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**Bin Ladin Guard Interviewed on Saudi 'Coup' Against Salafi Youth, Al-Qa'ida**  
**Part 1 of a series of interviews with Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri (Abu-Jandal),**  
**formerly the "personal guard" of Al-Qa'ida leader Usama Bin Ladin, by Khalid al-Hamadi in**  
**Sanaa; date not given: "Al-Qa'ida From Within, as Narrated by Abu-Jandal (Nasir al-Bahri),**  
**Bin Ladin's Personal Guard; Saudi Arabia Provided a Religious and Media Climate for the**  
**Afghan Jihad and Turned Against the Mujahidin Because It Feared Their Influence; Bin Ladin**  
**Used Saudi Territory as a Venue To Attract Elements for Al-Qa'ida, But Under the Cover of**  
**Guest Houses"**

*AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI*

*Sunday, March 20, 2005 T05:08:59Z*

**Journal Code: 1430 Language: ENGLISH Record Type: FULLTEXT**

**Document Type: FBIS Translated Text**

**Word Count: 4,864**

After the events of 11 September 2001, a very great deal was written -- and in several languages -- about Al-Qa'ida, which is led by Usama Bin Ladin. However, all those writings were by people from outside the organization and were merely journalistic conjecture and opinion or writings based on intelligence reports, some of which could be correct, but most were off the mark.

That is why has sought to be special and to approach the subject by publishing this lengthy series of diaries and memoirs of the former personal guard of Usama Bin Ladin, known as Abu-Jandal. His real name is Nasir al-Bahri. We have tried through him to open closed doors and to visit the forbidden kingdom, the Al-Qa'ida organization, and to delve deep into it through one of its most important elements, who has a treasure of profound information about it and its organizational structure.

Abu-Jandal is a well-educated young man, very intelligent, a good interlocutor, and quick-witted. He dazzles you with his strong argument whenever you try to besiege him with questions. He has a powerful memory. He is also muscular, and therefore the fact he was chosen to guard Usama Bin Ladin was not a coincidence.

He returned to Afghanistan from Yemen about two months prior to the attack on the US destroyer Cole in the port of Aden in 2000. He was arrested after that and spent 20 months in a Yemeni jail, 13 months of which were in solitary confinement.

At present, he lives in Sanaa. He leads a normal life there. He moves freely in the city's streets and engages freely in his professional work. However, he may not be free from the eyes of the -- local and external -- "watchman." He must live in the capital, Sanaa, and he is prohibited from moving to live in other Yemeni areas. His communications are under constant surveillance.

After repeated attempts over six months to open those dossiers, during which we met with constant rejection from the security services to do that, followed by an agreement in principle at times and rejection at other times, we succeeded in seizing this opportunity to conduct this series of interviews, which convey to the reader a picture of Al-Qa'ida. They provide a insider's view of Al-Qa'ida's leader and founder, Usama Bin Ladin, beginning with his growth and the religious environment in which he

was brought up in Saudi Arabia, followed by his life in Sudan, the activity of the (Al-Qa'ida) organization in Africa, and ending with his personal life and the life of the organization and its elements in Afghanistan, where the organization and the organizer have settled to this day. Afghanistan was the country that was used as a springboard to carry out the most prominent and serious nongovernmental military operations, which the United States calls "terrorism" and which Al-Qa'idah calls jihad, and which formed an important turning point in international politics.

In this segment, Abu-Jandal will talk about his personal background and the religious environment in which he lived in Saudi Arabia, an environment in which Usama Bin Ladin was brought up, too.

(Al-Hamadi) First, please give us a comprehensive idea about your personality: the beginning, your early life, studies, and everything connected with them.

(Al-Bahri) My full name is Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri, and I am from the inhabitants of the Yemeni governorate of Shabwah. I am an expatriate in Saudi Arabia. I was born in Jedda, Saudi Arabia, in 1972. I was brought up and I grew up and developed in Saudi Arabia. My father and mother are Yemeni. My mother is a housewife, and my father works as a mechanic in an engineering workshop. He is a very ordinary man. I completed my primary, preparatory, and secondary school studies in Saudi Arabia. I lived with my kinfolk in Saudi Arabia, and I grew up with the sons of that country. Its ulema, (religious) shaykhs, and propagators (of Islam) embraced us. I lived most of my life in Saudi Arabia. I left Saudi Arabia at the age of 21, and ever since then, I have been outside Saudi territory. However, most of my earlier life was spent in Saudi Arabia. Indeed, many people who hear me speak think I am Saudi, because of my accent.

(Al-Hamadi) What is your marital status?

(Al-Bahri) I am married and a father of three children, a son and two daughters. I live in the Yemeni capital, Sanaa. I married in early 1999. The story of my marriage is a strange one. I did not have the intention to marry at the time, but God willed it, and what He wills, He does. I had left Afghanistan and returned to Yemen. My intention was to go to Chechnya, but Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin made arrangements for me with some youths. He said: This man must get married. He sent some brothers to me and told them: Get him married. So I decided to marry in Yemen, although I had intended to go to Chechnya.

The story of my marriage was that I began to look for a woman who understood me and appreciated my situation and my jihadist condition, especially because I did not believe at the time that I should abandon jihad at all. My line of thinking was to take my wife and children and live in the arena of jihad, just like Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and other mujahidin. I used to ask: What is the difference between us and them? Therefore, I looked for a suitable girl. I traveled almost all of Yemen, from one end to another, in search for such a girl. God willed that I marry my present wife, who is from Sanaa.

(Al-Hamadi) Did she travel with you to Afghanistan?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, she traveled with me to Afghanistan a month and a half after our marriage. I took my wife to Afghanistan a month and a half after our marriage, and she became pregnant and gave birth in Kandahar to my first child, Habib. We left Afghanistan when he was four months old.

(Al-Hamadi) Was she living with you at the front, in special housing, or in the city with the Afghans?

(Al-Bahri) She used to live with me in a special compound for the families of the mujahidin, at

Kandahar airport. As for the families of the mujahidin who live in Kabul, they used to rent small houses, just like other Afghans. Indeed, the Arab mujahidin in Kandahar and Kabul used to share with the Afghans their numerous occasions, their weddings, and their sad occasions. The Afghans used to visit us, and we used to visit them. We visited them during Id to congratulate them, and they reciprocated. We used to spend the month of Ramadan together. We spent happy times and sad times together. We lived a normal social life, but in a society that was alien to us in language, environment, and way of life.

(Al-Hamadi) You said you lived most of your life in Saudi Arabia. How were you influenced by jihadist thought in Saudi Arabia, although it follows the Salafi line?

(Al-Bahri) There is a dilemma and a misunderstanding that most Muslims face. It can be summed up in that jihad has become merely a matter of thought for them, and they forgot that jihad is something that God has prescribed to us as a religious duty, like prayers, fasting, the alms tax, and pilgrimage. It is mentioned in the Koran, and it is with such understanding that we read the Koran, although all followers of Islamic trends, with their various ideas and lines, read the same Koran. Almighty God said that prayers have been decreed for you. He also said fighting has been decreed for you. Thus jihad has been confirmed to us, and we have been influenced by the events and tragedies that are taking place in the Muslim world. This has kindled the flame of jihad in us.

The process of being influenced was not by jihad as thought, but at first the source of influence was the events affecting Muslims. Of course, I became religiously committed, praise be to God, in 1987. We were interested in every matter that concerns Muslims, and we followed events affecting Muslims in Islamic and other newspapers and magazines. At the time, we began to follow events in Afghanistan, the battles in Khost, and, after that, the fall of Kabul. We were also influenced by the sermons delivered by some speakers in the mosques in Jeddah about jihad in Afghanistan. The cassettes on jihad that influenced us most were those by Shaykh A'id al-Qarni, especially the first cassette, titled "Nights in Afghanistan," and the second cassette, "The Afghanistan I Saw." Al-Qarni used to speak, enjoin, and call for jihad in an astonishing way.

We became interested in jihad and the mujahidin. The events in Kuwait that shook the Muslim world then followed. Immediately after that, we moved to the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and we saw the massacres and slaughtering of Muslims there. Of course, before all that and before we followed the events in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina, we used to follow the events in Palestine. I recall a picture that is still printed in my mind to this day. It is of a Jewish soldier breaking the limbs of a Palestinian child with a stone, in front of the eyes of the world. No one moved for his sake. I cried at that sight.

We were not divorced from all of the events that were occurring here and there. We were young men who greatly interacted with those events and constantly followed them, proceeding from a religious premise, as religious youths. Thus our motivation in going forward and defending the honor of Muslims was not only chivalry and courage; there was a stronger religious drive. Add to that the instigation and call to jihad in the Friday sermons, the tape cassettes, the magazines that covered such events, and other media. I was greatly influenced by that, and I wished I was one of those mujahidin, defending Muslim lands. I used to consider jihad and carrying arms a kind of voluntary work. I did not view jihad as a religious duty prescribed to every individual (fard ayn), but as a collective duty (fard kifayah) (if it is carried out by some, then the others are exempt from it), albeit with their parents' consent.

Our basic motive in jihad was to defend Muslim lands. We were greatly affected by the tragedies we were witnessing and the events we were seeing: children crying, women widowed, and the high number of incidents of rape. We were greatly affected by all that. When we went forward for jihad, we experienced a bitter reality. We saw things that were more awful than anything we had expected or had heard or seen in the media. It was as though we were like "a cat with closed eyes" that opened its eyes at those woes. We began to have real contact with the other trends, the enemies of the ummah (Muslim nation), and the ideology of the ummah began to evolve in our minds. We realized we were a nation (ummah) that had a distinguished place among nations. Otherwise, what would make me leave Saudi Arabia -- and I am of Yemeni origin -- to go and fight in Bosnia? The issue of nationalism was put out of our minds, and we acquired a wider view than that, namely the issue of the ummah. Although the issue was very simple at the start, yet it was a motive and an incentive for jihad.

(Al-Hamadi) Were all the religious shaykhs and scholars in Saudi Arabia enjoining and instigating the youths to engage in jihad? Were they discussing jihad issues in their Friday sermons and classes in the mosques?

(Al-Bahri) They did not discuss jihad issues in their private lessons. However, the matter went further than that. The religious shaykhs were preparing the youths for jihad. For instance, I recall that many youths were prepared for jihad by Shaykh Salman al-Awdah. The first time they headed for jihad, they were equipped materially and morally for jihad by Shaykh Salman al-Awdah. Of course, that was during the time of the events in Bosnia. Some of the youths who were equipped by Shaykh Awdah and went to Tajikistan were arrested there. I remember that some charity campaigns that collected donations for Bosnia-Herzegovina for instance, allocated some of the funds to prepare and equip the youths for jihad. There were astronomical sums available for equipping the youths for jihad. There was no religious shaykh who stood in the way of that trend at all. This is because all of Saudi Arabia, starting with the government, the religious scholars, and the ordinary people, was on the side of driving the youths toward jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina. We set out for that country, because there was no religious shaykh or preacher who did not talk about jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina and about the suffering of Muslims everywhere.

(Al-Hamadi) Were the religious scholars financing the preparation for jihad from their own funds, or did they collect funds from the wealthy and then spend some of those funds on the preparation process?

(Al-Bahri) All of the preparation for jihad was financed by the funds from the donations. I did not hear that a religious shaykh equipped a mujahid with his own funds, except for one or two shaykhs. The religious shaykhs were a link between the charitable donors and the young men who wanted to go to jihad. For instance, I was equipped for my first jihad by a woman. She worked as a schoolteacher. She had heard about the tragedies that had befallen the Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina and wanted to contribute to their defense. She asked: What is the best thing I can contribute? The answer was: Equip a mujahid. She said: I will donate a full month's salary to equip a mujahid. It was equivalent to approximately \$2,000. That sum was to equip me for my first jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

(Al-Hamadi) Some sources have confirmed that Al-Qa'ida used to send its propagators to Mecca to recruit new elements. What do you say about that, and did it really have offices in more than one country to attract and recruit?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, all that existed on a large scale in Saudi Arabia, but under the cover of guest houses and houses that hosted the wounded for treatment in Saudi hospitals. Those guest houses were used as

a cover for the Al-Qa'ida offices. All those who used to go to those centers found there was really a kind of movement and guidance toward the Al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan. I recall that videos about events related to the jihad in Afghanistan and about debating issues that inspire enthusiasm for and the love of jihad were played to visitors at those guest houses so as to urge them to join the jihad there, thus possibly paving the way for joining Al-Qa'ida.

The guest houses that were teeming with wounded mujahidin from Afghanistan were charged with an atmosphere of faith that had a great influence, an atmosphere that generated a love of adventure and a love of jihad. This atmosphere was used to attract young men to the arena of jihad, although that process of attracting youths was not clearly and methodically oriented toward Al-Qa'ida at that time. Later, however, it became a kind of recruitment directed toward Al-Qa'ida and toward joining the Al-Qa'ida organization, reinforced by an oath of allegiance. However, Shaykh Usama affirmed that all such Al-Qa'ida vessels in Saudi Arabia were completely dismantled. They were later abolished during the period of the early 1990s, when Usama moved to Sudan, because he feared that the abandoning of those centers by some officials, who then focused on their own businesses, might not serve the general trend of Al-Qa'ida. That was the situation until he returned to Afghanistan in 1996, when he revived the idea and opened branches of the Al-Qa'ida organization in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and elsewhere. Abu-Ali al-Harithi was in charge of Yemen, while many of the brothers were responsible for Saudi Arabia.

(Al-Hamadi) Was the Saudi Government's encouragement of the mujahidin in the form of providing them with material support, or was it in the form of providing them with a favorable climate and extending facilities to them?

(Al-Bahri) First in the form of facilities, and second in the form of media activity, which played a big role in stoking the fire of jihad among the people through media coverage of the arenas of jihad, particularly the press interviews that were held with some of the leading mujahidin figures, such as Shaykh Mahmud BaHathiq (Abu-Abd-al-Aziz), the first amir of the Arab mujahidin in Bosnia. I recall that he once gave a lengthy six-part interview. After that, we attended some of his lectures in Saudi Arabia. We attended some of his speeches, in which he talked about the jihad in Bosnia. His cassettes were distributed. They contained a recording of a debate between Shaykh Mahmud BaHathiq and Shaykh Muhammad Nasir-al-Din al-Albani on jihad and the legitimacy of jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina, how to direct the youths toward jihad, and how to convince the youths of that jihad. Such matters represented an open moral and media mobilization and were allowed by the government. They did not entail any problems.

(Al-Hamadi) However, if we compare the Saudi arena with the other arenas, we will find that during that period jihadist activity in Saudi Arabia was much greater than in any other country. Should that not be construed to indicate that Bin Ladin exerted influence in Saudi Arabia to be able to create such activity, even before he established the Al-Qa'ida organization?

(Al-Bahri) The Islamic climate was everywhere in Saudi Arabia, and the Islamic spirit was in everything: in the councils of scholars and in religious gatherings. I remember that many people used to come from outside Saudi Arabia, from Arab and Muslim states, in order to live in this Islamic climate. The entire society there was one fabric. It was impossible to find a house without the fragrance of Islamic trends, in any form. Thus, if a household did not have a young man who observed the faith, it had a young woman who observed the faith. If it did not have a young woman who observed the faith, the household perhaps had an Islamic tape or an Islamic book. Up until almost 1991, all such jihadist actions existed in the name of Islam and leaned toward Islam. There was

nothing called "jihadist thought", and no one used to say that is "Salafi thought" and that is "Muslim Brotherhood thought," or any other thought. Nothing of the kind existed.

(Al-Hamadi) Did Usama Bin Ladin not emerge from under the cloak of the Salafis?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin is a Salafi. He was brought up with the Saudi Salafi educational line that rests on one approach, the Wahhabi approach. All Saudi schools teach the book ( ), the call of Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Abd-al-Wahhab. We used to be taught that call every morning and evening, in the same way mothers suckle their babies, until we came to know the personality of Muhammad Bin-Abd-al-Wahhab more than we knew about the history of the prophet's companions. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin emerged from under the cloak of the Saudi Salafi call.

(Al-Hamadi) As religious youths, how did the jihad influence you? What was the role of the returnees from the jihad in Afghanistan in exerting such influence on you?

(Al-Bahri) I will not hide from you the fact that many of the Saudi religious youth used to spend the last 10 days of the month of Ramadan in Afghanistan. Indeed, some of them spent the weekend in Afghanistan thanks to the existence of an open bridge and constant flights linking Saudi Arabia and the Pakistani city of Peshawar, which can be reached from abroad only by Saudi airlines flights. Matters were made so easy for them. The youth used to envy those who went to Afghanistan and were greatly influenced by them. I recall that one of our colleagues went to Afghanistan and spent two weeks there during the month of Ramadan. When he returned, we gave him a hero's welcome. He influenced us greatly. When we used to look at the Afghan suits that the mujahidin who returned from Afghanistan wore as they walked the streets of Jedda, Mecca, or Medina, we used to feel we were living with the generation of the triumphant companions of the prophet, and hence we looked up to them as an example and an authority.

(Al-Hamadi) How then do you explain the big Saudi about-face against its mujahidin youth who returned from Afghanistan, in spite of all the facilities their government had extended to them?

(Al-Bahri) This is the serious tragedy that expresses the error of a stand that has turned the situation upside down. I would like to say here that the political situation in Saudi Arabia exists on the basis of the alliance between the Wahhabi Salafi call (da'wah) established by Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Abd-al-Wahhab and the rule of Al Sa'ud. That religious-political alliance used to get stronger at times and weaker at other times. I believe the Saudi coup against the mujahidin youth has many motives and reasons within the Saudi regime itself, especially the fear of the second partner (Al Sa'ud) in power from the growth of their religious ally and its domination of everything. They fear their religious ally will abolish them altogether. Therefore they decided to go in a reverse direction and retreat from that alliance, which has brought Saudi Arabia so much suffering that did not stop at any limit. The period during which the influential Saudi religious shaykhs were arrested, from 1993 to 1998, was sufficient for the youths to escape the influence of those religious shaykhs who represented a safety valve for the youths, because they used to rein them in and deter their recklessness. As soon as the head was severed from the body, those youths turned toward another direction, and Usama Bin Ladin grabbed them into Al-Qa'ida, and the youths rushed toward jihad and the possession of weapons.

(Al-Hamadi) Do you believe that the recent bombings inside Saudi Arabia were a reaction to the Saudi coup against the jihadists? What is the secret of its present timing?

(Al-Bahri) The basis of the entire idea of the bombings is a reaction. After the young men returned

from the external jihad fronts, the Saudi Government threw them into jails and detention camps, tortured them, and fabricated arbitrary charges against them. If five young men met around a table to eat or assembled for any reason, they were arrested on charges of plotting to overthrow the regime. Saudi security moves were rather contradictory and strange. Some of the young men who were arrested swore the security services forced them to sign a blank paper that was later filled in according to the whims of security officials. Very harsh and unjust sentences were passed against the young men. Suddenly, the ulema abandoned them. The authorities practiced a policy of suppressing them and striking with iron and fire. Thus a propensity for revenge and a propensity for proclaiming the government an unbeliever arose within the youth, on the basis that such savage actions are incompatible with the qualities and morals of Muslims, who cannot commit them. Thus the experience and combat and security skills that those young men had gained in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and other jihadist arenas were set against the palaces and a great deal of inexperience among the Saudi security services. As a result, they succeeded in carrying out such bombings, because those young men have acquired the sum of the experience of armed Islamic groups throughout the Islamic world, from Syria, from Egypt, from Libya, from Algeria, and from elsewhere. They have had contacts with experts from all those states, mixed with many kinds and forms of expertise, and carried out many experiments. Moreover, they have been in a state of conflict with the Saudi Government since 1993.

They have applied the sum of all that experience in the face of the Saudi Government, whose security officials and men have received modern training and qualification abroad, but that training remains theoretical and limited and is no match for the experience gained by those returning from the throes of iron and fire in the arenas and fronts of jihad. Moreover, the Saudi security authorities have begun from where others have begun, while those young men have proceeded from where others have stopped. Thus many young men became capable of carrying out suicide attacks on their own. The most prominent example of that is the recent storming of the US Consulate in Jedda, which in itself is a military barracks. Another example is the killing of Robert Jackson, the US military expert on Apache helicopters. How did those young men know that he was an expert on Apache helicopters, and how did they obtain that information and then enter his house and kill him, although he was on an intelligence mission under the cover of working for an oil company? This indicates that the young men have attained a high level of expertise and precision and the ability to obtain information and to excel in all directions. Therefore, I believe that the Saudi Government's reaction to those young men and their abandonment by the ulema has made and will make the young men issue fatwas on their own volition. Otherwise, who carried out the recent attacks in Saudi Arabia? They are all ordinary youths, but they were pining to carry out security operations. They came to regard the Americans as occupiers and the Saudi Government as a puppet and apostate government.

(Al-Hamadi) Since the end of 2002, terrorist operations have stopped in Yemen. What are the reasons for that? Is it an indication that Al-Qa'ida elements in Yemen have become so weak that they are unable to carry out any operation of that kind? Or have they reached a truce with the authorities as a result of the authorities' dialogue with them?

(Al-Bahri) Actually, the Yemeni Government has used several mechanisms to deal with the young men who return from Afghanistan. The best and most effective of those mechanisms was "dialogue." The Yemeni Government was forced to deal with the matter with such a mechanism, even though it had used the mechanism of iron and fire, and the mechanism of trials in many situations. I believe its resorting to dialogue and making dialogue the mainstay of its dealings with those young men and the policy it pursued have contributed to the success of the efforts of the Yemeni Government to absorb their counter-reaction. So far, this dialogue continues to progress with great success. Most of the

young men who came out of the Yemeni prisons as a result of that dialogue have observed the pledge they made to the government when they left jail not to carry out any action that undermines the country's security. They have really become convinced of that. They do not want to provoke problems and disturbances in their country, because the love of one's homeland is part of one's faith. Those young men harbor deep love for their country.

However, I frankly call upon the Yemeni Government to really carry out the promises it made to solve the social, living, and other problems of those persons. This is because many of them are suffering from material and social instability. The government has made a commitment to solve those problems, and it can resolve those problems by any method it deems appropriate, so that they can return to their normal situation and become assimilated within their society once again, as they used to be. Their experience can be utilized so that they can become defenders of their country in the future.

Therefore, I believe that the policy of dialogue that was pursued by the Yemeni Government and the subsequent release of many of those young men from prison was a good way to deal with the returnees from Afghanistan and a qualitative leap in what is known as combating terror. It absorbed the anger those young men felt at their government, and that has contributed to the cessation of military operations by the young men inside Yemeni territory.

(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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**City/Source:** London

**DIALOG Update Date:** 20050320; 07:34:36 EST

**Descriptors:** Domestic Political; International Political; Terrorism

**Geographic Codes:** AFG; BIH; SAU; USA; YEM

**Geographic Names:** Afghanistan; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Saudi Arabia; United States; Yemen; Asia; Europe; Middle East; Americas; South Asia; Balkans; North Americas

**NewsEdge Document Number:** 200503201477.1\_dc350efc6759fe50

**Original Source Language:** Arabic

**Region:** Asia; Europe; Middle East; Americas

World News Connection®

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Dialog® File Number 985 Accession Number 204800073



Dialog

**Former Bin Ladin 'Bodyguard' Discusses 'Jihad' in Bosnia, Somalia, Later Stage**  
**Part 2 of a series of interviews with Nasir Ahmad Nasir Abdallah al-Bahri (Abu-Jandal), formerly the "bodyguard" of Al-Qa'ida leader Usama Bin Ladin, by Khalid al-Hammadi, in Sanaa; date not given: "Al-Qa'ida From Within, as narrated by Abu-Jandal (Nasir al-Bahri), Bin Ladin's Bodyguard; the Islamic Group Entered Bosnia First; Bin Ladin Focused on Somalia; Ahmad Shah Masud Betrayed Us in Tajikistan; I Wanted To Go to Bosnia, But the Shaykhs Warned Me of Beautiful Women and Suggested Participation in Spreading Salafism in Eritrea"**

*AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI*

*Thursday, March 24, 2005 T09:25:48Z*

**Journal Code:** 1430 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT

**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text

**Word Count:** 4,597

(Al-Hammadi) What was your first jihad station, or what was your first destination when you decided to engage in jihad?

(Al-Bahri) My first station for jihad was Bosnia-Herzegovina. My journey for jihad at that time was not organized; it was an emotional trip to wage jihad. I was watching the tragedies of Muslims in Bosnia; the slaughtering of children, women, and old people; the violation of honor and mass rape of girls; and the huge number of widows and orphans left by the war. Therefore, I decided to go to jihad as a young man who was raised on religious principles and chivalry and who is full of zeal about religion and care for the Muslims. Before that, I had strongly wanted to take part in the jihad in Afghanistan, but God willed that I miss that opportunity. The arena of jihad in Bosnia-Herzegovina was an opportunity for me. The young people who had urged me to go to Bosnia were trying to make me change my mind and go to Eritrea. However, after much thinking, I decided to go to Bosnia based on my convictions, although the young people had spoken to me at length about jihad in Eritrea and about the method of fighting in it. I used to ask them: What is the reason for your rush to engage in jihad in Eritrea? They used to answer that this emanated from the need to spread the Salafi principles there and create a chance for the domination of the Salafi movement and the Salafis in that arena. I said: Listen to me, if this is the way the brother thinks, I do not agree with this. I do not want to go to Eritrea. They said: We will facilitate your trip to any arena of jihad other than Bosnia because there is moral corruption in Bosnia and many temptations and European women. Also, the blond girls might influence you. I said: We do not want the saying of the Prophet, God's peace and blessings be upon him, to apply to us, when he answered a companion, who had said: I fear for myself from the blond girls (as an excuse not to take part in jihad). I explained that the arena in Bosnia is more important and that there is international focus on it. This is why I decided to head for Bosnia.

(Al-Hammadi) When was that?

(Al-Bahri) This was in the month of Jumada II 1514 Hegira (corresponding to 1994). I traveled from Saudi Arabia to Yemen in October 1994. I ran away from my home without the permission of my family. Since I did not have a passport, I entered Yemen on an entry permit, which I had obtained

from the Yemeni embassy, based on my birth certificate and a copy of the identity card of my father, which proves my Yemeni citizenship. With the help of these documents, I obtained an identity card and a Yemeni passport in Yemen. I then started to plan my trip to Bosnia. I stayed in Yemen around one year, until the battles in Bosnia escalated in the summer of 1995, so I left for Bosnia. My goal was to win martyrdom and to win what God has in store for me. This was my strong motivation for going to jihad there, and that was my first jihad station.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you find there many Arab mujahidin, who had been in Afghanistan before?

(Al-Bahri) We found there two main Arab groups: the group of (Abu-al-Zubayr) al-Ha'ili, which consisted of the brothers who were in Afghanistan from the mujahidin or the old Arab Afghans who left from there; the second group is the (Mujahidin Brigade). The Bosnian army recognized these two groups as official regular military brigades, since the Bosnian army was a regular army, contrary to the situation that was in Afghanistan, which included gangs and political parties and forces. Bosnia was under the umbrella of a state, government, presidency, and regular army. The Arab (Mujahidin Brigade) had as its politicized mind and religious theorizer the Egyptian Islamic Group, led by Shaykh Anwar Sha'ban, may God rest his soul. It consisted of many Egyptians, Algerians, and a mixture of other nationalities. As for the (group of Al-Zubayr) al-Ha'ili, its members were a group of professional fighters from the Arab Afghans, who had prior experience in fighting in Afghanistan. They were made up of small groups distributed in many areas; however, they used to merge and become one brigade when hot battles erupted. Those are the two main groups of the Arab mujahidin in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

(Al-Hammadi) What is the nature of the official Bosnian recognition of these two foreign armed groups?

(Al-Bahri) These two groups were officially recognized there through incorporating them into the Bosnian military formation then. The mujahidin Brigade was under the command of the Third Corps of the Bosnian Army, and Al-Zubayr group was under the command of the same corps, but in a different brigade.

(Al-Hammadi) Did the Arab mujahidin have a big military effect in Bosnia through their participation and engaging in many battles?

(Al-Bahri) Thought can only be confronted with thought and ideology can only be confronted with ideology. The mujahidin young men used to go to jihad for the sake of jihad and then for the sake of martyrdom. However, this situation changed in Bosnia. There were differences among the Arab mujahidin because Bosnia had just emerged from under the umbrella of communist rule. Communist ideology had wiped out all the features of the Islamic religion and the understanding of Islam. We used to only see disabled and old people at mosques. Young people were not present at mosques, and they did not know anything about their religion. We saw some Muslim youth wearing a cross around their necks without knowing what this means, although they belonged to Muslim families and some of them had Arab and Muslim names. They were completely ignorant of Islam. Therefore, we saw that the responsibility we shouldered in Bosnia was broader and more comprehensive than the mission of combat, for which we had come. So we found that we became bearers of weapons and at the same time bearers of a call, a book, and a message. We played a good role in this field by using all effective methods and available means. Our educational and intellectual impact on Bosnian society was perhaps greater than our military effect. Besides, the Arab mujahidin there set wonderful examples of fierce combat on the battlefronts and of their love for martyrdom, despite their young ages.

(Al-Hammadi) Does this impact mean that the Arab presence was significant in Bosnia?

(Al-Bahri) In view of my military status there--I was guard of a brigade and I had the names of all members of the Mujahidin Brigade--the number of Arabs who were members in the Mujahidin Brigade in Bosnia was 450. If we add this figure to the number of members of Al-Zubayr al-Ha'ili group, the total number of Arabs in Bosnia could reach 1,000. However, despite their small number, their resolve was equal to their number multiplied by 10.

(Al-Hammadi) Did the Arab mujahidin in Bosnia form an extension of Al-Qa'ida Organization or were they something else?

(Al-Bahri) As far as I know and from what I learned from Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin himself, Bin Ladin sent two teams for jihad outside Afghanistan at that time. He sent the first team to Somalia and the second to Bosnia-Herzegovina. But when the latter team arrived in Bosnia, it found out that the Egyptian Islamic Group had arrived before it, since Shaykh Anwar Sha'ban was present there and was an imam and preacher of a mosque there. This is why the Egyptian Islamic Group had faster access to Bosnia-Herzegovina than the elements of Al-Qa'ida, whose leader, Usama Bin Ladin, was in Sudan at the time. In addition, Al-Qa'ida was closer to Somalia than other jihadist currents. So when the Al-Qa'ida team arrived in Bosnia, it sent reports stating that the Islamic Group was there. In view of this, Shaykh Usama decided to unite his efforts and focus on the US forces in Somalia. This is because his expectations were based on the existence of a US desire to turn Somalia into a rear US base that parallels its presence in the Arabian Gulf, especially since Somalia was a smooth land that is fit for combat and its people were poor and hungry. Therefore, the US forces entered Somalia in what they called Operation Restore Hope. The US forces were met with fierce resistance from the Somali mujahidin and Al-Qa'ida Organization, who managed to expel the US forces from Somalia in humiliation and ignominy after teaching them a harsh military lesson. However, there was no neutral media coverage of the events in Somalia. At that time, we did not know that there was organized jihad action there and did not know that there were powerful jihad operations in Somalia with the participation of Al-Qa'ida until we traveled to Afghanistan and worked with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. We learned then everything about this and about who was leading the operations against the Americans and the nature of the operations that were carried out and other details. This is why Al-Qa'ida Organization, as an organization carrying this banner, did not have a clear role in the events in Bosnia, but the religious and jihadist education received by the Arab mujahidin who were in Bosnia was geared toward love for organization and organized action, out of their belief that no practical jihadist experiments can succeed except through organized action.

(Al-Hammadi) After the end of the war in Bosnia, where did the Arab mujahidin, who were in it, go?

(Al-Bahri) A group of them decided to head for the Philippines, while another group headed for Chechnya. I was with a third group that headed for Somalia. That is why they turned from one "meteor" into several "shooting stars."

(Al-Hammadi) Did they all leave Bosnia-Herzegovina?

(Al-Bahri) The vast majority of them had left, especially the citizens of the Arabian Peninsula. They all left it. This is in addition to some Arab mujahidin from North Africa. The very few who remained in Bosnia are those whose security conditions did not allow them to leave Bosnia, such as some Egyptian, Algerian, and Tunisian brothers. They could not return to their countries because they were wanted for security reasons, so they had to stay in Bosnia. However, they ceased military action and began to engage in preaching and educational activities and charitable and relief work.

(Al-Hammadi) When you left Bosnia and headed for Somalia, was this done at the instructions of Al-Qa'ida Organization or was that a decision you made on your own because jihad was taking place over there?

(Al-Bahri) The idea to leave for Somalia was based on a very personal motivation because during my participation in the jihad in Bosnia, there was no relationship at all between me and elements from Al-Qa'ida or between me and Al-Qa'ida Organization itself. My mind was set on defending the lands of the Muslims and the Muslims, wherever they are, especially the weak and oppressed in this world, and the love of martyrdom for that cause. This was the only thing on our minds. I personally did not meet Usama Bin Ladin face to face and did not know him until after I returned from Tajikistan to Afghanistan.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you go from Bosnia to Somalia directly or via a third country?

(Al-Bahri) Since we could not go directly to Somalia, each one of us returned to his country. After that, we began to search for ways to get to Somalia and for a solution to the problem we faced, which is staying without engaging in any jihad action. We thought that it is unreasonable for us to stay without doing anything in terms of the mission to which we dedicated ourselves; namely, jihad, especially since we were unmarried young people and we did not have any family or social responsibilities. We were completely dedicated to jihad, and had nothing else to do. The issue of Somalia was hot at the time, especially the issue of Ogaden, a Somali Muslim region in Ethiopia. We used to hear about the persecution and oppression in that region. So I headed for Somalia with two young men, who are brother Abd-al-Aziz al-Muqrin, God have mercy on him, and brother Ahmad al-Khadr, may God release him from captivity--he is detained at a Yemeni prison in Sanaa. The three of us had a personal agreement with our brothers the mujahidin to go to Somalia and we were assigned the task of checking the situation there and seeing whether the situation is good organizationally for jihad or not. We only thought about getting personal supplies and sufficient weapons and ammunition and after that we will arrange the other things. The most important thing was to know whether there was hope to take part in jihad or not. We left on that basis.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you head for Somalia because there were US forces there or because there was a conflict and Muslims were suffering?

(Al-Bahri) No, we did not go because of the Americans, but because there was a conflict between Muslims and others.

(Al-Hammadi) But that conflict did not have clear features except in light of the presence of the US forces.

(Al-Bahri) Not exactly, because the US forces stayed in Somalia for about one year only. We did not have any plans to go to Somalia while the Americans were there. However, we became more convinced that we should go there after we saw the nature of the regional conflict that was going on between the Somali Islamic Union Movement and the Ethiopian Government. Our goal was to support the efforts of the Somali Islamic Movement. However, we encountered numerous problems there because of the mixing of personal and public interests and the lack of a clear vision for everybody. This created some kind of mistrust between us and the leaders of the Somali Islamic action, and this led to a dispute with them because they suspected that we belonged to Al-Qa'ida Organization although we had had no ties with that organization up until that period. We had lengthy discussions with them about the integrity of our jihad intentions, and we told them that we traveled to Somalia to defend the honor of Muslims. However, they had doubts about this and they used to ask

us: Why did you arrive so late? You left us to fight on our own for a long period. We answered: We swear that we did not hear anything about you because your media voice was weak while the voice of others was stronger so we headed toward the others, that is to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Had we heard about you before, we would have come to you earlier. They calmed down a little, but they had a negative attitude toward Al-Qa'ida Organization, which I knew about later.

(Al-Hammadi) Why did Usama Bin Ladin decide to transfer some of the forces of Al-Qa'ida Organization to Somalia?

(Al-Bahri) The impact of international developments on Somalia and the entry of the US forces into it were the justification for the entry of Al-Qa'ida into it. Al-Qa'ida viewed the entry of the Americans into Somalia not as a move that is meant to save the Somalis from what happened to them, but to control Somalia and then spread US hegemony over the region. This will achieve several goals. First, it will strike the growing Islamic movement in Sudan. Second, it will set up a rear US base in the Gulf, since Somalia was the closest point to the Arabian Gulf. Because they discovered that it was an unsafe country, they had to leave it and they continued to look for another country until they managed to occupy Iraq, which they thought could serve as a rear base for them. However, Iraq has turned into a quagmire.

(Al-Hammadi) While in Somalia, did you join Al-Qa'ida camps or did you stay alone?

(Al-Bahri) The fact is that Al-Qa'ida camps were concentrated in the area of (Kamponi), while we were in the northwestern area of Somalia. We did not know exactly the places where they were. The Somalis treated us in a bad way and laid a media siege against us and imposed some sort of siege on us. As a result of this, we did not know that the Arab brothers from Al-Qa'ida were in the (Kamponi) and (Borgabo) areas. I felt sad because of this bad treatment, and since I had some command of the Somali language, I sensed a lot of attempts to entrap us by some leaders of the Somali Islamic Movement in that area, although we came to help and support them. We tried to convince them that we are messengers for people behind us, but they were not convinced. Due to the bad leadership situation there, we decided to withdraw from Somalia.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you take part in any military operations against the US forces while you were present in Somalia?

(Al-Bahri) Never. I did not take part in any battles in Somalia because when I entered Somalia, Al-Qa'ida Organization itself had started to leave Somalia. Only one or two camps were left for it. These camps were for training purposes only. It did not have any additional military operations. It left with its operations and military commanders.

(Al-Hammadi) After you left Somalia, where did you go?

(Al-Bahri) After I left Somalia, passing through Kenya, I returned to my country, Yemen, and stayed there around three months. After that, I began to communicate with the young people to arrange for my trip to Tajikistan through Pakistan and Afghanistan. This trip of mine was in the direction of the second station, which is the Tajikistan station.

(Al-Hammadi) How was your trip to Tajikistan and can you give us details about its background?

(Al-Bahri) The Republic of Tajikistan was one of the eight countries, which have become independent of the former Soviet Union. Its capital is Dushanbe. The independence of Tajikistan was through an

internal Islamic move, led by the Islamic Renaissance Party, led by Abdullah Nouri. Of course, the Soviets and the remnants of the communists in those areas did not accept the idea of the rise of a strong Islamic trend in Tajikistan, so they started to carry out massacres against the Muslims and against the Renaissance Party. The residents and Muslims in Tajikistan were forced to immigrate and escape from their country to northern Afghanistan. The immigrant Tajik people were concentrated in the Afghan province of (Badkhashan), (Qunduz), and (Takhar). With the escalation in the incidents in Tajikistan, the Arab mujahidin, who were still in Afghanistan or who left it after the end of the jihad in Afghanistan and moved to other external fronts, began to form jihadist groups to head for the Tajik front. The first group was formed under the command of Ya'qub al-Bahr, God have mercy on him. Also, the group of Khattab, God have mercy on him, was formed. Khattab was martyred in the recent battles in Chechnya. Another group was formed, but it was not under a certain command. This third formation ended because there was no clear command. The two main groups remained, and they launched operations inside Tajikistan. The group of Ya'qub al-Bahr went deep into Tajikistan and began to carry out military operations from inside the capital, Dushanbe, while the Khattab group began to launch battles, campaigns, and strikes from the border areas with Afghanistan against the centers of the communist forces inside Tajikistan. The Khattab group had major military support from the Afghan leader Shaykh Abdul Rasul Sayyaf. There were many field commanders with Sayyaf who fought with the Khattab group and under his command. Of course, the Khattab group caused great hardship for the communists and struck the largest base for the Russian forces in Tajikistan. It also carried out very violent military massacres against them until a truce was announced in Tajikistan due to international pressures on the Islamic Movement. After that, the Khattab group retreated and the group of Ya'qub al-Bahr left Tajikistan, after he was martyred there, for Afghanistan. Some of them left for Bosnia-Herzegovina, while others left for Chechnya. The situation then witnessed the first escalation of the Chechen situation. This was the first stage in Tajikistan. As for the second stage, it was the stage in which we participated. At that time, we had left Somalia and headed for Tajikistan. My trip began from Yemen and then to Pakistan going through Afghanistan. Of course, my journey to Tajikistan was in coordination with some Arab brothers, including brother Husam Bin-Atash, God have mercy on him, who is nicknamed Al-Muhannad al-Jiddawi.

(Al-Hammadi) Were all the people who fought under the command of Ya'qub al-Bahr and Khattab Arabs?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, most of them were Arabs, especially the basic pillar and the first nucleus of the two groups. They were people who had prior experience in combat. They were from those who had taken part in the battles in Jalalabad in Afghanistan in 1988. Our brother Hamzah al-Ghamidi was with them. Al-Ghamidi was mentioned by Shaykh Usama on more than one occasion because he took part in combat in several places, starting with the battle of (Jaji) in 1988, the incidents in Jalalabad in 1988, and many later battles. He stood fast with Shaykh Usama until the last moment. He took part in the last battle of Tora Bora against the US forces.

(Al-Hammadi) Were the elements of the second stage of jihad in Tajikistan under the command of the two previous groups or were there new groups?

(Al-Bahri) After the incidents of the first experience in Tajikistan, the people who remained of the Khattab group merged with those who remained of the Ya'qub al-Bahr group. They merged into one group under the command of our brother Hamzah al-Ghamidi. They were all fresh blood.

(Al-Hammadi) What name did that group have?

(Al-Bahri) This group was called the group of the north, commanded by Hamzah al-Ghamidi.

(Al-Hammadi) How long did you stay there?

(Al-Bahri) Since we moved and until we returned, we stayed around six months because we could not take part in the battles in Tajikistan due to betrayal by the former Afghan government, which was led then by Ahmad Shah Masud, who tightened the noose on the Arab mujahidin in northern Afghanistan. They betrayed us while we were on the way and tried to commit treachery against us several times.

(Al-Hammadi) What did you do after that?

(Al-Bahri) Our entire group returned to Afghanistan. As I said, it had the name of the group of the north. This group was made up of around 36 Arab brothers, most of whom were from the Arabian Peninsula, from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Gulf, with the exception of one Egyptian, one Moroccan, and an Uzbek person. The others were all from the Arabian Peninsula.

(Al-Hammadi) What are the direct reasons for your retreat and how did it happen?

(Al-Bahri) We retreated because of the betrayal of the guide of the group in which we were. He was a Tajik. He tried to betray us and sell us to the Russian forces. Of course, the Russians at that time were feeling the heat and could not move. While we were going toward some Tajik areas on the southern border, this guide informed the Russian forces that there were 36 Arab mujahidin who wanted to raid their camps. Of course, around 15 Arab mujahidin had tipped the balance of power in Tajikistan, so how about 36 men who had good military experience and many other long experiences. That group was considered a nucleus formed by the best Arab jihadist experiences from various world fronts. The Russians had announced an award for anyone who delivers one Arab to them. They promised to give \$100,000 to anyone who delivers an Arab fighter to them. So if you have 36 fighters multiplied by \$100,000, you will have around \$3.6 million. It seems that the Tajik was tempted by this big amount of money and decided to hand us over to the Russian forces. As a result of this, Russia prepared 35,000 fighters and deployed them along the southern border of Tajikistan (the Tajik-Afghan border) to control us and prevent our infiltration into Tajik territory. When we heard the news about the movement of the large Russian forces in our direction and blocking our way, we decided to go back to Afghanistan.

(Al-Hammadi) How did you know about the movement of the Russian forces in your direction? Did you have a reconnaissance or intelligence unit?

(Al-Bahri) We learned about this news through a Tajik young man, who grew up among the Arab brothers with the beginning of the incidents in Tajikistan. He learned the Arabic language from them. He had some loyalty and he did this to return the favor to them. He said: I am greatly indebted to you, and I warn you that your Tajik guide decided to hand you over to the Russian forces, so we adopted a plan for withdrawal. Of course, I was one of the members of the shura council of that group. The council had six members, including Abd-al-Rahim al-Nashiri, who is nicknamed the Mullah and Al-Faruq, Faruq al-Makki, and Bilal al-Makki. They also include our brother the Kuwaiti Umar al-Faruq. Both are now detained in the United States. May God release them from captivity. Brother Hamzah al-Ghamidi came to me, and I then had typhoid. He asked me: What do you think, Abu-Jandal? The situation is difficult and the Russians are moving in our direction. I told him: It is better for us to return since the conditions are difficult and the snow had blocked our path. God willing, we will return in the summer or spring. After that, he told me about the betrayal of the Tajik, so we decided immediately to send two of our brothers to the nearest camp in north Afghanistan,

which belongs to the Islamic Party, led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, to inform them about our situation and that we wish to return. They sent us a group of armed men from their followers and we returned under their protection until we reached the city of (Faydabad), capital of the province of (Badkhashan), where we started to arrange our affairs, especially since most of us were sick. We decided to return to Jalalabad through the capital, Kabul. The Taliban Movement had started to march on Kabul and on most of the northern Afghan provinces. That was in 1996.

(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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**City/Source:** London

**DIALOG Update Date:** 20050324; 06:32:25 EST

**Descriptors:** Domestic Political; International Political; Terrorism

**Geographic Codes:** AFG; BIH; RUS; SAU; SOM; TJK; USA; YEM

**Geographic Names:** Afghanistan; Bosnia & Herzegovina; Russia; Saudi Arabia; Somalia; Tajikistan; United States; Yemen; Asia; Europe; Eurasia; Middle East; Africa; Americas; South Asia; Balkans; Central Eurasia; East Africa; North Americas

**NewsEdge Document Number:** 200503241477.1\_bb350d81a56f8056

**Original Source Language:** Arabic

**Region:** Asia; Europe; Eurasia; Middle East; Africa; Americas

World News Connection®

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Dialog® File Number 985 Accession Number 205000289



**Bin Ladin 'Bodyguard' Details Al-Qa'ida's Time in Sudan, Move to Afghanistan**

**Part 3 of a series of interviews with Nasir Ahmad Nasir al-Bahri (Abu-Jandal), formerly the "bodyguard" of Al-Qa'ida leader Usama Bin Ladin, by Khalid al-Hamadi in Sanaa; date not given: "Al-Qa'ida From the Inside, as Narrated by Abu-Jandal (Nasir al-Bahari), Bin Ladin's Bodyguard (3); US Embassies in East Africa Targeted Because of Their Role in Fueling Ethnic War in Rwanda and Burundi; Al-Qa'ida Participated in Warfare in Southern Sudan; Attack on Mubarak's Life Was Among Training Material in Afghanistan"**

*AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI*

*Monday, March 28, 2005 T06:48:46Z*

**Journal Code:** 1430 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT

**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text

**Word Count:** 4,727

After the events of 11 September 2001, a lot was written in several languages about the 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, but which were often wrong.

That was why newspaper has tried to stand out and approach this issue by publishing this long series of the memoirs and diaries of Bin Ladin's bodyguard, known by the name of Abu-Jandal, although his official name is Nasir al-Bahari. Through him, we tried to open locked doors and visit the forbidden kingdom of Al-Qa'ida, 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 bright young scholar, an excellent talker and quick-witted. He 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" in the port of Eden in 2000. Subsequent to that, he was arrested and spent 22 months in Yemeni prisons, including 13 months in solitary confinement.

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

After several attempts over 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 founder, 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, and end 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 to this day. They used this area as the starting point to execute the most prominent and dangerous nongovernmental 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 nature of Usama Bin Ladin's time in Sudan with his close followers and about the level of the movement's penetration into the depths of Africa.

(Al-Hamadi) Let us move to Sudan. How and why did Usama Bin Ladin decide to leave his homeland of Saudi Arabia for Sudan?

(Al-Bahri) In reality, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's departure from Saudi Arabia was not direct. He left Saudi Arabia for Pakistan and stayed there for some time. During that time, he was looking for a more suitable country to receive his followers, because the Saudi authorities were giving them a hard time and the regime had abandoned its responsibility toward them. Even Shaykh Usama himself was given a one-time-passport, to be used to exit Saudi Arabia and return once only. He used this passport for a final exit from Saudi Arabia and never returned. He was given that passport because of his personal connections with some members of the royal family. He was given that passport to travel to Pakistan to liquidate his investments there and then to return to Saudi Arabia and live under house arrest there. But he used this permission to exit Saudi Arabia and never return. He went to Pakistan, where he decided he would stay. But the Pakistani Government started a campaign against him and his Arab followers, starting in Peshawar and other cities. These Pakistani campaigns against the Arab Afghans living there were because of their "jihad" background and also because of silly childish acts by some of them, who used their military experience to conduct destructive acts and bombings in Pakistan. These acts were the reason behind the Pakistani tide against the Arab mujahidin, especially after the bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in the Pakistani capital, Islamabad. That period witnessed the biggest hunts of the Arab Afghans. During that same period, Shaykh Usama faced a hard time in Pakistan. So he decided to search for a country with more suitable conditions that would be willing to receive him and his followers. He chose Sudan, which was at its Islamic revolutionary peak, when the Islamic Front had come to power under the leadership of Dr Hassan al-Turabi. So Shaykh Usama went to Sudan. The Sudanese gave him a very warm welcome, because of the economic benefits they were going to gain from his investments in Sudan. There, he started several giant investment projects. He established five important investment companies, the biggest of which was the Wadi al-Aqiq Company for Agricultural Products. He also was a partner in the construction company that built the Port Sudan airport and the Madani-Khartoum Road to facilitate the transportation of agricultural products. These projects, executed with the cooperation of the Sudanese Government, were for purely economic investment aims.

(Al-Hamadi) How was Bin Ladin's personal life in Sudan? How did he live there? Did he lead a normal life, or did he have other activities?

(Al-Bahri) As far as I know, he led a very normal life there. But he communicated with the others and followed current local, regional, and international events with great interest, reading about their impact on the Islamic world. I also know that he was closely following the Yemeni war in the summer of 1994, reading all about it. He tried to send some members of Al-Qa'ida there to participate in that war alongside the legitimate government forces. But the members themselves were not able to participate in that war, as it blew up quickly and was quickly ended. Still, several former Al-Qa'ida members who participated in that war were previously in Afghanistan, the likes of Tariq al-Fadli and Jamal al-Nahdi, who were very well connected with Usama Bin Ladin.

(Al-Hamadi) Was Usama Bin Ladin's stay in Sudan only for economic and investment reasons a Sudanese condition to approve of his stay, or was it a personal decision to calm down and give up some of his military operations?

(Al-Bahri) The time in Sudan was a comparatively quiet and calm period for Shaykh Usama. The movement did not undertake any military operations then, except in Somalia. As for Sudan, all of his activities there were of a normal economic investment nature. I think Shaykh Usama decided to quiet down by himself, but he was closely following the events in Saudi Arabia, interacting with them. That calming down was not at the Sudanese Government's request. That did not happen in the first place. On the contrary, several Al-Qa'ida members who were with him in Khartoum participated in the war in southern Sudan with the Sudanese volunteers, alongside the Sudanese Government. Some of them went to fight in Somalia, and so forth. The Sudanese Government played no role in limiting his movements or his followers' activities. During that period, he concentrated on developing his wealth and enlarging the scope of his trading and investment activities. Maybe he used that period to think deeply about future plans.

(Al-Hamadi) But after trying to assassinate Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in Addis Ababa, the Egyptian Government accused Usama Bin Ladin of having training camps in Sudan. Did you hear anything about that?

(Al-Bahri) As far as I know, there were no Al-Qa'ida training camps in Sudan. Shaykh Usama directed his activities there toward pure economic and investment goals. He had to take the Sudanese Government and its interests into consideration. He did not want to cause it any harm. For all of those reasons, Shaykh Usama did not try to build camps there. At the beginning of his stay there, during the first period of trying to save the revolution led by Umar Hassan al-Bashir, he did open some camps for the Fundamentalist Eritrean Movement. But it was not widely known. Shaykh Usama concentrated in the first place on Al-Qa'ida camps he had built in Somalia.

(Al-Hamadi) Do you think that Al-Qa'ida and Usama Bin Ladin played any role in the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Husni Mubarak in the Ethiopian capital?

(Al-Bahri) I truly have no information about that, but I remember that when we were training in Al-Qa'ida camps that some members of the Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah were telling us that story and how the assassination attempt took place, as a kind of training material and a story to practice on. They told us that story, but they never confirmed that it was executed by Al-Qa'ida. I do not think that Al-Qa'ida had anything to do with that operation.

(Al-Hamadi) Does that mean the Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah was responsible for that attack?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, they were responsible for it, using Egyptian members. Everything was Egyptian. The assassination attempt against Husni Mubarak in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, was planned and executed by the Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah.

(Al-Hamadi) With Usama Bin Ladin staying on in Sudan for a long time, it has been said that he used it to build connections for Al-Qa'ida in Africa. Do you know something about that?

(Al-Bahri) After the Pakistani authorities gave the Arab warriors a bad time in Peshawar, Sudan became a second homeland for most of the Arab jihad groups, like the Egyptian, Libyan, and Algerian groups and others, as well as Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and other Al-Qa'ida members. As for enlarging the scope of Al-Qa'ida in Africa, that is true. Through Shaykh Usama's following up of the

events in all the states near Sudan or surrounding it, such as the events in Libya, Algeria, Yemen, Somalia, Eritrea, and Egypt. Even events in Liberia, although it is a faraway country in West Africa. Events took place there, and we did not know what was going on. But through the Al-Qa'ida movement and some Islamic groups, it became clear that the struggle there was an ethnic-religious struggle between Muslims and Christians in a country where Muslims account for 20 percent of the total population. That was why many Al-Qa'ida members wished to move jihad to that country according to the Al-Qa'ida way and the Afghani way. A leader of the Islamic groups in Liberia told us: "We wished we could have contacted the Arab Afghans, so they would the balance of power in that struggle in Liberia." Hence Shaykh Usama's activities in Africa. But I think that most of these activities were within the framework of acquainting himself with the situation there, so he could contact some groups and movements there to know their needs and situation. But I do not know whether these activities moved to the level of supporting those groups or any practical activities in the African countries.

(Al-Hamadi) The accident of Al-Qa'ida's military leader Abu-Ubayda al-Banshiri's drowning in Lake Victoria was an indication of how deeply Al-Qa'ida had penetrated Africa. Which countries had Al-Qa'ida reached in Africa?

(Al-Bahri) According to Shaykh Usama and other brothers, Brother Abu-Ubayda al-Banshiri tried to take advantage of the armed struggle taking place in Africa, such as the cases of Central Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, and others to facilitate the Al-Qa'ida members' penetration in Africa. I remember that among the things Shaykh Usama told us about the two American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam that those two embassies were just big American detention centers in Africa. They were the plotting minds behind the events that took place in Rwanda, where more than 80,000 Muslims were killed. The reason was the bloodshed that took place between the Hutu and the Tutsi, which was in reality between Muslims and Christians. The American embassies were feeding that struggle. That talk was among the information that Shaykh Usama had received by following the events there through Al-Qa'ida members. Abu-Ubayda al-Banshiri had carried out fact-finding tour in all the regions where struggles took place in Africa. During one of those trips, he drowned in Lake Victoria. The lake area in Africa connects eight to 10 countries. Important events were taking place in all of them, but we knew nothing about that, because they are isolated from the outside world. The Muslims there were suffering as a result of those events, and were parties of that struggle. Brother Abu Ubayda thought and planned how to bring those unknown events to the attention of the international scene and turn those cases into international cases. For if that was achieved, this might help attract new youths for jihad there and attract new members, thus opening the doors for other jihad operations. Brother Abu-Ubayda's aim was to open up several fronts against the Jewish-Christian allies everywhere in the world in an attempt to disperse them, weaken them, and draw their attention away from attacking Muslims.

(Al-Hamadi) What about the attempt to assassinate Usama Bin Ladin in Sudan? Who made that attempt? Was it a government conspiracy?

(Al-Bahri) The attempt on Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's life was in the Riyadh precinct in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. According to what I heard about that case from Shaykh Usama himself, his office was across the road from his home. Of course, because he was a political refugee in Sudan, the Sudanese security authorities were protecting him. At the same time, he had a licensed gun, which never left his pocket. A group of his followers were also armed. The time of the attempt was just before Al-Asr prayer. Shaykh Usama was ready to leave his home, heading to the office. But he was delayed by a talk between him and his son, Abdallah. During that period, he was readying his family

for a more austere life, to be content with a simple life, away from all the luxuries. His son Abdallah opposed that idea. His point of view was that his father was a millionaire and that they were supposed to enjoy that wealth. That talk with his son delayed him, while his bodyguards had already left for the office. So his attackers were deceived, thinking that Shaykh Usama was in his office with his guards. They started firing directly at the office, while Shaykh Usama was still at home. He and his son were armed. When he heard the gunfire, he came out of the house and saw armed men shooting at his office, while at the same time attacking his guards. Sudanese security was also present. He and his son attacked them from the other side. So the attackers were besieged. Some were killed and others wounded, while the rest escaped. Later it became clear that the attackers were members of an Islamic group that had declared Bin Ladin an infidel, thus allowing others to kill him. They also declared several other famous Muslims infidels. Those attackers were affected by their groups' ideas, without giving them much thought. The Egyptian and Saudi intelligence agencies were using the foolishness of that group and supporting it. But there was no confirmation that those agencies were behind that assassination attempt on Shaykh Usama's life.

(Al-Hamadi) Have you heard from Bin Ladin any confirmation of the Egyptian and Saudi intelligence agencies' innocence of the attempt to assassinate him, or is that just your personal opinion?

(Al-Bahri) That is not my personal opinion. I have heard it directly from the brothers who were around Shaykh Usama, who have heard it from him directly. He had told them about that attempt and how it was executed. But I do not remember that he mentioned that the Egyptian and Saudi intelligence agencies were behind it. If he knew such information, he would have revealed it. We have always known him to be courageous and unafraid to announce any information of which he is sure. Those two agencies were concentrating on him a lot, because of the presence of Ayman al-Zawahiri and the Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah. They used to meet Shaykh Usama there.

(Al-Hamadi) Do you expect the Sudanese Government to have used this incident to exert pressure on Usama Bin Ladin to expel him from Sudan?

(Al-Bahri) No, the Sudanese never used that incident to pressure him. The Sudanese were -- until the very last moment, when Bin Ladin left Sudan -- giving him the best treatment. His leaving Sudan was due to his political impact on the Saudi street through his effective speeches and statements inside Saudi Arabia. That led Riyadh to pressure Khartoum to expel him from their country. Simultaneously, there were other Egyptian pressures, which went along with the American pressure on Sudan because of its Islamic direction. It still was the country most affected by the second Gulf War and the American siege. So the ruling Islamic Front in Sudan, under the leadership of Dr Hassan al-Turabi, asked Shaykh Usama to leave the country. For Bin Ladin, Abu-Turabi was always a nuisance, although he was an Islamic thinker, contrary to President Umar Hassan al-Bashir, who displayed all the good Sudanese qualities of courage and help. He would not accept that pressure because he considered Bin Ladin his guest and a refugee in his country. As for Al-Turabi, it seems that his studies at the Sorbonne and his previous political background had a great impact on him. So Al-Turabi became the tool to pressure Shaykh Usama to leave the country.

(Al-Hamadi) Did Al-Turabi play any role in convincing the Sudanese Government to expel Bin Ladin from its territories?

(Al-Bahri) Al-Turabi himself exerted a great deal of pressure on Shaykh Usama to make him leave Sudan. He visited him for three consecutive days, holding long meetings and heated discussions with him, until late at night, to convince him to leave Sudan. Shaykh Usama tried to convince him of the

opposite: that there was no need to expel him, that they had not committed any armed acts against Sudan, and that there was no other country ready to receive them. But Al-Turabi told him that he had two options: either keep silent or he leave the country. He was very determined that Bin Ladin leave the country. That was when Shaykh Usama decided to leave Sudan. He said: As long as many young men have been detained and imprisoned in Saudi Arabia and the Sudanese want me to keep silent, I will leave Sudan. He made arrangements with the Sudanese to leave the country with his followers and moved to Afghanistan.

(Al-Hamadi) Was it possible that the Sudanese would have agreed to his staying on in their country if he had agreed to keep silent?

(Al-Bahri) I think the Sudanese would have accepted that, if Bin Ladin would have agreed to keep silent. It was a deal with him: Your staying against your silence. The Sudanese had benefited a lot from him. He had erected several huge projects in their country for millions of dollars. He was a first-class contractor, and his companies were building big projects in Sudan for very low bids. As far as I know, the Sudanese Government still owes Bin Ladin. They were unable to pay their debts to him, because he had sold them all his companies in Sudan up to that time. Khartoum has not paid its debt so far.

(Al-Hamadi) You mean that before he left Sudan, Bin Ladin sold all of his companies?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, he sold them all to the Sudanese Government for a very cheap price, because he had no other option.

(Al-Hamadi) What are the most important projects that Bin Ladin's companies executed in Sudan?

(Al-Bahri) Among those is the Khartoum-Madani Road, which is one of the longest asphalt roads in Sudan. Shaykh Usama also built several dams and the airport in Port Sudan. He also created huge funds for agricultural investments, offered the Sudanese many services, and offered the mujahidin many job opportunities.

(Al-Hamadi) During his exit from Sudan, how was the situation, and what were the security measures that accompanied his departure?

(Al-Bahri) Bin Ladin left Sudan for Jalalabad on a private jet. On board there was only a Russian pilot, who spoke no Arabic. On that trip, Brother Hamud al-Zubayr (God rest his soul) accompanied him. He was also accompanied by Brother Sayful-Adl al-Masri (may God release him from prison) and two of his sons, Saad and Umar. There were also very few guards with him in the small plane, which held only 12 passengers. Brother Sayful-Adl was sitting next to the pilot. In his hands he held a map of the route, because they did not trust the pilot very much. They just gave him the role of steering the plane, according to their plan. The departure was kept highly secret, and the security measures were very important for the success of Bin Ladin's departure for Afghanistan. His arrival in Afghanistan was coordinated with the field leader in Jalalabad, Engineer Mahmud, a leader of the Hezb-e Islami Afghanistan, which controlled Jalalabad. They welcomed Shaykh Usama there, because they both were former acquaintances. They gave him a warm welcome, and then accompanied him to the headquarters of the Afghan leader, Mullah Yunus Khalis. That reception was a kind of back payment for Shaykh Usama for everything he had offered the Afghan warriors during their war against the Soviet troops. They said: "How can we not stand by the man who sacrificed his money and the lives of his followers and all that he owns on this earth to support us and our holy war. They received him and his followers very well. Afghanistan was the only country that could afford to carry the

burden of Bin Ladin's and Al-Qa'ida's presence on its territories.

(Al-Hamadi) Do you think that a meeting took place between Bin Ladin and Sudanese President Umar al-Bashir concerning the Sudanese request that he leave the country? Who officially informed him of that request?

(Al-Bahri) All I know is that those who made the request were the leaders of the Islamic Front, led by Al-Turabi. Although Al-Bashir ignored them and guaranteed their security during their secret departure from Sudan. Shaykh Usama left Sudan with very few of his guards and two of his sons on a private plane, as I mentioned before. The rest of the Al-Qa'ida members, along with other Arab brothers from different Islamic groups, followed them later on two airplanes that belong to the Afghan airline, Ariana. They took them from Khartoum to Jalalabad, Afghanistan, in coordination with the Afghan leaders.

(Al-Hamadi) Bin Ladin mentioned more than once that he was very pained by the Sudanese. Was he pained by them as a country, by its government, or just by Al-Turabi?

(Al-Bahri) Shaykh Usama was pained by the situation in Sudan generally. He was affected by the events going on there, even after his departure. When Al-Turabi was imprisoned, the young men used to tell him: "Shaykh Usama, Al-Turabi is in prison." He would answer them: "That was expected. Two cooks do spoil the broth." By that he meant that the situation in Sudan was abnormal, with there being two leaders at the same time.

(Al-Hamadi) How would you describe Bin Ladin's relationship with Al-Turabi? Was it a normal relationship, or were there sensitivities?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, there were some sensitivities between them. Their biggest problem, which caused those sensitivities between them, was Shaykh Usama's practical program and his success in defeating the American forces in Somalia, in cooperation with the Somali Islamic groups. They also defeated the American troops in Sudan, where Sudan was supposed to be the Americans' entrance to their control over Somalia and the whole Horn of Africa. That was why Bin Ladin's success in defending Sudan was a sensitive spot, which caused Al-Turabi's jealousy. Al-Turabi relies mainly on theories. Maybe he was afraid Shaykh Usama would take over the leadership of Sudan someday in the future, at his own expense. Especially because Bin Ladin was at that point looking at Sudan as the backbone of the international world Islamic movement, as an important extension of the Islamic movement in the Horn of Africa and East Africa, in general.

(Al-Hamadi) After Usama Bin Ladin's move to Afghanistan, how were Al-Qa'ida members gathered there anew, after they were dispersed around the whole world?

(Al-Bahri) Shaykh Usama was going to declare jihad against the United States while he was still in Sudan. But he was unable to, because the Sudanese Government refused to permit him it and prevented him from making that announcement. They told him they could not bear the effects of such an announcement. So he moved to Afghanistan and made his announcement there. Then, it was a country without a government. There were no parties controlling the whole of the Afghan lands. Due to his good connections with most Afghan leaders, they supported him, saying that they had no problem with that, because America was the same as the Soviet Union, which they had fought in Afghanistan. Bin Ladin used that Afghan enthusiasm and declared his point of view and his plan to face the United States from that moment on. It was like a call and an invitation for all followers and supporters, especially the new members. As for the old members, they were not very dependable. Bin

Ladin used to say about them: "God forgive our old brothers. They did not participate with us." Shaykh Usama had tested them when he declared jihad in Somalia. He had sent messages to all of the brothers in Saudi Arabia, in Yemen, and everywhere. The best of them replied: "Abu-Abdallah, I cannot participate with you, because I have a family and young children." Many of them were still in shock and affected by the turn of events in Afghanistan after the departure of the Soviet troops. There was a power struggle between the Islamic parties themselves there. Which in turn caused a kind of disappointment among the Arab mujahidin. But as soon as Shaykh Usama declared jihad, many new members followed him, the first among them being the north group, of which I am a member.

(Al-Hamadi) Could you provide us with any details about Usama Bin Ladin's fatwa to fight the Americans openly?

(Al-Bahri) Of course. For that fatwa, Shaykh Usama almost called all Muslims everywhere to fight the Americans and defend Muslim lands. The Americans were a target wherever they were. With the Americans, there was no deal and no security in any Islamic country, because of their interference in all areas of the Islamic world. The United States had interfered in all Islamic cases, starting with Chechnya and ending with Somalia and East Africa. America's hand is everywhere, and they have besieged countries and starved peoples. That was why he allowed their killing wherever they were. He was sort of predicting the future, especially about his blow to the United States. Shaykh Usama declared that fatwa, which was supported by many scholars inside Afghanistan and Pakistan. They consolidated that fatwa by giving it their confirmation and authorization. A few months later, the operations in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam took place, as a result of that.

(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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**City/Source:** London

**DIALOG Update Date:** 20050327; 02:46:33 EST

**Descriptors:** International Political; Leader; Terrorism

**Geographic Codes:** AFG; EGY; PAK; SAU; SOM; SDN; USA; YEM

**Geographic Names:** Afghanistan; Egypt; Pakistan; Saudi Arabia; Somalia; Sudan; United States; Yemen; Asia; Africa; Middle East; Americas; South Asia; North Africa; East Africa; Central Africa; North Americas

**NewsEdge Document Number:** 200503281477.1\_af46100dcf22a545

**Original Source Language:** Arabic

**Region:** Asia; Africa; Middle East; Americas

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Dialog® File Number 985 Accession Number 205200123