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A Survey of Islamic Fundamentalist Activism in Central Asia and the Caucasus

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*A Survey of Islamic Fundamentalist Activism in
Central Asia and the Caucasus*

**Stephen R. Bowers
Valeria Ciobanu**

Executive Summary

In almost every part of this region, there are indications of Islamic fundamentalist activism.

The goals of the region's Islamic fundamentalist groups include mobilization of Islamic faithful into radical activities, planning for sabotage of US military operations, and working to overthrow secular regimes.

Al Qaeda activity was observed primarily in Azerbaijan and in Uzbekistan.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which has very close ties with the Taliban, plays an increasingly Pan-Central Asian role and is active throughout most of the region. IMU is joined by Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HUT) in this regional role. While HUT enjoys widespread influence in the region, it eschews the violent tactics employed by IMU.

A primary local concern is the extent to which events in Afghanistan will draw the nations into a broader conflict.

There is evidence of Chinese activity in Kyrgyzstan with the Sunni group *Harkat-ul-Mojahedin* and *Uighur Question* identified as most active.

While not universally true, it is clear that there are important connections between local Islamic groups and Islamic organizations from outside the region.

There are many significant foreign connections noted by our respondents. Most frequently cited are ties with the Taliban as well as other groups and individuals from Saudi Arabia.

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Concept of This Study

This study is based on a series of interviews with elites within Central Asia and the Caucasus region during the five weeks following the terrorist attacks against the United States. The objective of the survey was to determine the extent of Islamic fundamentalist activism in the region, to make a judgment about the nature and funding of those activities, and to assess the prospects for an expansion of such activities.

Respondents were selected from among the ranks of those whom we would regard as the elites of the region. Many are active in the non-governmental organizations whose work has done much to shape post-Soviet society. Lawyers, teachers, graduate students and businessmen make up the bulk of the respondent group. We chose such individuals because they are most likely to respond to the questions necessary to advance our research interests. As part of the regional elite, they have access to the essential means of communications, by telephone and or e-mail. They are also the people most familiar with contemporary developments and most able to provide us with the insights needed for our research. Respondents are identified only by profession and residence and were assured that we did not intend to publish their names. Finally, while they are not drawn from the ranks of those most likely to support radical Islam, they do have the contacts that enable them to make valid observations about what is happening among those sectors of their nations.

It is important to note that, while this introduces a bias into our responses, our intention was to elicit both information and perceptions about attitudes and activities in a region now regarded as very important to the conduct of US policies. It would have been helpful to engage broader segments of the elite classes but the challenges of what is often an antiquated communication system were such that this was not possible under current circumstances.

Two other important observations are necessary in explaining the nature of our interview process. First, these were one-time only interactions; there was no possibility for a follow-up interview. Consequently, while the evaluation process has often raised questions, those questions could not be directed to the respondents. Second, respondents were assured that while their responses would be published their identities would not be released as part of this study.

All of the completed interviews are reprinted at the back of this study. With a few exceptions, these interviews constitute the entire data base upon which this narrative is based. The exceptions are the small number of remarks, seemingly not relevant to the thrust of our questionnaire, which were sometimes offered by respondents outside the context of the actual questions. Sometimes these statements represented off-hand observations while on other occasions they were things that the respondents did not want written onto the response forms. Four people who were unwilling to submit to the interview itself did offer some observations that were duly noted by our interviewers and reported as casual comments distinct from the interviews themselves. When these

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comments have been determined to be relevant, we have made note of that in this narrative.

For purposes of this survey, our operational definition of Islamic fundamentalism was based on the proposition that this phenomenon is a political ideology that employs Islamic slogans and organizational structures. The symbols and institutions of Islam are part of a revolutionary movement that aims at the destruction of the current political and social system. Islamic fundamentalism, as noted by many of the respondents in this survey, now represents an ideological substitute for Marxism-Leninism in many parts of the former USSR.

Observations: Regional Activism

The most important observation drawn from our interviews relates to the question of whether or not there are indications of Islamic fundamentalist activism in this region. In fact, it is easier to note the exceptions than to indicate those places experiencing this phenomenon. According to our respondents, the exceptional areas are Armenia, the Krasnodar region, Kavkazkie Mineralnie Vodi, and, to a certain extent, Rostov on the Don. With regard to Rostov, Professor Larisa Hopiorskaia has suggested that there is a Vahabist movement in the area that, at the present time, has little influence. They are, however, she explains, working to bring together scattered Vahabist groups and may eventually become a significant actor in this region.

Otherwise, the interviews demonstrate that Islamic fundamentalism is a growing political force in the region. Moreover, the groups cooperate within the region itself and have, as is noted below, significant extra-regional ties. The most important assumption here is that Islam is being politicized and that this process has accelerated since the commencement of hostilities in Afghanistan.

Observations: Groups, Goals, Tactics, and Strategies

Throughout Central Asia, the IMU and HUT are most consistently cited for their activism. Both play an increasingly regional role and generally operate on the basis of small cells of no more than five people. While the two groups make common cause on the central issues of this conflict, it is important to note that HUT has generally been associated only with non-violent tactics. There is a consensus among our respondents that the HUT is probably the most widely and effectively organized group in this region. Observers credit it with being very effective in its educational endeavors, thus creating a large organizational base that, while operating with a high degree of secrecy, has greatly increased its influence in places such as the Fergana Valley. It is associated with successful propaganda as well as charitable programs.

Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda group has been observed in several locations in recent years. Among our respondents, Al Qaeda activity was observed in Azerbaijan and in Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, these activities have been designed to recruit local people to

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join with Osama bin Laden's organization, either for work within their own nation or elsewhere in Central Asia.

In southern Russia, there is a much greater saturation of Russian and secular culture. As a result, there is apparently less of a fundamentalist threat here. While there was one reference to the Wahabist movement in the Rostov region, elsewhere there was an assumption that the threat of Islamic radicalism was relatively limited in southern Russia. We completed only three interviews in this region but an additional three people, two journalists and one university professor, refused to participate, arguing that there were no such activities in the region and that comments about non-existent activity would not be helpful. Two of the three people who did complete the interview stated that there was no significant activity at this time.

Respondents also note some activity by the Uighurs who are Turkic speakers originally from Xinjiang Province in China and are often denounced by the Chinese as terrorists. Since September 11th, there has been renewed pressure with regard to the Uighurs, pressure generated by the Chinese government as well as by suggestions that the Uighurs could be making common cause with Muslims in the former USSR. Two respondents in Kyrgyzstan, both of who were rather confident about the local situation, commented upon Uighur activities. The *Uighur Question* was the group mentioned most in connection with such activities and, according to a retired police official, this group calls for a "holy war".

Also in Kyrgyzstan, the Sunni group *Harkat-ul-Mojahedin* has been active in recent years. Where there is evidence of activism by Chinese Muslims, their primary goal is to incorporate their ambitions with those of other fundamentalist groups in Central Asia. In so doing, they hope to create a "united Islamic front" that will work for the creation of an Eastern Turkestan.

Observations: Foreign Connections and Funding

One of the most important concerns in our study is the examination of foreign connections and funding for the fundamentalist groups. When questioned about funding, there was a clear pattern indicating foreign support but the sources of that support varied widely and from state to state.

Most significant indications point to several nations as sources of funding. Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan are implicated in supporting Wahhabite groups in Azerbaijan while Azerbaijan's Shiite followers are supported by Iran. Saudi Arabia appears as a key donor to groups in Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Indian sources are reportedly supporting fundamentalists in Kazakhstan while the Taliban is cited throughout most of Central Asia for its contributions to the radical Islamic cause.

While there are reports of members actually making financial contributions to their groups, most forms of self-support come in the form of criminal endeavors. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is most frequently identified in this context. Black market exchanges, the sale of counterfeit pharmaceuticals, and illegal weapons sales are its primary activities.

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Overseas connections in general are more diverse than the funding sources cited above. Many connections are of a cultural nature and have less significance for radical activism. Respondents from Kazakhstan provided information of varied and relatively benign relationships with Islamic organizations from other nations. While Afghanistan and Pakistan have close ties in Kazakhstan, there is little enthusiasm among the Kazakhs for Islamic fundamentalism.

International connections with groups in Azerbaijan are among the most diverse and include a wide variety of well-known organizations. Al Qaeda, the Egyptian “Islamic Jihad”, the Pakistani “Lashkar-I-toiba”, “Dgeishula”, and the Iranian “Hizbollah” group. In Central Asia, there is a routine pattern of international connections that focus heavily on Afghanistan – largely the Taliban but also Al Qaeda – and demonstrate the regional role of the IMU and HUT. Kyrgyzstan, of course, is experiencing some involvement by the Uighurs.

Observations: The Fundamentalist Appeal

While our respondents were not generally associated with the fundamentalist groups, they did offer valuable insight into the appeal of radical Islamic in the former USSR. Very broadly, that appeal can be found in three areas: (1) economic, (2) political, and (3) psychological.

The economic motivations are pronounced throughout Central Asia and the Caucasus region and represent the most common theme in our interviews. As an Uzbek respondent noted, many young people “are desperate about their job prospects. They feel that there is no future for them here but don’t know where else to go.”

A student interviewee in Turkmenistan points out another facet of the current economic crisis when he observes that the absence of educational opportunities makes it difficult for people to develop the skills needed for survival. Thus, going to training camps in Afghanistan, simply to learn combat skills, fills an educational vacuum.

Political motivations are reflected in several concerns cited by respondents in most of these new states. Many people have absorbed enough history of the glory of Islamic countries in the past to feel ashamed of current conditions. They feel that Islam has been under attack since the Crusades of the 11th century. As an Uzbek businessman remarked, many of the young radicals are attracted by the idea of being part of something important. To join a radical group would make them part of history.

Government oppression adds to the political appeal of radical fundamentalism. Where the regimes are especially oppressive, even the educated, hoping for some improvement in their situation, praise the fundamentalists for their opposition to Russian influence.

It is also important to recognize, as several respondents noted, that the repudiation of the Marxist Leninist philosophy has created a political vacuum. Islam dramatically fills the need for a faith that can provide political as well as social and spiritual guidance.

The psychological dimension of the fundamentalist appeal is demonstrated by the role of Islam in providing spiritual and social guidance. The interviews make the point that radical Islam often provides a sense of purpose and accomplishment. In addition,

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membership in such groups brings the prospect of adventure and travel to other countries, and, sometimes, even the possibility of receiving money in compensation for their endeavors.

One of the most significant points is that the Islamic fundamentalist groups are often seen as fighters, especially by young people. They project an image of rebellion against corrupt secular authority as well as an air of reverence for the tenets of the Islamic faith. Membership in such an organization, as noted above, enables someone to become a part of history.

An important psychological element of the fundamentalist appeal is that an association with such groups may often serve to boost the status of those who become members. In the post-Soviet environment, religion in general benefited from the perception that it represented a counter-value to Marxist-Leninism. Joining a radical group has become a vehicle of social advancement. While most of those we interviewed emphasized non-religious motivations for supporting Islamic fundamentalist groups, it is important to note that there are people who are genuinely religious, not motivated primarily by a desire for personal advancement, and actually join movements for these reasons. Respondents in Kyrgyzstan noted evidence of sincere religiosity where the HUT is the primary beneficiary of such motivations.

Observations: Attitudes Toward the West

Attitudes toward the West, throughout the region, are inconsistent. As one might expect, there are communities in which there are strong anti-Western feels as well as communities in which the West is highly regarded among significant sectors of the population.

According to some respondents, in Kazakhstan there is more popular support for the United States than for Osama Bin Laden. There is even a perception that a US-Russian alliance will serve to protect Kazakhstan from the Taliban's negative influence.

Among the region's growing refugee population, there is much deeper support for radical fundamentalism. In southern Russia, while there is no evidence of significant sympathy for Osama bin Laden among long-term residents, there is support among the refugee population for anti-American sentiments as well as for bin Laden. In Armenia our respondents express fear that there may be an upsurge in refugee support for radical views because of popular perceptions that US policies are a basic cause of their sufferings.

In Azerbaijan anti-American attitudes were evident before September 11th and have grown since the war on terrorism began. Many Azerbaijanis feel that the United States embraces a "double-standard" by failing to denounce Armenian extremists as terrorists. (See Interview 2)

In Central Asia, attitudes toward the United States vary by social group as does support for Islamic fundamentalism and Osama bin Laden. The most common theme here is that those who are lower in terms of social-economic standards are more likely to accuse the United States of complicity in crimes against Islam. At the same time, they are the people who accept the view of bin Laden as a heroic figure.

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Uzbekistan presented a special case in that US military personnel were entering the region during the time the interviews were conducted. Popular resentment was clearly focused on the issue of a US military presence, something that sparked anti-American feelings among some segments of the population. Many Uzbeks also blame the US for the backwardness of that nation and see American support for Karimov as evidence of a negative American role in their lives.

In the broader region, resentment of the United States was sometimes coupled with anti-Russian feelings. As fighting intensified in Afghanistan and the joint US-Russian role was more visible in the war on terrorism, these feelings became more pronounced.

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December, 2001

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Part Two: Interviews

Interview 1

Journalist

Armenia

Editor's note: This journalist answered our questions based on the situation in Armenia. Obviously the responses fit into a very different category because the circumstances in Armenia are different from the rest of the region. His responses are, nevertheless, interesting because they demonstrate both continuity and discontinuity when one examines this unique state.

Questions 1 through 4

There are no active Islamic organizations in Armenia, since the religion of the country is Christianity. There is a Shiite mosque in Erevan. Iranian specialists reconstructed it, and the Muslims that are temporarily here are visiting it. Besides, the mosque functions as an Iranian cultural center, and it is being visited by the students who are studying oriental studies and also by those who are studying Islam as a religion.

Questions 5 through 7

Islamic priests that work in a mosque and in a cultural center are connected with Iranian embassy as well as with Iranian religious and educational centers, especially with “free Islamic University” in Teheran. All the connections are of scientific nature and are aimed at learning the culture of the East. There are quite a few universities in Erevan (state-owned as well as private); the main profile of which are Oriental studies (they mainly focus on Iran, Turkey, and Arabic countries.) In 2000, the center for Armenian-Iranian relations named “Migr” was found in Erevan. This center works closely with Iranian embassy and organizes events that are mainly of cultural and educational nature.

Since 1992, Erevan also has Caucasus Iranian center, which is supported by the Iranian official authorities, and led by one of the most famous experts in Iranian studies, Garnik Asatryan, who is also a professor at Erevan State University. This center holds scientific seminars and conferences on the regular basis, which are being very popular. It also publishes the scientific magazine “Iran-name” (in Armenian) as well as other works.

Question 8

During the war in Nagorniy-Karabakh that took place from 1993 to 1994, the sub-units of Afghan mujahedin fought on the side of Azerbaijan (from different sources up to 1200 people) who was sent by the Government of Rabbani. It was believed that Afghan Mujahedin were supposed to fight “for their faith – Islam” against the Armenians whom they regarded as “gyauri”. However, after realizing that confrontation between Armenians and Azerbaijanians was not of a religious background and after the visit to Afghanistan by L. Ter-Petrosyan (the president’s advisor) the Taliban decided to call the Mujahedin back home.

During the war in Nagorniy Karabah, Chechens fought on the Azerbaijan’s side. In 1992, it became possible to organize direct negotiations with Chechnya using the diplomatic methods, and to send several captive Chechens back to Grozniy as an act of good will.

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However, a year later, in 1993, groups of Chechens headed by Shamil Basaev went to Nagorny Karabakh in order to fight on the side of Azerbaijan. Shamil Basaev made a decision to fight against Armenians because of religious beliefs. He also was the most famous of the Chechen commanders. The sizes of these groups were varied, starting from platoon-sized organizations going up to company-sized groups. These groups could easily operate independently and conduct small local operations. At the same time, other mercenaries (Afghans and Arabs) fought on the side of Azerbaijan and the Turks). They supported Azerbaijan for religious reasons and they backed the Turks because they felt an ethnic kinship with them.

Shamil Basaev led a detachment of 200 people. It was completely defeated during the battles at Mardakertskiy direction in the spring, 1994. Shamil Basaev with 8 or 10 of his comrades miraculously escaped during the final engagement, thus avoiding being taken captive.

Subsequently, (1996-1999) A.Mashadov, M. Udugov and others, on behalf of the government of Chechnya, made anti-Armenian statements, which were justified, on the basis of Islamic religious beliefs.

In all of this, Osama bin Laden has played no role. While various Afghans have been involved in these disputes, Osama bin Laden enjoyed no popularity or authority of any sort in Armenia. Armenians generally regard him as an evil person.

The Armenian attitude towards American policies is positive, and, in fact, it has become even more so lately. However, a counter-terrorist operation that is being carried out by the United States and Great Britain in Afghanistan causes a lot of concern in Armenia because of the fact that Armenia is located close to the Islamic world. At the same time, a big Armenian diaspora lives in Islamic countries of the Middle East (first of all: Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt), and many people are worried that this counter-terrorist operation will transform into a combat between Christianity and Islam. Consequently, the Armenian diaspora will be in danger. Presumably, under current circumstances, Armenia and its government will do their best in order to save traditionally good relations with Islamic countries.

Armenia is also worried about the fact that the Nagorny Karabakh problem is not solved yet. Theoretically, the escalation of conflict on the religious ground could start at any time between Armenians, who are Christians (actually, Armenia was the first country to adopt Christianity as a government religion), and Azerbaijanians, who are Muslims.

The fact that Islam is becoming more and more popular in Azerbaijan should be considered carefully in connection with the Nagorno-Karabagh conflict. Several factors should be taken into account: (1) a couple of thousand Azerbaijanians are finishing their studies in Iranian religious schools (the majority of them are refugees); (2) most citizens are disappointed in the party power as well as in the opposition parties; and (3) the presence of more than 10 thousands refugees from Chechnya who currently live in Armenia. They claim that their success in the fight against Russia is determined by their utilization of both religion and religious propaganda. This theme is very appealing to Azerbaijan and thus constitutes a threat to Armenian interests.

Question 9

Armenia will never support Islamic fundamentalist organizations. However, Armenians who live in the Islamic countries that are located in the Middle East maintain and will maintain good relations with Islamic organizations of all different types. For example, the traditional Armenian party *Ramkavar-azatakan* in Lebanon is known to have good relations with Shiite organization "*Hezbollah*". These relations help to stabilize the internal political situation in Lebanon, a country where many religions are practiced and many ethnic groups reside.

Unfortunately, all your questions were about Islamic fundamentalist organizations. These organizations have little to do with Armenia because it is a Christian country. Because of this, in my answers, I tried to go over all the matters that could be of any interest to you, including some recent conflicts in Nagorno Karabagh and the Armenian diaspora, even though you did not ask about it in your questionnaire. With best wishes, David Petrosyan, political correspondent for "Noyan Tapan". October 11, 2001

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Interview 2

Baku, Azerbaijan

1. Are fundamentalist organizations active in your area?

Islamic fundamentalists organizations started to show signs of activity in Azerbaijan starting in 1996, however, the time when they had been particularly active was between the years 1998 and 2000. First of all, it is essential to name the organizations, which were connected with the vahabist movement and had the connections with their bother-in-arms in the North Caucasus (Chechnya and Dagestan), as well as in the Arabic world. However, after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, some kind of slowdown is being observed, but at the same time, it is also the result of the preventative actions taken by the Azerbaijan law-enforcement authorities. Special Authorities took a strong control of all the existing radical Muslim organizations. At the same time, the control of all the foreign citizens coming to the country was also strengthened. These initial actions were successful - on October 12, the Ministry of state defense reported the arrest of the Arab, who was a citizen of Egypt. This Arab was suspected in organizing a terrorist act that had taken place on September 11, and he was an active member of Egyptian "Islamic jihad". He also had connections with "Al-Kaida", which was lead by Osama Bin Laden. Arab had been in hiding and fled to Azerbaijan recently, but he was found and arrested after the inquiry of Egyptian authorities. At the same time, it became known that vahhabits appeared in the Azerbaijan regions, which border Russia. They came from Chechnya and Dagestan, and the situation became intense. On October 13, Djavid Muflizade, a 19-year old Azerbaijani who was a member of "Islamic jihad" had been killed during the course of actions in Abhasia. This last fact confirms the seriousness of the situation.

2. What organizations are the most active?

Organizations, which are connected with the vahabist movement, are currently the most dangerous. "Islamic jihad", "Alkaida", "Dgeishulah", and "Hizbut tahrir al-islam" are the most prominent organizations. However, there is also a possibility that other or new organizations will come about. At the same time, we should not forget about the extremist organizations, which are connected with Iran, and about propaganda of Shiites (a different movement in Islam, which is also a current religion in Iran.) They count on the Islamic Party of Azerbaijan and other organizations like "Hizbullah", which have connections with Iran.

3. What are their goals?

The goal of vahhabit (Wahhabi) organizations is to fight with the enemies of Islam, first of all, USA and Israel; Shiite organizations desire to overthrow the Azerbaijan secular government and create an Islamic state.

4. How are these organizations financed?

Vahhabit organizations receive financial support from different kinds of religious organizations in Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Kuwait, and Pakistan. Shiite organizations receive financial support from Iran. The more detailed information about financial support could be found in my report at the Nelson Institute conference in Chisinau on September 29-30.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

As of right now we do not have any detailed information about the organizational structure of extremist organizations. However, it is clear that they are divided in small groups (each is not more than 5 individuals), which know only their leader and are held secretly. At the same time, they do have official places to meet, so they mostly use mosques for their meetings and propaganda. As of today, more than a 100 out of 1200 functioning mosques in Azerbaijan are being controlled by Vahabits, and 600 by Shiites.

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6. Do these organizations have foreign connections?

Without a doubt, not only Muslim extremist organizations in Azerbaijan are closely connected to the similar organizations outside of the country. Sometimes, they are also being subsidiaries of foreign terrorist organizations. For example, underground affiliates of following international terrorist organizations are known to exist in Azerbaijan: "Al-Kaida" (led by Osama bin Laden), Egyptian "Islamic jihad", Pakistani "Lashkar-I-toiba", "Dgeishula", "Hizbut-tahrir-Islam", Iranian "Hizbullah".

7. What is the nature of relations between local groups and those from abroad?

It is difficult to define the nature of a relationship, which mentioned organizations have with each other, as well as with other organizations, because their activities are very secretive and we obtain information only after their arrests and terrorist acts. Based on the information that is currently available to us, we can only be positive about the fact that Shiite organizations strictly obey to the Iranian special authorities. It is hard to discuss the vahabits organizations, because there is insufficient information about them.

8. Does Osama Bin Laden enjoy support locally? What is the popular attitude toward the US?

All above-mentioned organizations are considered to be active in Azerbaijan. Currently, vahabit organizations are the most active. However, organizations that are being controlled by Iran should also be held under the close surveillance, since they can begin their activity if the relations between Azerbaijan and Iran become aggravated. Muslim organizations do not have much support among the population of Azerbaijan so far. However, we cannot exclude the chance that the situation will change. It all depends on the specific situation, the ability of the government to find a solution to the Karabah problem and to improve the economic situation in the country. However, if other countries (for example United States) will try to force Azerbaijan to sign the treaty, this may make the local population feel humiliated and, consequently, cause a fundamentalist Islamic outburst. The increase of negative attitudes towards the West and United States in particular in Azerbaijan has been noticed. People accuse the government of the United States in using the politics of "double standard." When Azerbaijanis think of terrorism, they relate it to the activity of Armenian terrorist organizations (ASALA) against Azerbaijan in 1986-1994. During these events up to 200 people died and about 1800 were injured. However, Armenian terrorist organizations are not being targets for the West and, particularly, for the United States in their war against international terrorism. Moreover, from Azerbaijani's point of view, Western countries are encouraging these organizations. The news about the release of famous Armenian terrorist, Varugan Karapeetyan, has intensified this attitude. This terrorist was sentenced to the death penalty and has been released by French authorities in the beginning of 2001, after he had detonated a bomb in the Orly Airport on July 15, 1983 (as the result of the explosion 8 people died and dozens were injured). He came back to Armenia as a national hero. People in Azerbaijan were hoping that after the vicious terrorist attacks on September 11, United States would realize the threat of terrorist organizations. However, the list of the most dangerous terrorist organizations, published by the United States Department of State in October, was very disappointing for Azerbaijan, because it did not contain Armenian terrorist organizations again. Moreover, on October 15, 2001, almost all the Azerbaijan mass media has published this list of terrorist organizations prepared by the State Department with the following statements: "this list does not contain any Armenian terrorist organizations, because it was put together by Morton Abramyan, Armenian by nationality." Because of this, Azerbaijanis consider the United States war against terrorism in Afghanistan, as a matter of fact, to be the war of Christian East against Muslim West, and this belief is rapidly becoming stronger. As long as more peaceful inhabitants are being killed in Afghanistan, we cannot disregard the increase of negative attitudes towards the West and United States in particular. However, in order to be specific about these kinds of attitude, regular questionnaires, monitoring, and strong attention of the media are needed.

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9. Why would people support Islamic fundamentalism?

Some reasons have already been stated above. They are – unsolved Karabakh conflict with Armenia, sharp economic downturn, and increased amount of refugees. Actually, the negative attitude towards the West and sympathy to the Islamic movements are especially popular among refugees. Azerbaijan might become more forward to the Islam and sympathetic to Islamic fundamentalist organization because of the following reasons: 1) Western countries and the United States do not make public announcements about the Armenian terrorism; 2) United States wants to cancel amendment 907 about providing Azerbaijan with help from the government officials.

Interview 3

BAKU, AZERBAIJAN

1. At the present time are there any signs of military activity coming from Islamic fundamentalist organizations in your region?

There is no military activity. However, in the last year and a half to two years facts have been made public and judicial proceedings have been conducted on the affairs of several radical Islamic groups.

2. If this is occurring, then which organizations appear to be the most active?

Jeshulla, Hezbollah, the Chechens, recently the activities of the Uzbek, Hizb ut Takhir have come to light.

3. What are the goals of the strategic plans they are currently pursuing?

The goals are to overthrow the Azerbaijan government and unify the Caucasus on the basis of Islam.

4. How are these organizations receiving financial support (How does this occur / how is this organized)?

There is information that they are supported by the Iranians and Arabs.

5. How are these organizations structured (the organizational structure)? How do they organize their actions? Individual groups, vicinity, organized groups, parties, religious groups? How do they cooperate?

Small groups.

6. Do these groups have any discernable (or explicit) connections with similar organizations outside the region? If possible, name the organizations.

Hezbollah and Jeshulla – with the Iranians.

7. What kind of cooperation is there between the organizations (within your region and outside your region)? Is there a system of seniority among the organizations? Does one group control another or do they act on an equal basis? Do they put forth any kind of individual goals? If so, what are they?

So far there is no intelligence on the coordination of their efforts.

8. Which Islamic structures and organizations are associated with the military activity?

Does Osama ben Laden utilize any support within the population of your region?

Does there exist within the local population a negative (including even a radically negative) relation to the policy carried out by the United States of America?

He enjoys no support. There isn't any.

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Interview 4

Southern Russia

- 1. Are there any signs of militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?**

There are no signs of Islamic Fundamentalist organizations in my region!

- 2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?**

There are some people who call them wahhab (wahhabism)!

- 3. What strategic goals do they pursue?**

They are pursuing only one goal, live by the canons of Koran! They are not planning any terrorism acts. They are very peaceful, doing prayer 5 times a day, as every Muslim has to do. They are not military active.

- 4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?**

They are supported by the rich Muslims in our region. Actually they don't need a lot of money, (there are 2-3 mosques in my city, and 1 Muslim college), that's about it.

- 8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?**

The structure I mentioned before has no contact with Osama bin Laden what so ever.

- 9. Does the local population of your region have a negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?**

As about the negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States, I have to say that I am the first of all got negative attitude, because I think that it is not the right way to fight terrorism by bombing Kabul and peaceful people that live there.

- 10. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?**

Actually I am not supporting these kind organizations, but we all believe in Allah, and there is not a word in Koran about war, it tell us to live in peace, but some people are using the GREAT power of the religion in their own interests, and that is the problem that is occurring.

Interview 5

University Professor, Researcher, and Journalist

Rostov/Don

- 1. Are Islamic fundamentalist organizations active?**

There is a small amount of vahabists in Rostov district, but they do not have much influence. Primarily, vahabizm is popular in rural areas of Rostov, on the territories, where immigrants from Chechnya and Dagestan are living. The local authorities are controlling their activities, and no signs of military activity are being observed.

- 2. Which organizations are most active?**

The situation in Rostov district is highly correlated with the situation in the Northern Caucasus and the situation in the whole region. Vahabist movement in the region has different kinds of activities (these activities vary from missionary activities to terrorist acts).

- 3. What are their goals?**

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The constant migration of the population, emissary trips of the radical national and religious organizations representatives allow us to summarize their goals in one – creation of the Islamic state from one sea to another.

4. How are these organization financed?

Currently, the subsidiary of the international Islamic organization “Al-Igassa” – “Salvation” (MIOS), which is located in Moscow, is active in Russia. The headquarters of this organization is in Dgida (Saudi Arabia). The division of MIOS also operates in Dagestan. This division finances the building and operation of religious and educational buildings, centers for soldiers’ preparation, the distribution of audio and video tapes and books about vahabist movement. It also recruits and sends young men to the vahabist universities for the education in the extremist spirit. We have information about their activities in the Rostov region as well.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

Separate, small groups of vahabist followers are scattered throughout the region.

6. Do these organizations have foreign connections?

The connection, as a rule, is being kept with the organizations which are active in the region, in those republics where these immigrants came from, and it is of an *ethnic* nature.

7. What is the nature of relations between local groups and foreign organizations?

When financing is taking place, the side that finances the Vahabist organization controls it.

8. Does Osama bin Laden enjoy local support?What are attitudes toward the US?

The local population is on alert towards all the Islamic organizations, building of mosques and functioning of Muslim praying houses. A stereotype of the Muslim-terrorist has formed starting from the terrorist act in Volgodonsk (1999). Osama bin Laden is barely supported by the majority of the Muslim population in the district. These Muslims moved to the territory more than 20 years ago. They want to become permanent residents and do not desire any conflicts with the local population. The immigrants that have moved to the district recently might support Osama bin Laden, but they do not express their attitude in public. The attitude that local population has towards the United States is hard to describe, since it is vague. A chance that there will be a new wave of immigration due to the US actions greatly possible.

9. Why would people in your area support Islamic fundamentalism?

99% of the population does not have reasons to do so and does not support them.

INTERVIEW 6

Researcher
Kislovodsk, Russia

1. Are there any signs of militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

Having examined the situation in the region KMV (Kavkazkie Mineralnie Vodi), I found out that there is no militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations. However, I cannot speak for the broader region.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)?

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

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7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region?

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

No, because people in our region have a very negative reaction to the terrorism as a whole and Islamic terrorism in particular. This attitude stemmed from the terrorist acts that had taken place in P'yatigorsk, Essentuki, and Mineralnie Vodi. These events affected the lives of many people and resulted in a negative attitude towards the terrorist N1 – Osama Bin Laden.

9. Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

No, a lot of people including Muslims support the United States policy. Some people, however, are just being neutral in this regard, simply because they do not follow politics.

10. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalist organizations?

Nothing. There is no support for such tendencies here.

Interview 7

Attorney

Kuban, Krasnodar

1. Are there any signs of military activity of the Islamic Fundamentalists organizations noticed in your region?

According to the mutually accepted terminology, region – is considered to be a part of the Federation. Thus, there are no visible signs of activity of the Islamic Fundamentalists organizations in the Krasnodar region.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?
It is not occurring at this time.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)?

How do they elaborate their actions? For example, is it either groups of individuals or neighborhood, or organized groups, or parties, or religious groups? How do they interact?

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region? Is there a system of seniority between these organizations? Are they being controlled by one another or is there an equality? Does the organization set for itself any goals, and if it does what are these goals?

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

The majority of our people have learned of the Osama bin Laden only after he had been condemned by the Media for hijacking and suicide crashing of the planes in the United States. Nobody is aware of his organization, as well as of what his goals and postulates are. It is impossible to express opinion with regard to something, when the essence of the question is unknown.

The majority of sensible people believe that the military actions should not be commenced in the world, especially in the Middle Asia. The violence leads to violence. The civilized world should be smarter.

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Our goal is to unite our efforts against terrorism and elaborate acceptable methods, strategy, and tactics for fighting against it. The preference should be given to the ideological and psychological influence, and in no case it should be given to the military actions.

Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States? The negative attitude does exist, mainly because of the fact that Krasnodar region is located very close to the Islamic republics and the Near East. I prefer to avoid the word “radical”.

INTERVIEW 8

ATTORNEY

Tashkent - Uzbekistan

1. At the present time are there any signs of militant activity by Islamic fundamentalist organizations in your region?

This activity is nothing new here and has been evident for the past three years or more.

2. Which organizations are most active?

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb Ut Tahrir are the most active. Since the Uzbek government decided to allow the USA to base military activities here, the Taliban has been active.

3. What are the goals of these organizations?

They want to create a crisis situation that will require the Russians to move into our area. They believe that the presence of the Russians here will create a revolutionary situation. They expect that this will cause a war between Islamic fundamentalists and the non-fundamentalists. They want to create the impression that only the fundamentalists oppose Russian influence and, in addition, an American presence in Uzbekistan.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is very violent and works to create hostilities. It is well-known here at they have plans for sabotage of key installations. People who understand the actual situation fear that the IMU will move into Kyrgyzstan to attack the Popan Reservoir. Sabotage of this installation would cause great damage to Uzbekistan. For us, this would be even worse than the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were for the USA. This has had a dramatic impact on the Ferghana Valley which already suffers from great tensions. IMU also has a political goal - the removal of the government of Karimov.

4. How are these organizations supported financially?

The IMU gets most of its money from smuggling and other criminal activities. In particular, they sell weapons to the Taliban and to the Chechens. The IMU is very much into drug sales. Hizb-ut-Tahrir, people believe, gets money from Saudi Arabia. The Taliban, of course, has the government of Afghanistan to support it as well as Osama Bin Laden.

5. How are these organizations structured?

They all work in small groups. Hizb-ut-Tahrir works as an informal religious group with extremist ties to groups in Saudi Arabia. It is difficult to be sure about Hizb ut Tahrir because they work in secret.

The IMU acts as a military organization. They use this structure to implement criminal activities. They are not like a political party at all. If they take power, they will run the country like Afghanistan. They are strongest in the rural areas.

6. Do these groups have any discernable (or explicit) connections with similar organizations outside the region? If possible, name the organizations.

IMU has ties with the Taliban. Their people are often seen in the company of people known to be Afghans. The IMU people travel to Afghanistan often. When with the Afghans, the IMU are more likely to undertake violent actions. Beatings of average people seen as opposed to them are common. They also rob such people.

7. What kind of cooperation is there between these organizations?

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Hizb ut Tahrir, Taliban, and IMU have similar goals. But the Hizb ut Tahrir regards the IMU with some contempt. They see them as corrupt. The Hizb ut Tahrir stressed high moral standards, honesty. They really live by the Koran in all matters. The IMU people are known to use alcohol in secret – I have heard this. They do not always say their prayers. The Taliban works mostly with the IMU. They are close allies and they give the IMU many forms of support.

8. Does Osama bin Laden enjoy popularity support in your region?

Is there anti-US feeling among the people?

Osama enjoys support among uneducated people, among the extremely religious people, those in rural areas. These people, none of whom are sophisticated, believe that Osama will offer hope for Uzbekistan. Often, in rural homes, you will find Taliban works or pictures of Osama bin Laden on display. Educated people are less likely to be anti-USA. Even when they do not support the USA, they have real reasons. They will say they don't like the support that USA gives Israel or they feel that the USA should take more interest in Uzbekistan. They do not have superstitious reasons for not liking the USA.

9. What is the appeal of the Islamic fundamentalist organizations?

They operate well because of the poverty in our region; because of the real oppression of religion. They get more support because they oppose Karimov. This brings together both the extremist and moderate elements. Moderates don't want Uzbekistan to be forced into a dictatorship of Karimov, so they want him to go. They feel some sympathy to the Islamic radicals because they hope the radicals will force Karimov out. The moderates are, too often, afraid to fight while the fundamentalists will.

This is part of the fundamentalist attraction: they are seen as fighters, especially by young people.

Moderates and fundamentalists are brought together by their anti-Russian feelings. These are stronger than the anti-USA feelings. Both urban and rural people dislike the Russians. Mostly rural people dislike the USA.

INTERVIEW 9

Profession – historian

URGENC, UZBEKISTAN

1. Are there any signs of militant activity coming from Islamic fundamentalist organizations in your region?

Yes, there are activities by Hizb-Ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

2. Which organizations appear to be the most active?

Hizb Ut Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan are equally active. However, the government seems to be more effective in fighting the Hizb Ut Tahrir. Many of them are in prison now.

3. What are their goals?

Hizb-Ut-Tahrir is largely peaceful in its operations but Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is violent. Hizb Ut Tahrir says that Uzbekistan is not really an independent state but is manipulated by Russia.

Both want to create an Islamic state and overturn the Karimov government. They also want to remove the influence of all moderate Islamic groups.

4. How are these organizations receiving financial support (How does this occur / how is this organized)?

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is made up of people who are criminals and engage in many illegal activities to raise money. I have seen these people selling black-market goods. They also receive money from Afghanistan, from the Taliban. They sometime boast of this fact and say that it makes them stronger.

Hizb Ut Tahrir also gets money, but it is said to be from Saudi Arabia. I have never met a person whom I felt was a member of this group so my knowledge is only indirect.

5. How are these organizations structured (the organizational structure)? How do they operate?

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Hizb Ut Tahrir is completely secret. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is well known as operating in small groups, no more than five. Their commanders communicate directly with individual groups. Groups do not communicate with each other directly.

6. Do these groups have any discernable (or explicit) connections with similar organizations outside the region? If possible, name the organizations.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is regarded by most people I know as being foreign – really from Afghanistan.

7. What kind of cooperation is there between the organizations (within your region and outside your region)? Is there a system of seniority among the organizations? Does one group control another or do they act on an equal basis?

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is controlled from Afghanistan, completely. Hizb Ut Tahrir is also controlled from outside of Uzbekistan but it is impossible to be certain who controls it. People I know think that it is controlled by Saudi Arabia.

8. Which Islamic structures and organizations are associated with the militant activity? Does Osama bin Laden enjoy support within the population of your region?

Does there exist within the local population a negative (including even a radically negative) relation to the policy carried out by the United States of America?

While there is support for Osama Bin Laden, it comes from people who are not educated. I have never heard an educated person praise Osama.

The more educated people are glad that the US forces are in Uzbekistan. (We have heard they are here but have not seen any of them.) Educated people would like to be allied with the US and feel that the US will influence the Karimov government to become more democratic.

Educated people uniformly support the US and English attacks against Afghanistan. If the Taliban is allowed to work freely, it will cause much trouble in Uzbekistan.

9. What is the appeal of the radical fundamentalist organizations?

The people who sympathize are young and not very sophisticated. Or they are simply old and illiterate.

They get support from people who hate the Russians and who also hate communism. There is also, among uneducated people, hostility toward the US because America is a successful country while Uzbekistan is backward. But we are backward because of those uneducated people and their influence.

Interview 10

Respondent is a businessman

Home - Uzbekistan

1. Are there any signs of activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan are most active.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir and IMU, as noted above.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

There is talk about overthrowing Karimov and creating an Islamic state. They want to do this in the long term. Right now they work to create problems for the US military forces coming into Uzbekistan. People talk about violence actions against any US people seen in the area. Military people, they say, should be killed. And also Uzbek military people who work with US military. I hear discussions about damaging any vehicles being used by US military.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

They get money from outside the country. Uzbekistan is too poor to bring in much money. But it

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does come in with people from the Middle East and from representatives of the Taliban. They do get some money from local people, but not much. Only a symbolic amount so they can say that local people give support.

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)? How do they elaborate their actions? For example is it either groups of individuals or neighborhood, or organized groups, or parties, or religious groups. How do they interact?

Hizb Ut Tahrir works in absolute secrecy. I have never heard the identity of any person from this group. Since early September, the IMU seems to have gone complete underground. .

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

Yes. They both work closely with the Taliban. I have seen people in Uzbekistan – this was in the Ferghana Valley – who came here from the Middle East. People who appear to have money and are, most people believe, bringing funds for the local radical Islamic groups.

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region? Is there a system of seniority between these organizations? Are they being controlled by one another or is there an equality? Does the organization set for itself any goals, and if it does what are these goals?

The Hizb Ut Tahrir people sometime complain that the IMU group is involved in many illegal activities. But they are cooperating now. I have heard this from a person who is involved with IMU. He has spoken to me within the past week about this. Hizb Ut Tahrir is seen as superior to IMU. It has more money, more people. Its people are regarded as “real men” more than IMU.

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region? Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

9. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

The main reason they might support them is their religious ties. Also, there is money that comes to people who work with them. Because it is hard to get a good job, lots of young people join because it gives them a sense of purpose. They get to be part of adventures. They can get training in other countries if they work with this. Some young people talk about joining such groups just so they can get out of Uzbekistan and be part of something important. Some young people feel that they will be part of history if they do something against the US. To join a radical Islamic group would help put them in history, they believe. Sometimes they joke about this but often they are serious. It is something that is discussed a lot in schools.

Interview 11

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

1. Are there any signs of activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

Yes, there are several organizations: Vahabists, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), Akranists, Hiz Allah (the Party of Allah).

Not a single one of the above stated organizations is registered. They all are considered to be operating illegally, because their activities and teachings radically contradict the constitution, as well as the legislation and the government of Uzbekistan.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

The most active organization is Hizb-ut-Tahrir. It threatens everybody by trying to declare the Jihad (the holy war) and urges people to reject the legislative acts and overthrow the government.

The other organizations are choosing the most peaceful methods for achieving their goals, and they

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urge more people to practice Islam and live by its laws.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

The building of caliphate is the only goal of these organizations. The most radical organization, Hizb-ut-Tahir, believes that the only way to reach this goal is to overthrow the existing government and reject the current legislation.

The other organizations, which are less radical, urge people to meet all the requirements of Koran and live according to the Muslim religion. Their strategic actions are the distribution of leaflets and propaganda. Obeying the governmental policy, power, and high society laws are considered to be major sins that would radically contradict the conception of Islam.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

The major part of it comes from overseas, as well as from the revenues that are earned by the businesses on the territory of Uzbekistan, and from the mandatory dues that members of these organizations have to pay.

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)? How do they elaborate their actions? For example is it either groups of individuals or neighborhood, or organized groups, or parties, or religious groups. How do they interact?

The organizations that are discussed above work like spiders do. By this I mean that one person instructs his own group of five individuals, another person instructs another group, and these groups do not know each other. This reduces the risk of disclosure in case that something goes wrong.

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

Yes they do. Firstly, it is apparent that a very strong and well-organized connection exists between these organizations in Uzbekistan in particular (i.e., Hizb-ut-Tahrir with IMU, Vahabits with IDU, Vahabits with Hizb-ut-Tahrir, IMU with Arcanists, Hiz Allah with IMU). Secondly, there is an apparent connection between these organizations and organizations from Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, and, of course, Afghanistan (Talibans and Dguma Magoni).

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region? Is there a system of seniority between these organizations? Are they being controlled by one another or is there an equality? Does the organization set for itself any goals, and if it does what are these goals?

All these organizations operate simultaneously, working under the same conditions, both apart from each other and cooperating with each other.

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region? Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir is considered to be the strongest military active organization. The local population has deep regret for the occurrences that took place in the United States, but at the same time, people also think that these attacks were consequences of the policies that the United States have been practicing lately. They think that because of the United States foreign policy towards other countries and intervention in the politics of other governments, this kind of negative attitude is natural. The events that took place on September 11 were the results of the American interference in the affairs of other governments, and this tragedy could have been foreseen and avoided.

Interview 12

Retired officer in the Ministry of Interior

Uzbekistan

1. Is there activity by Islamic Fundamentalist organizations in your region?

This has been present for several years and has, I believe, intensified in the last year

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2. If so, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

The most important and most consistent is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)

But there have also been times when Al Qaeda, the well-known organization of Osama bin Laden, has been working here.

3. What are their goals?

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan works to overthrow Karimov and create an Islamic state.

The Al Qaeda has been here in an effort to recruit members and to support the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

4. How are these organizations supported or financed?

The IMU raises much of its own money via criminal endeavors. In my work I was witness to much of this. They smuggled many things, weapons, for example. They were involved in the sale of counterfeit medications. I know they sold penicillin that was not genuine. They have been partners in kidnapping activities.

The IMU also gets money from overseas. I saw documents showing financial support from banks in Egypt.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

They are always small. The Al Qaeda group that we captured near the border was only three people. Their leader was an Arab person and his two colleagues were young Uzbeks who were around 17 or 18 years old. The Arab held the money for them. He has over \$2,000 in US money.

The IMU cells consist of no more than five people and they report back to a command facility directly. They do not communicate with other cells out in the countryside.

6. Do these organizations have connections with foreign organizations?

The IMU is receiving support from Al Qaeda as well as unidentified sources in Egypt. The IMU people spend time in Afghanistan for training purposes. Taliban representatives have been seen with IMU cells on many occasions.

7. What is the nature of relationships between organizations inside your region with those outside your region?

The closed connections are between IMU and Taliban. They operate as equals. I and my colleagues concluded this from our discussions with IMU members we arrested. They present themselves as allies - not servants - of the Taliban. They were open about this but made it clear that they Taliban was supporting IMU goals rather than being directed to support the Taliban inside Afghanistan.

I spent two days with the Al Qaeda cell we captured two years ago. The relationship here was clear. The Arab directed the two young Uzbeks. The Arab didn't talk much but the Uzbeks did. The papers and other materials on the Arab made his position of authority clear.

After two days, we turned the group over to the army but the three were all killed in an attempt to escape from the army. Thus, we know of nothing more than what I learned in my two days with them.

I am retired now but my former colleagues in the Ministry have told me about three other such Al Qaeda groups captured in the past year. Each carried two or three thousand US dollars and had documents showing connections with Al Qaeda.

8. Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

Among the most superstitious of the Muslims, he has much support. You see his picture sometimes in public places in the fundamentalist Muslim communities.

The support is greatest in small towns or villages.

10. Does the local population feel about the United States?

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Among the Muslims, there is great resentment of the USA. They don't like reports of a USA military presence in Uzbekistan. This is true even for the people who don't want an Islamic state here.

11. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalist organizations?

Many get involved for very pragmatic reasons. There is respect for the very religious. So there are those who will decide to be very religious. This is a way for personal advancement.

Sometimes, there is money to be made through an association with the IMU.

There are poor people who see the fundamentalists as working against corruption and working to build a moral society.

Interview 13

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

1. Are there any signs of military activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

Yes, there are several organizations: Vahabists, Hizb-ut-Tahrir, IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), Akranists, Hiz Allah (the Party of Allah).

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2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

The most active organization is Hizb-ut-Tahrir. It threatens everybody by trying to declare the Jihad (the holy war) and urges people to reject the legislative acts and overthrow the government.

The other organizations are choosing the most peaceful methods for achieving their goals, and they urge more people to practice Islam and live by its laws.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

The building of caliphate is the only goal of these organizations.

The most radical organization, Hizb-ut-Tahir, believes that the only way to reach this goal is to overthrow the existing government and reject the current legislation.

The other organizations, which are less radical, urge people to meet all the requirements of Koran and live according to the Muslim religion. Their strategic actions are the distribution of leaflets and propaganda.

Obeying the governmental policy, power, and high society laws are considered to be major sins that would radically contradict the conception of Islam.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

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6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

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with Hizb-ut-Tahrir, IMU with Arcanists, Hiz Allah with IMU). Secondly, there is an apparent connection between these organizations and organizations from Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, and, of course, Afghanistan (Talibans and Dguma Magoni).

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region? Is there a system of seniority between these organizations? Are they being controlled by one another or is there an equality? Does the organization set for itself any goals, and if it does what are these goals?

All these organizations operate simultaneously, working under the same conditions, both apart from each other and cooperating with each other.

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

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9. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

- 1) Economic reasons – poverty, unemployment, and lack of the prospective.
- 2) Political reasons – instability, political repression held by the government, and revenge for the people that have been repressed.
- 3) Psychological reasons – emotional instability, and psychological pressure on the adolescents by given organizations.

Interview 14

Journalist, Osh, Krygyzstan

1. Are there fundamentalist organizations active in your area?

Yes, they became active just over ten years ago and they are growing in number.

2. What are the most active of these organizations?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are most active.

3. What are their goals?

At this time, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been organizing against the USA's military actions against Afghanistan. The IMU is joining this effort but they attract different people.

For the most part, Islamic conservative here are concerned about discouraging the use of alcohol. They feel that men should wear beards and women should wear scarves. They do not encourage violence. In fact, they are not anti-American in general. Their only objection to the US is its military activities in this region.

I have spent lots of time in the Fergana Valley. This is said to be a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalist activity. But I can tell you that these people are moderate. They do not hate the USA. They do not support Osama Bin Laden. The religious conservatives here are not political.

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4. How are these organizations financed?

Local members must contribute much of their money to the organizations. The IMU works with smugglers organizations. HUT, however, gets money from both Saudi Arabia and other Central Asian states.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

They are very small cells for each organization. They all work in secrecy for many of their activities. They spread leaflets throughout the community. Many of the leaflets call upon people to not use alcohol. These are very common.

Sometimes, the IMU circulates leaflets calling for opposition to USA policies. They ask people to support the Taliban against the USA.

6. Do these organizations have foreign connections?

IMU people, I know for a fact, meet with Taliban representatives. I have seen these people together although I have never spoken with them. They are people to avoid; they use violence.

Recently, there have been more people from China here. These are members of the Islamic community in Xinjiang province. I have seen them here often, in several towns in Krygyzstan. While they meet with religious leaders their greatest concern is to find people who are related to them for nationalistic reasons. Their meetings with other Muslims are casual. I have been present during some of these discussions. They are polite but ask for no support from local Muslims. They have meetings with people whom I regard as Chinese. These meetings seem to be rather private. They do not invite other people to sit in for these meetings.

I have spoken with friends who have met these people. They say that their concerns are nationalistic and that they want the Uighur people to be free from central Chinese control. They talk about their relations with people in Afghanistan. They seem to be willing to work with Osama Bin Laden's network but they say that the group has not done much to help them. Osama, they say, has no real interest in Xinjiang now. They say their only hope is to join with other Uighur people in the region.

7. What is the nature of relations between local groups and those from abroad?

The relations with the Uighur's are casual. The HUT and IMU don't trust each other. The smugglers and other criminals have a lot of influence with IMU. It is clear that the Saudi's influence the HUT but I have only heard of this fact. I have never met such people face to face.

8. Does Osama Bin Laden enjoy support locally? What is the popular attitude toward the US?

Osama Bin Laden is seen as trouble. Most Muslims do not identify with him. They see Bin Laden and the Taliban as being like the Kurdistan Workers' Party or some of the old radical Arab socialist movements.

People here do not like the Taliban because so many of the communists have joined the Taliban years ago.

People feel sympathy for the USA because of the 11 September attacks but object to a US military role in this region. They don't want US troops here; they don't want US troops fighting in Afghanistan.

9. Why would people support these Islamic fundamentalist groups?

There are many different reasons. The IMU gets support from people who fear that the Karimov regime wants to expand into much of Central Asia. These people are afraid of the Karimov government and feel that the IMU is a protection against him. They would like to see Karimov ousted from power.

The HUT gets more support from people concerned about religious matters and from those who are fearful of the USA's military actions.

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The common fear for most people – supporters of HUT or IMU – is that their terrorist actions of Osama Bin Laden will be used to justify a regional campaign against Islam. They remember the Soviet days of suppression of Islam and they see what is happening in Chechnya. There is a real fear that the Russians will support local regimes, like the Karimov government, is using violence against all conservative Muslims. This means that people have a great fear of both Russia and of the USA. They don't like the USA alliance with Karimov.

INTERVIEW 15

Retired police official who is an ethnic Chinese

Kyrgyzstan

1. Are Islamic fundamentalist groups active in your region?

Yes, especially since 1999.

2. Which organizations are most active?

One of the most active – I have studied this for some time – is Harkat-ul-Mojahedin. It is a Sunni based group that works with Uighurs. It has been active both here in Kyrgyzstan and in Uzbekistan. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is here and another active group is the Uighur Liberation Movement. There are also discussions about a group known as Uighur Question.

3. What goals do these groups pursue?

In Uzbekistan, they work to overthrow Islam Karimov. In general, they want to broaden the Islamic cause to include most of Central Asia and parts of China. They want to create an armed movement bringing Muslims in all of these regions together. The creation of an Eastern Turkestan would be a desired result for them. Eastern Turkestan would include parts of Xinjiang province as well as parts of Central Asia. Their goals involve the overthrow of the secular governments in Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The Kyrgyzstan government is also a target.

Leaders of the Uighur Question call for a “holy war” against secular governments.

4. What is the structure of these groups?

They are organized into small cells – they never know anyone outside of that group. They make extensive utilization of false documentation.

They are very violent.

5. Do these groups have external connections?

Harkat-ul-Mohahedin has operated out of training camps in Afghanistan. This group as well as the Uighur Liberation Movement has connections with Osama bin Laden.

6. What is the nature of those foreign connections?

They have offered training for these groups. They trained in Afghanistan and Chechnya.

7. Are there any Islamic organizations that conduct military activities?

Yes, Harkat-ul-Mohahedin, Uighur Question and IMU.

8. Does the local population support Osama bin Laden? How do they feel about the US?

While members of the above groups support bin Laden, there is not that much popular support for him. Unfortunately, however, the groups can mobilize support in many ways. There are both positive and negative feelings about the US. People are often reluctant to express support for the US even when they feel supportive.

9. What is the nature of their appeal to people in your region?

Joining an Islamic group – radical or not radical – is a means of social advancement. There is also the belief that these groups will reduce corruption. Uneducated people join them because it gives them a cause while educated people use them to advance themselves professionally.

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INTERVIEW 16

Journalist, Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan.

1. Are there any signs of militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

No, not that I know of.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

5. What is the structure of these organizations? How do they work?

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region?

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active?

There are no answers to questions from 2 to 8, since I am not aware of such organizations in Kazakhstan.

9. Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

I do not think that they support him.

10. Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

I cannot say that the local population has this kind of attitude. People in Alma Ata are pro-Western and like the USA. They support the idea of Russia and the USA working together against the militant Islamic forces. This means we will be protected from the Taliban threat. We will be grateful to USA & Russia for this.

11. What could make the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalist organizations?

I do not know how to answer this question, because the population of Kazakhstan first of all is multinational and practices many different religions, and secondly, they do not support Islamic fundamentalism.

Generally speaking, Kazakhstan is located far away from all the events, and they do not have direct influence on Kazakhstan. People do not feel that these events concern them in any dramatic way.

9. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

a) Economic reasons - poverty, unemployment, and lack of the prospective.

b) Political reasons - instability, political repression held by the government, and revenge for the people that have been repressed.

c) Psychological reasons - emotional instability, and psychological pressure on the adolescents by given organizations.

Interview 17

Human rights activist

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Kazakhstan

As a result – he answered only 6 questions of 8:

1. Of course.
2. There are several militant-active organizations in the region. From those are **Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Taliban.**
3. Their general goal is to **Restore the Islamist's Halifat**
4. The financial sources are located in **Afghanistan (Kabul) and Pakistan (Islamabad).** Oleg told me **that there was financial aid even from India.**
5. He doesn't know anything about the structure of these organizations.
6. All these organizations are linked with once from other Islamic countries, but for the moment he doesn't know precisely which with.
7. He said also that if these organizations received financial aid from Afghanistan and Pakistan, they are subordinated to them.
Individual projects of mentioned organizations come to formation of public opinion and attraction of sympathizers.
8. Individuals associated with militant Islamic activism are the members of mentioned organizations.

Local population do not give support to Osama ben Laden, but they don't approve the policy of USA in the region at all (categorically).

Interview 18

Journalist, Osh, Krygyzstan

1. Are there fundamentalist organizations active in your area?

Yes, they became active just over ten years ago and they are growing in number.

2. What are the most active of these organizations?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are most active.

3. What are their goals?

At this time, the Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been organizing against the USA's military actions against Afghanistan. The IMU is joining this effort but they attract different people.

For the most part, Islamic conservative here are concerned about discouraging the use of alcohol. They feel that men should wear beards and women should wear scarves. They do not encourage violence. In fact, they are not anti-American in general. Their only objection to the US is its military activities in this region.

I have spent lots of time in the Fergana Valley. This is said to be a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalist activity. But I can tell you that these people are moderate. They do not hate the USA. They do not support Osama Bin Laden. The religious conservatives here are not political.

4 .How are these organizations financed?

Local members must contribute much of their money to the organizations. The IMU works with smugglers organizations. HUT, however, gets money from both Saudi Arabia and other Central Asian states.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

They are very small cells for each organization. They all work in secrecy for many of their activities. They spread leaflets throughout the community. Many of the leaflets call upon people to not use alcohol. These are very common.

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The HUT gets more support from people concerned about religious matters and from those who are fearful of the USA's military actions. The common fear for most people – supporters of HUT or IMU – is that they terrorist actions of Osama Bin Laden will be used to justify a regional campaign against Islam. They remember the Soviet days of suppression of Islam and they see what is happening in Chechnya. There is a real fear that the Russians will support local regimes, like the Karimov government, is using violence against all conservative Muslims. This means that people have a great fear of both Russia and of the USA. They don't like the USA alliance with Karimov.

INTERVIEW 19

Kyrgyzstan

Respondent: University professor

1. Are there any signs of militant activity by Islamic Fundamentalists organizations in your region?

Yes, there has been such activity. More in the last six months.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

Hizb-ut-tahrir and Hizbolla are the only names I know but there are other lesser known groups which operate without any formal name.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

While they talk about creation of an Islamic fundamentalist state that would reject "modern" society, they focus on the idea of Eastern Turkestan. This is the informal or un-named groups for the most part. They talk about the Muslim Uighurs as their "brothers".

In truth, religion does not really seem important to these un-named groups. They are motivated by cultural concerns as well as, I believe, by the desire to make money. They support the idea of having part of Xinjiang China join with Krygyzstan. While the Chinese people are Muslims, that is not as significant as

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cultural matters. They talk about the old dream of East Turkestan. You don't hear much talk about religious ideas from them.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

While the formal groups like Hisbolla and Hizt-ut-Tahrir are said to receive money from Saudi Arabia, the other groups, the ones that talk about Eastern Turkestan, make their own money by selling weapons. They sell the weapons to people in the Xinjiang region of China. These Chinese are working against the government of China.

5. What is the structure of these organizations? How do they conduct themselves? How do they treat each other?

They operate in small groups and in secret. The Hizb-ut-Tahrir is very secret and the "informal" or un-named groups are even more secret. That is, their identities are secret. Everybody, however, knows that such groups exist. None of these groups work together. They don't trust each other. Many of the individuals in the groups, I am told, have histories of bitter personal rivalries against each other.

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with organizations of the same kind outside of the region?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir works throughout Central Asia. The un-named groups in Kryrgyzstan have some connections inside China with Muslim groups of Xinjiang. Sometimes Chinese people are seen in rural areas of Kyrgyzstan where they meet with local supporters. There is a regular passage across the border by these people and their Kyrgyz supporters.

7. Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

Ignorant rural people regard Osama as a "Muslim hero". Educated people see him as a dangerous person who has not claim to speak for Islam. They fear he will spark a war not only in Central Asia but elsewhere in places like India and Pakistan.

8. Does the local population have negative attitudes towards the policies of the United States?

Many people, both educated and uneducated, feel that the US has not shown any interest in our region. They believe that Kyrgyzstan is an important nation and should be treated with dignity by the US and the West. There is some resentment about US support for Israel but this is not the main issue for us. There is a fear of US military actions in Afghanistan. Educated people want to see the Taliban gone but are fearful that the unrest will spread beyond Afghanistan. Most people, in spite of this fear, respect the US determination to have vengeance against Osama. This is a matter of honor.

Interview 20

Teacher

Osh, Kyrgyzstan

1. Are Islamic fundamentalist organizations active in your area?

For the past year, there has been a great deal of such activity.

2. Which organizations are most active?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HUT) is the most active but there are also Chinese Muslims - Uyghurs - in the region. The Chinese came in about one year ago.

3. What are their goals?

The Uyghurs want to separate from China and set up their own Central Asian state. This would be an independent "Eastern Turkestan". They advocate violence in the pursuit of this goal. HUT wants to create a united Central Asian Islamic state. They oppose all forms of Shi'ism. They want to force all Jews out of the region and they oppose the United States. There is talk about joining the Afghans in their fight with the US during the past few days.

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4. How are these organizations funded?

The Chinese (Uyghurs) have a lot of money that people assume comes from their province (Xinjiang) in China, as well as from Taiwan. There are no indications of local funding for them. HUT gets funds from local sources – a little – and much more from Osama Bin Laden’s people (Taliban). Local supporters organize smuggling operations to raise money for HUT. This involves guns, cigarettes, and drugs).

5. How are these organizations structured?

They are in small groups of either four or five people. The groups do not contact each other directly. Someone from outside the region comes in to give directions to the individual groups.

6. Do these groups have an open or obvious connections with similar organizations outside the region?

The Uyghurs have close connections with groups in China. There are rumors that they have visitors from Taiwan on occasion. HUT is a regional movement and keeps in touch with members elsewhere in Central Asia.

7. What kind of cooperation is there between the organizations within your region and outside the region?

HUT does not cooperate with the Uyghurs. It is associated with Muslims who come in from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The local HUT does not appear to take orders from or give orders to the other groups.

8. Which Islamic structures and organizations are most associated with militant activity? Does Osama bin Laden enjoy support among the local population? What is the local view of the USA?

There is lots of support for Osama bin Laden. Some activities take place in the mosques but, more and more, members meet in private homes. Many local people feel that the US is hostile to Islam. They learn this in the mosque.

9. What is the appeal of radical Islamic fundamentalist organizations?

They help people feel that they are part of something larger than themselves. For young people who are not educated and have no jobs, membership in such groups gives them support, including food and money.

Many of these people simply hate the West; anti-Russian and anti-US sentiments attract them to the fundamentalist groups.

Interview 21

Researcher/scientist

Turkmenistan

1. Are there any signs of militant activity by Islamic Fundamentalist organizations in your region?

The government prohibits such activities. Whatever is happening takes place in secret.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

We hear about activities of Hizbollah but I have never seen anyone I knew to be a member of this organization. Hizb-ut-Tahrir is also said to be active but, again, I have only heard this.

Now it is true that the Taliban is here. But this is done with official support of the Turkmen government.

It is also true that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has people here. I have actually met some of them.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

The Hizbollah is associated for me with Iran. It wants to recruit Islamic radicals who will join a regional Islamic movement.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, according to the members I met, want to overthrow the Karimov regime, thus protecting Turkmenistan from Uzbek imperialism.

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4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

Turkmen President Niyazov supports some Islamic groups. These are “official” Islamic groups, as we had in the Soviet era. The truth is that we have not traditionally been a very religious people and now it is only the illiterate people who associate with Islam in any form.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, from what the two people I met indicated, gets support from Saudi Arabia. They also have, I was told by them, business activities that bring in money for the Movement.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

The ones supported by the government are officially organized and function openly through the mosques.

Where there are activities by Hizbollah or even the Hizb-ut-Tahrir, they are secret and operate in very small cells. As I said before, I have not seen these groups myself. Maybe the reports of their activities are government propaganda to scare us.

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan operates in very small groups. Perhaps there are only a few such groups in our entire nation.

6. Do these organizations have any open connections with foreign organizations?

Hizbollah, which is the group most likely to really function here, is funded, I believe, by Iran. The Taliban, in its official capacity here, is an organization of the Afghan government.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan gets support from Saudi Arabia.

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations inside your region with those outside your region?

Turkmenistan is a closed society. If such contacts exist, they must be secret. I know that I have seen foreigners here but, always, they are escorted by representatives of the government. I have seen people here from the Balkans but they are sponsored by the government as official guests.

The same thing was true for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan people whom I met. They were with a person whom I assume was a government representative. (He did not introduce himself)

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active?

None

9. Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

Only on the part of very ignorant people. There is really not much support at all for him.

The government does support the Taliban and some people will support this government policy. This is because they see the Taliban as an enemy of Uzbekistan.

10. Does the local population feel about the United States?

Educated people realize that only the US can provide leadership for our region.

Educated people see our government as wanting to work with the Taliban because it will help in keeping our population under control.

11. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

Frankly, educated people always reject such tendencies. The danger is that there are many illiterate and impoverished people. There are young people who would associate with such tendencies because they see it as giving them some hope. The terrible conditions in our nation encourage support for desperate measures and radical groups. There are some Chechens here who preach fundamentalist Islam as they now practice it in Chechnya. But this is a very ignorant form of Islam accepted by people who are not able to read the Koran or anything.

The fear of Uzbekistan encourages some people to support Islamic fundamentalists who pledge to overthrow the Karimov government.

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Interview 22

Businessman

Turkmenistan

1. How active are fundamentalist organizations in your area?

They are very active and now much more open than earlier in the year.

2. What organizations are the most active?

The Wahabist movement is very active and the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is also active. Al Qaeda has been active for some time in Turkmenistan. In general, there are also many people here – Arabs, Chechens, Albanians, and even Bosnians have been reported. (I have met not Bosnians but have met numerous Arabs, Chechens, and Albanians.)

3. What are their goals?

They are working to create an Islamic state, one that would include more than just Turkmenistan. They are working to create opposition to Russia and Russian influence in this region. They want to create a force that will support the fighters of Islam who are opposing the USA. They also talk about removing any Jews from Turkmenistan. (I do not know of many Jews here so it may be that they have accomplished this goal years ago.)

4. How are these organizations financed?

There are many sources of funding. Turkey, Pakistan, and Iran are very important here.

5. What is the structure of these organizations?

They are so secret that I don't know much about this. All I can say is that they work in secrecy and are small groups. But everybody knows this.

6. Do these organizations have foreign connections?

Hizbollah has contacts with these groups. There are also groups from Azerbaijan which come here. I know a man whose brother met with Osama Bin Laden here two or three years ago. (I suppose he is an honest person.) Pakistan and Turkey play an important role in this connection and I see many such people here. I have seen them meeting with well-known Islamic fundamentalist figures. These were people known to be with Hizb-ut-Tahrir. Hizb-ut-Tahrir is rather secret but the identities of these people were known and it was clear whenever they met that the people from Pakistan were regarded by them with great respect.

7. What is the nature of relationships between local groups and foreign groups?

I can add nothing here to what I have stated above. Now there are many other foreign people here, as I said. But is often hard to tell about who gives the orders. There are the Albanians, for example. I have met with these people on several times. They are very strict Muslims who are extremely anti-Russian and anti-American. I asked them how they learned about Islam since they spent so much of their youth in Albania, an atheist nation. They said they were left in an orphanage and that Islamic people from Egypt ran those orphanages after the communists left. Here they learned Islam. They said they were traveling in our region to learn more about Islam. They come and go; they never remain here for more than a few months. I never knew there were Islamic people who looked like these people. They were very different from us and I don't think they would fit in here if they did stay. .

I will say that the Albanian presence here is interesting. I have also met in my business people who carried Albanian passports but they were not like the Albanians who came from an orphanage. They looked like Arabs.

Some of the other businessmen I know have spoken of this and believe that it is an Albanian criminal organization that will take control of the Turkmenistan economy. This will mean that the limited resources of our state will be exported and cause great hardships.

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8. Does Osama Bin Laden enjoy local support? What is the attitude toward the US?

Osama enjoys much popular support. The Islamic fundamentalists here support him against the USA. There is a great amount of anti-USA propaganda. People are afraid to speak of support for the USA even though many people do support the USA.

9. Why would people support Islamic fundamentalism?

What exists here is political Islam and there are many people who feel it will reduce or eliminate corruption and poverty

Interview 23

University Student
Saragt, Turkmenistan

1. Are there any signs of activity from by Islamic fundamentalist organizations in your region?

Yes, there is a great deal of this activity.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Hizb-ut-Tahrir

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

At this time, they work to build up support against the USA, against Russia, and in favor of building an Islamic state. They want our country to be allied with Afghanistan.

For the last week, there has been talk about how Russia and the USA are building an alliance that will work to destroy Islam. This alliance is also seen as helping Russia and hurting China.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

In general, there is money that comes from Afghanistan, Iran, and China.

5. What is the structure of these organizations? How do they work?

They spread leaflets in the neighborhoods. They spread tapes of speeches by fundamentalist leaders. Sometimes they give people books about Khomeni. They spread pictures of Osama Bin Laden. They always work in small groups; more often in secret.

They work to enlist people to help the Taliban. However, nobody wants to go to Afghanistan to help the Taliban.

In the town square you can always hear discussions. This week they say that many Kyrgyz fundamentalist Muslims are going to join the Taliban and that we should follow their example. Supporters of the Taliban say that. The Kyrgyz fundamentalists apparently live in Ferghana Valley and are leaving there to help in Afghanistan. Yesterday someone said that Chinese troops were going to Afghanistan and that these Kyrgyz Muslims were joining them.

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

There is secrecy about this but people believe that they work with the Taliban and with some groups from Iran – but nobody ever says which groups. There is talk about Chinese connections.

7. What is the nature of relations between the local organizations and those from outside?

Nobody really knows about this.

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region? Does the local population have negative attitudes towards the USA?

I do not hear people denouncing the USA. Even after the attacks yesterday on Afghanistan, not much was said against the USA. There is fear that a big war will spread to Turkmenistan but people I know blame the Taliban and Osama Bin Laden.

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Only very stupid people say good things about Osama Bin Laden. Most people say he is a murderer and that he killed thousands of Americans. President Bush is more popular than Osama among people I know.

9. Why would people in your region support Islamic fundamentalists organizations?

People who believe what the fundamentalist Islamic people say are not educated. They often believe that these people have money and will pay them to fight. Sometimes young people who are not educated and have no jobs will join these people. I know of some young people who have gone to Afghanistan to train in the camps. Usually, the people that I know of who did this were people who did not have the skills needed to survive here. They were not able to work with others here.

Interview 24

Researcher/journalist

Ashabat, Turkmenistan

1. Are Islamic fundamentalists organizations active in your region?

Yes, they have been active for years but the activities have intensified since August.

2. What organizations are the most active ones?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Hezbollah are the main ones. Chechen figures have been arriving with increasing frequency since the summer.

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

For the most part they campaign against Russia and the United States of America. The Chechens work to gain support for their fight against Russia. These are their tactical goals.

In addition, they are working to create an Islamic state, to reduce secular authority, and to impose Islamic law in the courts. They reject the notion of modern society.

They want to severely limit ties with the Commonwealth of Independent States.

4. How are these organizations being financed?

They get money from Iran and Saudi Arabia. The Chechens have come here to sell weapons and they use this to get money for their efforts. Many fundamentalist groups work in smuggling.

5. What is the structure of these fundamentalist organizations?

They work in small cells. Hizb ut Tahrir is especially secretive but is fairly peaceful in pursuit of their goals. Most of the work is done in rural areas but in the cities the groups make an effort to enlist support from those newly arrived from the rural areas. Hezbollah workers try to organize people in their neighborhoods while the Hizb-ut-Tahrir is more likely to organize out of the local mosque.

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region?

Hizb-ut-Tahrir exists through the region, not only in Turkmenistan. The Hizbollah is tied very closely with Middle Eastern powers while the Chechens work with Chechens from the North Caucasus area. The Chechens have active ties with criminal organizations. There are some connections with Islamic forces in China. Sometimes Chinese associated with Xinjing province and the separatist movement there are seen here. They are more likely to be seen in small towns rather than the big cities.

There have been representatives of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan here in order to make business with criminal groups.

People from Saudi Arabia, here for work with these groups, are also seen but more often in cities.

7. What is the nature of relations between the local organizations and those from outside?

It is clear that when Saudi Arabians and Chechens are involved in anything, they will give the orders. The Chinese people seen with the fundamentalists appear to come to help, not give orders. They often bring money to help but they are not like the Saudis and the Chechens who have a bad reputation and generate fear.

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8. Does Osama bin Laden enjoy support from local residents? Do people have negative attitudes towards the USA?

The greatest concern heard here is that the US led war will involve Turkmenistan. Most people oppose military actions and do not like it when nations like Uzbekistan join with the USA. There is the same negative attitude about Russian involvement.

Osama bin Laden is not popular. He is seen as a foreigner who has no business in this part of the world. Not only that, they feel that he pretends to be Islamic when he is no better than the other foreign people who want to exploit people here.

9. Why would people in your region support Islamic fundamentalist groups?

People who are uneducated will support fundamentalists. Prejudiced people will also support them. The support for Islamic fundamentalists is a serious problem in rural areas. The oppression by the government causes many people to support Islamic fundamentalists because they feel that these people will actively oppose the government.

Many young people support them because they have limited job prospects and feel that this will give them a "mission".

There are many people who hate the Russians and see the fundamentalists as tough opponents of the Russians. The same is true for people who hate the USA but there are fewer people who feel strong in their hostility against the USA.

There are other people who believe that secular society is a bad thing; that it promotes greed and a lack of concern for the community.

It is also often the case that people who were strong communists just over a decade ago will become Islamic fundamentalists. They like the idea of having a faith that will answer the main questions in their lives.

Interview 25

Attorney

Tadjikistan

1. Are there any signs of militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

For the time being any radical Islamic movements are prohibited here in Tajikistan and there is nothing openly active is going on.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

Usually the strategic goals of such organizations are about how to control the certain territory, most often even to expand the control by conquering neighborhood territories. There is the thing that makes such organization different from the normal religious Muslim organizations: this is that in Fundamentalistic organizations there is intolerance of the representatives of other religions.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

It is not a secret that some Intelligence agencies use such organizations for their needs and that they are one of the financial sources for them. Taliban is a key source. There are also tight connections with the criminal world (drug dealing and etc.).

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)?

Usually it looks like they have a control center (it might be one person with good connections and power or the group of people sharing the certain responsibilities inside the organization). There are always mobile group of warriors, secret agent systems in other countries, a strong financial team. Now it is popular to have some computer people and etc. They are all using the Internet for communications.

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6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

I have no information on this question.

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region?

Competition and fighting for power. They do not cooperate with each other here.

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active?

Hez bu Allah, Al Kaida, Hez bu Tahir and etc. are active here.

9. Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

10. Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

Well, let's say that nobody is glad about the idea of bombardment of Afghanistan as we think this may hasten the negative processes of destabilization in the region. Besides a lot of people think that the United States policy is based on the idea that Western civilization should play a dominating role over the Eastern world.

11. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

People are not sympathizing the Islamic Fundamentalists organization as the rule but everything can be presented as the Muslim fight for freedom, so in this case even the most radical organization could gain the popularity among the ordinary people (especially in the *rural* areas). Muslim radical propaganda is effective in Tajikistan.

Interview 26

Administrator of Developmental program

Tadjikistan

1. Are there any signs of militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

As it is, there are no signs of militant activity from side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in Tajikistan. The only one organization, which could be a real alert for state security, is UL-Takhrir. This underground Islamic group works all over the Fergana valley and has strong structure in Uzbekistan. Arresting of several significant local UL-Takhrir leaders in Sogd (North part of Tajikistan, Fergana Valley) three months ago, can explain the low activity of this group in Tajikistan nowadays.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

The strategic goal of UL-Takhrir is to rein the Islamic Rule in Central Asia: no TV, no schools only Islamic, no Constitution and Laws only Sharia, etc.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

As aware from Ministry of Security, it is supported by Afghan Talibans. As the evidence, authorities present two afghan Talibans being captured with fundamental Islamic literature in Tajikistan recently. The same literature has been confiscated from local UL-Takhrir leaders in time of prisoning.

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)?

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

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7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region?

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

Only Ul-Takhrir could be considered as a potential military active. Being partner of Talibans who are pushtuns, Osama bin Laden cannot receive any noticeable support from Tajikistan. It is well known that official and non-official Tajikistan sympathize to North Alliance who are Tajiks and Uzbeks in common.

9. Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

The most of population have loyal attitude towards the politics practiced by the US.

10. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

Only the difficulties in socio-economic situation and educational background are conditions for sympathizing to Islamic Fundamentalism.

Interview 27

Health worker

Tadjikistan

1. Are there any signs of militant activity from the side of Islamic Fundamentalists Organizations noticed in your region?

No, we don't see any clear signs from the Tajik Islamic fundamentalist organizations. Actually, they support the Northern Alliance, like all Tajik people that I know. Our Tajik Islamic organizations are a part of our government so they are very calm about the situation in Afghanistan.

2. If this is taking place, what specific organizations are the most active ones?

See answer in question 1

3. What strategic goals do they pursue?

They pursue only one strategic goal – to capture power in Tajikistan. Since they joined the Reconciliation Agreement of 1997, they work for this goal within the legal framework.

4. How are these kinds of organizations being supported/financed?

Iranian, Afghanistan, and organizations in other Islamic fundamentalist nations.

5. What is the structure of these organizations (organizational structure)?

Political parties or movements with strong leadership and based on the regional affiliation.

6. Do these organizations have any apparent connections with the organizations of the same kind outside of the region? Name them, if possible.

Political parties of Northern Afghanistan and Islamic parties in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, Islamic Party of Russia.

7. What is the nature of relations between the organizations both inside and outside of your region?

Common roots, the same sources of funding

8. What Islamic organizations are considered to be military active? Does Osama bin Laden receive support from the inhabitants of your region?

We don't have Islamic organizations that have a military arm. Our inhabitants do not support Osama bin Laden in any way.

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9. Does the local population of your region have negative attitude towards the politics practiced by the United States?

Yes, because we fear that there will be a counterstrike by the Taliban after the US military actions. Now we are afraid of a possible attack or terrorist acts in our country.

10. What could cause the people in your region to support/sympathize Islamic Fundamentalists organizations?

Traditions and culture of some of the regions in our country. We have regions in which Islam is very strong and greatly influences the life of the rural population. This is not so strong in urban areas.

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