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Bodyguard Interviewed on First Meeting With Bin-Ladin, Al-Qa'ida Beginnings

Part 4 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: "An Insider's View of Al-Qa'ida as Narrated by Abu-Jandal (Nasir al-Bahri), Bin-Ladin's Bodyguard (4): "I Tried To Keep Away From Al-Qa'ida After My Experience in Tajikistan; Abu-Abdallah's Quiet Approach Persuaded Me To Swear Allegiance; There Was Nothing Called Al-Qa'ida; Bin-Ladin Worked Under Command of Abdallah Azzam at First" AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI

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After the events of 11 September 2001, a great deal was written -- and in several languages -- about Al-Qa'ida, which is led by Usama Bin Ladin. However, all of 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 of which were off the mark.

That is why has sought to be different and to approach the subject by publishing this lengthy series of diaries and memoirs of Usama Bin Ladin's former bodyguard, known as Abu-Jandal. His real name is Nasir al-Bahri. We have tried through him to open closed doors, to visit the prohibited 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 residing in other parts of Yemen. His communications are under constant surveillance.

After six months of repeated attempts to open those dossiers, during which we met with the constant rejection of the security services, 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 an insider's view of its 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'ida calls jihad and which formed an important turning point in international politics.

In this segment, Abu-Jandal will talk about the manifestations of his acquaintance with Usama Bin Ladin, the mechanism with which Bin Ladin was able to attract him, and the benefits he gained from joining the Al-Qa'ida organization.

(Al-Hamadi) What was Taleban's reputation in the northern areas of Afghanistan, particularly because it was a newborn movement and no one knew anything about it, in the sense that it was not one of the well-established Afghan parties or movements?

(Al-Bahri) Actually, many of the inhabitants of northern Afghanistan were misleading us. They warned us against the Taliban and said they were communists. At the time, we did not know exactly the identity of the Taliban. Suddenly, we heard reports of battles and that the Taliban had stormed into Jalalabad and taken (Torkhum), Arghandeb, and (Darunka) and that it had begun to advance toward the northern provinces. We said: What is this huge army that is entering various areas so rapidly? We did not know at the time that Taliban was an Islamic and a religious movement, and we were very afraid that we would be handed over to those communists, that is, to the Taliban. We began to send brothers individually to Kondozi province through the group of Shaykh (Abdul Rasul Sayyaf). I was the last to move with them, because of my dark complexion, because I was afraid they would discover my Arab identity.

I moved with a military convoy that belonged to the forces of Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. Its commander spoke Arabic fluently because he had studied in Riyadh. He took me to the front between the Taliban forces and the former government forces led by Ahmad Shah Mas'ud. He said to me: These are my borders, and those are the Taliban forces. May God be with you. I took him aside and asked him about the identity of the Taliban and told him: I ask you to tell me the truth. What is your view of Taliban? He replied: They are good. I said to him: Why do the Afghan radio stations in Kabul and Kondozi say they are communists? He told me those radio stations were government radio stations that sought to mislead the people in order to gain their loyalty.

After that, I moved toward the Taliban front across a road that was open to the public between the two battle lines. When I reached the side under Taliban control -- and I was in a state of panic, in view of what I heard about them and because I feared they would arrest me -- I was surprised by them. They were young men who were applying the sunnah by growing their beards and through their clothes, including some who wore turbans, and their eyes were darkened with kohl. Some of them were sitting on armored cars and reading the Koran. One of them looked at me and asked: Are you an Arab? I answered him: Yes, I am an Arab. He shouted toward the commander: An Arab, an Arab, an Arab. Then many people gathered around me and insisted that I have tea with them. I told them about my destination, and they put me in a car under guard and told me: You are safe until you get to Jalalabad -- although the distance was very far and the road, to my knowledge, was full of bandits and highwaymen. However, the situation had changed. The road was really safe, and there was no sign of bandits or highwaymen. The country was truly safe. During that period in which I came to know the Taliban, I met with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin in Jalalabad. That meeting was a step toward my joining Al-Qa'ida later on.

(Al-Hamadi) When did you get to know Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) I got acquainted with Shaykh Usama and I met him personally when I returned from my trip to the north, to Tajikistan, and specifically when I arrived in Jalalabad from Kabul, which was a stop on my return from Tajikistan.

(Al-Hamadi) When you returned to Jalalabad from your journey to the north, was Bin Laden staying in Jalalabad?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, Bin Ladin was residing in Jalalabad from the time we entered Afghanistan until our return to Jalalabad. Therefore, when Shaykh Usama heard there was an Arab group going to Tajikistan, he tried to contact us, but we used to evade him because we knew that if he got hold of us, we would not be able to get away. We knew Bin Laden was in Afghanistan before we got there.

(Al-Hamadi) Were you afraid of Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) No, we were not afraid of him. Our evasion was not out of fear, but we felt we would not be able to meet some of Usama Bin Ladin's requirements, although during our entry to Afghanistan, we did not know he had declared jihad against the United States and that he had decided to fight America. We did not know about that until after we returned from our journey north, that is, six months after we had headed toward Tajikistan.

(Al-Hamadi) When you returned from the journey to the north, had you decided to return to Yemen?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, I had decided to return to Yemen to settle there or to go to wage jihad in Chechnya. I had no intention of returning to Afghanistan and taking up arms there, because it gave me a complex, as a result of the treachery of the Afghans, and the struggle among the Islamic parties to take power following the departure of the Soviet forces, and so forth. I was thinking at the time of joining the organized jihad organizations, as in Chechnya, where the work is organized and within clearly identified groups.

(Al-Hamadi) How did the first contact with Bin Ladin take place in Jalalabad?

(Al-Bahri) When I arrived in Jalalabad brother, Abu-Muhannad al-Jaddawi, Husam Bin-Atsh, met with us. He always used to try to convince me of the need to meet with Shaykh Usama. I told him: Brother, I am a man who likes to be at the front. I do not want what Bin Ladin is calling me to. He used to insist and say to me: You must meet Shaykh Usama and get to know him. I said to him: My dear, let me be frank with you. I am not of the kind who likes to meet with Abu-Abdallah (Bin Ladin). I am for the front. I am leaving Afghanistan and returning to Yemen. There, I will decide either to get married or to go to Chechnya, because we felt at the time that settling and staying in Afghanistan, without fighting, would be a kind of torture and divine punishment and that God would be angry with us. We had dedicated ourselves to jihad, and the matter was finished. Our mission in life is to protect the ummah (Muslim nation) wherever we are able to go. If we heard that any young man from among our brothers had married, we used to go to him and offer him our condolences and not to congratulate him, as is the custom. We said to him: May God recompense you (an expression of condolences said to a bereaved person) for jihad. And the matter was finished. If I get to Yemen, I will face one of two options: Either I will get married, and you will offer me your condolences, or I will go to Chechnya, in which case you must follow me. Brother Muhannad and the other young men tried to convince me of the importance of visiting Shaykh Usama, but they were unable to do so.

Eventually, they sent Brother Abu-Muhammad al-Misri, a student of knowledge, to me. Students of knowledge have their special method of persuasion, citing Koranic evidence and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. He said to me: O brother, it is the right of your Muslim brother that if he calls you, you respond to him. Responding to the call of brother Abu-Abdallah is something you owe. I said to him: O you matawi'ah (enforcers of Islamic law), there is no escape from you. Brother Abu-Muhammad al-Masri laughed, and I agreed to go with him to Shaykh Usamah.

(Al-Hamadi) Did Bin Ladin send him to get you?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, Abu-Muhammad went back to Shaykh Usama and said: Abu-Jandal refuses to come to you. Shaykh Usamah had heard a great deal about me from Abu-Muhammad, who told him that I was a young man with a good mentality and so forth. I did not know that. I did not know what Abu-Muhammad was saying about me. He was trying by various means to get me to Shaykh Usama. I said: Very well, God willing, and I finally agreed.

We went to Shaykh Usama. I met him, and we stayed together for three days, during which we got to know him. We ate together. During those three days, he was waging a kind of a media campaign directed at us, in an attempt to convince us of the justification for his call for jihad against America. He told us about the bad state the Arabian Peninsula had reached and sought to convince us of the bad things that happened there as a result of US interference in the region. He said that he personally put to the religious shaykhs and the regime in Saudi Arabia many solutions for that, but in vain. All of the information we had at the time about US interference in the Gulf we obtained during our presence in Saudi Arabia, but we were not aware of the circumstances of that interference, its hidden aspects, and links until we met with Shaykh Usama at that place. He revealed to us so many of the things that were not revealed to us previously.

(Al-Hamadi) Why? Was it because he talked persuasively, or because he had found empty vessels and so he filled them with what he wanted?

(Al-Bahri) It was because he was in direct contact with the issue of US interference in the Gulf and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. He talked to us about his personal experience. His strong argument opened to us distant and wide horizons about that issue and about the situation of the ulema in Saudi Arabia, the situation of the existing alliance between the Saudi regime and the Islamic Salafi movement, and the call of Shaykh Muhammad Bin-Abd-al-Wahhab (18th century founder of Wahhabism). We became informed about all those topics by Shaykh Usama and the way he talked. Of course, in view of our Salafi religious upbringing, I did not fully 100 percent accept Shaykh Usama's words, but they opened to me a scope for research.

I began to verify some matters by contacting some people I knew and looking up books and publications published here or there, and in particular the reports and publications of the Saudi Reform Movement (Harakat al-Islah al-Saudi). We began to contact each other with regard to the case of Shaykh Sulayman al-Awdah (Saudi religious scholar who was jailed). We began to hear once again the old tapes we used to hear in Saudi Arabia, such as "From Behind Bars," "Steadfastness Until Death," and "The Inevitability of Confrontation." After that, we began to understand the messages that those tapes conveyed to us in a manner that we did not grasp in the past. However, after sitting down with one of the leaders of the Saudi Reform Movement and with Shaykh Usama, we received those messages in a different way, and we understood the issue in another way. We developed a stronger awareness. In view of our military experience and our experience in carrying arms, we said: What is America? If we had succeeded in many armed confrontations and military fronts against the Serbs, the

Russians, and others, America will not be something new. We often sat down with the brothers who fought the Americans in Somalia, and we used to hear about the brothers who struck the Americans at the Aden Hotel in the early 1990s and about the brothers who blew up American residences in Riyadh and Al-Khubar. We reached the conclusion that America is no different from the forces we have fought, because it has become a target for all and sundry. All of its foes have dealt blows to it. So I decided to join Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. That was the beginning of my work with Al-Qa'ida.

(Al-Hamadi) What were the details of the first meeting between you and Bin Ladin? What did he focus on in his conversation and behavior to attract you to him?

(Al-Bahri) The fact is that the details of the story of my first meeting with Shaykh Usama were very beautiful, although more than six years have passed since it took place. When I returned to Jalalabad, I arrived at the headquarters of the World Muslim Relief Authority in the city. I did not know where my Arab companions from the northern mujahidin group had settled down. I informed the Arab brothers from the authority's officials of that, so they lifted the wireless receiver and began to call Najm al-Jihad. Najm-al-Jihad was the site of the headquarters of Shaykh Usama and the families and mujahidin who were with him in Jalalabad. They began to call Najm al-Jihad: Tayibah, Tayibah, which was the codename of one of the brothers there. They replied to them from the Najm al-Jihad position and asked them: What do you want? They replied: We have an Arab who wants Brother Muhannad. They said: Who is he? They replied: Tell him it is his cousin. Brother Muhannad immediately knew that it was me and said to them: Take me to him. Brother Muhannad came to us after the afternoon prayers, together with five armed men who were mujahidin from Al-Qa'ida. They took a private car and took me to a secret guest house in Jalalabad. The young Arab men used to stay in this house upon their return from the northern areas. We stayed in that guest house. Upon entering it, my companions from the northern journey saw me and were pleased and cheered. Among them was Brother Azzam, may his soul rest in peace, who blew up the American Embassy in Nairobi.

I sat down with some of the young men, who kept saying to me: It is great to sit down and talk with Shaykh Usama. I said to them: What does Shaykh Usama have? They used to answer: You do not know what Shaykh Usama has. You will be happy with him, and so forth. I used to say to them: What does he have? They said: Frankly, Shaykh Usama has a new argument on an important issue. In view of the fact that they had arrived one week before me and used to see Shaykh Usama every day, they marketed me to him throughout that week before my arrival in Jalalabad. It was then 25 Sha'ban, just four days before the month of Ramadan. They used to say to me: You need to go to Shaykh Usama, because he will say very important things. I did not interact seriously with what they said. Brother Muhannad used to come to me at night, and we sat together in the guest house garden. He kept repeating all night: Shaykh Usama has a cause. He has declared war on the United States, and we must fight the United States, and so forth. He then used to ask me to visit Shaykh Usama, and I used to say to him: This matter is not on my mind, because I have now decided to return to Yemen, either to marry one of my cousins and stay in the country, or to proceed to jihad in Chechnya. This matter is not open to argument.

He, together with the other young men, tried to persuade me, but I did not accept any of what they said. They did not reach any result with me. On the third day, 27 Sha'ban, Brother Abu-Muhammad al-Masri, an Al-Qa'ida cadre, came to me and told me frankly: Shaykh Usama wants to see you. He wants to sit down with you and the other young men and talk to you. He has an issue he wants to put to the young men. I agreed to go Shaykh Usama. I had then intended to visit Shaykh Usama just once so as to avoid any friendly reproach and not to return to him again. I went to him, and Shaykh Usama met with me. He began to talk to us. We were part of a circle that included a large group of young

men. I was sitting on his right in the same row. Whenever he talked, he looked at me and said: Did you comprehend, Abu-Jandal? Did you understand, Abu-Jandal? And I replied: Yes, I have understood. Yes, I have comprehended.

In the evening, when we decided to go to the guest house where we were staying, Shaykh Usama came and said to me: How are you, Abu-Jandal? He asked how long it had been since I ate ma'subah al-qarmushi (flour, bananas, and sugar, fried). Ma'subah is popular meal in Saudi Arabia. I answered: Almost more than four years. He said to me: Then we will eat ma'subah for breakfast at my place tomorrow morning, because I usually have ma'subah for breakfast. It was as though the man felt I had other intentions. He had a kind of perspicacity. I said to him: Excuse me, shaykh, from accepting this invitation, because I may not be able to attend. He insisted and said to me: Never, you must come. If your brother calls, you respond to his call. I said: Very well, God willing, I will come to you in the morning. He said to me: The right of hospitality is three days. At the end of the three days, you are free to decide what you want. Of course, throughout the three days, Shaykh Usama continued to talk to us and to put to us the issue of the Arabian Peninsula and US occupation of it. Of course, we were convinced there was a US presence and a US occupation, but our view was different from his view, in view of the fatwas of Shaykh Abd-al-Aziz Bin-Bazz (former mufti of Saudi Arabia) and Shaykh Muhammad Salih Bin-Uthaymayn, who issued fatwas on the permissibility of calling on the assistance of unbelievers. It was because of those fatwas that we were silent. Otherwise, I would not have expected anyone to be silent if Shaykh Bin-Bazz and Shaykh Bin-Uthaymayn had said the contrary and said: Unbelievers must not enter the Arabian Peninsula; entry is prohibited to them, and if they had cited the evidence cited by Shaykh Usamah. If that had taken place I would not have expected any of the young men could have possibly remained silent. I believe there would have been a rebellion in Saudi Arabia against US intervention in the Arabian Peninsula if such a fatwa had been declared. However, the religious shaykhs had a different view. They wanted to ward off sedition from the country, because if fighting had broken out inside Saudi Arabia between the invading US forces that came under the guise of protection and defense and the citizens of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf, there would not have been equality in resources and arms, because the Americans are strong in that matter. The issue could turn into a pretext that Washington could use to occupy the country, and the young men were not prepared, trained, or qualified militarily for such an armed confrontation.

(Al-Hamadi) How long did Bin Ladin continue to give you lessons and talk to you to win you over to his side in Al-Qa'ida?

(Al-Bahri) Shaykh Usama continued for three days to give us lessons and to deliver talks that were directed precisely at us. I was looking at the young men, and all the young men were looking at me because they knew I was one of the members of the northern group's shura council and I was the deputy of one of the northern groups that were ready for jihad in Tajikistan. The young men wanted to know my view on the matter. We used to go back to the guest house in the evening, and we used to meet there. The young men began to ask me: What do you think, Abu-Jandal? What do you have to say on this matter? I said to them: By God, every one of you is a man and should, therefore, be able to decide for himself and follow his superior. As for me, my situation is different. The young men were trying to ascertain my decision, so as to do what I do.

After three days of continual sessions with Shaykh Usama, specifically the night before Ramadan, Shaykh Usama called me after the afternoon prayers and said to me: What is your view, Abu-Jandal, of what you heard? I said to him: I will not hide from you, shaykh, that what you said is convincing and that you are putting forward a clear case, but it is clear to me you do not have anyone from the people of the land itself, that is, from the people of the Arabian Peninsula, whose cause this is. He said

to me: What you say is true. Most of the brothers around me are Egyptians, Algerians, and North Africans. That is why I invite you to join our caravan. I had believed that Shaykh Usama had missed such a fact, but I discovered that he concentrated a great deal on the people of the Arabian Peninsula, especially on the people of Hijaz.

We -- the northern group -- were the first group to join collectively the Al-Qa'ida organization. Shaykh Usama met with each of us separately, and many of us swore allegiance to him immediately. Of course, the swearing of allegiance was very secret. No one knew who swore allegiance to him and who did not. As for me, I stipulated one condition for swearing allegiance. I said to him: I am prepared to work with you, but on one condition. He said: What is it? I said: If I should come out of your umbrella and leave the command of the region in which you are to another place, you will have no authority over me. Shaykh Usama accepted the condition and said to me: I accept your condition. After I swore allegiance to me, after he accepted my condition, I spent the entire month of Ramadan in a state of worship. It was as though Shaykh Usama wanted to make use of Abu-Jandal administratively for a period of time and to benefit from his ability to argue and put forward his case and his ability to talk to others. Perhaps he wanted to benefit from me in that aspect, so I stayed with him. Shaykh Usama used to focus on me with regard to training, with the intention of carrying out a form of mental mobilization during my training, a kind of guidance and education about the main cause he espouses. I participated in many military courses, such as a tactical foundation course in guerrilla warfare and some special courses in the use of automatic weapons. Whenever I completed a course, Shaykh Usamah used to summon me, and I used to go and stay with him.

(Al-Hamadi) You said the swearing of allegiance was secret. Does that confirm that not everyone who stayed with Usama or worked with him is a member of Al-Qa'ida?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, not all those who are around Shaykh Usama are necessarily members of Al-Qa'ida. You may find a brother in front of you, and he may participate with you at the front, and you may find him around Shaykh Usama, coming and going to his meetings -- Shaykh Usamah does not refrain from seeing anyone -- but you cannot be sure whether such a person is a member of Al-Qa'ida or not. One cannot determine such a thing. One is not necessarily a member of Al-Qa'ida, even if one was with Shaykh Usama. Many young men lived with him for two or three years and did not swear allegiance to him and were not members of Al-Qa'ida, despite their constant presence with him. Sometimes we used to hear that one of the young men had carried out a martyrdom operation. It was only then that we were sure he had sworn allegiance to Al-Qa'ida. The execution of martyrdom operations was a kind of proof that enabled us to identify those who had sworn allegiance to Al-Qa'ida.

(Al-Hamadi) You participated in the jihad in Bosnia, Somalia, and Tajikistan. What new military benefit did you gain by joining Al-Qa'ida?

(Al-Bahri) After I spent the month of Ramadan with Shaykh Usamah, he decided two or three days after the Id (al-Fitr: three-day religious holiday marking end of Ramadan) to send me to the (Jihad Wal) camps in the city of Khost for military training and to give me a concentrated course on many important military aspects and on how to draw up military plans, fight battles, and so forth. It is true that we had trained in Bosnia and gained some practical experience in Somalia and in Tajikistan, but the keys to action and dotting the i's and crossing the t's were skills acquired in Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's Al-Qa'ida camps. That is because the period of our training in Bosnia was short, as a result of the war that was going on there, and there was no organized military action in Somalia. When they were first established, the (Jihad Wal) camps were called the Al-Faruq camp, the first Al-Qa'ida camp

in Afghanistan. It was the same camp that was bombed with US cruise missiles in 1998, following the bombing of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar-es-Salaam.

(Al-Hamadi) From your long experience with Usama Bin Ladin later on, how did the idea of the Al-Qa'ida organization begin with him?

(Al-Bahri) The practical jihadist beginnings of Shaykh Usamah were not under the banner of anything called the Al-Qa'ida organization. He used to work with Shaykh Abdallah Azzam in the Services Bureau in Peshawar, Pakistan, to coordinate and facilitate the affairs of the Arab mujahidin who arrived from their countries and who departed from Afghanistan. Bin Ladin used to finance the bureau's services, while Azzam used to run its operations directly or indirectly. With the increase in the number of Arab mujahidin coming to Afghanistan, a training camp called "Sada" (Echo) Camp was opened. The name was meant to mean the echo of jihad. It was on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. After the arrival of many members of the Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah and Jama'at al-Jihad who were qualified militarily, Bin Ladin and those with whom he had a jihadist relationship established a new and more advanced training camp that was tantamount to a military college. It was called Al-Faruq Camp or the Al-Faruq Military College.

The Al-Faruq Camp bypassed the 45-day period of quick training on weapons that was in force in the Sada Camp. It was established on the basis of a clear military methodology, a military college where cadets passed through a number of stages and levels until they finally graduated at the command level, as military commanders capable of leading any jihadist action anywhere. The idea of establishing that military college was a global idea. Thus, if the jihad in Afghanistan ends, graduates of the college can go anywhere in the world and capably command battles there. Those objectives have actually been achieved through the success accomplished by the young men who had moved to many fronts outside Afghanistan, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, the Philippines, Eritrea, Somalia, Burma, and elsewhere. Those fronts did not arise from a vacuum, but were the outcome of the action of well-trained cadres who had received methodical military training. The curricula of that college or camp were the same as the military curricula of conventional military colleges and comprised all specializations. The college had a committee called the military curricula committee. Of course, the college was later called the Al-Faruq Military College at the Al-Qa'ida Camp, on the basis that it was a military base for jihad. Then it was called the Ansarallah (Supporters of God) base (qa'ida) camp, and there was nothing at the time known as the Al-Qa'ida organization.

It was then known in the jihadist arena in Afghanistan and in Peshawar that when people used to see someone, they were able to identify him as a follower of the Egyptian Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah, or as one of the Algerians, or as a Moroccan. The followers of Bin Ladin, however, had no clear name because they were a mixture of nationals from all the Arab states. They called them followers of Al-Qa'ida, and over time that became their title, followers of Al-Qa'ida.

With the passage of time and the development of jihadist operations within and outside Afghanistan after the end of the first Afghan jihad, this name was given to jihadist elements who were followers of Bin Ladin. The reputation of that camp reached the level of the present organization, and it has now come to be known throughout the world as the Al-Qa'ida organization. However, in the early days of the camp's establishment, there was nothing known as the Al-Qa'ida organization.

(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)

POWERED BY **Dialog****Former Bin Ladin 'Bodyguard' Discusses Al-Qa'ida Training Methods, 'Libraries'**

Part 5 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: "Al-Qa'ida's Inside Story, as Told by Abu-Jandal--Nasir al-Bahri, Bin Ladin's Bodyguard (5); Shaykh Abdallah Azzam Supervised the Afghan Jihad Encyclopedia, a Comprehensive Islamic Military Guide"

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In this episode, Abu-Jandal talks about the training of new recruits in Al-Qa'ida and the period of testing that they have to undergo to prove that they are qualified and can withstand pressure.

(Al-Hammadi) How long was the training period in the (Jihad Wal) military camps?

(Al-Bahri) It lasted about two months. It included a course in guerilla warfare and other courses in various military areas. It included theoretical instructions backed by practical training. Therefore, our best training to qualify us militarily was inside the Al-Qa'ida camps in Afghanistan because all the instructors had had great military experience and participated in many battles inside Afghanistan. They had the presentation ability and the skill to instill information in the minds of the trainees. Moreover, training in the battlefield differs from qualifying personnel at training camps.

(Al-Hammadi) Was your training at the (Jihad Wal) camps confined to the use of weapons or did it include educational rehabilitation and concepts and principles on which the Al-Qa'ida Organization is based?

(Al-Bahri) Training in these camps was on how to use weapons. However, it indirectly included certain aspects of guidance and educational messages. For instance, while training on hitting marks or targets, all the targets were in US uniform. The names of the targets were American. The instructions were: Hit the US soldier or officer; blow up the US vehicle. When the target was hit, it would be announced that someone hit the US soldier or target. Thus, the United States and all that was American occupied our mind. It was an issue that engaged the minds of the Al-Qa'ida youths who train in military camps. Indeed, hitting American targets became a dream of everyone in the Organization.

Of course, the Al-Qa'ida Organization developed the means of military training starting with the old traditional methods and inventing the most modern means. They used the most up-to-date methods and most effective ones in this regard. They trained us on how to select the targets and on what the suitable types of targets were for operation. For instance, would the killing of a US soldier or national in the jungles of Africa impact the United States or should a qualitative and hard blow be directed at the United States? This was part of the guidance on the quality of operations and the type of military mobilization against the United States so long as it is the primary enemy of the Al-Qa'ida

Organization.

One of the books that we studied at the (Jihad Wal) camp was written by a US general on the establishment of the rapid deployment forces; that is, the marines, and why they were created. One of the examples that this US general gave in his book was the following: If a tanker carrying liquefied natural gas is blown up in the Straits of Hormuz at the mouth of the Arabian Gulf, it will stop the oil supplies to the world for at least one week because it would be a floating gas pipeline. This would lead to raising the cost of oil in the entire world. Many of the Al-Qa'ida youths were very interested in this idea and they were thinking of hitting an oil tanker in the Straits of Hormuz and isolating the Gulf region, which is the source of oil, from the whole world.

We studied many American books in the strategic and military fields. One of which was the report that the former US secretary of State Henry Kissinger presented in the 1970's following the 1973 war and the discussion that he held with Saudi King Faysal Bin-Abd-al-Aziz. When the Americans threatened him with bombing the oil fields, Faysal told them: We will blow them up ourselves and will lose nothing because our camels are still here and our milk and dates are still here. You will be the losers. King Faysal's strong position against the Americans created a certain reaction and developed a certain vision.

One of the US books, which we studied, was a book by US President Roosevelt entitled: 1999, Year of Oil Without War. In this book, Roosevelt explained how the United States would control the outside world. The most important element in studying this book is to know the US viewpoint about us and what they want from us. The Al-Qa'ida Organization depended on what the Americans themselves say and on what they publish in order to invite condemnation against them and convince the Al-Qa'ida Organization members of the correctness of Al-Qa'ida aims to impede these US plots and prevent their implementation.

The libraries of the Al-Qa'ida Organization's military training camps contained many books and the best in the military field, especially American books, in addition to videotapes that contain some of the Western television programs on the Al-Qa'ida Organization. The videotapes also included lectures and Shaykh Usama's interviews with many US and Western media and others.

Brother Abu-Ata, may God have mercy on his soul, provided simultaneous translation of the program and the interviews which were broadcast by Western channels because he was very fluent in English and acted as a translator for Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin during his interviews with Western channels. There was also brother Abd-al-Hadi al-Urduni (the Jordanian), may God have mercy on his soul.

I recall that Brother Usama used to explain to us certain strategic military issues and concepts and he used to tell us that the struggle was not only between the Al-Qa'ida Organization and the United States, that the Al-Qa'ida Organization in this struggle is merely a nucleus and a tool for this nation to wake up and defeat the American offensive against our Islamic world and drag the United States into a large-scale front which it cannot control. He used to say: We are working for a big operation; namely, dragging the United States into a field confrontation with the Islamic peoples and the entire Islamic world.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you have military books of scientific value in the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps libraries contained many book and military encyclopedias, including the Encyclopedia of Jihad in Afghanistan, which explains everything that is connected with the military aspects, beginning with the machinegun and then the guerilla warfare,

urban warfare, undercover wars, the wars of security and intelligence, data gathering, tank wars and chemical wars. This encyclopedia was in about 12 volumes with pictures, maps, and charts. This encyclopedia was composed by a number of Islamic military experts and was supervised by Dr Abdallah Azzam, may God have mercy on his soul. It was a comprehensive encyclopedia for a jihadist military education in an Islamic form. There were many other military and political books, both specialized and general, in various fields and many Islamic messages related to the education of jihad and which were written by Shaykh Abdallah Azzam. There were the jihadist books by some of the Egyptian Jihad Group and others, and some of the books by military generals. These books gave us some of our military education.

There is a significant point in this regard. When a person has the motive and the intention and the desire to realize something, he will do it and will excel and produce something new and creative. That was what we have seen in the qualitative operations that demonstrated military excellence and a pioneering role in military operations.

(Al-Hammadi) The ordinary military colleges subject new recruits to a 40-day testing period to assess the recruits and select the firm ones. Did the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps follow this system to test the new recruits and select the Al-Qa'ida Organization members?

(Al-Bahri) There are three phases in the Al-Qa'ida Organization military camps. The first is the testing period. It is called the days of experimentation. The second phase is the military preparation period. It is called the drilling period. It lasts 45 days. The third phase is called the guerilla war tactics course. It also lasts 45 days. During the experimentation period we used to experience all forms of exhaustion, including psychological exhaustion, as well as moral exhaustion. The training was extremely hard. Sometimes we hardly slept for four hours in two days at various times. The experimentation period is just over 15 days. At the end of this period, when we were extremely tired, the instructor would come and say with extreme coolness: Today is the last day of experimentation. You must now walk for 30 kilometers. Only very few individuals lasted until the end of the experimentation. Yet, each one of us used to urge his exhausted comrades to encourage them to remain steadfast and continue. This phase teaches recruits to withstand difficulties.

Indeed, because of the exhaustion and fatigue during the experimentation period, some of them said that they could take no more, that they no longer wanted jihad.

During the second phase, the drilling period, the new recruits take all military courses, deeply studying all kinds of weapons, beginning with light machineguns, through antiaircraft guns, and ending with shoulder-borne missiles, like SAM-7 and Stinger missiles, in addition to explosives and all kinds of guns, like the recoil and recoilless guns and the bow guns (madafi' qawsiyah). They are trained on surveys, maps and how to draw them, as well as sand maps, and other things. The trainee in this phase is given an integrated military education just like any graduate from the best regular military colleges.

Then comes the third phase, which is called the tactics and guerilla warfare course. It also lasts 45 days. This course was compulsory for all because the irregular warfare is based on guerilla warfare. In this course, theoretical military skills are learned. Practical applications are carried out using all kinds of weapons that had been studied in the previous course, and employing military skills that have been gained. Indeed, this is a period of testing to measure what a man can absorb during previous courses.

(Al-Hammadi) To what extent was the training inclusive of practical applications?

(Al-Bahri) The practical application was emphasized more than the theoretical training, based on the

religious principle: Practical traditions are more useful than theoretical traditions. The theoretical military information is available everywhere, given the spreading of knowledge and information, like the Internet and other means. What the trainee needs is the practical side and actual application of all the military knowledge that he has acquired. Therefore, the first day of training at the Al-Qa'ida Organization camps begins with disassembling and assembling of weapons. The trainer begins with this and ends by using the weapon so that the trainee will know everything about this machine by heart.

(Al-Hammadi) It is said that many Arab youths joined the Al-Qa'ida Organization not because they were convinced of its ideas but because they wanted to escape from their difficult economic conditions in their own countries. What do you think of this?

(Al-Bahri) This is a fact. But we can also say that these were not escaping from their economic conditions but rather from the political conditions because many of them had certain ideas and they did not find an opportunity in their countries to express their ideas. Had the Arab states had freedom of opinion and expression, many of their sons would not have left and joined the Al-Qa'ida Organization, given that many of them were well trained academically and had university degrees. Some of them graduated from the best universities in the world. Some of them occupied high posts with high salaries like Sayf-al-Adl-al-Masri, who was an officer in the Egyptian storm troopers units. Abu-Hafs al-Masri was a police officer. Abu-Ubaydah al-Banshiri was also an Egyptian police officer. They are many. These individuals left their countries because there was no freedom and they were not allowed to express their opinion. Thus, they were forced to express their opinion in this way, given that nobody dealt with them rationally. Repression was the only means of dealing with them. Thus, they were forced to leave for the outside world, including the Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin world, where they found a suitable place in his Al-Qa'ida Organization for meeting together and for a reunion.

(Al-Hammadi) Where did you go after you finished your military courses at the (Jihad Wal) camps?

(Al-Bahri) As we were concluding our training period -- and we were in the (Jihad Wal) area in the Khowst region -- there was an attempt to assassinate Shaykh Usama while he was in Jalalabad. However, the Taliban Movement's security apparatus arrested those who implemented the attempt while entering the Afghan borders. The Taliban Movement received intelligence information that a group entered Afghanistan with the purpose of assassinating Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin. Mullah Muhammad Omar sent a helicopter to Shaykh Usama who was in Jalalabad and he asked him to meet with him in Qandahar. They met at Qandahar Airport. Mullah Omar told Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin: You must come and settle with us in Qandahar because it is our stronghold and main headquarters. It is safer for you than Jalalabad because in Jalalabad you will find people from various religions and ethnic groups and the security there is weak.

Three days later, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin returned to Jalalabad and decided to transfer all his wives and the families of the Arab mujahidin by air from Jalalabad to Qandahar, except Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin himself who moved to Qandahar by land. When he arrived in Qandahar, Mullah Omar gave him the choice of either to stay at the Electricity Company housing complex, where there are all the services, or to stay at the Qandahar Airport housing complex, which did not have such utilities. He selected the airport complex because he wanted his followers to live an austere and modest life in this world. There were no utilities in the complex and there was no running water. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin used to say: We want a simple life.

With the arrival of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and his comrades at the Qandahar Airport complex, we

moved from Khowst to this same place two months later. We met with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and were his guests for three days.

At that time, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin began establishing formations from the young men who completed military training, distributing them among the various camps and various fronts. He used to give them the choice of selecting their positions. He gave me the choice of staying with him or returning to the camp and I opted for returning to the camp because living with these young men was more lively. To live with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin means to live a strict and heavily disciplined life. He allowed me to return to the camps in Khowst and I stayed there for five months.

(Al-Hammadi) Did Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin take with him everything connected with the Al-Qa'ida Organization, in terms of men and equipment, when he left Jalalabad to Qandahar or did he leave some of them there?

(Al-Bahri) He took almost everything but he did not evacuate the Najm al-Jihad Complex there. He left it there but changed it temporarily into a guesthouse to receive and accommodate those who pass by Jalalabad from the Al-Qa'ida Organization. He left some unmarried young men there to run the guesthouse. He drew up for them an action program. The guesthouse later became a rest house for some families of the Al-Qa'ida Organization members to be used during emergencies and in case certain areas were shelled. Indeed, some of the families returned from Qandahar and settled in the Najm al-Jihad Complex in Jalalabad.

(Al-Hammadi) You stayed five months in the (Jihad Wal) camp in Khowst. Did you return to Qandahar to stay with Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, I returned to Qandahar but I stayed at a place far from the Qandahar Airport complex, where Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and some Arab families were staying. I did not stay in Qandahar for long. I stayed only for 15 days and then Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin asked me to choose between staying with him and moving to any camp or front, whether in Jalalabad, Kabul, Khowst, or any other place. I decided to return to Khowst to join training at the (Jihad Wal) camps. I became interested in training and I had been accustomed to life there and I knew men there.

(Al-Hammadi) When were you selected to be the personal bodyguard of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) Before I was selected to guard Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin, I began training operations with the brother instructor Abu-Ata. At that time, training courses were held on guerilla warfare tactics, especially the mountainous war. At that time we received an alert message, saying that they needed at least 16 unmarried Arab brothers to come to Qandahar as soon as possible because there was a sort of state of alert in Qandahar. The problem was that most of the Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's guards were married men and they had burdens to carry. Therefore, there was a need for bachelors to replace them. Brother Abu-Ata told me: Abu-Jandal why do you not go to Qandahar? I told him that I was a soldier and I was prepared to go wherever he sent me. He then said: Rely on God and go to Qandahar and take with you the first group, which was about 16 brothers, most of them were Yemenis. They formed the first nucleus of Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's guards. I was their commander. When we reached Qandahar, we were placed under the command of an Egyptian brother called Abu-Khalid al-Masri

I was an ordinary bodyguard for Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin within the group of guards and I was not a commander of the guard. Five or six months after this, Brother Abu-Ata arrived and said: We want brother Abu-Jandal to return to the (Jihad Wal) camp to train the men there. Then Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin told me: Go once again with Abu-Ata for training at the camp.

(Al-Hammadi) How long did you remain in the (Jihad Wal) camp when you returned this time round?

(Al-Bahri) I stayed about four months and then there was a general mobilization at the Kabul front. I moved toward the Kabul front, me and Brother Hassan al-Khamiri, may God have mercy on his soul, one of those who carried out the attack against the US destroyer Cole at the Aden port in 2000. We were the first Yemeni young men to participate in the fighting at the Kabul Front, along with the Taliban Movement, although Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin was still against the overenthusiasm of the Arab men to join fighting with Taliban. We received the news that the Ahmad Shah Masud forces were advancing toward Kabul. Therefore there was mobilization. I moved along with brother Hassan al-Khamiri and we were also joined by brother Husam al-Madani, may God have mercy on his soul, and brother Abu-al-Faraj al-Libi. The four of us were the first Arab group to arrive in Kabul to participate in the fighting there.

(Al-Hammadi) What did you do after you arrived in Kabul?

(Al-Bahri) After that I was wounded at one of the fronts. At that time we dealt painful blows to the Ahmad Shah Masud forces because we were hitting them with mortars. It seems that there was betrayal behind our lines. Perhaps a weak-minded person gave the Masud forces the coordinates of the position where we were stationed. They used artillery and tanks against us. There were only six Arabs at the position. Five were hit and I was the only one to remain standing on my feet. I was wounded but I was capable of movement. I remember that among those who were wounded in my group were brother Abu-Anas al-Sharqi from Saudi Arabia, brother Abu-Ja'far al-Yamani, may God have mercy on his soul, and brother Abu-Jihad al-Masri. We withdrew to a hospital and I fled the next morning because I never liked hospitals. We reached the Kabul guesthouse. The secretary of the Kabul front brother Abu-Muhammad al-Masri told me: Take command of the Kabul guesthouse. That was the highest task I was given in the Al-Qa'ida Organization. I was the commander of the Kabul Guesthouse.

(Al-Hammadi) How long did you serve as the commander of the Kabul Guesthouse?

(Al-Bahri) I served for about six months.

(Al-Hammadi) What was the role that the guesthouse played?

(Al-Bahri) It was a rest house and a link between those who arrived from outside Afghanistan via Jalalabad and those who returned from the fronts or the military camps. There, the men were distributed at the fronts and camps. The guesthouse played the role of deploying mujahidin at various fronts and giving them assignments. It facilitated and arranged their movements. It carried out all tasks related to these things.

(Al-Hammadi) Where did you move after these six months during which you served as a commander of the Guesthouse?

(Al-Bahri) At that time, a large part of the Kabul front fell. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin ordered the evacuation of all wounded and injured and kept only the able bodied to help defend Kabul. Because I was injured, Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin decided to pull me to the Khowst camps where Shaykh Usama was there at that time. When I arrived in Khowst, he told me: Stay here until your wounds are healed and then we will see where we will send you.

At that time a tactics course was being held at the (Jihad Wal) camp. Brother Abu-Ata was supposed

to do the training. I said: Shaykh Abu-Abdallah (Usama Bin Ladin), I would like to take this course. He said: No, come with me to Qandahar. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin had decided to send one of his married guards to do the training and put me in his place among the guards. At the last moment, he said: All right, Abu-Jandal stays here and let this man come with me. Thus, I was able to fully take this course on tactics. After the course, I stayed at the camp for several months. I then sent a letter to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin in which I told him that I was tired of staying in the camp. I asked him to give me a task outside of Afghanistan or allow me to return to Yemen to get married.

When he read my letter he was disturbed. He said: Send for him and let him come to me. I went to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin and he asked me: What is your problem? I told him: Shaykh I feel exasperated. I am aware that this haste is a personal flaw and this is the nature of the people in the Arabian Peninsula as a whole. Even the Prophet, may God's peace and blessings be upon him, said that they were restless people. Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin then told me: Be patient, wait. I told him: Shaykh I can wait no longer. He said: Go back to the camp and I will see what I can do.

Whenever he saw me he seemed to invent tasks for me to keep me busy because he knew that I was not of the type that could stay in one place for a long time without doing anything. He used to tell the commanders; Keep Abu-Jandal preoccupied so he might not preoccupy us. Therefore, I always assumed tasks and moved from one place to another.

(Al-Hammadi) Did this period of time make you closer to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin?

(Al-Bahri) Yes, I became very close to Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin at that time because of my continuous participation in many tasks and my continuous movement in between positions that were close to him. I used to participate in solving many problems that faced the young men. Moreover, I was within Shaykh Usama Bin Ladin's personal guards, given the fact that I was not married. I was always tasked with quick and urgent missions.

(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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POWERED BY **Dialog****Former Bin Ladin Bodyguard Describes Al-Qa'ida Leader's Personal Life****Report on an interview with Nasir al-Bahri, Usama Bin Ladin's personal bodyguard, by Khalid al-Hammadi, in Sanaa; date not given: "Al-Qa'ida Organization from Inside as Reported by Abu-Jandal, Nasir Al-Bahri (6)"***AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI**Wednesday, March 30, 2005 T04:22:56Z***Journal Code:** 1430 **Language:** ENGLISH **Record Type:** FULLTEXT**Document Type:** FBIS Translated Text**Word Count:** 5,219

In the wake of the 11 September events much was written in various languages about Usama Bin Ladin's Al-Qa'ida organization. However, all those accounts were written by persons outside the organization and were no more than journalistic efforts or accounts based on intelligence reports. Some were perhaps fairly accurate but most were not. For this reason Al-Quds al-Arabi has tried to present something different and more closely accurate and conducted this long series of diary entries and memoirs of a former personal bodyguard of Usama Bin Ladin. His name is Nasir Al-Bahri but he is known as Abu-Jandal. Through this person we tried to open the closed doors, visit Al-Qa'ida's forbidden realm, and dive deep into its depth through one of the most important individuals who had much information about it and about its organizational structure.

Abu-Jandal is a highly cultured young man of great intelligence. He is a good talker with a quick intellect and an excellent memory who dazzles you with his perceptive replies whenever you try to besiege him with questions. On top of all this he has a muscular build, which accounts perhaps for his selection as Bin Ladin's bodyguard.

He returned from Afghanistan to Yemen around two months before the bombing of the USS Cole in Aden port in 2000. He was later arrested and spent one year and 10 months in a Yemeni jail, including one month in solitary confinement.

He now lives free in his home country, specifically in Sanaa. He leads a normal life, walks freely in the streets, and conducts his business as he wants. He is not completely free, however, of the watchful eyes of the local and foreign "watchmen". He cannot leave Sanaa and is forbidden to reside in another part of Yemen. His communications are under constant surveillance.

We made continuous efforts for six months to open the files that he knows, but our requests were at first consistently denied. Sometimes we would get a preliminary approval to interview him but then the approval would be withdrawn. Finally we succeeded in seizing this opportunity to conduct and present this series of episodes that takes the reader on a voyage in the ocean of Al-Qa'ida and allows him hidden views of its founder and leader Usama Bin Ladin's life, beginning with his religious upbringing in Saudi Arabia, his sojourn in Sudan, and the organization's activities in Africa. The account then moves on to Bin Ladin's personal life and the lives of other Al-Qa'ida members in Afghanistan, where the organization moved at one point and where it is still located. Al-Qa'ida used that country as a springboard to execute the most famous and most serious military operations carried out by a non-governmental group. The United States calls this activity "terrorism" while Al-Qa'ida

refers to it as "jihad," an activity that has marked an important junction in global politics.

In this episode Abu-Jandal speaks about his military duty as personal bodyguard to Bin Ladin and Al-Qa'ida leader's personal and social life.

Abu-al-Sha'tha, a Man Who Accuses Others of Disbelief (subhead)

(Al-Hammadi) When exactly were you chosen to be Bin Ladin's personal bodyguard?

(Abu-Jandal) I was chosen to be Bin Ladin's personal bodyguard after I completed all my training courses and after I served for a long time as a member of the group that guards him. I was then given the task of being his personal bodyguard, a task to which I devoted all my time.

(Al-Hammadi) How were you personally chosen for this duty? Were your earlier duties meant to be a test for you?

(Abu-Jandal) My earlier duties helped to strengthen trust between him and me and he became convinced of my abilities. However, there was a specific incident after which I was chosen. During my service as a member of the group that protected him an incident occurred during which I acted spontaneously in a manner that demonstrated my alertness. My behavior drew the attention of Shaykh Usama and the other senior leaders around him including brother Sayf al-Adl. The details were like this: We were sitting in a gathering in Kandahar and a man belonging to the takfiri stream (repudiation, which accuses other Muslims of disbelief) arrived. He was called Abu-al-Sha'tha the Sudanese. Right there in the gathering he began to speak offensively and rudely to Shaykh Usama. Because I moved around the city a lot I recognized the man as a member of the Renunciation and Repudiation Group.

When Abu-al-Sha'tha then drew close to Shaykh Usama, I spoke out: "Shaykh Abu-Abdallah (Bin Ladin), allow me to sit next to you. He replied: "No, there is no need." I repeated my request and insisted on it because I was afraid for his safety and feared that the man might do him harm. I loved Shaykh Usama deeply and, indeed, after a while I stopped calling him shaykh and started calling him "Uncle."

Finally after a lot of entreaties on my part, Bin Ladin said: Come and sit behind this door that is next to me. I went behind the door and kept looking out for any sudden movement from that Sudanese believer in repudiation in the direction of Shaykh Usama fearing that he might assault him or even try to assassinate him.

Shaykh Usama meanwhile kept his hand on his pistol while talking with the man. Finally the Sudanese man did something strange and stretched out his hand towards Shaykh Usama. Without thinking I threw myself on the man, pulled his arms behind his back, and sat on top of him until he could no longer move. He screamed for help and said: "I did not do anything." I told him to keep quiet or I would remove his head from his body. Shaykh Usama laughed and said: "Abu-Jandal, let the man be." Afterwards he told me to take the man out of the house and lead him away.

My quick and strong response caught the attention of Shaykh Usama and the senior Egyptian organization members. After that day Shaykh Usama gave me a pistol and made me his personal bodyguard. The pistol had only two bullets, for me to kill Shaykh Usama with in case we were surrounded or he about to fall into the enemy's hands so that he would not be caught alive.

(Al-Hammadi) Did Bin Ladin give you the authority to kill him in such an event?

(Abu-Jandal) Yes, he did. I was the only member of his bodyguard who was given this authority and I was to use this pistol. I took care to keep the two bullets in good condition and cleaned them every night, while telling myself: These are Shaykh Usama's bullets. I pray to God not to let me use them. May God be praised, my prayers were answered and I was not forced to use them. According to our security arrangements, if enemy forces surrounded Shaykh Usama and there was no possibility that he would escape, I was to kill him before they could catch him alive. For six months, the period during which I was personal bodyguard, I constantly stood behind his back and accompanied him round the clock. I went with him everywhere, except on very few specific occasions.

(Al-Hammadi) Was Bin Ladin afraid that his enemies, especially the Americans, might find out a particular thing or discover secrets that he kept under wraps?

(Abu-Jandal) He was not afraid of any particular thing. He just took precautions. He had stature, he made the decision to carry out jihad against the Americans, and he had become a symbol of the Islamic nation as someone who stood up to the Americans to defend the nation. If something happened to him, the nation would suffer moral and psychological defeat. However, if he refused to be captured alive, he would become a martyr, not a captive, and his blood would become a beacon that arouses the zeal and determination of his followers. I remember that he used to say: "Martyrdom rather than captivity." This was his frank view.

(Al-Hammadi) During your work as Bin Ladin's personal bodyguard, what was your exact duty, just to defend him or did you have other duties?

(Abu-Jandal) My basic duty was to defend Shaykh Usama. Sometimes, however, he sent me as his representative to some Al-Qa'ida outposts and camps. I was regarded as his representative during debates. He sometimes instructed me to visit some military outposts to talk to people about certain issues that troubled them. I sometimes examined those issues and their causes and presented my view to Shaykh Usama to make a decision. These missions on which he sent me kept me sometimes away from him.

A Spartan Lifestyle (subhead)

(Al-Hammadi) What were these issues that troubled some Al-Qa'ida members?

(Abu-Jandal) Actually there were rivalries among Al-Qa'ida members depending on their countries of origin. The Egyptians used to boast about being Egyptian. The Saudis, Yemenis, Sudanese, and Arab Maghreb citizens used to do the same thing sometimes. This troubled Shaykh Usama and he used to send me to them to help eliminate these regional rivalries because the enemies of God, those who have sickness in their hearts, and informants would exploit these ignorant attitudes and try to sow divisions and disagreements among Al-Qa'ida members.

(Al-Hammadi) Did you like the role of being official spokesman for Bin Ladin?

(Abu-Jandal) No, I was not exactly that. I regarded myself as someone properly educated by Shaykh Usama. I regarded him as a father. I believed that if we wished to confront our strong enemy or confront the broad front that the United States wielded against us, we needed to entrench amity among ourselves and eliminate regional rivalries. The shaykh himself did not personally intervene in these issues and I frequently intervened to solve these problems in my own way, even without telling the

shaykh because I used to regard myself as being one with Usama Bin Ladin, one with as Al-Qa'ida organization, and one with the Islamic nation.

(Al-Hammadi) Through your work with him, how would you describe Usama Bin Ladin's personal life?

(Abu-Jandal) I can say no more than Shaykh Abdallah Azzam, may he rest in peace, said: I urge you to do only good deeds to Usama Bin Ladin, for he is a whole nation embodied in one man. He really shoulders the nation's cause. I never saw him paying attention to what he wore or to his personal belongings. He was very simple in all he did, even in his treatment of the young men around him. He used to sit with us and eat and drink with us. In the wake of the bombing of the two US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998, we were under economic siege and we experienced financial difficulties. Once I was in charge of a post near Kandahar Airport. It was empty because the families living in it had left and gone to the city. Shaykh Usama came to visit us and asked: What are you eating today? I replied: Rice and potatoes. He said: May God be praised, you are richer than we are. I asked: Richer than you, how? He said: We ate bread and yoghurt today. He used to lead a very simple life.

I remember that I told him: Shaykh, the situation here is difficult for the young men. I am here in charge of 40 Arabs and Afghans and we have no money or anything to eat. He laughed and said: My son, Jandal, we have not yet reached a condition like that of the prophet's companions who placed stones against their middles and tightened them around their waists. The messenger of Allah used two stones. I looked at him and said: Abu-Abdallah, those were men who had strong faith and God tested them, but we are weak and God will not test us in the same way. He looked at me in astonishment and said: Are you really saying these words? I replied: Yes, those men were strong in faith and God wished to test them. We, on the other hand, have sinned and God would not test us. Shaykh Usama laughed.

Imagine a man with the kind of resources he had, the cause he embraced, and his stature as a leader, sitting with us and eating rice and potatoes. I remember that at one period, we used to eat dried bread and water only. Shaykh Usama used to take the hard bread, dip it in the water and eat it, saying: May God be praised. We are eating but there are millions of others who wish they could have something like this to eat.

So we never really felt afraid as long as we were with that man. We ate with him, walked with him. Our love for Shaykh Usama springs from the fact that we went hungry together and were filled together. We felt afraid with him and felt safe with him. We wept and rejoiced with him. We were joined by a common destiny. We lived a full life with him without discrimination. The man was very simple in all his dealings and in everything in his life. Nevertheless he bore the nation's concerns and he did that very cleverly. In that aspect of his character he was very astute. His simple way of dealing with others and his tolerance towards those who offended him made everyone around him love him dearly.

I remember that Abu-Sha'tha the Sudanese, who once tried to assault Shaykh Usama in Kandahar, issued a statement against Bin Ladin, called him a disbeliever, an apostate, and a renegade from the Islamic nation. Shaykh Usama forgave him and ordered that he be given \$200 when Abu-Sha'tha wished to leave Afghanistan. He did this despite the suspicions that surrounded Abu-Sha'tha and his behavior.

Our life with Shaykh Usama, his honorable character, tolerance, and easy dialogue with others caused

us to become very attached to him. He was consistently very generous with others. No one ever came to ask for financial assistance and was rebuffed. I remember in this context that we once passed through a very difficult financial situation. An Arab brother who wished to travel abroad came and explained his difficult circumstances to him. Shaykh Usama went into the house, came out with whatever money his family had, which was around \$100, and gave it to the man.

I was aware of the shaykh's financial situation and said: Abu-Abdallah, why did you not leave a part of that money for us. Those who are staying here are more deserving than those who are leaving. He replied: Our situation is not hard. God will send us money. Do not worry. Our livelihood will come to us. For five days after this incident we had nothing to eat except pomegranates which grew around his house although they were not yet ripe. We ate raw pomegranates with bread, three times a day. I believe that God raised Usama Bin Ladin to a high status because despite his great wealth, he was very modest, attached only to what rewards God would give him, and his preference for the afterlife over this world.

(Al-Hammadi) It is well known that Bin Ladin is a multimillionaire. How could he have reached a situation of poverty or almost absolute need?

(Abu-Jandal) Shaykh Usama dealt with money from a special perspective. He preferred that he and his followers should live very economically and poorly so that they could learn to bear hardships and overcome crises, no matter how extreme. For this reason he followed a path of austerity and renunciation of worldly goods as an educational method that enhances people's ability to endure. Many other jihadist organizations were infiltrated with the help of money and luxury. This happened because their members lived in luxury and could not face hardship.

(Al-Hammadi) Did this austere style of living also extend to his family and children?

(Abu-Jandal) Yes, he treated his family and children in the same way. He brought his children up in a simple way of life to teach them self-reliance in everything. I remember that when we were staying at the Kandahar Airport post, his son Sa'd came and said: Father, I wish to get married. The father said: This does not concern me. Rely on yourself. The son said: What should I do? Shaykh Usama replied: Take this plot of land and this budget. Till the land and from the revenue that you get, save money and get married. And actually the son tilled the land and raised crops. His father merely gave him advice on how to do it. Thus he relied on himself and got enough money to get married. Shaykh Usama used to give to each of his sons a plot of agricultural land and a budget to cultivate it, telling him: Till the land and from the revenue you can have an income.

His sons used to rely on themselves in working the land from the time of plowing until they collected the harvest and sold it in the market. Bin Ladin accustomed his sons to shoulder responsibility and rely on themselves, not on their father's millions. I used to hear him telling his sons: Sons, your father's millions about which you hear are not for your father to use. This money is for the Muslims and I hold it as a trust for the cause of God. Not one riyal of it is for you. Each of you is a man. Let him rely on himself. His sons actually worked and each developed an income of his own that he obtained with his sweat. This was the kind of life to which Shaykh Usama accustomed his sons.

(Al-Hammadi) When you were staying at the Kandahar complex, did Bin Ladin spend most of his time with Al-Qa'ida members or with his three wives who were staying with him in the same place?

(Abu-Jandal) I spent most of my time with him because I was his personal bodyguard. When his family moved with him from one place to another, as when he visited Kabul for example, the group of

bodyguards which consisted of 14-16 men traveled with him. His family, which consisted of his wives and children, used to ride in a bus accompanied by a vehicle full of guards. His three wives lived in one house that had only one floor. They lived in perfect harmony. Shaykh Usama was firm in managing his household's affairs just as he was firm in handling matters outside his home. We never heard about any conflict among the wives.

Disagreement between Bin Ladin and his Eldest Son Abdallah (subhead)

(Al-Hammadi) At what point did your task of guarding Bin Ladin stop?

(Abu-Jandal) My responsibility used to end at the door of his home. Sometimes his sons used to work with us as guards. Their responsibility, however, continued inside the house. We used to accompany him to the door and call out to his sons: Come and assume your duty. We used to stay outside the door and around the house to guard it.

(Al-Hammadi) Did the situation continue after his marriage to the Yemeni young woman Amal al-Sadah?

(Abu-Jandal) No, this situation existed prior to his marriage to his fourth wife, the Yemeni woman. It continued up to the time I returned to Yemen to get married myself. The shaykh's Yemeni wife left for Afghanistan one year after I got married.

(Al-Hammadi) Did all of Bin Ladin's children live with him in Afghanistan?

(Abu-Jandal) Yes, except for his eldest son Abdallah and two of the children of his former wife Umm Ali whom he divorced while living in Sudan. She returned to Saudi Arabia with her children, a boy called Ali and his sister. His eldest son Abdallah returned to Saudi Arabia after making an arrangement with his uncles and the Saudi ruling family. He wanted to return and settle in Saudi Arabia.

(Al-Hammadi) Why did his eldest son return to Saudi Arabia and abandon his father's jihadist path?

(Abu-Jandal) Abdallah returned to Saudi Arabia because his views did not agree with his father's. As he saw it, he came from a wealthy family and deserved to live well on the money that his family had. This view was at complete variance with his father's. Shaykh Usama avoided mentioning Abdallah's name after this or talk about the story because he had been hurt by him. He wished that his eldest son had remained with him to help him. He respected his son's wishes, however, and allowed him to return to Saudi Arabia when the son decided to do so.

(Al-Hammadi) What about his wives? Did you ever hear that they complained about their austere lives with him? Did they try to rebel against him like his eldest son?

(Abu-Jandal) It happened only once. His wife Umm Ali asked Shaykh Usama for divorce when they still lived in Sudan. She said that she could not continue to live in an austere way and in hardship. He respected her wish and divorced her in accordance with the Koranic verse "husband and wife should either live together equitably or separate in kindness." The other wives stayed with him, however, although they come from distinguished families and are highly educated. His wives Umm Hamzah and Umm Khalid both have doctoral degrees, one in Arabic language and the other in Islamic shari'ah.

(Al-Hammadi) Are all Bin Ladin's wives of Saudi origin?

(Abu-Jandal) One comes from a Syrian family, like his mother. Two are Saudis. His fourth and last wife whom he married after divorcing Umm Ali is a Yemeni. He married his first wife Umm Abdallah, who is a Syrian, while he was still in his twenties. The other wives he married after he embarked on a life of jihad. I know that his wife Umm Khalid is of Al-Sharif family and was the sister of one of his jihadist comrades, who offered her hand to him in marriage and Shaykh Usama agreed.

(Al-Hammadi) What about his Yemeni wife? It is said you played a role in arranging that marriage.

(Abu-Jandal) Regarding Shaykh Usama's marriage to his latest wife the Yemeni Amal al-Sadah, a Yemeni citizen made the initial arrangements. I had no opportunity to meet with him, however. My mission consisted of taking the dowry from Shaykh Usama and carrying it to the bride's family. The shaykh gave me \$5,000 and told me to deliver it to a certain man in Yemen and that man in his turn took the money to the bride's family. I did not know at that time that the money was a dowry for Shaykh Usama's bride. I found out later. When I decided to return to Afghanistan the brothers asked me to take Shaykh Usama's bride and the male relatives accompanying her with me. I waited for two more months in Yemen for that purpose and finally I could wait no more and I left. The bride and her male relatives followed me a month later. We held a splendid wedding ceremony for the shaykh in Kandahar in which his wives and children participated. Songs and merriment were mixed with the firing of shots into the air.

(Al-Hammadi) Did he have any children by his Yemeni wife?

(Abu-Jandal) In fact I left Afghanistan for the final time shortly after his Yemeni wife arrived. I heard later that she had given birth to a daughter.

(Al-Hammadi) With all the pursuit to which Usama Bin Ladin and Al-Qa'ida members were subjected, did you hear if his wives stayed with him or returned to their original countries?

(Abu-Jandal) After my final departure from Afghanistan, which occurred two months prior to the bombing of the US destroyer Cole in Aden in 2000, I heard that all his wives stayed with him in Afghanistan except for his first wife Umm Abdallah who left before the incidents and could not return.

(Al-Hammadi) How many children does Bin Ladin have from all his wives?

(Abu-Jandal) I do not know the exact number. There are many but I remember that his male children who were with him in Kandahar up to the time I left the country were nine. If we add Abdallah and Ali, the number of his male children would rise to 11 from all his wives except the last one, the Yemeni wife. As to daughters, there is no possibility of knowing the number.

(Al-Hammadi) What was Bin Ladin's social life like, I mean with his family and children outside the house? Was there room in his life for recreation?

(Abu-Jandal) He used to go the wilderness outside Kandahar with all his wives and little children. I, Hamzah al-Ghamidi, and a third companion, a Yemeni, were the only persons allowed to accompany them on such outings. He would ride with us in his private car and his family would ride in a bus. His grown sons would follow us on horseback although the distance was about one hour by car. He would then sit with his wives and we used to take the car far from that place so that he would not see us and we would not see him. We would communicate by radio. In that place he would teach his wives how to use firearms. They would play together and do some simple physical exercises. He used to lead a

normal family life.

(Al-Hammadi) Bin Ladin is shown sometimes riding a horse. Did he like to ride horses? Did he do it often?

(Abu-Jandal) He was a fine horseman who loved horses. He did not ride daily, however, but he had a lot of experience with horses. He knew about pedigree and could tell a horse's likely lineage by simply looking at it. Perhaps his early wealthy life and his contacts with the Saudi ruling family taught him that because the ruling family members love horses and racing. Other members of the Bin Ladin family also loved horses. Shaykh Usama, moreover, loved horses from a purely religious perspective because the prophet, may God's prayers and peace be with him, used to say: "There is goodness in horses until the Day of Judgment." Bin Ladin loved horses from this perspective and he sometimes arranged horse races among the organization's members. Once he came and asked me: "Can you ride a horse, Abu-Jandal?" I said: "I can drive anything but I cannot ride a horse." He said "What a shame" and instructed me to take lessons but I evaded the training and did not finish the course.

(Al-Hammadi) Were there any events that you found moving during your association with Bin Ladin?

(Abu-Jandal) We experienced such situations with Shaykh Usama. An official Taliban delegation headed by Prime Minister Mullah Mohammad Hasan Rabbani visited him on a certain feast after returning from Saudi Arabia. At the beginning of the visit they expressed a wish to be introduced to all those who were present. The brothers began introducing themselves: I am so and so from Egypt, I am so and so from Algeria, I am an Egyptian and my name is, I am from Iraq, I am from Morocco. Mullah Rabbani looked at Bin Ladin and said: Shaykh Usama, we have not heard anyone say I am from the Gulf. The Saudis have said that you do not have with you anyone from your country, the people of the cause. They say that all those around you are a group of Egyptians, not from Saudi Arabia or the Arabian Peninsula. Shaykh Usama was provoked by this comment and said: What do they mean I have no people from the Arabian Peninsula? He turned to one of our young companions who was standing by the door and said: Call our Arab brothers. More than 70 men showed up.

Shaykh Usama began introducing them: So and so from Mecca, so and so from Yemen, so and so from Jedda, this man from Riyadh, et cetera.

The situation completely changed and the Egyptian brothers felt lost among so many people from the Arabian Peninsula. Mullah Rabbani's eyes filled with tears and he said: All these are people from the land of the two holy mosques. He assured Shaykh Usama that the Taliban would always defend him and his followers despite the pressure that Saudi Arabia was putting on the Taliban movement. He told him: As long as all these men are with you, then you have men and do not need us. Still we consider ourselves your allies.

These words were very moving to Shaykh Usama and most of the young men who were present. This was one occasion when I saw him show emotion. He was moved not because of personal pride or out of a wish to be the leader of a cause merely in name. No, the cause he embraced had become a general cause and many people joined him in defending it. It was not Usama Bin Ladin's cause but had become the cause of many people around him in that region. On many occasions Shaykh Usama showed disregard for worldly goods and an inclination to austere living although he possessed millions and did not need to live like that. He felt that he drew close to God by doing this.

(Al-Hammadi) Did Bin Ladin really suffer from chronic illnesses?

(Abu-Jandal) Through my close association with him I never noticed that he suffered from any illness except some acute inflammation of his vocal cords. This was caused by a chemical weapons attack that affected his throat during his jihad against the Soviet forces. This did not affect him much but whenever he spoke for a long time with those around him, he needed to drink a lot of water. So whenever he gave an interview to a journalist he used to spend a whole day after that communicating only by gesture to preserve his ability to speak. Apart from this the man was fit and in good health. I remember that he even used to ride in horse races with the young men for distances of up to 70 km without stopping. If he had suffered from an illness, he would not have been able to do that.

(Al-Hammadi) What were his likes and dislikes?

(Abu-Jandal) To put it very briefly, he hated hypocrisy, lies, and flattery. He never allowed anyone to come to him and flatter or praise him. He liked the young men around him to be frank, devoted to their work, and sincere in discussing and handling issues.

(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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