Qaida in Afghanistan was nearly complete. In a March 2001 phone conversation intercepted by Italian authorities, Essid ben Khemais—currently held in prison for his high-level involvement with Al-Qaida and the Tunisian Islamic Combatant Group—explained, “the Armed Libyan Fighting Group is a faction of the Islamic Jihad.”⁷⁹

Following their return to Afghanistan in 1997, the LIFG exclusively ran at least two military training camps, with courses offered “on AK-47s, pistols, a Siminoff sniper rifle, 82 mm mortars, and anti-aircraft weapons such as Doshka.”⁸⁰ Those who lived at the camps were “obligated” to undergo weapons training.⁸¹ One of the most well-known facilities managed by the LIFG in Afghanistan was the Shaheed Shaykh Abu Yahya Camp, located approximately 20 miles north of the capital Kabul. The camp included volunteers of several nationalities and was run by an LIFG commander known as Abu Mohammed al-Liby.⁸² The Shaheed Abu Yahya camp functioned until

⁷⁷ “Communiqué #14 Regarding the American Attack against Sudan and Afghanistan.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan14.htm>. August 25, 1998.

⁷⁸ “Interview with Omar Rashed, LIFG spokesman.” *Al-Nida’ul-Islam Magazine*. Issue 26; April-May 1999.

⁷⁹ “Apprehension of a Suspect of a Crime, Essid Sami Ben Khemais, alias ‘Saber’ alias ‘Sami’ alias ‘Omar al Mahajir.’” Substitute Prosecutor Dr. Stefano Dambroso. Milan Public Prosecutor’s Office; Case No. 13016/99. April 2001.

⁸⁰ “Testimony of Detainees and Documents Submitted on their behalf before the Administrative Review Boards.” U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on April 3, 2006. Page 20878.

http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/ARB_Transcript_Set_8_20751-21016.pdf.

⁸¹ “Testimony of Detainees and Documents Submitted on their behalf before the Administrative Review Boards.” U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on April 3, 2006. Page 20878.

http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/ARB_Transcript_Set_8_20751-21016.pdf.

⁸² “The Guantanamo Moroccans.” *Al-Hayat* (London). February 16, 2005.

approximately mid-2001 when Taliban leader Mullah Umar issued an order officially closing many former Arab-Afghan affiliate training camps and centralizing military instruction to limited Al-Qaida and Taliban-supervised facilities.⁸³

Training camps controlled by the LIFG enabled the group to reach out to other jihadist movements in need of training and resources. In 2000, unidentified Al-Qaida handlers took Kuwaiti nationals Mohammed Mansour Jabarah and his older brother Abdul Rahman from across the border in Pakistan to the Shaheed Abu Yahya Camp, even though technically it was not an Al-Qaida-run facility. Jabarah was first picked to train as a personal bodyguard for Usama Bin Laden and later was sent on to East Asia by 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed to oversee a terrorist bombing campaign focused on U.S. and Israeli targets.⁸⁴

Equally, the LIFG also made use of camps run by other Arab mujahideen commanders inside Afghanistan, particularly the venerated Khalden Camp under the supervision of Al-Qaida associate Abu Zubaydah al-Falastini. Though the Khalden camp was not per se an “al Qaeda facility,” camp manager Abu Zubaydah “had an agreement with Bin Ladin to conduct reciprocal recruiting efforts whereby promising trainees at the camps could be invited to join al Qaeda.”⁸⁵ While Abu Zubaydah controlled which recruits reached the gates of Khalden, it was his deputy Ibn Shaykh al-Liby (also a known associate of Al-Qaida) who was actually in charge of training at Khalden and became “a fount of knowledge about people and operations at Khalden.”⁸⁶ Though it is not clear whether Ibn Shaykh al-Liby was ever officially a member of the LIFG, he is alleged to have provided several high-ranking LIFG operatives with “training and preparations for military operations.” The Libyan government has issued Interpol arrest warrants for at least two such individuals, Ashur Abdullah al-Shamis and Mohammed Yusuf al-Miqariyaf, who reportedly held “several meetings with Ibn-al-Shaykh al-Libi in Jalalabad, Afghanistan along with a group of extremist terrorist elements for the purpose of planning terrorist operations.”⁸⁷

A significant number of LIFG recruits received military training under the lead of Ibn Shaykh al-Liby at the Khalden Camp in Afghanistan—among them, accused LIFG activist Omar Deghayes. Deghayes, a Libyan living in the United Kingdom, fled his homeland in 1986 after his father was allegedly killed by members of the Qadhafi regime. After becoming a law student at a British university, Deghayes traveled abroad with a friend to Malaysia, Pakistan and eventually to Afghanistan—where he allegedly received training at the Khalden military camp in 1999.⁸⁸ Deghayes was later captured in Pakistan, accused of being an operative on behalf of Al-Qaida and the LIFG, and subsequently held by the U.S. government as an enemy combatant in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The Libyan government has cited other alleged instances of wanted LIFG

⁸³ “The Guantanamo Moroccans.” *Al-Hayat* (London). February 16, 2005.

⁸⁴ Solomon, Jay and James Hookway. “Al Qaeda Agent Traversed Asia Targeting ‘White Meat.’” *The Wall Street Journal*. January 21, 2003.

⁸⁵ *The 9/11 Commission Report*. Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States. July 22, 2004. Page 500.

⁸⁶ Gillan, Audrey and Julian Borger. “Shoe bomb Briton named as key agent in Bin Laden’s network.” *The Guardian* (London). January 17, 2002.

⁸⁷ “Interpol Wanted Request for Muhammad Yusuf al-Miqariyaf.” Libyan Justice Ministry. <http://www.libjust.com/details6.htm>. January 5, 2002.

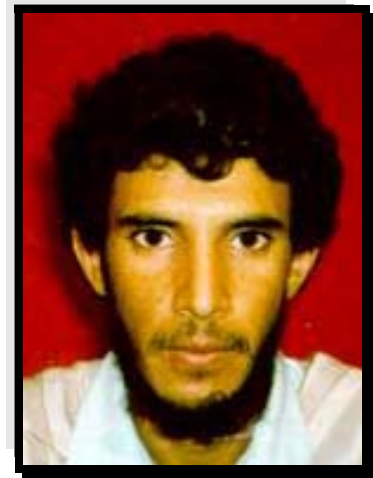
⁸⁸ “Testimony of Detainees and Documents Submitted on their behalf before the Administrative Review Boards.” U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on April 3, 2006. Page 20888. http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/ARB_Transcript_Set_8_20751-21016.pdf.

fugitives who have received weapons training at Khalden, such as Ali Mohammed Abdelaziz al-Fakhiri.⁸⁹

The issue of shared training camps became a central bond between and among Al-Qaida affiliate groups. This was particularly so for the LIFG and another prominent North African militant group active in Afghanistan, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), which seeks to establish an Islamic state in Morocco and generally supports Al-Qaida's war against the West.⁹⁰ According to the U.S. government, the GICM "with assistance from Al Qaeda" has also "planned to carry out attacks against U.S. citizens in foreign countries."⁹¹

In May 1997, senior leaders of both the LIFG and GICM convened a series of meetings on neutral ground in Turkey. Official Moroccan court documents note that LIFG commander Abu Abdullah al-Sadek, LIFG Shura Council member Abdelrahman al-Faqih, Abu Daoud al-Liby, and Abu Saad al-Liby were all present for the meetings in Turkey aimed at "coordinat[ing] the operations between the two movements."⁹² In an agreement negotiated by Abdelrahman al-Faqih, the "LIFG agreed to host weapons training and jihad indoctrination at LIFG camps in Afghanistan for Moroccans."⁹³ Bolstered by these initial ties, the LIFG and GICM continued to coordinate and, in 2000, Shaykh Abu al-Laith al-Liby gave \$3,000 to GICM representatives in order to purchase a vehicle.⁹⁴ As per the accord reached in Turkey, Moroccan GICM recruits in Afghanistan began to arrive at the Shaheed Abu Yahya Camp run by LIFG commander Abu Mohammed al-Liby. This arrangement continued for some time until quarreling among the mujahideen led the Moroccans to break away and form their own separate training camp.⁹⁵

As the second Intifada pitting Palestinians against Israelis heated up in the fall of 2000, the LIFG also began increasing its public support for extreme Palestinian Islamist groups dedicated to the eradication of a Jewish state. Only days after the renewed



**Libyan fugitive Ali
Mohammed Abdelaziz al-
Fakhiri**

⁸⁹ "Interpol Wanted Request for Ali Mohammed Abdelaziz al-Fakhiri." Libyan Justice Ministry. <http://www.libjust.com/details7.htm>. January 5, 2002.

⁹⁰ "Appendix C: Background Information on Other Terrorist Groups." *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002*. Office of the Secretary of State and Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism; U.S. Department of State. Released April 2003.

⁹¹ "Testimony of Detainees Before the Combatant Status Review Tribunal." U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on March 3, April 3, and April 19, 2006. Page 2572. http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/Set_36_2493-2577.pdf.

⁹² "Record of interrogation of named: Nour-eddine Nafiaa (Noureddine NFIA)." Kingdom of Morocco, Ministry of Interior, National General Security Directorate; Casablanca-Anfa Security Department Judicial Police Service. August 8, 2003.

⁹³ "Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaeda-Affiliated LIFG." U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

⁹⁴ "Record of interrogation of named: Nour-eddine Nafiaa (Noureddine NFIA)." Kingdom of Morocco, Ministry of Interior, National General Security Directorate; Casablanca-Anfa Security Department Judicial Police Service. August 8, 2003. *Note*: Abu Layth al-Libi—an explosives and guerilla warfare expert—is currently considered by the U.S. military to be Al-Qaida's regional commander responsible for insurgent operations across all of southern Afghanistan, including the provinces of Khost, Paktia, and Ghazni.

⁹⁵ "The Guantanamo Moroccans." *Al-Hayat* (London). February 16, 2005.

uprising began in the Palestinian territories, the LIFG issued a statement expressing its total solidarity with extremist groups like Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad:

“At a time when the ears of Muslims all over the world have been deafened by constant media rumors about the peace process with the Jews... we see the energy of the Muslim Palestinian people burst out, as young men, the elderly, children, and women all come out to sacrifice themselves—one martyr after the next, and one person injured after the next... With their pure blood, they inscribe tales of glory, power, martyrdom, and sacrifice on the black pages of surrender... We, the Islamic Fighting Group, stand firmly alongside our Muslims in Palestine, and we are proud of their blessed sacrifices and the pure blood they are spilling in order to purify Jerusalem and the land of Palestine from the filthy Jews... The liberation [of Palestine] and the expulsion of the Jews from it, is an obligation upon the entire Islamic nation. It will undoubtedly require hefty sacrifices, and the spilling of torrents of pure blood. This is because deceitful hands weave the threads of a global conspiracy, and because the infidels have come together to seize Palestine from the hands of the Muslims. You should all stand united alongside your mujahideen brothers in [Palestine].”⁹⁶

Part V: The LIFG and the Contemporary War on Terrorism

Following the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. government launched a campaign “to disrupt the use of Afghanistan as a terrorist base of operations, and to attack the military capability of the Taliban regime.”⁹⁷ On September 23, 2001, U.S. President George W. Bush signed Executive Order 12334, naming several Al-Qaida affiliate groups as Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) entities, including the LIFG.⁹⁸ On the same day, in response to threats by the U.S. government to invade Afghanistan in order to apprehend Usama Bin Laden and other Al-Qaida leaders responsible for 9/11, the LIFG published a new fatwah, or religious edict, asserting that the U.S. was using terrorist attacks in New York and Washington “as an excuse to initiate a war against the Muslims, Islam, and the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan [the Taliban].”⁹⁹ Moreover, according to LIFG religious advisor Shaykh Hassan Qaid (a.k.a. Abu Younis al-Sahrawi):

“It is a duty upon Muslims... —no matter if they are Arab or foreign, Asian or European, if they live nearby or far away—to [protect the Taliban]... Every individual in the Islamic nation must contribute in defeating this enemy with any means available, whether physically, financially, or simply by calling for jihad in order to spread fear among the infidels... By declaring war against the Muslims and occupying their countries, the United States of America has made all of its worldwide interests into legitimate targets for the mujahideen. They [the mujahideen] shall bomb and demolish them by any means necessary. Those interests include military, economic, humanitarian, diplomatic, cultural, tourism, or anyone else anywhere around the globe... Women, children, and the elderly... should not be specifically targeted, unless they are in the vicinity of those whose killing is permissible—in which case, there is no sin in killing them... Anyone who stands alongside

⁹⁶ “Communiqué #18 Regarding the Blessed Rajab Intifada in the Land of Israa.”

<http://www.almuqatila.com/AMEER/bayanat/bayan18.htm>. September 30, 2000.

⁹⁷ U.S. President George W. Bush. “Presidential Address to the Nation.” October 7, 2001.

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011007-8.html>.

⁹⁸ “Executive Order on Terrorist Financing Blocking Property and Prohibiting Transactions With Persons Who Commit, Threaten to Commit, or Support Terrorism.” White House Press Office. September 24, 2001. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010924-1.html>.

⁹⁹ “Fatwah of Shaykh Hassan Qaid (Abu Younis al-Sahrawi) Regarding the Crusader American Attack on Afghanistan.” <http://www.almuqatila.com/alsharaya/fatwa/afghanistan.htm>. September 23, 2000.

the United States and assists it with moral support, petroleum, intelligence, shared military bases, or airports in its war against the Muslims in Afghanistan and elsewhere should be fought and killed in order to support our Muslim brothers in their battle against the infidels, to protect Islam, and to take our revenge upon the oppressors.”¹⁰⁰

True to its word, the LIFG continued to work with Al-Qaida against U.S.-led coalition forces as they fought to liberate Afghanistan from the control of the Taliban. As control of Afghanistan gradually slipped from Al-Qaida and the Taliban, mujahideen fighters were forced to flee over the border into neighboring Pakistan. In 2002, Khalden training camp manager Abu Zubaydah was captured by security forces in a residence in Faisalabad, Pakistan alongside at least three LIFG operatives and a fourth individual also “known to have ties to the LIFG.”¹⁰¹ Other LIFG members were captured by U.S. forces on the battlefield in Afghanistan and subsequently transferred to the U.S. prisoner camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.¹⁰² On December 8, 2004, the U.S. State Department designated the LIFG as a Foreign Terrorist Organization under section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. In its designation, the State Department noted, “LIFG members have been directly or indirectly implicated in a number of terrorist activities, particularly in North Africa... The LIFG constitutes the most serious threat to U.S. interests and personnel in Libya.”¹⁰³

In May 2003, senior LIFG leaders based in Europe allegedly conspired with their North African allies in the GICM to help plan and facilitate a wave of suicide bombing attacks on targets in the Moroccan city of Casablanca that killed over 40 people and caused more than 100 injuries.¹⁰⁴ The attacks focused on Western and “Jewish” interests, including community centers, a restaurant, and a hotel. British-based LIFG Shura Council member Abdelrahman al-Faqih—who “has a history of GICM-related activity” and has served as a key liaison between the LIFG and the GICM—was convicted in absentia by the Rabat Criminal Court of Appeals in Morocco for his alleged involvement in the Casablanca bombings.¹⁰⁵ In 2004, then head of the U.S. Central



An image glorifying 9/11 posted on the official LIFG website

(http://www.almuqatila.cc/pic_almuqatila/index_photos/11-9-01_photo11.jpg)

¹⁰⁰ “Fatwah of Shaykh Hassan Qaid (Abu Younis al-Sahrawi) Regarding the Crusader American Attack on Afghanistan.” <http://www.almuqatila.com/alsharaya/fatwa/afghanistan.htm>. September 23, 2000.

¹⁰¹ “Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG.” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

¹⁰² “Testimony of Detainees Before the Combatant Status Review Tribunal.” U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on March 3, April 3, and April 19, 2006.

http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/Set_34_2426-2457.pdf and http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/Set_46_3096-3129.pdf.

¹⁰³ “State Department Announces Steps to Reduce Terrorist Threat.” U.S. State Department. December 28, 2004. <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2004/Dec/29-379809.html>.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. State Department. “Appendix C – Background Information on Other Terrorist Groups.” *Patterns of Global Terrorism*. <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/pgrtrpt/2003/31759.htm>. See also: “State Department Announces Steps to Reduce Terrorist Threat.” U.S. State Department. December 28, 2004. <http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2004/Dec/29-379809.html>.

¹⁰⁵ “Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG.” U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

Intelligence Agency George Tenet warned the U.S. Senate, “one of the most immediate threats is from smaller international Sunni extremist groups who have benefited from Al Qaeda links. They include... the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.”¹⁰⁶

Simultaneously, several prominent LIFG commanders have stepped forward and have taken over prominent, public positions within Al-Qaida’s leadership in Afghanistan—most notably, Abu al-Laith al-Liby and Abu Yahya al-Liby. The former

individual, Abu al-Laith, has been the primary subject of at least two full-length video recordings released by Al-Qaida’s official “As-Sahab Media Foundation” in the past year alone. According to former LIFG member Noman Benotman, Abu al-Laith had fought with the mujahideen in Afghanistan during the early 1990s, returning to Libya in 1994 in hopes of sparking an Islamic revolution against the Qaddafi regime. Following the collapse of the LIFG armed campaign inside Libya, Abu



(L) Abu al-Laith al-Liby, (R) Abu Yahya al-Liby

al-Laith fled to Saudi Arabia—where he was briefly incarcerated following the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing—and eventually on to Afghanistan.¹⁰⁷ At present, he is considered to be one of the top commanders in charge of Al-Qaida’s ground forces in southern Afghanistan, responsible for carrying out terrorist operations in the restive Khost, Paktia, and Ghazni Provinces, and the region bordering Miram Shah, Pakistan. According to the U.S. Defense Department, Abu al-Laith specializes in the production of improvised explosive devices and advanced guerilla warfare tactics.¹⁰⁸ He has been repeatedly singled out for praise by a variety of fellow Al-Qaida commanders around the world. The thirtieth issue of Al-Qaida’s *Sawt al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad) Magazine included an interview with Karim al-Mejjati, a senior Moroccan Al-Qaida operative who allegedly helped execute a series of suicide bombing attacks in Saudi Arabia and Morocco in 2003, and who openly acknowledged serving “in the charge” of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. In addition to offering praise for KSM during his interview, al-Mejjati likewise noted, “I will not forget my brother and commander Abu al-Laith al-Liby, may Allah help him, who was my commander in Kabul before the city fell.”¹⁰⁹

Though he would appear to have far slimmer credentials than his colleague Abu al-Laith, Abu Yahya al-Liby has nonetheless also become a strikingly influential figure in the international jihadist movement ever since his stunning escape in July 2005 from a high-security U.S. prison at Bagram air base (near Kabul). Less than six months later, Abu

¹⁰⁶ Testimony of U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director George J. Tenet Before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. February 14, 2004.

http://www.cia.gov/cia/public_affairs/speeches/2004/dci_speech_02142004.html.

¹⁰⁷ Whitlock, Craig and Munir Ladaa. “Al-Qaeda’s New Leadership: Abu Laith al-Libi, Field Commander and Spokesman.” *Washington Post*. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/world/specials/terror/laith.html>. September 8, 2007.

¹⁰⁸ “Testimony of Detainees and Documents Submitted on their behalf before the Administrative Review Boards.” U.S. Defense Department Combatant Status Review Tribunal (CSRT) and Administrative Review Board (ARB) documents released on April 3, 2006. Page 21752.

http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/foi/detainees/csrt/ARB_Transcript_Set_11_21662-22010.pdf.

¹⁰⁹ Al-Qaida’s Committee in the Arabian Peninsula. “Interview with the martyr Karim al-Tuhami al-Mejjati.” *Sawt al-Jihad* (Voice of Jihad Magazine). Issue No. 30. Released: February 8, 2007.

Yahya began to appear in video recordings produced by Al-Qaida's official "As-Sahab Media Foundation"—so often, in fact, that his face has become virtually synonymous with As-Sahab. Over the last two years, Abu Yahya has been the principle featured spokesman for Al-Qaida in at least fourteen separate audio and video recordings released by As-Sahab—appearing more often than either Usama Bin Laden or Ayman al-Zawahiri. Abu Yahya has even used his position at As-Sahab in order to publicly address issues of more particular significance to Libyan Islamists—such as the controversial criminal case against Bulgarian doctors who were accused of deliberately spreading AIDS among Libyan children.

Eager to continue its war against the West as the battlefield shifted from Afghanistan to Iraq, the "LIFG has called on Muslims everywhere to fight the U.S. in Iraq," according to U.S. Director of National Intelligence John Negroponte.¹¹⁰ In October 2004, Al-Qaida supporters in Libya posted an open request on Arabic-language Internet chat forums to the chief of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's media wing regarding Libyan national Khalid al-Zaidi—who allegedly survived combat with U.S. forces in Iraq only to be subsequently killed back home in Libya. According to the message, "we think you have heard about [his martyrdom]. He was the lion who traveled to Mesopotamia at the beginning of the war and showed great promise. But he was badly wounded [in battle] and was forced to return to Libya."¹¹¹ Therefore, "the most important thing we want from you, the Tawheed wal-Jihad Movement, is to name one of your upcoming operations in his name in order to show support for your brothers in the land of Libya."¹¹²

A significant number of the Libyan recruits seeking to join Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq ultimately joined Al-Qaida's infamous "Martyrs Brigade" responsible for carrying out suicide car bomb attacks. In October 2005, Zarqawi's media wing released a new, full-length propaganda video featuring video testimony from a Libyan suicide bomber who identified himself only as "Abu Dharr al-Liby."¹¹³ Abu Dharr explained:

"I wish to say to the brothers, to all of the mujahideen, it is obligatory upon you to continue with these martyrdom operations, because they are—by Allah—the things that affect and massacre the Americans the most... [God-willing] we will cause great damage and pain to these infidel Americans and to those who ally themselves with them... We ask Allah to create severe pain and damage amongst the ranks of the Americans, the infidels, and those who ally with them... By Allah, nothing will elevate [Islam], nothing will bring it honor except for Jihad in the Path of Allah, and the strongest Jihad in the Path of Allah in our current times are these martyrdom operations... And I wish to say to my Muslim brothers in all parts of the world, as well as to my brothers from the mujahideen: it is upon you to take this path, since it is—by Allah—the path of honor, and it is—by Allah—the path of miracles... Allahu Akhbar! Allahu Akhbar! Allahu Akhbar! I want to say to America and the helpers of America and the allies of America that we are marching towards you with men who love to die just as much as you love to live! So, by Allah, and by the Will of Allah, the Victory of Islam is coming, and the Honor of Islam is coming at the hands of these martyrs."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Testimony of Director of National Intelligence (DNI) John D. Negroponte Before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee. February 28, 2006.

http://www.dni.gov/testimonies/20060228_testimony.htm.

¹¹¹ <http://www.ansarnet.ws/vb/showthread.php?t=17252>. October 17, 2004.

¹¹² <http://www.ansarnet.ws/vb/showthread.php?t=17252>. October 17, 2004.

¹¹³ "The Battle of Omar Hadeed." <http://www.omar-hadeed.net>. October 7, 2005.

¹¹⁴ "The Battle of Omar Hadeed." <http://www.omar-hadeed.net>. October 7, 2005.

In February 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department took significant action aimed at the LIFG's operational base in the United Kingdom, designating five individuals, three companies, and one "charity" as terrorists for their ties to the LIFG. In addition to labeling Birmingham, UK resident Abdelrahman al-Faqih as "a senior leader of the LIFG," the Treasury Department also designated Midlands resident Mohammed Benhammedi as a "key financier for the LIFG" and a "member of... the LIFG economic committee" who is "believed to provide funds for the LIFG through Sara Properties Limited, Meadowbrook Investments Limited and Ozlam Properties Limited."¹¹⁵ The U.S. government also officially named an alleged LIFG charitable front group known as the Sanabel Relief Agency (SRA) as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) entity after its "first priority" was assessed to be "providing support to the LIFG's jihadist activities."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ "Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG." U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

¹¹⁶ "Treasury Designates UK-Based Individuals, Entities Financing Al Qaida-Affiliated LIFG." U.S. Treasury Department Press Release. February 8, 2006. <http://www.treasury.gov/press/releases/js4016.htm>.

Appendix A: Enlistment Form for the “Abu Yahya al-Liby Training Camp”

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَسْأَلُكَ يَا رَبِّهِمْ... فَرَحِبْ بِكَ فِي مَعَسِكَ الشَّيْخِ الشَّهِيدِ أَبُو يَحْيَى رَحِمَهُ اللَّهُ
وَسَأَلُ اللَّهَ تَعَالَى أَنْ يَقْبَلَ مِنْكَ هَجْرَتَكَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَأَحْضَاكَ لِقَرِيبَةِ
الإعداد والجهاد استجابة لأمر الله ورسوله وما يطاق من طاعة المعارف هذه إلا بداية
تعارف وتعاون على البر والتقوى... نسأل الله أن يعيننا وأياكم على طاعته.

الكنية:

العينة والذات الاجتماعية:

تاريخ التوريق: - / / م

مدة الإقامة بالقرية: يوماً / شهراً

الجهة التي عملت منها على تركية لك:

الطريق التي سلكتها إلى كنفنا:

المسرى الدراسي:

الجهة السابقة:

التجارب العسكرية التي سبق أن أمتلقتها:

ساحر القدر الذي أمتلقت من كتاب الله:

التجارب الشرعية التي أمتلقتها:

التهافت أو الخواتم التي كنتها:

الفتات التي كنتها:

هل أنت موافق ومقر على لائحة المتكرب:

تاريخ كتابة الاستمارة: / / م

إدارة المتكرب

Appendix B: Translation of Enlistment Form for the “Abu Yahya al-Liby Training Camp”

“In the Name of God the Merciful the Compassionate”

“Dear brother, welcome to you at the Camp of the martyr Sheikh Abu Yahya, may God bless his soul. We ask God, be He exalted, to accept from you your migration in the path of God and your revival of the obligation of preparation and jihad in fulfillment of God and His Messenger’s command. This introductory form is no more than a beginning of acquaintanceship and co-operation in righteousness and piety. We ask God to assist you and us on His obedience.”

“Surname:”

“Nationality and Marital Status:”

“Age:”

“Date of arrival: -142 Hijra or / / 200 ”

“Expected length of stay: (days/months)”

“Recommended by:”

“Route to Afghanistan:”

“Educational level:”

“Previous occupation:”

“Military courses previously taken:”

“How much Quran do you memorize:”

“Religious courses taken:”

“Skills or experience acquired:”

“Languages spoken:”

“Are approved and listed in the Camp List:”

“Date form completed: / / 2001”

“Camp Management”