

Bin Ladin Bodyguard Views Jihad Principle, Saudi, Other Attempts To Kill Bin Ladin
Part 7 of a series of interviews with Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri, alias Abu-Jandal, formerly the "personal guard" of Al-Qa'ida leader Usama Bin Ladin, by Khalid al-Hammadi in Sanaa; date not given: "The Inside Story of Al-Qa'ida, as Told by Abu-Jandal (Nasir al-Bahri), Bin Ladin's Personal Guard (7); Turki al-Faysal Visited Bin Ladin in Qandahar With Huge Plane in an Attempt To Bring Him, Al-Qa'ida Members, Back to Saudi Arabia; Saudi Intelligence Sent Uzbek Boy To Assassinate Bin Ladin, Promising Him Two Million Riyals, Saudi Nationality"

AL-QUDDS AL-'ARABI

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In this episode, Abu-Jandal speaks on the stages he underwent to join Al-Qa'ida Organization and his vow of allegiance to Usama Bin Ladin -- a vow that would certify his membership and pave the way for the organizational phases that would follow. He also discusses the extent to which the Organization realized its aims.

(Al-Hammadi) You passed through many phases while in Al-Qa'ida Organization, starting with Jalalabad, through the Khowst camps, and ending with Qandahar. When exactly did you make the vow of allegiance to Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) I vowed allegiance to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin twice. However, as I said before, my allegiances were conditional despite my deep connections and my personal relationship with him. The first vow of allegiance was three days after I met him in Jalalabad for the first time. I told him that I was prepared to work with him on certain conditions. The second vow of allegiance, which was the official vow that made me member of the Al-Qa'ida Organization, was made later on; that is, after I passed through several organizational phases that were necessary. My condition was that in case I left the areas that were under the direct command of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin to any other place I would not be under any obligation to obey any of his orders. The Shaykh accepted this condition and said: I accept your condition. Thus I was under the command of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin as long as I was in Afghanistan. However, I would be under no obligation the moment I left Afghanistan.

(Al-Hammadi) What was the official vow of allegiance to Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) The vow was an ordinary one, like other vows but with a special touch. The text says: "I pledge before God my obedience to carry out both pleasant and unpleasant orders at good and bad times, and to work selflessly and not to disobey my commanders."

(Al-Hammadi) What is the significance of the expression "not to disobey our commanders?"

(Al-Bahri) In fact I paused at this part of the vow while reading it and I asked Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin about it. He said If I ask you to do something, you will heed and obey and if I ask someone else

to do it, you will not object to this and you will not ask: Why did you assign this task to this or that individual?

(Al-Hammadi) Were there many kinds of vows, like the minor and major vows for instance?

(Al-Bahri) The text of the vows was the same. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin asked us to make the vow of obedience under the Emirate of the Faithful (Afghanistan) and under the leadership of Taliban because the major vow was to Mullah Muhammad Omar, the emir of the Taliban Movement. As for us, after vowing allegiance to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and our commitment to conditions and covenants between us and him, whatever agreement Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin reached and any covenant he held would be binding on us and we would heed and obey. Thus, we became under the rule of the Taliban state but under direct supervision of the "Arabian" section. The chieftain of our tribe, the Arab tribe, was Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and we were required to heed and obey our tribe's chief. Therefore, our vow of allegiance was unlike the major vow of allegiance for the Prince of the Faithful Mullah Muhammad Omar. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin was the one who made this major vow to Mullah Muhammad Omar in his name and on behalf of his followers from the Al-Qa'ida Organization members. Anyone of us, as individuals, who wanted to make this major vow of allegiance to Mullah Muhammad Omar directly could do so but would thus be outside the command of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. In this case, Usama Bin Ladin would not be responsible for him.

Mullah Muhammad Omar approved the status of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and the Arab men continued to be under the command of Usama Bin Ladin.

(Al-Hammadi) You said that Usama Bin Ladin declared his position through his rifle after the Saudi Islamic reform shaykhs were arrested. Was his movement and the establishment of the Al-Qa'ida Organization a response to what the Saudi Regime did to the ulema and shaykhs there?

(Al-Bahri) In fact Usama Bin Ladin respected Shaykh Salman al-Awdah and Shaykh Safar al-Hawali. At that time and until just before the bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin had been contacting the Saudi shaykhs and consulting with them on the issue of carrying up arms. They used to tell him: O Abu-Abdallah (Usama Bin Ladin), there is no need to use arms and there is no need for armed action. Thus, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin complied with their opinion, given that he always supported collective opinion in line with the Islamic Shura (consultation) principle. When the Saudi shaykhs were arrested, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin felt that the voice of the truth would be stifled and people would not be able to convey their preaching to others. Thus, Usama Bin Ladin was forced to raise his voice in another form and to use a language that others did not understand.

When Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin was asked why he resorted to the language of the gun, he used to answer his questioner with the following lines of poetry:

We said--and our listeners gave us their ears and heard us--let the sword occupy the pulpit.

Whoever seeks his rights, must eventually find the sword to be his best guide.

When they refused to respond to our demands, we turned our saber rattling into songs.

Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's experience in using firearms made him argue with them in this way, which he knows perfectly, after allowing the ulema, the patient, and those who were good at arguing, to reach the end of their arguments. However, when he found out that the Saudi Government had

responded by arresting all of these shaykhs and imprisoning them, and after he had learned that the Government stifled all sources of the truth, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin was forced to make himself heard. His appearance was stronger than others and his influence assumed a global level because the language of arms was more powerful than any other language.

(Al-Hammadi) What was Usama Bin Ladin's main aim in establishing Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) The main aim of the Al-Qa'ida Organization was to establish the law of God on earth. It was the same aim of the other Islamic organizations; namely, to abide by the Islamic sharia and establish the Islamic State. Differences were just over the means to be followed to realize this aim. Otherwise they all had the same goal. The Al-Qa'ida Organization had been in existence before the fall of the Soviet Union. During the global struggle between the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, the Al-Qa'ida Organization existed as a small organization. However, subsequent events transformed it into an effective organization and changed its course in the direction of hostility to the United States.

(Al-Hammadi) But some say that this organization was created by the United States. What do you say to that?

(Al-Bahri) The Al-Qa'ida Organization is not a US creation. This is a fact and I say this before God and as a testimony for history. What happened during the first Afghan jihad was that the interest of the mujahidin merged with the US interest in fighting the communist influence in the Central Asian region and preventing it from spreading in the direction of the Middle East, and to be more exact, in the direction of the warm waters in the Arabian Gulf region. The United States offered the mujahidin only moral and media support, if any. As for the material backing and arms, these were bought with Muslim money and through private contributions, especially at that time when jihad was accompanied by mobilization and a great information campaign in all Islamic countries. The mujahidin traveled to Afghanistan from all places with tickets at greatly reduced prices.

(Al-Hammadi) To what extent do you think has Al-Qa'ida realized the aims for which it was established? Or do you think that it has a long way to go yet?

(Al-Bahri) I believe that the Al-Qa'ida Organization is still at the beginning and still has much to accomplish and we pray to God to do what he considers best.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you feel that Usama Bin Ladin was perhaps aiming to realize fame, leadership, and power by his establishment of the Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) Absolutely not. We never felt anything like that. I recall him saying on many occasions: By God, if the Saudi Government did not arrest the reform movement shaykhs and preachers, I would not have raised my voice or spoken. When the Saudi shaykhs were arrested and when the Government silenced all words of truth that were said against them, I was forced to speak and take this action. My words of course differ from that of others. Some speak through discussion but I do it well with the rifle.

(Al-Hammadi) As you said before, all Saudi Ulema and shaykhs were urging jihad and collecting contributions for jihad. Does this mean that they constituted a foundation for the Al-Qa'ida Organization or Usama Bin Ladin in Saudi Arabia?

(Al-Bahri) No, they did not constitute a foundation for the Al-Qa'ida Organization or Usama Bin

Ladin in Saudi Arabia? There was only a religious sympathy with the jihad idea, without any regional organizational specifications, like Egypt for the Egyptians, Yemen for the Yemenis, and Saudi Arabia for Saudis. The people of Yemen and Hejaz dedicated themselves to God and each one of them said: I am just a mujahid. There was no political dimension to this and there was no intention to open a dialogue or begin a multi-stage organizational education. All that existed in this connection was a process of pushing young men toward jihad. This became a sort of fashion. After jihad ended in Afghanistan and the cause there turned into conflicts among the various Afghan jihad factions, many preachers reversed their attitude and they changed their position toward jihad in Bosnia. I was one of the young men who were directed toward jihad in Bosnia by Shaykh Khalid Awdah al-Harbi, also known as Abu-Sulayman al-Makki, the cripple who held meetings with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and later surrendered to the Saudi Authorities after returning from Syria. I asked him at that time: O Shaykh, where do you advise me to go for jihad in Bosnia, with the Al-Zubayr group or with the mujahidin battalion? He said: If you want entertainment and laughter, join Al-Zubayr group but if you want organized and disciplined work, then join the Mujahidin Battalion.

Since that time I had preferred and taken to heart disciplined work and I found that it was much better than random activities. Based on many Koranic verses, I loved disciplined work. The shaykhs pushed us in this direction. However, these shaykhs never pushed us to join any particular organization or asked us to go to the Al-Qa'ida Organization or to Usama Bin Ladin. Even Usama Bin Ladin himself said: I am just one of the slaves of God.

The picture then did not take the form of an integrated drive to defend the Islamic nation except after the 9/11 events. Before that the process was just pushing the young men toward jihad and inciting them to carry out jihad anywhere they wanted and urging them to do that because of the reward they would receive (in paradise). Neither the preacher shaykhs in Saudi Arabia, Usama Bin Ladin himself, nor us imagined that we would reach this stage with such a speed.

(Al-Hammadi) Was there not any coordination between Usama Bin Ladin and the Saudi Shaykhs at that time to push the young men for jihad?

(Al-Bahri) I believe that there was an agreement between them on this issue but as to the substance and details of this I had no way of knowing.

(Al-Hammadi) Until the early 1990's, Usama Bin Ladin was allowed to enter Saudi Arabia. Certainly he had extensive contacts in Saudi Arabia. Did he exploit these contacts to convince the ulema to push the young men toward jihad and facilitate their recruitment into the Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) Under the influence of Shaykh Abdallah Azzam's ideas, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, held consultations with the shaykhs and ulema to unify the people on the idea that jihad was the solution, that the least that jihad would accomplish would be to obviate the blame that was directed at the Islamic nation and drive the enemy away and then regroup ranks at home. We would not have closed our ranks at home while our conditions abroad were confused, given the numerous attacks against us, because this was not a natural condition and could not be done. During this time, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin often held dialogues with Shaykh Abd-al-Aziz Bin-Baz and Shaykh Bin-Uthaymin especially during the Gulf war. He held intensive discussions with them on this issue and he greatly concentrated on this aspect; namely, pushing the young men toward jihad and kindling the spirit of jihad in their hearts. However, crystallizing this aim in the current organized manner was done unintentionally, as one might say. That the young men should carry out this accurate and organized work and unify the ranks against the United States and others was not intended at the beginning. What was intended was

to push the young men toward jihad based on what God said: "And those who strive in Our (cause), We will certainly guide them to our Paths." (Koranic verse) Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin used to say that if we convince the young men and push them in this direction, they will become true men because events must make of them true men. There will be new generations of young men.

It is now understood that most of those who carried out operations against the United States were not from those who participated in jihad in Bosnia. Likewise, those who participated in jihad in Bosnia, were not the ones who participated in jihad in Afghanistan the first time round, but from the new young men. Events produce events and a generation produces other generations. If some of them become defeatists, God will create others as God said: "If ye turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people; then they would not be like you!" (Koranic verse)

(Al-Hammadi) Usama Bin Ladin comes from a big business family in Saudi Arabia. This made him occupy an important position in the eyes of the merchants, ulema, and officials. Did you feel that he exploited his relations with these groups in facilitating the process of spreading the jihadist thought in Saudi Arabia and pushing the young men for jihad in Afghanistan and elsewhere?

(Al-Bahri) Concerning the idea of jihad itself, there was no organized work in Saudi Arabia because the entire Islamic call concentrated on jihad and all the people called for jihad. After Friday prayers, contributions for Jihad were collected, not to support Usama Bin Ladin or in cooperation with him. Indeed, all the charity organizations were in general serving Islam. I remember that some young men used to go to the relief organizations to give them contributions for jihad, thanks to the calm atmosphere that was provided for jihad and the mujahidin at that time and in the absence of accusations of terrorism, which developed against jihad recently. Now, and after the 9/11 events, many sensitive developments occurred. Some of the shaykhs retreated from their previous ideas and said that they were mistaken. Some of them remained steadfast and continued along their paths. The 9/11 events were a sort of sieve that separated the weak and defeatists and removed them. Despite all of this, the 9/11 could not shake the jihad ranks or dismember them. The collection of contributions for jihad was part of the general charity work for the sake of God, and there was no strategic aims or organized work and nobody thought of the organized work.

(Al-Hammadi) It is said that the Saudi Government carried several mediation attempts with the aim of persuading Usama Bin Ladin to change his position and stop his jihad. What do you know about that and what were the delegations that were sent to him for this purpose?

(Al-Bahri) The Saudi Government continued its dialogue and sent many delegations to Usama Bin Ladin and tried to persuade him to retreat from his jihadist policies. This was because of the strong relations between the Bin Ladin family and the ruling House of Sa'ud. The delegations took several forms and used several means. Sometimes they sent his brothers to him and sometimes they sent his mother, whether to Saudi Arabia when he was in Saudi Arabia, or to Qandahar when he moved to Afghanistan. At one time, the Saudi Government sent his mother and his half brother on the maternal side by a special Saudi plane that landed at Qandahar airport. When they arrived there, they tried to convince him. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin said: This is a principle. I keep it in my heart and I have promised God not to abandon it. Like one of the companions of the prophet, he said: By God, you will not be able to deviate me from my path even if you have 1,000 souls and these souls are given up one by one until death.

Yet he was very kind to his mother and he treated her well and used his own methods to convince her. She returned empty handed. Then they tried to send ulema. They sent him many of them, including the

Saudi Awqaf Minister Shaykh Abdallah al-Turki, who was sent to him more than once. I remember that in one such attempt, an official Saudi delegation arrived at Qandahar airport led by Prince Turki al-Faysal, the former head of the Saudi intelligence, who is the current Saudi ambassador in London, with a giant Saudi plane with the aim of returning to Saudi Arabia with Usama Bin Ladin and all the Al-Qa'ida Organization members in Qandahar at that time. However, the delegation left without them. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin was successful in all these attempts and did not budge an inch from the course that he drew for himself and his organization.

(Al-Hammadi) What is the nature of the relationship between Usama Bin Ladin and Prince Turki al-Faysal that prompted the latter to travel all this distance to convince the former to change his mind about jihad?

(Al-Bahri) In fact I do not know much about this relationship. However, given the positions of Bin Ladin and Al-Faysal, I do not think that they had good relations. On the contrary they might have had bad relations.

(Al-Hammadi) Some say that that the dossier of the Al-Qa'ida Organization was supervised by Prince Turki al-Faysal when he was heading the Saudi intelligence. Perhaps he might have a connection and relationship with Usama Bin Ladin given the nature of his job, and might have tried to contain him or steer him in a certain direction later on.

(Al-Bahri) As I have said, I do not have a great amount of information on the relationship between Usama Bin Ladin and Prince Turki al-Faysal. What I know and what I should expect, in terms of the psychology of the intelligence men, is that there should not be good relations between them. However, there could have been a relationship confined to attempts at persuasion and mediation. What I know is that the Saudi intelligence sent agents more than once to assassinate Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin but failed. I participated in the arrest of one such agent who tried to assassinate Usama Bin Ladin in Afghanistan. The Saudi intelligence sent a young Uzbek man living in Saudi Arabia to the Usama Bin Ladin headquarters in Qandahar, promising him two million Saudi riyals and the Saudi nationality and other things if he succeeded in killing Bin Ladin. When we arrested him, we asked him: Did you expect that you would be able to kill Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and escape from 14 guards armed with automatic weapons and with such high level of training? He was very dazed as though he had just woken up from a coma. He looked like a child. He was only 18 and had been deceived. He was crying in a very pathetic manner and said: I made a mistake. Finally, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin said: Release him.

(Al-Hammadi) When did this attempt occur?

(Al-Bahri) It almost coincided with the Attack against the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps in 1998, which followed the bombing of the two US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

(Al-Hammadi) How many assassination attempts were made against Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) During my time, there were two attempts. As for the espionage cases, I remember experiencing one attempt. Before I joined Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, there was one attempt to assassinate him in Sudan. I mentioned the details elsewhere in my narrative. After I left Afghanistan, Usama Bin Ladin was exposed to two assassination attempts. In one of these attempts, an attack was planned against the Qandahar airport complex, which accommodated Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, his family, and the families of those married followers of his. The plan was to destroy the complex completely with bombs made of nuclear waste. The bombs would be placed in the four corners of the

complex and the building would be blown up and all those inside would be killed, including Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and his followers and their families, including women and children. However, God saved them and the plan was unearthed and the plotters uncovered.

(Al-Hammadi) Were these attempts made by Afghans, Arabs, or others?

(Al-Bahri) Of course, the planning and coordination of these operations was done outside of Afghanistan but the implementation on Afghan territory was left to Arabs. Yet they were obviously under US administration and supervision. The Israeli intelligence apparatus, Mosad, also played a role. It sent an Arab spy through an Arab intelligence apparatus to spy on Usama Bin Ladin and gather intelligence about him, and whether he had chemical factories or biological weapons. They relied on Arabs because it was difficult for a non-Arab to stay among us in Afghanistan. A non-Arab would not have been able to mix and establish contact with the Arab men because of the language barrier and because it would not be possible for the Arabs to absorb him, and therefore, he would not be able to gain any information from them. In this mission, Mosad relied on Arab spies.

(Al-Hammadi) Which of the Arab states were behind the attempts to assassinate Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) I recall that one of these attempts was backed by the Saudi intelligence department, using an Uzbek young man who resided in Saudi Arabia. This took place after the US attack against the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps in Khawst, an attack which I mentioned a short while ago. The other attempts were done by the Jordanian intelligence apparatus. I recall that some of those who carried out these attempts confessed that they were sent by the Israeli intelligence apparatus through the Jordanian intelligence.

(Al-Hammadi) How did the Al-Qa'ida Organization discover the spies who were able to enter into Al-Qa'ida ranks?

(Al-Bahri) The Al-Qa'ida Organization members had a high sense of security. Moreover, the spies whom the intelligence apparatuses used to send to Afghanistan were not well trained and with no intelligence skill. They were unqualified in intelligence gathering. They failed from the beginning and exposed themselves by their foolish methods. They confessed everything the moment they were arrested on a mere suspicion. All these spies used to fail from the beginning when they arrived at Al-Qa'ida Organization positions, with the exception of an Iraqi who worked among Al-Qa'ida men. He was working for the US intelligence in the Al-Qa'ida Organization positions, which did not necessary include only Al-Qa'ida elements. He was discovered when the Americans sent another spy to help him. This other spy was a Syrian and he exposed his Iraqi colleague because of his unprofessional methods.

(Al-Hammadi) How was the structure of the Al-Qa'ida Organization intelligence apparatus and who was responsible for it?

(Al-Bahri) The entire intelligence apparatus in Al-Qa'ida was supervised by one man, brother Sayf al-Adl al-Masri. He was responsible for the Al-Qa'ida Organization security apparatus. Through his long experience, his large-scale contacts, and personal intelligence, he used to manage this apparatus with his many excellent methods. However, by the end of the 1990's and as spying attempts on the Al-Qa'ida multiplied and after repeated attempts to assassinate Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, the Organization started to train new cadres in Afghanistan and expand the circle of the Al-Qa'ida Organization security activities to make it an organized apparatus with many workers. The apparatus played its security role and appointed men at all camps, fronts, and facilities belonging to the Al-Qa'ida Organization and outside of them. It became very like all intelligence bodies, so much so

that if anyone anywhere in the world planned to travel to Afghanistan, especially to the Al-Qa'ida Organization, the apparatus would acquire information about him and submit reports on him to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and he always made decisions on this.

(Al-Hammadi) Was the Al-Qa'ida Organization cadres on a high level of training?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, they had a very high level of training and strong qualifications. They were able to distinguish between the intelligence elements and those who were just recruited for the intelligence apparatus. They had great abilities in interrogating suspects, using modern methods.

(Al-Hammadi) In light of this high security sense in the Al-Qa'ida Organization, do you believe that the United States will be able to arrest Usama Bin Ladin and his assistant Al-Zawahiri?

(Al-Bahri) Everything is expected and possible. However, Usama Bin Ladin is now at a stage where the issue is no longer a question of intelligence as it is a question of uncovering his location to storm and attack it. Yet, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and his comrades continue to engage the attention of the United States, whether in Afghanistan, Iraq, or elsewhere. If something happens to Usama Bin Ladin, it will not affect Al-Qa'ida Organization because it has split up into fragments and spread all over the world and each fragment represents Usama Bin Ladin. Each of the members of the Organization considers the Islamic nation's cause to be his own cause. For them Usama Bin Ladin is now merely a symbol.

(Al-Hammadi) How did the Al-Qa'ida Organization finance its military operations in and outside of Afghanistan?

(Al-Bahri) Concerning the financing and the money transfer and movement, I have no information. However, it was obvious that all these operations were financed by the funds of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. There were no external contributions. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin always insisted that Al-Qa'ida Organization's activities should be financed from his own funds. He used to say: This is mine and I do not want anybody to share this good deed with me.

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Former Bin Ladin 'Bodyguard' Discusses Al-Qa'ida Stance on Saudi, Iraqi Affairs
Part 8 of a series of interviews with Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri, alias Abu-Jandal, formerly the "bodyguard" of Al-Qa'ida leader Usama Bin Ladin, by Khalid al-Hammadi, in Sanaa; date not given

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(Al-Hammadi) Did you know anything about Bin Ladin's position on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait?

(Al-Bahri) I would like to say that according to the religious background and Salafi education we received in Saudi schools, institutes, and mosques, the Ba'th Party ideology was atheist and had nothing to do with Islam. We were brought up and educated on these ideas. The majority of people there continue to consider the Ba'th ideology atheist because it is based on the ideas of Michel Aflaq and the Arab Ba'th Party theoreticians. Therefore, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin opposed Saddam Husayn's invasion of Kuwait. He called on the Saudi Government to allow for the recruitment of youths and to open the door of jihad in the land of the two holy mosques in order to defeat the Iraqi invasion and expel the invaders from Kuwait. That call was not meant to fight the Iraqi people.

Bin Ladin had many reasons to call for jihad. His intentions were geared toward ending the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait and rescuing the Iraqi people from the domination of the Ba'th Party. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin was dreaming of this. Therefore, he asked the Saudi Government to open the door for him. He said he was ready to prepare more than 100,000 fighters in three months. He used to say: "I have more than 40,000 mujahidin in the land of the two holy mosques alone." These were trained in Afghanistan. He said he was ready to prepare them within a few days. The number of other mujahidin outside Saudi Arabia was many times more. Had Saudi Arabia allowed that to happen, all would have participated in expelling the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, especially since Saudi Arabia enjoys a special religious status that concerns all Muslims because the two holy mosques are located there.

(Al-Hammadi) It is well known that the Salafi current in Saudi Arabia is dominating all other currents. How could it agree with the jihadist current adopted by Usama Bin Ladin under the umbrella of the Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) As I said, events make events. Shaykh Salman al-Awdah once delivered a beautiful lecture under the headline "Our Role in the Midst of Events." It spoke about events outside Saudi Arabia like Palestine, Afghanistan, Chechnya, Bosnia, and Somalia. It noted that these events were far from Saudi Arabia but were taking place in our Islamic world. It hinted at plots against the Gulf region and oil wells. These lessons and hot news changed the awareness and realization of the youths of what was taking place around them. I recall that when Shaykh Salman al-Awdah called in his tape "The Industry of Death" for jihad in Somalia, concentrating on the US offensive on the Horn of Africa, the youths were at that time heading toward Bosnia-Herzegovina and a few went to Chechnya. Only a few remained in Afghanistan. He drew our attention to the importance of the issue of the Horn of Africa.

Also we did not understand the dimensions of many of the developments taking place around us. All this was unknown to us. We might have heard the news of these developments in a transient manner without realizing their dimensions.

Developments here and there, especially after 1991 and the war on Iraq, as well as the 1993 events in Saudi Arabia, which witnessed the arrest of shaykhs and men of religion, and the 1994 war in Yemen and the Saudi support for the socialists during that war and the ulema position on the Yemen war, all opened large horizons we did not think of before. In the past, our work was purely charitable and all our problems were internal. We did not have a strong connection with outside events. This continued until the events of Yemen, which, I think, shook many and created some sort of distinction between events. True, the Gulf crisis was strong, but it did not have a strong impact on the youths. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin spoke about this. He then went to the men of religion and told them: "Fear God. How can you issue a fatwa (religious ruling) sanctioning the Americans' entry into the country. This is inadmissible." All these events took place inside the palaces of the ruling family. The public did not know what went on. The rulers even aired on television a fatwa by Shaykh Bin-Baz allowing the foreign forces to enter the country. We were very surprised how Shaykh Bin-Baz, who was known for his popularity and educational status, could sanction this. We did not know what was going on.

Shaykh Bin-Uthaymin appeared on television the next day and addressed the people. He, too, sanctioned the entry of foreigners. At that time we were not aware of the issue of ideological argument against the unbelievers' deeds. Ideological education for the Saudi youths has now started to raise their awareness in this respect. But the position of the Salafi current on the ideology of jihad is well known. It has always opposed jihad but without giving reasons. The Salafi current was not oriented toward jihad. The youths did not have a clear idea about the various trends of the Islamic groups until we went out for jihad. As soon as we left for jihad from the large prison called the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, large horizons of knowledge opened up for us. We began to feel that we were completely absented from what was going on in our world. I recall that when we were in Saudi Arabia, the leaflets of Dr Muhammad al-Mas'ari were distributed to us in complete secrecy for fear that they might get into the hands of the merciless Saudi security services. We were brought up in Saudi Arabia on the concept of eat and remain silent. This is the prevailing concept of the kingdom's motto (two swords and a palm tree). This means eat from the palm tree and remain silent because the two swords are there to cut off the head of anyone who acts differently.

We were brought up on this thought. The Saudi Government had its prestige and we were terrified by it. This, however, has changed now. It had negative results on the country and its government and people. Media blackout and failure to open dialogue channels reflected negatively on the country. I recall now one of the things Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin used to tell us. He said that when he went to see Shaykh Abd-al-Aziz Bin-Baz and Shaykh Bin-Uthaymin for talks with them on the issue of the Americans' entry into the Gulf, Shaykh Bin-Uthaymin told him: "My son Usama, we cannot discuss this issue because we are afraid." Shaykh Bin-Uthaymin said this while pointing to his neck as an indication that he feared beheading if he talked about that issue.

(Al-Hammadi) In view of this situation in Saudi Arabia, did Usama Bin Ladin tell you what he did with the men of religion?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, Shaykh Usama used to look at the men of religion and tell them: "You are the men of religion and people of positions. You must speak up and bravely announce your positions." Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin had even suggested providing the men of religion and the Saudi Government with mujahidin to expel the Iraqi forces from Kuwait and thus foil the entry of US forces into the region,

but they rejected his offer. Bin Ladin told them: "I am ready to prepare 100,000 fighters with good combat capability within three months. If the Iraqi army has an eight-year experience of war with Iran, these mujahidin have longer experience and they are ready to wage wars and defend you." The Saudi leaders, however, did not give this offer any attention because they were controlled by others and they obeyed their orders blindly. There was no room for any discussion. All these things opened new horizons for the youths, broadened their mental faculties, and changed their positions. For example, I lived in Saudi Arabia as a Yemeni expatriate up to the 1990 Gulf war. I enjoyed the rights and social relations enjoyed by any Saudi citizen. We lived together as one family. This, however, changed much, particularly after the Yemeni war in 1994. We were surprised to see the Saudi Government side with the Yemeni socialists in the war although it was against socialism.

I recall that a colleague of mine in the Saudi Navy once came to bid me farewell. I asked him where he was going. He answered by saying he was going to attack the western Yemeni coast. I was surprised and asked about the connection between Saudi Arabia and the Yemeni coast. He said: "We received orders to go there for an operation against the coasts of Al-Hudaydah and Al-Makha." I asked him: "Why would you strike at the Muslims there and you are a Muslim army and even the fatwas issued by men of religion stress that the war raging there is an internal problem?" This issue showed that we were not aware of what was going on around us.

A Saudi colleague of mine, who was working in the Saudi Air Force, once told me that he and his air squad received orders to strike at the Yemeni government forces (forces of the legitimate government in Sanaa). I asked him: "Why do you want to strike at the Yemeni forces? Are they not Muslims? Why strike at these forces while their enemies in the battlefield are Socialists and these socialists are infidels and renegades as we have been taught?" I was further confused by the Saudi Government's defense of the socialists. I asked my friend: "Did you obey the military orders to attack the Yemeni forces?" He answered: "Are we crazy to bomb Muslims? We dropped the bombs in the desert and returned. This is a decision I made together with all pilots of the air squad after seeking the opinion of the men of religion. They did not allow strikes on the legitimate Yemeni Government forces."

These issues generated an internal conflict within ourselves and prompted us later to think deeply of the reasons. When we went abroad and began to mix with the world of jihad, we argued about some issues until jihad against America was announced. Some members of the Salafi current asked in surprise: "Jihad against America?!" Some of them even said: "America knows everything about us. It knows even the label of our underwear." This was the result of the psychological defeat America planted in their hearts. Therefore, we began to concentrate on some Salafi students and engaged with them in a detailed dialogue on jihad. After reaching certain convictions with them, we asked them: "Why do you not go to Afghanistan to know true jihad and what is taking place there and then you can decide about jihad?" The purpose was getting them out of the closed Saudi environment so that they would open their eyes and minds. The doors of scientific independent judgment will then be opened for them instead of depending only on what is reported to them. We used to tell them to research and discuss things with others. Some of them were convinced of the idea of going to Afghanistan. Some went to Afghanistan with the purpose of opening constructive dialogue there about what Usama Bin Ladin said about jihad. Others went there to return the young mujahidin from there, but they were convinced of the idea of jihad as announced by Bin Ladin after discussing this issue with their leading shaykhs. An extraordinary jihadist Salafi current had thus emerged. It was completely different from the jihad current.

(Al-Hammadi) You said Bin Ladin offered to expel the Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Did he propose this to the Saudi Government or the men of religion?

(Al-Bahri) According to Bin Ladin, he proposed this to a senior official in the Saudi Government. He told him: "We are ready to get the Iraqi forces out of Kuwait." But the state policy at that time showed that the issue had already been decided and the US forces had to be called in to get the Iraqis out of Kuwait. Therefore, the government moved in the direction of seeking US assistance although the problem could have been solved through the Arab League and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The OIC member states have huge forces and these are sufficient to solve the problem. Had these been used, the assistance of US and other foreign forces would have been unnecessary.

Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin made his offer to the Saudi Government as well as to Muslim scholars and men of religion. He tried to convince them of his idea and asked them to educate people about the danger of seeking the help of foreign forces. He presented an integrated military program and asked them to open training camps for the young and recruit the jobless. He also called for implanting the military spirit in their minds. He got into a heated argument with them in this regard and they were angry with him. We were surprised why Saudi Arabia rejected Bin Ladin's offer. We, however, understood the reason after some time. We learned that it was a US scheme to invade the region. That was met with an internal defeat. The Gulf States allowed foreign interference to protect themselves. We also learned that the Saudi rulers contacted the men of religion and asked them to issue fatwas about the subject. That came too late.

I recall that Shaykh Abd-al-Aziz Bin-Baz said the Saudi regime did not call in the Americans only after the fatwa. He said the Americans had already been there in the region. Nevertheless, the Saudi Government told him: "O shaykh, if you do not issue a fatwa allowing Muslims to seek the assistance of US and other foreign forces, sedition will erupt in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The mujahidin will then clash with the US forces, triggering sedition. Besides, the Iraqi Ba'th forces are at the door."

(Al-Hammadi) What did Bin Ladin think of ousted Iraqi President Saddam Husayn and other Arab leaders?

(Al-Bahri) I remember that we used to talk about the Arab leaders and criticize their weak positions. Some of the brothers used to say: "Shaykh Usama, we want to carry out an operation against this or that Arab leader because the Egyptian, Iraqi, and other governments are apostate governments." They were very zealous. He used to answer them: "Leave them alone and do not preoccupy yourselves with them. They are scum and belong to the group of Abdallah Bin-Ubay, leader of the hypocrites at the time of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him. When they witness the defeat of the United States, they will be in their worst situation." Shaykh Usama did not distinguish between the Arab leaders and the Americans. He did not see any difference between them. He considered them the same. But his strategy of work was against striking at the Arab countries or carrying out attacks inside the Arab countries.

(Al-Hammadi) Can you explain this?

(Al-Bahri) The Syrian Government, for example, was largely criticized by the Islamic groups. Many of these groups had ideological differences with the ruling regime in Syria. These differences might reach the point of considering it an apostate regime. This is so although we might militarily agree with Syria on many issues. They might allow us to cross their country and might support us. That, of course, was in the past. The situation has now changed and the Syrians are now part of the international alliance.

(Al-Hammadi) Did Bin Ladin consider the United States his only target?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, he considered it his only target. Therefore, he restricted the activities of his organization to the United States. He was not considering work in any Arab country. Shaykh Usama used to say on various occasions: "There are some Arab countries which cannot stand the battle for even a week. If we concentrate on them we will completely defeat them and topple entire regimes." He also said: "I can topple the regime in two or three Arab states because these are not states in the true sense of the word and their leaders are not up to the level of responsibility. We must completely topple the United States and we hope to be the ones who can topple its entire system." Shaykh Usama followed this policy and I think he largely succeeded in it.

(Al-Hammadi) What about Al-Khubar incidents in Saudi Arabia? Do you think Al-Qa'ida was behind them?

(Al-Bahri) No, I learned from Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin himself that Al-Qa'ida had nothing to do with Al-Khubar incidents. He, however, always prayed to God to have mercy on those who were killed in that operation like brothers Muslih al-Shamrani, Khalid al-Sa'id, Abd-al-Aziz al-Mu'atham, and Riyad al-Hajiri, in addition to the four martyrs who were accused of carrying out Al-Riyad operation and who were executed by the Saudi Government without investigation. Even the US Government was angry with Saudi Arabia for executing them without investigation and without informing the Americans about this. Things looked as if these were used as scapegoats. I recall that a month before the execution of the four, the mujahidin issued a warning stating that if the four are executed the response would be painful to the regime. Defense Minister Prince Sultan Bin-Abd-al-Aziz responded to that warning by saying these were childish games. Following the execution of the four there came the reply in the Al-Khubar operation. The executors issued a statement confirming this. They said the operation was carried out to avenge the execution of the four.

What I knew from some of the brothers who lived with the mujahidin was that the Al-Khubar operation was carried out to avenge the execution of the four who carried out Al-Riyad operation, and that Al-Riyad operation was carried out to avenge the killing of Shaykh Abdallah al-Hudayf in Saudi jails in 1995. Shaykh Abdallah al-Hudayf once mutilated the face of a Saudi investigating officer, who tortured people in prisons, by spraying acid on his face. The shaykh was arrested and tortured to death. Many of the brothers close to him said they did not see any trace of execution. They stressed that he was killed in detention and buried in an unknown place so that none would know his location. Many of the people who worked with Shaykh Miflih al-Shamrani cited him as saying: "By God we will not be men if we do not avenge the death of Shaykh Abdallah." Therefore, all these operations are retaliatory operations linked to one another. Al-Riyad operation was carried out to avenge Shaykh Abdallah al-Hudayf's death and Al-Khubar operation was carried out to avenge the execution of the four suspects of Al-Riyad operation. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin had nothing to do with these operations.

(Al-Hammadi) Did they have any connection with Al-Qa'ida and were they in Afghanistan or elsewhere?

(Al-Bahri) Not at all. Even the televised dialogue the security agencies conducted with them as aired by the Saudi television was dictated on them. In it they said they were influenced by Muhammad al-Maqdisi's books and Usama Bin Ladin's messages. The security agencies forced them to say what they said. It was clear during the conversation that they said what they were prompted to say. As for the story of their relationship with Usama Bin Ladin and his influence on them, I wonder how they were affected by Bin Ladin's speeches. I think that was an excuse uglier than guilt and it was unacceptable. Al-Maqdisi's books and Bin Ladin's speeches were there in Saudi Arabia long before

then and they were not influenced by them, so how could they be influenced by these books and speeches overnight? Therefore, I reaffirm that this operation came in reply to the death of Shaykh Abdallah al-Hudayf. This is well known by all our brothers there.

(Al-Hammadi) Why did Al-Qa'ida not carry out military operations in Israel, where there was a battle with the Arabs and Muslims?

(Al-Bahri) It wished to do so, but one should not forget the role the Arab cordon states (states neighboring Israel) play in defending the Israeli borders, particularly the two Arab neighbors of Israel (not further identified). Moreover, Shaykh Usama believed that Islamic Jihad and HAMAS in Palestine carried out their duty quite well. He felt he was duty bound to support these two groups in an indirect manner by cutting off the head of the serpent and striking at the big head which backs and finances Israel, that is, America. People know that had it not been for the US veto, Israel would not have survived a two-week battle with HAMAS or Islamic Jihad, not to mention the Arab armies. These were sufficient to defeat Israel, but the US and Arab backing of Israel and the international support for it enabled it to survive. Shaykh Usama used to say: "If America falls, the other regimes, including Israel, will fall."

(Al-Hammadi) Do you think the young mujahidin, who are influenced by Al-Qa'ida ideology, will use Saudi Arabia as a back stage and springboard to fight the Americans in the region, particularly in Iraq?

(Al-Bahri) As reported in the news, many of the mujahidin were arrested in Iraq. If we examine the pictures or names of these mujahidin, we will find that they were new young people who did not fight in Afghanistan, Bosnia, or anywhere else. They were Saudis and others from various nationalities. The Iraqi interior minister spoke about this in detail. But the question is: Who sent these young men to Iraq? Events produced them and the conflict prompted them to go there. What is currently taking place in Iraq will prompt others to go there to fight the Americans. This is similar to the situation which prompted others before them to go to Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Chechnya. Every event has its men, and as is said, every time has its state and men.

(Al-Hammadi) Does this mean that the Iraqi events created or might create a new Al-Qa'ida organization?

(Al-Bahri) This is possible. Al-Qa'ida Organization will then be the brain guiding others. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin has recently called on all armed groups to merge under the leadership of Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Merger is a very strong trend. I believe that many organizations will come under the leadership of Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. Al-Zarqawi and his small group alone could so much against the US forces in Iraq, so imagine how things will be when all unite under one leadership. Bin Ladin's endorsement of Al-Zarqawi as an emir (prince) in Iraq means that Al-Qa'ida organization is reshuffling its cards in Iraq quite well.

(Al-Hammadi) In view of the current events in Iraq, do you think Al-Qa'ida has a large presence there?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, Al-Qa'ida members are present in Iraq, but I do not know the size of their presence. Their presence is now clear, especially after Shaykh Usama's call on all fighting groups in Iraq to join Al-Zarqawi's group and declare allegiance to him. I think this will expand the circle of Al-Qa'ida activities there and increase the number of the members present there. After the fall of Saddam Husayn's regime in Iraq, many of the former Iraqi members of Al-Qa'ida began to contact each other

and form a united front to fight the US forces there. They formed a nucleus for the ones who followed them in raising weapons against the US invaders.

(Al-Hammadi) It is reported that the United States exploited the card of Al-Qa'ida to swoop down on the Islamic world and occupy it as happened in Afghanistan and Iraq. What is your reply to this?

(Al-Bahri) America has primarily served Bin Ladin. Yes, America has primarily served Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and Al-Qa'ida Organization. When Shaykh Usama attacked America he wanted to expose it to the Islamic world. He also sought to expose its evil. This is what really happened. After the 11 September events, America stopped trusting any of its cadres. It stopped trusting even its officers and officials. It is incorrect to say that Washington used Al-Qa'ida to swoop down on the Islamic world. America entered Iraq and before that Afghanistan as part of a long-term plan aimed at occupying the whole region. It wants to revive the history of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1970s. It wants to restore the French, British, and Italian colonialism of the region. America wants to occupy the whole region. Shaykh Usama and Al-Qa'ida Organization were only a strong thorn in the throat of America. They caused it indigestion in swallowing up our Islamic world and prevented it from implementing its terrible scheme. The occupation of Iraq was not at all justified. I think the emergence of Al-Qa'ida Organization with this strength and superior capability in the circle of international events has created some sort of balance in international relations after the domination of the world by one pole, which is America. This happened after the collapse of the Soviet Union. We hope that Al-Qa'ida Organization will be the reason for the collapse of the American pole in the same way as Afghanistan was the reason for the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

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Former Bin Ladin 'Bodyguard' Recalls Al-Qa'ida Figures, Views East Africa Bombings
Part 9 of a series of interviews with Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri, alias Abu-Jandal, formerly the "personal guard" of Al-Qa'ida leader Usama Bin Ladin, by Khalid al-Hammadi in Sanaa; date not given: "The Inside Story of Al-Qa'ida, as Told by Abu-Jandal (Nasir al-Bahri), Bin Ladin's Personal Guard (9); Abu-Zubaydah Was No Leading Member of the Organization and Was Running a Guesthouse for Material Benefits; Al-Qa'ida's Leadership Structure Egyptian; Bin Ladin's Ties With Mullah Omar Strengthened After Arab Mujahidin Checked Advance of Tajik Commander Ahmed Shah Masoud"

AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI

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In this episode, Abu-Jandal speaks about several influential figures in Al-Qa'ida and their role in the Organization in addition to other events he had witnessed in Afghanistan.

(Al-Hammadi) Abu-Ubaydah al-Banshiri, the military commander of Al-Qa'ida Organization, became very famous in Africa until he drowned in Lake Victoria. What do you know about him and what role did he play in Africa?

(Al-Bahri) Abu-Ubaydah al-Banshiri, may God have mercy on his soul, was not known to me personally. However, I heard the Egyptian comrades speak about him. They spoke well of him and praised him. They used to say that he was a first-rate military man. He was named Al-Banshiri after the well known Banshir Valley in northern Afghanistan and he was connected with the northern Afghan commander Ahmed Shah Masoud who was assassinated two days before the 9/11 events. Abu-Ubaydah al-Banshiri was one of the old Arab mujahidin in Afghanistan and he took part in the first battle in which the Arab mujahidin in Afghanistan participated. It was the battle of Gagi. Some of our men described him as a Gagi companion, in allusion to the prophet's companions during the battle of Badr, the first battle in Islam.

Abu-Ubaydah al-Banshiri was deputy to Usama Bin Ladin before Abu-Hafs al-Masri. His ferry capsized in Lake Victoria and he drowned. May God have mercy on his soul.

Abu-Ubaydah was far-sighted. He concentrated on Africa in General and on the Horn of Africa in particular and used to say: The United States will certainly control the Horn of Africa and therefore, we must establish a Horn of Africa close to the Arabian Peninsula. He had a far-reaching plan, beginning with Somalia, which he wanted to make a base for the Arab mujahidin, spreading jihad ideas from there, given that it was an open country in which the Arabs used to move about using only their ordinary identity cards without encountering anyone to ask them about their nationality or anything else. It was easy to enter Somalia.

The Al-Qa'ida Organization mujahidin did not enter Somalia after the United States did. Indeed, the Al-Qa'ida Organization mujahidin were already there when the United States entered because they had

a program and camps and a vision to unify the country. They aspired to make of Somalia a stronghold for them close to the Arabian Peninsula because the brothers in the Al-Qa'ida had an aim to liberate the Arabian Peninsula later on.

(Al-Hammadi) Did Abu-Ubaydah al-Banshiri play a big role in Africa?

(Al-Bahri) Abu-Ubaydah was in effect the general field commander in the Horn of Africa. He used to discuss events and developments with Usama Bin Ladin on a daily basis. Abu-Ubaydah was the supervisor of the activities in the Horn of Africa from Uganda to Somalia and from Kenya to the Horn of Africa and Sudan. All these areas were under his supervision.

(Al-Hammadi) Does this mean that he was the mastermind, and that he played the main role in the attack against the two US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, he had a big role in planning and implementing these two operations. He was the executive commander of these two attacks.

(Al-Hammadi) Did Al-Banshiri propose the attacks against these two embassies?

(Al-Bahri) As far as I know, he had the intention to let the Al-Qa'ida Organization hit the two embassies and to let the Egyptian Jihad organization do the job. However, the brothers in the Al-Qa'ida Organization objected. They objected to the idea of bombing the two embassies because they considered Kenya an important passageway to Somalia and they did not want it closed. How could they close this passageway? How could they enter Somalia then? Therefore, at the beginning the brothers in the Al-Qa'ida did not want to do that so that they might not invite Kenya's wrath against them. However, eventually, when restrictions imposed on them increased and after they left Somalia, they decided to carry out the two attacks. That was in 1998.

(Al-Hammadi) What do you know about the first meeting between Usama Bin Ladin and Al-Zawahiri and how were they able to come together and how were they brought together despite their divergent ideological upbringing?

(Al-Bahri) I do not know the details but I know that there were numerous closed sessions and meetings between the leadership of the Al-Qa'ida Organization and the leadership of the Egyptian Jihad Organization. These meetings took place when I was in Afghanistan and during my work as a bodyguard for Usama Bin Ladin. I did not interfere in this and I did not try to know what was going on despite my closeness to Usama Bin Ladin. However, we knew that there were intentions to unify efforts and effect a union. I remember that these contacts and meetings began in 1997 and even before that. There were coordination of operations, logistical support, and joint implementation of some operations in and outside of Afghanistan. There were Al-Qa'ida Organization elements fighting within the ranks of the Jihad Organization and members of the Jihad Organization were fighting in the Al-Qa'ida Organization ranks.

(Al-Hammadi) What about the bombing of the Egyptian embassy in the Pakistani capital Islamabad, was it the doing of the Al-Qa'ida Organization or the Jihad Organization or was it a joint operation?

(Al-Bahri) We understood from the Egyptian Jihad Organization members when they talked about this issue that the Egyptian Islamabad embassy bombing was a retaliatory attack because of what the Egyptian Government had done to those who implemented it, in terms of the dishonor and torture to which they had been subjected in Egyptian jails. They took revenge by bombing the Egyptian embassy

in Islamabad. Two persons carried out the attack. One of them entered the embassy with a Samsonite briefcase and opened the embassy gate and the other drove into the embassy with a Hilux pickup vehicle. I think this operation was carried out without informing the general commander of the Egyptian Jihad Organization. Therefore, the Al-Qa'ida Organization had no connection with this operation. Had it known about the plan, it would not have allowed it, given that Pakistan was still the most important passageway for the Al-Qa'ida Organization from and into Afghanistan. Moreover, the Al-Qa'ida Organization had good relations with the Pakistani Islamic organizations and it was not in Al-Qa'ida's interest to harm them in their own country.

(Al-Hammadi) Then how do you explain the arrest of Abu-Zubaydah in Islamabad and what about his role in the Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) Abu-Zubaydah played no role in the Al-Qa'ida Organization. He was arrested in Pakistan, as I heard later. He had a guesthouse in the Pakistani capital Islamabad and he used to receive and give accommodation to Arab Mujahidin. His only job was to serve the mujahidin and he was not affiliated with the Al-Qa'ida Organization or other organizations. I remember that the Al-Qa'ida Organization coordinated with him to receive the sick or the wounded from the Arab brothers and treat them in Pakistan, or to complete security papers and ensure transportation and communication and means of movement. He used to offer these services in exchange for material benefits. This house or guesthouse was opened for commercial and material purposes. In all cases, he was not a member of the Al-Qa'ida Organization.

(Al-Hammadi) Do you believe that Al-Zawahiri played an important role in Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) After joining Al-Qa'ida Organization, he played a major and important role. He became the number-two man in the organization.

(Al-Hammadi) It is known that from the beginning, the leadership of Al-Qa'ida Organization belonged to Usama Bin Ladin because he was the founder and financier. What was the nature of the leading members who were lower than him in rank?

(Al-Bahri) The majority of the leadership structure after Usama Bin Ladin was Egyptian. There was also a Mauritanian member. As for the ordinary members and elements, the ratio varied. At the beginning and for some time the Saudis formed the biggest percentage. Then the situation began to change every now and then with the Saudis or Yemenis taking the lead. At a certain training course, you find most of the recruits Yemenis. The next course you will find most of the attendees Saudis with few Yemenis, and so on. Some of the classes did not have a majority of Saudis or Yemenis but a mixture of men from various countries. I am speaking of course of individuals who received training at the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps. But it is difficult to say that they were active Al-Qa'ida members.

(Al-Hammadi) What do you know about Muhammad Atif? Was he really the man responsible for the military wing in Cairo?

(Al-Bahri) Muhammad Atif is himself Abu-Hafs al-Masri. All I know about him is that he was deputy of Usama Bin Ladin and responsible for the Military Committee. Whether he was a leader or responsible for the military command in Cairo, I do not know.

(Al-Hammadi) Do you know him personally? How was his character?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, I know him. He was a serious-minded man, a disciplined man. He was not the gregarious type who could live with the young mujahidin and understand and solve their problems and address their concerns, like Usama Bin Ladin. Perhaps this was due to his military position in the organization and his military circumstances and his monitoring of events. His work and activities sometimes compelled him to avoid people and keep away from others. Sometimes we only saw him once a week or once in two weeks, either during prayers or during feasts.

Many of the young mujahidin liked his character, may God have mercy on his soul. He was a first-rate sportsman and he loved horsemanship but was not as good a horseman as Usama Bin Ladin. He was a professional volleyball player. Whenever we had to play volleyball we used to place Usama Bin Ladin in one team and Abu-Hafs in the other team because they were skillful and tall.

(Al-Hammadi) How did the Kuwaiti national, Sulayman Abu-Ghayth, suddenly become one of the leaders of Al-Qa'ida and the official spokesman of the Organization? What do you know about him?

(Al-Bahri) I do not know Sulayman Abu-Ghayth personally and I had had no relations with him. I first heard about him when he gave a Friday sermon in Kuwait and spoke about Usama Bin Ladin and defended him and about the Al-Qa'ida Organization and the mujahidin in Afghanistan. He attacked the United States and its allies, and incited the youths against the United States. As far as I can remember, the sermon was made in the late 1990's. He was immediately arrested and was stopped from preaching. He no longer could tolerate his conditions in Kuwait and he thought Kuwait was no longer suitable for him. He decided to take his wife and children and travel to Afghanistan after coordinating with the brothers there to receive him.

Sulayman Abu-Ghayth is a book-learned man, with a strong line of reasoning and eloquence. Because he was from the Arabian Peninsula, he was placed in such a position and he had priority over others. Therefore, he was chosen the official spokesman of the Al-Qa'ida Organization.

(Al-Hammadi) Do you not believe that he had already been a member of Al-Qa'ida when he was still in Kuwait, or did the harassment he faced in Kuwait compel him to escape from his exasperating conditions and join Al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan?

(Al-Bahri) I think that the harassment he faced in Kuwait and the ban on his sermons there made him go to Afghanistan and officially join the Al-Qa'ida Organization. I heard that he had been one of the previous members of the organization, that he participated in the initial Afghan Jihad period, and that he participated in jihad in Bosnia and supported the Chechen cause.

(Al-Hammadi) After the bombing of the two US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, US planes bombed the Al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan. How were the Americans able to define the location of these camps? Were there spies?

(Al-Bahri) The Al-Qa'ida camps in the Khowst region were established in 1989 and they were located among many Afghan villages. To specify and monitor them was very simple because they were established on a specific location with facilities, depots, and restaurants. There was active traffic for logistics and for the arrival and departure of trainers, as well as smuggling routes and so on. Therefore, to acquire such information was not impossible or difficult.

(Al-Hammadi) You were a witness to this US air strike. What was the size of the damage and the number of casualties in the camp because of the US strike?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, I was a witness to this event. I was working as a personal bodyguard with Usama Bin Ladin. The night of the strike, I moved with him from Qandahar to Kabul. The next day, they attacked these camps thinking that Bin Ladin and his guards were in the Khowst camps. One night before the bombing, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin decided to go to the Khowst camps. When we left Qandahar toward Khowst, the Americans were able to know our destination through the Afghan cook who was working with us. Later on, we discovered that he was a US intelligence agent and had been recruited by force to monitor the movements of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. He confessed that he had informed the Americans that Usama Bin Ladin was on his way to the Al-Qa'ida camps in Khowst.

I remember that when we reached a crossroads between Khowst and Kabul in the Wardak Province, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin said: Where do you think, my friends, we should we go, to Khowst or Kabul? We said we would go to Kabul in order to visit our comrades at the front there. He said: With God's help, let us go to Kabul. We arrived in Kabul and the US attack against the Khowst camps occurred the next day. It was a concentrated bombardment. Each house was hit by a missile but they did not destroy the camps completely. They hit the kitchen of the camp, the mosque, and some bathrooms. Six men were killed: A Saudi, an Egyptian, an Uzbek, and three Yemenis. Six were also wounded. I believe that 75 missiles were fired at the camp in this operation. The number of missiles that we counted all over Afghanistan were 50 but, god be praised, the damage they left was much less than their actual destructive power.

(Al-Hammadi) Was there security cooperation and coordination between the Taliban Government security apparatus and its counterpart in the Al-Qa'ida Organization?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, there was strong cooperation and coordination between them. Expertise and instructors were exchanged between the two. I recall that when spies on the Al-Qa'ida Organization were discovered or when there were attempts to assassinate Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, joint investigations and interrogations were held with the perpetrators. The Arab mujahidin used to interrogate the spies in the presence of the Afghan security officers from the Taliban centers. After the interrogations, the suspects would be referred to the Taliban Movement and it would decide what to do with them and whether or not to imprison them in its jails.

(Al-Hammadi) What kind of life did the Al-Qa'ida leaders who were working under Usama Bin Ladin live? Were they given salaries and privileges like the military services officers in regular armies?

(Al-Bahri) They had no privileges but there were something like a salary called "Monthly Stipend." This was only for the married men to spend on their families. These payments ranged between \$50 and \$120 according to the size of the family. However, this payment was not given to every one. Some of the Al-Qa'ida members and leaders were well to do and their houses were better furnished than Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's house. This stipend was not used for an easy living or to buy luxury items but to have the basic necessities of life.

Life there was simple and all were equal in terms of living standard. As for the unmarried men, they used to eat whatever food they found available at the Al-Qa'ida camps and in other places where Al-Qa'ida centers could be found.

(Al-Hammadi) Where did the Al-Qa'ida married men send their children for education, given that the medium of instruction was not Arabic?

(Al-Bahri) Educating the children was the biggest problem for the Arab brothers in Afghanistan because of the language barrier. However, the brothers overcame this difficulty, thanks to the presence

of some Arab brothers who volunteered for this. At the beginning, old style classes were opened and the children were taught Koran, the tradition of the prophet, the Arabic language, and certain lessons in public morals. The teachers were Arabs from the Al-Qa'ida members. Finally a school was established for all the children of the Arab brothers in Afghanistan with scientific methods of teaching in various subjects. This covered the elementary period because the school was established within a short time. The children were taught many things, combining religious and modern lessons.

(Al-Hammadi) What about the unmarried men from the Al-Qa'ida? How did they spend their life in Afghanistan?

(Al-Bahri) The unmarried men had plenty of spare time. They were assigned one of three jobs: Training in the camps, fighting at the front, or staying near Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin to guard him. The latter was a small force and was ready to do battle at any moment.

(Al-Hammadi) Were the Al-Qa'ida Arabs able to mix with the Afghans when they were in Afghanistan under the Taliban rule, given the religious and ideological closeness of the two sides?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, they lived in a normal manner and realized some fusion with them, even though they maintained their character and upbringing. Some of them were successful in this regard through commercial dealings with the Afghan traders and intermarriages between Arabs and Afghans. Many young Arabs married Afghan women. Some Afghans liked to give their daughters in marriage to Arabs but some others expressed reservations in this matter.

(Al-Hammadi) Was the number of marriages between Arabs and Afghans considerable?

(Al-Bahri) I do not remember any cases where Arab women married Afghans. As for the Arabs who married Afghan women, the number was not bad but not large either. Most of the marriages were successful.

(Al-Hammadi) How did the Afghans look at the Al-Qa'ida Arab members?

(Al-Bahri) The Afghan people are generous and courageous. They do not forget the good deeds of others and were not ungrateful. Therefore, they considered the Arab Mujahidin the grandsons of the companions of the prophet. They respected and honored them. Honoring guests in general was one of the traits of the Afghans, and the Arabs and mujahidin were held in high esteem. They used to say: These Arabs came from the end of the world to contribute toward the establishment of our state. They considered their respect for the Arabs to be gratitude and a duty. Under the Taliban Government, there were no class or ethnic differences. They respected the Arabs because the Arabs also respected Afghans and appreciated them. There were many points of convergence between Arabs and Afghans because of the same religion and faith. The Arabs' contribution to the Afghan jihad and their courage were appreciated by the Afghans. This reflected on their treatment of the Arabs who settled in Afghanistan and was demonstrated by the Afghan people's acceptance of them.

(Al-Hammadi) How did the relationship between the Al-Qa'ida Organization and the Afghan Taliban Movement begin and develop?

(Al-Bahri) The relationship began after Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin traveled from Jalalabad to Qandahar and after his meeting with Mullah Muhammad Omar at Qandahar Airport. They held talks there after the first attempt to assassinate Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin in Jalalabad. Mullah Muhammad Omar received news through the Taliban intelligence that certain individuals arrived in Afghanistan for the

purpose of liquidating Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. Acting on the basis of his religious zeal, Mullah Omar sent a helicopter for Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin in Jalalabad and asked him to come to Qandahar. When he arrived at Qandahar Airport Mullah Omar informed him of the subject and there was long discussion between them. Mullah Muhammad Omar then proposed to Usama Bin Ladin to move to Qandahar with all the Arab families to settle there because it was safer than Jalalabad. Usama Bin Ladin and his companions then moved to Qandahar, which was considered Talabani's stronghold, and settled there.

Relations then began between the Mullah and the Shaykh but the relationship was strengthened and consolidated after the advance of the Afghan commander Ahmad Shah Masoud toward Kabul and after Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin alerted the Arab mujahidin in Afghanistan to defend Kabul. They played a great role in defending it and in repulsing the Masoud forces, given their good military experience. During that time the blood of the Arabs and Afghans was spilled at the Afghan fronts and this was an important factor in strengthening the relationship and bolstering links between the Al-Qa'ida Organization and the Taliban Movement and their leaderships.

(Al-Hammadi) How did the relationship develop between Usama Bin Ladin and Mullah Muhammad Omar?

(Al-Bahri) The relationship between Mullah Muhammad Omar and Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin began as a result of the two sides' agreement in terms of religion and ideology. Mullah Muhammad Omar had his own idea about jihad and he used to hear about the battles of the Arab mujahidin in the Gagi area and their battles in Jalalabad and during his meetings with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and the prolonged sessions of talks between the two. This had a great effect on strengthening their relations. Moreover, the enemy of both was the same. They agreed on the same enemy; namely, the United States. Mullah Muhammad Omar used to say that the United States wanted to strike at Taliban not because of Usama Bin Ladin but because it wanted to strike at Afghanistan to drive out the Taliban Government from the country because it was implementing the Islamic sharia law in the country and because of US fear of the Islamic trend.

Thus, the two sides, Mullah Muhammad Omar and Usama Bin Ladin, agreed on the same ideological principles and the same enemy; namely, the United States. Indeed, the United States treated the Al-Qa'ida and Taliban issues as one issue and considered them the same because of the same religion. The United States did not fight them because of their military strength but because of their intellectual and ideological beliefs.

(Al-Hammadi) Some sources said that one of the causes for strengthening the relationship between Usama Bin Ladin and Mullah Muhammad Omar was a marriage between the two sides. How true is this?

(Al-Bahri) This is not true, because there were no marriages between Usama Bin Ladin and Mullah Muhammad Omar. Mullah Muhammad Omar did not give his daughter in marriage to Usama Bin Ladin and Usama Bin Ladin did not give any of his daughters in marriage to Mullah Muhammad Omar and nothing of this kind happened between the other leaders on both sides. What was described as a marriage between the two sides to strengthen relations between them was absolutely untrue.

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FOUO Dialog

**Afghanistan: Usama Bin Ladin's Former Bodyguard on Al-Qa'ida Organization
Interview With Abu Jandal: "Al-Qa'ida From Inside As Narrated by Abu Jandal, Bin Ladin's
Personal Guard (Part 10, Last Episode)"***AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI**Monday, April 4, 2005 T17:37:20Z***Journal Code:** 1430 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text**Word Count:** 4,271

After the events of 11 September 2001 a lot was written in several languages about Al-Qa'ida movement, headed by Usama Bin Ladin. But they were all written from outside the movement and were just journalistic endeavors, or they relied on intelligence reports, which sometimes were correct and often were wrong.

That was why Al-Quds al-Arabi newspaper tried to stand out and approach this issue by conducting this long series of the memoirs and diary of Bin Ladin's personal guard, known by the name of Abu Jandal, while his official name is Nassir al-Bahari. Through him we tried to open the locked doors and visit the forbidden kingdom of the Al-Qa'ida movement, diving into its depths through one of the most important elements, who has a wealth of information and knowledge about the movement and its composition.

Abu Jandal is a young bright scholar, who is an excellent talker with quick wits, who amazes you with his strong arguments whenever you try to beleaguer him with questions. He has a strong memory and strong muscles, which may be why he was chosen to guard Usama Bin Ladin, and not out of mere coincidence.

He returned from Afghanistan to Yemen just two months before the bombing of the American destroyer Cole at the port of Eden in 2000. Subsequent to that he was arrested, spending 22 months in Yemeni prisons, 13 of which were in solitary confinement.

Currently, he lives a free man in his homeland, Yemen, specifically in the capital, Sana. He leads a normal life, roaming freely in the streets, and practicing his chosen profession. But he might not be free from the eyes of local and outside monitors, as he lives under house arrest in the capital, Sana. He is not allowed to move or live in any other part of Yemen, and his communications are under constant surveillance.

After several attempts for as long as six months to open those files, which were always refused by security agencies which sometimes agreed and then refused, we finally were able to grab the chance to conduct this series, which takes the reader to the world of Al-Qa'ida and its leader and establisher Usama Bin Ladin. They start with his religious upbringing and environment in Saudi Arabia, then his time in Sudan, the movement's activities in Africa, ending with his personal life and the life of the movement's members in Afghanistan. This is where the movement and its leader have settled down until today, which they used as the starting point to execute the most prominent and dangerous non-governmental military operations, which the United States calls "terrorism" and Al-Qa'ida calls

"jihad," and which represent an important turn in international politics.

In this episode, Abu Jandal will talk about the dimensions of Al-Qa'ida's assassination of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud and other issues related to it, among them Abdullah Azzam's relationship with Mas'ud and Bin Ladin, and the future of Al-Qa'ida.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) It has been said that Al-Qa'ida was responsible for the assassination of the renowned Afghan leader, Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. Why did Al-Qa'ida assassinate him, while he was one of the renowned jihad leaders?

(Abu Jandal) As for Ahmad Shah Mas'ud and his differences with Shaykh Usama, I assure you that these differences were not because of his short-term differences with Taliban, and that they were not new. They were rather old differences between Mas'ud and Bin Ladin. These differences started in the first days of jihad in Afghanistan. I remember that Shaykh Usama told us once that there was a meeting between Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and some brothers, like Brother Abdullah Anas, and Brother Abul Shahid al-irhabi. They discussed Ahmad Shah Mas'ud's situation, whether he was an agent or not. There were several suspicions about him. Everybody wanted Mas'ud to appear as an agent, and that he should be exposed in front of the other mujahidin. I remember that Shaykh Abdullah Azzam had made the decisive statement about that issue, insisting that he should not be exposed at an inappropriate time. People were looking up to Ahmad Shah Mas'ud as a great jihad leader. If he were going to be exposed the way they intended to at that time, a great crisis would take place among the mujahidin, which was the last thing they needed. Shaykh Azzam then refused the idea of exposing him that way. He said to leave him and the idea of exposing him for later, that it was not appropriate to expose him at such a time. If any Afghan leader's image was distorted, the other party might use it as propaganda in their own interest against the mujahidin. They would try to shake the trust between the Afghan jihad leadership and the Islamic peoples, who were at that time thirsty for any Islamic power or any Islamic giant who would breathe life again in the Umma. That was why the Afghan jihad received all kinds of support from all the Islamic movements and all states of the Islamic world. If one of its prominent field leaders should appear as an agent, that trust would be shaken and also affect the rest of the Afghan jihad leaders. So Shaykh Abdullah preferred to keep silent about it, saying: "Leave him now. Now is not his time. A time will come when he will be exposed". After the evacuation of the Soviet troops from Kabul, the city was handed over to Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. Shaykh Azzam really intended to publish a book exposing Ahmad Mas'ud Shah as an agent. But circumstances did not allow that, as he was killed in Peshawar a short while afterwards. The rest preferred to keep silent about that issue after his death, because their arguments and talent of convincing others were not as powerful as Shaykh Azzam's. If Shaykh Azzam had talked about it, his words would have been the decisive ones. The incident of Azzam's assassination weakened and shook several attempts at exposing Ahmad Shah Mas'ud as an agent, and others as well. After Ahmad Shah Mas'ud took over power in Kabul, his treason, deals with the west and his support of many ideas contradicting the Islamic law (shari'a) became all the more obvious. He very often became an obstacle for jihad and the mujahidin, both inside Afghanistan and in neighboring Islamic states. There are many examples confirming this. Throughout four years of his rule in Kabul, we did not witness any signs of an Islamic government. Ahmad Shah Mas'ud was an agent: that was an obvious fact. That was why his assassination by the alliance of Al-Qa'ida and Taliban was expected. The man left Afghanistan, heading toward the west. He visited several western countries, among them, France, Britain, the United States and Russia. His visit to Russia was the first of its kind and was a historical one for him. He returned with big plans to attack Taliban. All Taliban and Al-Qa'ida did was to attack him before he attacked them. It is a known fact that his assassination was two days before 9/11. That was why his assassination and the attacks of 9/11 were advance attacks on Mas'ud and the United

States, which had planned to attack the Islamic state led by Taliban upon its birth.

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(Al-Quds al-Arabi) Was the planning and execution of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud's assassination done by Al-Qa'ida alone, or did Taliban request it, while Al-Qa'ida's role was merely executing?

(Abu Jandal) What I know is that these attacks were a joint Taliban-Qa'ida operation. Taliban received intelligence reports confirming that Ahmad Shah Mas'ud was returning from the West with an agenda and plans to attack Taliban and remove it from power. That way, Mas'ud would be the powerful alternative for Taliban in Afghanistan after its fall. So they decided to attack him in advance, like the old saying that goes: "Eat him for lunch before he eats you for dinner." That way, the decision was made by Taliban and executed by Al-Qa'ida.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) But from the writings of Dr. Abdullah Azzam, it is noted that Ahmad Shah Mas'ud was praised by him, as opposed to what you just told us. How do you explain this?

(Abu Jandal) Yes, he was praised. But Ahmad Shah Mas'ud was active on both fronts. He was with the resistance. He actually had to, to appear like a hero. Among my memories of him, I remember that I found at his place a report written in Russian by a Russian high-ranking intelligence officer, which was translated for me by some Tajik brothers. In that report, he emphasized that the defense of Moscow begins at the Solang Pass (as published). That pass lies in Afghanistan, and was controlled by the former Afghan communist leader Abdul Rashid Dustum. It is only 25 kilometers away from Kabul. The Russians were very far-sighted, regarding their national security. They saw that the defense of Moscow started from inside Kabul. That Russian officer wrote in his report that their most appropriate candidate, approved by the Russians was Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. It is true that Shaykh Abdullah Azzam published a book entitled "A Month Among the Giants," i.e. among Mas'ud's troops, after a jihad trip he undertook to the territories of northern Afghanistan, controlled by Mas'ud's troops. During that trip, Shaykh Azzam visited several northern regions, like Badkhashan, some regions of Qunduz, some regions of the Banshir Valley (as published), and the states of Birwan and Kabisa (as published). Of course, Mas'ud's men's attitude toward Shaykh Azzam in the north was different from their attitude in other regions. Ahmad Shah Mas'ud's racism against the Arabs was a well-known fact. But Shaykh Azzam had a much wider view than that. He did not look upon Afghanistan as only for the Afghans. He tried to convince the leaders of the Afghan jihad that Afghanistan is just a seed, and would be the first step and the basis for the start of unifying the Islamic world. From the very beginning, Shaykh Abdullah Azzam's policy was a tolerant one with everybody, never hurting the other party. He was totally against those ill at heart. He never hurt anybody, nor criticized anybody, not even his opponents. He always referred to them very politely and respectfully. That was why some people thought that Shaykh Azzam's respect for Mas'ud in talking or writing meant that he supported him. But if we take a closer look at his talks or writings we will find that he did not support him at all. Mas'ud was one leader among other field leaders of jihad in northern Afghanistan. But his reputation was heightened and advanced by the West for their own interests. The Western media concentrated on polishing up Shah Mas'ud's image by writing about him or conducting interviews with him on Western TV channels and in Western newspapers. At that critical period of time, Shaykh Abdullah Azzam did not like to show anything toward Shah Mas'ud out of his conviction that the general interest and the interest of jihad required not revealing or scandalizing Mas'ud's being a Western agent. Azzam was far-sighted about that issue. He used to say: "This is not the appropriate time." In reality, one could not call Mas'ud an infidel, say that he committed any atrocities, or start offending and accusing him. That was why Shaykh Azzam was awaiting the chance to expose Mas'ud. But he

never got it, because fate was quicker, when Shaykh Azzam was assassinated in that infamous mysterious incident in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1989.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) Was there no previous relationship or acquaintance between Usama Bin Ladin and Ahmad Shah Mas'ud?

(Abu Jandal) Shaykh Usama assured us time and again when we asked him more than once about that matter, that there was no relationship of any kind between him and Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, except for some financial aid which the Services Office offered Mas'ud through Shaykh Abdullah Azzam. As for any previous relationship between them, there was none whatsoever.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) In that respect, how would you evaluate the jihad relationship between Usama Bin Ladin and his ex-university professor in Saudi Arabia, Dr. Abdullah Azzam?

(Abu Jandal) That was a very strong relationship that can be described as a father-son relationship. It was more than a brotherly relationship, and more than a paternal relationship. Through Shaykh Usama's constant talk about him, we felt that for him Shaykh Azzam was like a godfather, a real tutor.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) It was said that Abdullah Azzam played an important role in attracting Usama Bin Ladin in Saudi Arabia, and convincing him to go to Afghanistan to finance jihad operations there.

(Abu Jandal) I think what was said about Shaykh Abdullah Azzam convincing Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin regarding jihad was not very accurate. Bin Ladin's direction was self-motivated. But Bin Ladin was very enthusiastic like any young man of his age. He was very zealous about jihad, and needed some time to crystallize the idea in his mind. That was why the period in which Bin Ladin was in contact with Azzam was rather a period for crystallizing the idea in his mind. Otherwise, Bin Ladin was just one among others who collected donations for the mujahidin in Saudi Arabia. He started his jihad with delivering financial support and services for the mujahidin, then returning to Saudi Arabia. Then one day he became enthusiastic and said: "I want to join the battlefronts, to see how the mujahidin live and what they do. I want to live with them for a few days." After he went there, he was very much impressed with that kind of life, and the battles he saw there. Of course, his frame of mind and his religious upbringing in Saudi Arabia helped. Then he met with Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, and that was a meeting of money, will and youth represented by Usama Bin Ladin, and knowledge, direction and experience represented by Abdullah Azzam. When these two important elements met, something called the Office of Services was born in Peshawar, Pakistan. Then came the House of Ansar, then the training camps.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) Does that mean that Abdullah Azzam was the most prominent spiritual director for the Arab Afghans, while Usama Bin Ladin was the biggest financier for the mujahidin in Afghanistan? So, did they complement each other, one being the director, while the other was the financier?

(Abu Jandal) It really wasn't like that. Shaykh Azzam was not the godfather of all Arab mujahidin, whether in Afghanistan or in Peshawar. There were Arab mujahidin who were against him. But their circumstances and their situation did not allow them to confront that man, because his position was strong, his arguments were strong and his debate was strong; he was strong in all his endeavors. Any confrontation with him would not have been correct. No one on that scene could confront him, despite the presence of many who disagreed with his ideas and ways. Some were zealous; some were those who would call everybody "infidel." On the other hand, Shaykh Usama was not the biggest financier of Afghan jihad and Arab mujahidin. The propaganda then went that Usama Bin Ladin was a

millionaire, who supported Afghan jihad with his money. All the while, Shaykh Usama concentrated on building Al-Qa'ida and on supporting other jihad groups. There was very strong support from Islamic charity and philanthropic organizations during that period of Afghan jihad, from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates. These three states were the source of the biggest financial support for Afghan jihad. Other states were the source of additional support, as well. Pakistan was the major channel for the mujahidin crossing over to Afghanistan, as well as the crossing over of financial support. I think that propaganda made Azzam the biggest theorist, and Bin Ladin the biggest financier of Arab Afghans. At the time of Shaykh Azzam's presence in Peshawar Shaykh Umar Adul Rahman was also there. Although both their jihad thinking met at some points, there were many points where they differed. Shaykh Umar Abdul Rahman's arguments were totally different from those of Shaykh Abdullah Azzam's. In Peshawar, there were also several symbols of Islamic organizations and groups from more than one Islamic and Arab country, who did not agree with the ideas of Shaykh Abdullah Azzam. Among them were the groups of "Emigration and Penance" (al-Takfir wal-Hijra), the Egyptian al-Jihad group and others. Each of them had their own arguments and views. But Abdullah Azzam was able to force his presence upon the scene, due to his activities in the da'wa (call), mainly concentrating on jihad. He did not allow any differences or confrontations with other Islamic groups to distract him, despite those groups publishing pamphlets and booklets against each other. Some Islamic groups allied with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin opposed some of his ideas. But later events forced those groups to join with Al-Qa'ida, such as the Egyptian jihad group. If there ever was integration between two giants at the time, it was the alliance of Shaykh Usama and Shaykh Azzam. They both treated each other very well. In Azzam's famous will I read a sentence that said: "Treat Usama Bin Ladin well, for he is a whole nation embodied in one man." That sentence was deleted on purpose from his will in later editions.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) Several armed Islamic groups in more than one country around the whole world have united with each other to form the World Islamic Front, which was led by Al-Qa'ida in Afghanistan. How was that front formed?

(Abu Jandal) The events that befell the Muslims and the American pressures on the Islamic world since 1990 created a kind of reaction with several armed groups. This also led to a total change of their strategies, according to the events and circumstances that they faced. Many of the jihad groups were now convinced that there was no alternative to joining Al-Qa'ida and Taliban, as these two groups were the most competent groups which were able to stay on and face the international pressures exerted on them, transforming their struggle into an international struggle. The status of several armed Islamic groups both inside and outside their countries became very critical. Under those circumstances they were forced to join Al-Qa'ida. Accordingly, the World Islamic Front was formed in 1998 to fight the Jews and crusaders. It consisted of several armed Islamic groups from different Arab and Islamic countries under the leadership of Al-Qa'ida, which was its official spokesman and representative.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) To what extent did Al-Qa'ida change from an armed group headquartered in Afghanistan to a belief and ideology which became active and widespread in the whole world so that many Muslim youths followed it?

(Abu Jandal) Yes, it did change into a belief. What effected that change about Al-Qa'ida from an armed group into a belief is the United States. All Muslims around the world came to view the source of their tragedy as one, namely the United States. It was the source of all their problems, interfering in all internal Muslim affairs from the Far East to the far West. They became convinced that the only effective way to stop the United States' interference is the Qa'ida way, i.e. by direct attacks and armed

confrontations. If the United States was to continue its current foreign policy, interfering in the region's affairs, exerting pressure upon some of its states, and spreading trouble in others, then Washington would have to take precautionary measures against the upcoming crisis. In the Islamic world there are 70 states, 70 passports and 70 images. They wouldn't know where Al-Qa'ida is and whether Al-Qa'ida is represented by Usama Bin Ladin or in the minds of those 70 states and 70 passports. The United States will lose its friends in the region before others, if it continues with that irresponsible policy. That is why the United States should leave this region and should not interfere in its political affairs. If it does not, then Al-Qa'ida will become a giant everywhere around the world. It will become another superpower facing the American superpower, which is the only superpower right now. Everyone embracing Al-Qa'ida thought and jihad thought will be a superpower facing the American superpower. That superpower might not be visible, but it has become a reality that forces its presence on the international scene.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) The dormant cells of Al-Qa'ida, Abu Jandal, are they really dormant or are they sedated, awaiting their role in the future?

(Abu Jandal) The issue of the dormant Qa'ida cells and their spread all over the world is a phantom created by the United States for itself. Washington is imagining anything as related to Al-Qa'ida, as a result of the heavy blow it received on 9/11. The issue of the dormant cells -- according to the American concept -- means that some people went to Afghanistan, trained in Al-Qa'ida camps, and are ready to attack any time. Whether they are dormant cells or sedated cells, they are dormant because they have not yet received orders to attack, and they are sedated because it is not yet time for their activation. I think that does not fit with Al-Qa'ida thinking. According to Usama Bin Ladin's thinking, there are no dormant cells. He has suffered because of the war, and there is no place for dormant cells for him. Every element of Al-Qa'ida is self-activated. Whoever finds a chance to attack, just goes ahead. The decision is theirs. This is regardless of whether they pledged allegiance to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin or not.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) Did you meet with any of the 9/11 attackers? And what do you know about them?

(Abu Jandal) After those events I remembered that I knew Khalid al-Mihdar and Muhammad Ata. They were the only ones I remembered I knew. I had met them in Qa'ida camps and on some battlefronts in Afghanistan. That makes the period I stayed with them amount to two months. My relationship with Khalid al-Mihdar was just superficial. As for the rest, their images were unfamiliar to me. I could not recognize any of them. Maybe that was due to the change in their appearance and features, maybe because they had shaved their beards.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) In your opinion, how was Bin Ladin able to melt into Afghanistan since the American invasion of it, with his many wives and children and the rest of Al-Qa'ida leadership, so that the United States was unable to find him?

(Abu Jandal) Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin is living in Islamic societies. If they had rejected him, the United States would have arrested him in its first days there. But I'm sure that Shaykh Usama is a very popular figure there, and the societies there still accept him very much. This is what enabled him to hide safely until now. Otherwise, how would Bin Ladin's fortune compare to Saddam's? Saddam had the fortune of a whole state, which is totally incomparable to Bin Ladin's. But because people did not accept Saddam he was found in a narrow hole, where he was not even safe from those around him. As for Shaykh Usama, I think that he lives freely with his three wives and more than 15 of his children and a large group of Qa'ida members totally safe, because the people very much accept him. If it

wasn't for that acceptance and God's guidance, he wouldn't be able to hide for that long a time.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) In your opinion, what will be Al-Qa'ida's fate if Bin Ladin is arrested or passes away?

(Abu Jandal) In the case of his death, I think he will be a symbol for all those who follow him, especially in the case of his assassination. He will be an idol for all those who believe in his ideas. He will be a great inspiration for them to follow in his footsteps. His death will be a great force for stirring up everybody's emotions and enthusiasm to follow him on the path of martyrdom. In case of his arrest, the situation might be a bit different. It might lead to a strong psychological defeat for the group's members and many Muslims. That will be the case, especially because there are lots and lots of youths who are attached to Usama Bin Ladin as a person. This might lead to a reverse reaction for everybody.

(Al-Quds al-Arabi) In the case of Bin Ladin's absence by death, regardless of how, do you believe that all Al-Qa'ida's money will disappear with his absence?

(Abu Jandal) That depends on the honesty of those who manage that money. It depends on everybody who has been trusted with that money, to save it or invest it. According to their honesty and their fear of God will the fate of that money be decided. Many problems might occur, as it is not a case of \$1,000 or \$2,000, but rather millions of dollars.

(Description of Source: London Al-Quds al-Arabi in Arabic -- London-based independent Arab nationalist daily with an anti-US and anti-Saudi editorial line; generally pro-Palestinian, tends to be sympathetic to Bin Ladin)

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