

THE QUETTA SHURA TALIBAN IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN:

ORGANIZATION, OPERATIONS, AND SHADOW GOVERNANCE

Portions of this paper have been compiled from *Securing Helmand: Understanding and Responding to the Enemy* and *The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar*

INTRODUCTION

Much of the recent debate regarding the war in Afghanistan has focused on al Qaeda, specifically, the extent of their operations in Afghanistan and the Pakistan border region. Often overlooked in the strategic calculus are other enemy groups operating in the region and their ability to challenge the Afghan government and coalition forces for control in the war-torn country. It is precisely these groups that have provided al Qaeda a sanctuary to train, plan, and launch some of the most catastrophic terrorist attacks in recent history. Indeed, their relationships with key al Qaeda leaders have been forged over the past quarter-century of resistance.

For much of the past eight years, these groups have made substantial gains while the international community pursued a limited counterterrorism strategy coupled with insufficient resources. The enemy has seized the opportunity to expand their operating environment and have seized the initiative from the world's most advanced fighting forces. However, these are not an amalgamation of rag-tag fighters. They see themselves as the legitimate government of Afghanistan in exile. Among these groups, one stands out far and above the rest, the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST).

ENEMY OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZATION

The enemy system in southern Afghanistan is resourced and directed by the QST, a re-organized leadership structure based on the early 1990s Supreme Shura that served as the governing body of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan prior to 2001.¹ The QST is headed by Mullah Mohammad Omar, who calls himself the Amir-ul-Momineen or Leader of the Faithful.² The term 'Quetta Shura' originated from Mullah Omar's relocation of the Taliban organization to Quetta during the winter of 2002.³ Mullah Omar and his group continue to refer to themselves as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, despite being removed from power in 2001.⁴ This is revealing, as the Taliban see themselves as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and aim to extend their control over the entirety of the country. The Quetta Shura Taliban, whose operations have systematically spread from southern Afghanistan to the west and north of the country, is by far the most active enemy group in Afghanistan. Virtually all enemy groups operating in the country have sworn allegiance (in varying degrees) to the Taliban's leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar.⁵

A stable Afghanistan is predicated on many factors and there are no guarantees that

a military victory over the various enemy networks in Afghanistan will achieve that end. Yet, it can be said with certainty that a Taliban-dominated Afghanistan will continue to pose a threat to U.S. interests at home and abroad if these groups were to once again allow extremist terrorist elements to function inside its borders. Addressing the threat posed by the Quetta Shura Taliban requires a thorough understanding of the enemy and how their operations have seized the initiative over the past several years.

The main objectives of QST activity are Helmand and Kandahar provinces in southern Afghanistan. Helmand affords the QST access to a historically amenable Pashtun population and significant cash flow derived from the narcotics trade. Over the past several years they have posed a serious challenge to coalition efforts aimed at bringing stability to the beleaguered province. The situation in Helmand had deteriorated to such an extent that the effort required an infusion of 10,000 U.S. Marines during early summer 2009. The Marines' initial clearing and holding efforts, two central tenets of proper counterinsurgency operation, have dealt a serious blow to the insurgent operation in and around the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. Some have even suggested that Helmand may prove to be the petri dish for General McChrystal's COIN strategy. While it is perhaps premature to foretell the enduring effects of the Marines' initial efforts, it is at the very least an example of successful COIN in its earliest stages.

In neighboring Kandahar, the situation is equally unsettling, if not more so. Kandahar City is the spiritual home of the QST and the center of operations for Mullah Omar and his shura prior to the U.S. invasion in 2001. With a population of one million, the province and its capital city is considered the 'jewel of the south' and the primary strategic objective of the QST. The QST has consolidated its gains in and around the

provincial capital over the past several years and have been largely unchallenged by the limited coalition presence.

Currently, the QST's leadership structure is comprised of two main bodies, the *rahbari shura*, and the *majlis al-shura*.⁶ Responsible for the Taliban's operations in southern and much of western Afghanistan, the QST is the "intellectual and ideological underpinning of the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan," according to Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, a retired former commander of American forces in Afghanistan.⁷

Although Mullah Mohammad Omar remains the figurehead atop the QST organization, he no longer directs day-to-day operations. His reputation and admiration among rank-and-file Taliban still make him the spiritual leader of the movement, both for cohesion and recruitment. However, his advanced age, relative lack of operational experience, and "most wanted" status necessitated additional leadership. The QST's day-to-day operations are handled by Omar's top deputy, Mullah Barader, who solidified his position after the arrest of top-aide Mullah Obaidullah in March 2007 and the death of Mullah Dadullah Lang in May 2007.⁸ Omar and Barader have a close, long-standing relationship. Both fought side-by-side against the Soviets and later established their own madrassas in Kandahar.⁹

The QST is organized functionally in southern Afghanistan. The organization consists of indigenous fighting units and foreign fighters. QST commanders plan and lead offensive and defensive operations against coalition and Afghan forces, whereas facilitators manage logistical elements. However, there is evidence to suggest that more senior-level commanders are responsible for both.¹⁰

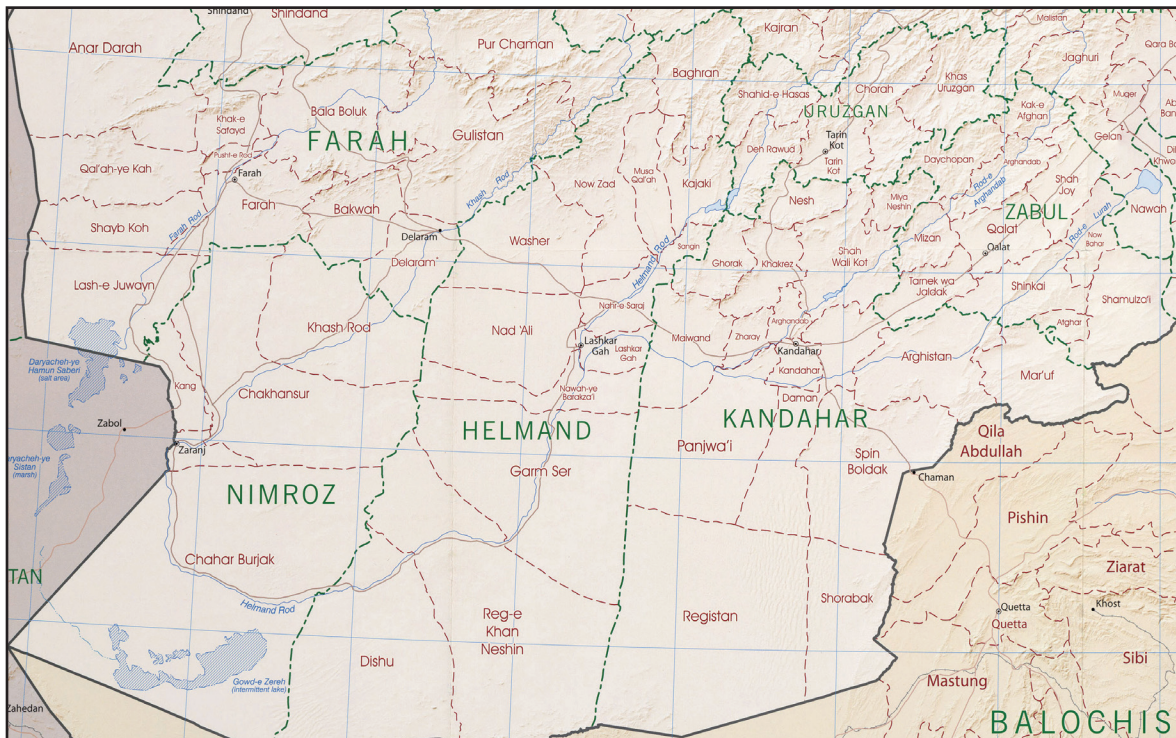
QST commanders in southern Afghanistan operate within a hierarchical chain of command stretching back to Quetta. The Quetta leadership gives general guidance

to the organization at the beginning of the spring fighting year and indeed, throughout the fighting seasons. The operational orders typically appear in the form of a planned offensive, such as the past *Kamin* (Pashtu for ‘Ambush’) and *Ebrat* (Pashtu for ‘Victory’) offensives.¹¹ The Quetta-based senior leaders also adjust the campaign as it unfolds if major changes in mission or resources are required. For example, senior leaders in Quetta have issued such requests for reinforcements when coalition and Afghan forces launch operations into critical enemy terrain.¹² This type of guidance allows the Quetta-based leadership to identify its priorities to Afghan-based leaders, who might need resolution at a higher command echelon.¹³ Additionally, some central leaders or senior provincial leadership allocate foreign fighters to assume a variety of responsibilities such as training and advising.

The senior leadership in Quetta nevertheless provides direction, guidance,

and sometimes issues direct orders to the senior commanders in the south.¹⁴ Senior commanders physically travel to Quetta on occasion to meet with QST senior leadership. These visits are arranged to share “best practices” and “lessons learned” to improve operational effectiveness.¹⁵ Communication between Quetta senior leadership and commanders in Afghanistan is not limited to face-to-face interaction, however. Raids on various compounds throughout the region have netted scores of satellite telephones and two-way radios, suggesting that communication between commanders in and out of the south is commonplace.¹⁶

Large fighting units range in size from groups of twelve to thirty-plus fighters.¹⁷ They typically carry out more sophisticated attacks, such as coordinated, multi-directional ambushes or raids on ANP fortifications in Taliban-controlled territory.¹⁸ Foreign fighters are better trained to conduct these sophisticated



MAP 1 - SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN (CIA MAP)

attacks. Suicide bombers are also more likely to be foreign. Their deaths will not be mourned by local families and relatives, potentially eroding public support for Taliban operations and will not start the vicious cycle of retributive justice that is part of the pashtunwali code. Suicide attackers are often trained in Pakistan and sent into the south, instructed to report to a specific commander to receive operational instructions.¹⁹

QST operations at the district level and below are resourced by local indigenous fighters at the behest of more senior Taliban commanders. It is likely that the QST's central command and control is weaker as operations and attacks are conducted at the village-level. Low-level commanders and small-unit leaders (no less than five personnel) likely operate with a higher degree of autonomy because of the nature of their operations.²⁰ Smaller units are typically comprised of between eight and twelve men, responsible for planting improvised explosive devices (IEDs), conducting small-scale ambushes of coalition and Afghan patrols and checkpoints and collecting intelligence on locals' interaction with coalition and Afghan forces.²¹ These units maintain a working knowledge of coalition and Afghan lines of operation in a specific piece of terrain, enabling them to launch attacks when the opportunity presents itself.

QST recruitment efforts draw on a wide range of local constituencies. Taliban commanders recruit from a pool of fighters who are sympathetic to the Taliban for a variety of reasons such as tribal identity, resentment of local government officials, or resentment of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces.²² The Taliban run an active propaganda campaign in areas under their control, in which Taliban mullahs argue that locals have a religious obligation to support the insurgency.²³ But while they may justify their

actions with the rhetoric of jihad supplied by the Taliban, most indigenous fighters who serve with the Taliban are not ideologically driven.²⁴ Taliban commanders use financial incentives as important means of recruitment. According to some estimates, the average foot soldier is paid between \$100-150 a month, while cell commanders make considerably more, approximately \$350 a month.²⁵ Taliban foot soldiers are often deployed for only short temporary service. Taliban commanders often use a call-up system by which young men in areas under Taliban control are called on to report for short several day operations.²⁶

The Taliban's 2006 rulebook demonstrated that senior Quetta Shura Taliban leaders were concerned with inculcating areas under Taliban control as bases for recruitment.²⁷ The rulebook specified that "A Taliban commander is permitted to extend an invitation to all Afghans who support infidels so that they may convert to the true Islam."

²⁸ It applies the Taliban's strict military justice system to Taliban fighters, but also specifies that new recruits are protected from execution, a measure presumably intended to prevent fallings out with the communities from which local Taliban are recruited.²⁹

An additional element of the QST enemy system in the south is foreign fighters. These fighters constitute a smaller portion of the enemy's total force numbers. The majority of foreign fighters are recruited from Pakistan's madrassas, refugee camps in Baluchistan, and reportedly as far east as Miram Shah in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).³⁰ A Marine operation in Helmand's southern Garmser district during the late spring of 2008 revealed the magnitude of the foreign fighter facilitation network.³¹ During the operation, 150 fighters, mostly foreign, were killed in just one week's time. Reports suggested there were more than 500 fighters in the district, most of them foreign.³² Coalition forces in Helmand have even

reported “syndicates” of militants moving back and forth across the Helmand-Pakistan border, including Pakistanis, and elements of al Qaeda.³³

INFILTRATION AND INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGNS

More than the local or national government, the QST have demonstrated a greater ability to influence the population. As the Taliban have sought to expand their control in the south, they have continued to conduct a sophisticated, multi-pronged campaign of intimidation designed to dissuade the population from cooperating with the coalition and Afghan government. The Taliban’s intimidation campaign is part of a larger effort to infiltrate and solidify territorial gains surrounding key population centers. The ultimate aim is to replace governance structures affiliated with the Karzai government with the Taliban’s own mechanisms. Typically, these efforts have been directed at high-level figures in influential leadership positions. Taliban intimidation has succeeded in convincing much of the population of southern Afghanistan that the Taliban maintain the capability to carry out their threats and that neither the Afghan government nor the coalition can protect them.³⁴

Geographically, the Taliban’s intimidation campaign in the south has centered on strategically important heavily populated districts surrounding Kandahar City in Kandahar and Lashkar Gah and Gereshk in Helmand. Taliban intimidation in both provinces is carefully directed to degrade government capabilities and exert psychological influence over the population.

A primary target for the Taliban in Kandahar and Helmand has been leading figures in the regional security apparatus. The National Directorate of Security (NDS), the domestic intelligence agency of the government of Afghanistan, considered highly capable by

Afghan standards, has been a prime target of Taliban attacks. In Kandahar, the Taliban assassinated the deputy NDS chief in 2008 and attempted two dramatic but failed attacks on NDS Headquarters in August and September 2009.³⁵ In the spring of 2009 in Helmand, two sons of an official of Afghanistan’s NDS were killed when explosives planted under a desk in a store owned by an intelligence official in Lashkar Gah detonated.³⁶

Afghan police commanders were targeted with a similar intensity. In 2008, the Taliban killed a district police chief near Lashkar Gah in Helmand and conducted a double suicide bombing at the Kandahar City Police Office.³⁷ In addition, Taliban gunmen frequently attacked mid-level police officials at their homes in Kandahar 2008 and 2009.³⁸ A further assassination attempt against the Helmand security apparatus was conducted when a roadside bomb struck the car of Dad Mohammad, a former mujahedeen commander, NDS official, and a respected member of Afghanistan’s *Wolesi Jirga* (lower house of Parliament). The incident killed Dad Mohammad, local police commander Abdul Samad Khaksar, and four bodyguards.

Frequent attacks have also been conducted against the governors of both Helmand and Kandahar. The Taliban nearly shot down Helmand governor Gulab Mangal’s helicopter in Musa Qala in 2008, and conducted an IED attack against Governor Toryalai Wesa’s convoy in Kandahar City in 2009.³⁹ Ahmed Wali Karzai, brother of President Hamid Karzai and chairman of the Kandahar Provincial Council, also faced multiple well coordinated assassination attempts in 2008 and 2009.⁴⁰

The Taliban’s campaign to take control over Kandahar and Helmand has also involved effective attacks designed to remove anti-Taliban Kandahar tribal leaders and militia commanders. In February 2008, the

insurgents assassinated Abdul Hakeem, a key leader of Kandahar's important Alokozai tribe and the chief of the auxiliary police in Arghandab.⁴¹ Months later, they killed Habibullah Jan, the leader of Kandahar's Alizai tribe and a Member of Parliament for Kandahar.⁴² In September 2008, the Taliban assassinated Tor Jan, a key militia commander and former commander of the security force for the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team.⁴³ Another major contractor and ally of the Karzai family, Taj Mohammad, was killed in an attack in October 2009.⁴⁴ The Taliban's increased targeting of influential tribal leaders and militia commanders has significantly fractured Kandahar's anti-Taliban tribes and degraded the capabilities of her security forces, further plunging the province into disarray as the Taliban make inroads in Kandahar City.

The Taliban in Kandahar have not limited their program of assassinations to tribal leaders and security commanders. Pro-government clerics have been systematically killed by the Taliban since the very beginning of the insurgency in 2002. By January, 2009, twenty four members of the 150-strong *Ulemma Shura* – which played a leading role in countering Taliban propaganda – had been murdered by the Taliban.⁴⁵ A further assassination, that of leading Kandahar cleric Qari Sayed Ahmad, was ordered directly by senior QST leadership, perhaps an indication of the priority that the Taliban's high command gives to the elimination of rival clerics.⁴⁶ Two leading clerics from the border town of Spin Boldak were assassinated in February and March of 2009. By the spring of 2009, assassinations forced many of the remaining pro-government clerics to move into Afghan National Army (ANA) compounds in Kandahar City, and these clerics did much of their preaching by radio, not in person.⁴⁷ The Taliban's assassination campaign thus had the intended effect of isolating these

pro-government mullahs from the people of Kandahar.

The Taliban also target rank and file members of Kandahar's civilian administration. Throughout 2008 and 2009, the Taliban issued warnings to employees of the provincial and national governments in Kandahar, warning them to resign from their posts or face assassination. Government officials killed by the Taliban in the last year included a Kandahar high court judge, the deputy head of Kandahar's water and power department, the head of the Kandahar provincial social affairs department, and the chief of the Kandahar public bus service.⁴⁸ The Taliban also made unsuccessful assassination attempts against Mohammad Hashim Granai, head of the Zabul provincial council (who resides in Kandahar), and the mayor of Kandahar, Ghulam Haider Hamidi.⁴⁹

In Helmand, meanwhile, the Taliban have repeatedly tried to assassinate Mullah Salaam, a former Taliban commander who defected to the Afghan government and now serves as district governor of Musa Qala. Taliban militants attacked the home of Mullah Salaam located in the north-western district of Kajaki in December 2008. Twenty Afghan National Police (ANP) who were serving as bodyguards for Salaam were killed. Salaam was away in Kabul at the time of the attack and was unharmed. Several months later, in February, a vehicle with six of Salaam's guards hit an IED as it passed through the northeastern town of Musa Qala, killing all passengers. It is possible that Salaam's guards were the targets of both attacks, designed to frighten his other guards into cooperating with a Taliban assassination attempt on Salaam at a later date.

Taliban intimidation, however, is not limited to attacks on government officials, and the Taliban have been known to use violence against ordinary citizens to shore up their

influence in contested areas. In December of 2006, they executed twenty-six men in a Taliban-dominated village west of Kandahar City for cooperating with ISAF troops. The headless bodies were publicly displayed and locals were warned that they would suffer similar consequences for collaboration.⁵⁰ The Taliban have continued to publicly display the corpses of executed victims as a warning against collaborators, although Mullah Omar banned the beheading of informants in 2008, recommending firing squads as an alternative.⁵¹

The Taliban's concerns with civilian informants continued into 2008. Some ANA commanders in Taliban-held villages west of Kandahar City were known for distributing cell phones to the population, as cell phones allowed villagers to privately call in tips against the Taliban.⁵² In response, the Taliban demanded in March 2008, that Kandahar's cell phone companies suspend service from five in the evening to seven in the morning so that the Taliban could operate safely during those hours.⁵³ When some of Kandahar's service providers refused to acquiesce, the Taliban began destroying cell phone towers. Cell phone companies refused government protection, fearing that it would brand them as connected with the Kandahar government, and several companies eventually gave in to the Taliban's demands.⁵⁴

The Taliban are reported to have established networks of informers within Kandahar City to report on citizens who cooperate with the government and in many areas the Taliban have personalized their night letters, delivering threats to specific individuals. In 2009, groups of Taliban fighters began conducting nighttime patrols and raids in some areas of Kandahar City, occasionally engaging ANP units with small arms fire, and Taliban patrols have been known to visit houses at night and forcefully demand food and supplies.⁵⁵ The Taliban's nighttime patrols increase public fear of Taliban

retribution by projecting the perception of heightened Taliban capabilities in Kandahar City. While the Taliban do not run courts in Kandahar City itself, they are known to summon individuals in Kandahar City to appear before courts established in 2008 in the neighboring Arghandab District.⁵⁶ Their presence in Kandahar City allows the Taliban to serve warrants calling residents of Kandahar City to appear before courts in Arghandab District. Arghandab District, which holds a key strategic location just to the north of the city is a brutal example of the efficacy of the Taliban's intimidation campaign. Once firmly pro-government, Arghandab became a key Taliban bastion in 2008 after multiple commanders and tribal leaders in the district were killed by the Taliban.⁵⁷

SHADOW GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Perhaps the most troubling development in Afghanistan is that the Afghan government is being out-governed by the enemy. The proliferation of Taliban shadow governance structures is significant, not only in its ability to provide justice, security, and dispute resolution, but because these structures are more effective than anything the Afghan government or international community have been able to muster. Years of corruption, mismanagement, and neglect have weakened the writ of the Afghan government at every level and provided a vacuum that the Taliban has filled with great success.

The Taliban assigns a governor to each province, responsible for nearly all civil and military matters within the provincial boundaries. The Taliban governor's primary functions include coordinating the efforts of the commanders working in his province and administering and providing oversight of Taliban finances and judicial mechanisms.⁵⁸ The Taliban's high command place special emphasis on financial oversight, and explicitly addressed the issue in the 2006

rulebook approved by Mullah Omar and issued to Taliban field commanders.⁵⁹ The rules specified that, “Taliban may not use Jihad equipment or property for personal ends,” and that each Talib is “accountable to his superiors in matters of money spending and equipment usage.”⁶⁰

The establishment of sharia law courts are one of the defining aspects of Taliban control. The establishment of Taliban courts has been reported not only in Kandahar and Helmand, but in the provinces surrounding Kabul.⁶¹ There are concrete reports of courts operating in areas of Kandahar province, though it is unclear how many courts the Taliban operate and to what extent the Quetta Shura standardizes their procedures.⁶² A panel of three or four itinerant judges travel through Maiwand district, for example, ruling on petitions brought before them and punishing guilty parties.⁶³ In Zhari, similar courts carried out twenty-seven executions by 2008.⁶⁴ By 2008, the Taliban’s traveling judiciary had extended its influence to the towns of Senjaray and Senzary, ten miles west of Kandahar City.⁶⁵ One local farmer reported that the courts in Maiwand and Zhari “deal with a number of cases: land disputes, family disputes, loan disputes, robbery, killing, fighting... and the people are happy with them.”⁶⁶

The Taliban’s judicial system is backed by the Taliban’s military power. Taliban courts have the power to serve warrants and call villagers to testify before them.⁶⁷ The Taliban’s provision and enforcement of justice has become a key source for building legitimacy in Kandahar. Anecdotal evidence suggests Taliban courts are more efficient and transparent than are government-funded courts, and that many locals prefer them.⁶⁸ Not only are local courts corrupt, but they are also inadequate for the size of Kandahar’s population.⁶⁹ As of June 2009, there were only eight government judges serving a population of one million Kandaharis, and

those judges are unable to travel to many outlying districts.⁷⁰

In their efforts to increase local perception of the Taliban as the legitimate government, the Taliban have required locals in Zhari and Panjwai to obtain Taliban licenses for certain activities.⁷¹ Villagers have sought Taliban approval before repairing irrigation systems.⁷² In one case, the Taliban specified that machinery used had to be rented from private companies, and not loaned from the government’s agriculture department.⁷³ By banning the use of government development aid, the Taliban further distanced the population from ISAF and reinforced the psychological perception that the Taliban was the legitimate local government.

Perhaps one of the most critical aspects of the Taliban’s shadow governance structure is revenue and taxation. Facilitators are responsible for receiving and directing foreign fighters, distributing weapons such as IEDs, explosives, and chemicals, ammunition, and small-arms. A smaller number of facilitators have also been classified as financiers, according to coalition and Afghan reports. Financiers are responsible for handling taxes collected from bazaar vendors, and local residents. They may also be responsible for storing and transporting narcotics. For example, Haji Adam, killed in Kandahar in January of 2009, not only served as a prominent QST facilitator with strong links to senior QST leaders, but was also a wealthy opium smuggler. Adam operated in the Taliban controlled territory along the northern Helmand-Kandahar border and used profits from the drug trade to fund the insurgency.

A major source of Taliban funding is a *zakat* collected from villagers in areas under Taliban control. The exact tax assessment likely varies from area to area, though in some places the *ushr*, or a ten percent Islamic tithe, is collected.⁷⁴ The tax is tied to agricultural production of licit crops, like

wheat and fruits, as well as illicit crops like opium, and is often paid once or twice yearly following major harvests.⁷⁵

The Taliban's connection to opium and heroin trafficking remains a subject of debate, but what is clear is that the movement is closely connected to opium cultivation at the lowest levels. Most Taliban fighters are farmers and Taliban campaigns are timed to allow the Taliban to harvest their opium fields every April.⁷⁶ The Taliban have historically charged opium farmers an *ushr* on opium at harvest time. Furthermore narcotics traffickers who buy opium directly from farmers must pay the Taliban a tax, as well as truckers who pay a per-kilogram transit tariff. But the Taliban also provide protection for traffickers. In exchange for a fee, Taliban fighters have been known to forcefully defend narcotics processing labs and refineries that manufacture opium into heroin. Perhaps more lucrative than any of these rackets, senior leadership in Quetta are paid regular installments from narcotics kingpins as a general fee for operating in Taliban controlled areas. Donations from supporters in Pakistan and the Gulf States are a further source of revenue for the insurgency. Thus, while illicit crops are an important source of revenue for the insurgents, the Taliban do boast a diversified portfolio.

The Taliban benefited from the discontent caused by poppy eradication in Helmand and Kandahar. In Helmand, the Taliban were welcomed into farming communities that were often the target of government-led eradication forces. In Kandahar, poppy eradication was a favored cause of the Asadullah Khalid administration, and in April of both 2007 and 2008, the Kandahar government launched major eradication campaigns.⁷⁷ The eradication efforts selectively targeted those farmers who were not part of the establishment in Kandahar. In both years, the eradication campaigns came under intense attack by Taliban forces,

and eradication could not be completed in towns along the Arghandab River, especially because the Canadian military refused to support counter-narcotics units.⁷⁸ Successfully defending local opium farmers both further ingratiated the Taliban with the local population and increased the Taliban's taxation and smuggling revenues.

CONCLUSION

The Quetta Shura Taliban is sophisticated, resourceful, and fully-entrenched in many of Afghanistan's southern, western, and northern provinces. Perhaps the most glaring failure of the eight-year long war effort has been underestimating the enemy in Afghanistan. The QST has demonstrated their ability to adapt, institute lessons learned, and best practices. Indeed, QST are an entirely different enemy in both form and function than they were just years ago. With designs on seizing all of Afghanistan, mirrored in historical events, it is all the more necessary to seize the initiative from this formidable foe.

ENDNOTES

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- ² Recently, there has been substantive debate as to Omar's current role in the QST organization. While he is certainly still the figurehead and spiritual leader of the movement, his involvement in day-to-day operations is likely limited at best. Rather, reports that Omar has consolidated his direct control over operations in Afghanistan likely refers to the movement's senior leadership in and around Quetta, such as Barader and Zakir, rather than Omar himself. Not only is Omar's operational expertise limited, his relative isolation due to fear of capture and advanced age makes it highly unlikely that he is actively involved in operational details. It has even been reported that senior members of the Shura council must go through Barader, his deputy, in order to reach the reclusive leader.
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- ⁵ Kagan, Frederick W., "The Two-Front War," American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, entry posted November 9, 2009, <http://www.aei.org/article/101250> [accessed December 2009].
- ⁶ Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008). 90.
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