

The Islamic Mercenaries in the Karabakh War:

The Way International Terrorist Networks Penetrated Azerbaijan

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Yerevan - 2004

INTRODUCTION

Up to now there have been no attempts in academic circles to systematize or analyze documents and evidence concerning the recruitment of Chechen and Afghan mercenaries in the Karabakh war. In this regard, this volume is unique. I believe that facts presented in this book speak for themselves in terms of how terrorist structures emerged and developed in the Caucasus, and why Azerbaijani and Turkish government agencies patronize and regulate their activities.

The struggle of Karabakh Armenians for self-determination and self-preservation is often considered as an attempt to secession. The Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh, however, has been forced to fight not only against regular Azeri troops, which tried to expel Armenians from their homeland, but also against an impressive number of foreign mercenaries recruited by Azerbaijani authorities for the military operations. Later on, it became clear that some of the mercenaries joined the ranks of international terrorist organizations.

While working on this monograph, various sources in Armenian, Russian, English, French and Turkish were used. I tried to use sources in such a way that they balance each other, and thus to avoid one-sided conclusions.

The September 11 events in the USA showed the vulnerability of the international community against the threat of modern times - the terrorist activities of radical religious groups and the network of international terrorism. To perceive the formation process of contemporary extremist and terrorist groups, as well as the coordination of their activities in various regions of the Eurasian continent, one must investigate their origins and operation in the conflict zones, especially in those areas where conflicting parties have different civilizational i. e. historical, religious, linguistic and, cultural backgrounds. Undoubtedly, networking between radical Islamic and extremist groups in various countries became possible due to so-called "hot spots" that emerged on the territories of the former USSR and Yugoslavia. Among such "spots" the conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Tajikistan, Chechnya and Bosnia offered perfect arenas for collaboration both within radical religious groups and between these groups and local state leaderships that either harbored or coordinated their activities.

From this standpoint, the long-lasting conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh represents an interesting case for investigating the preconditions of broadening of such a collaborative network among international terrorist groups in the Caucasus, particularly in Azerbaijan, where these groups found safe haven among local authorities that regulated their further operations.

Even today, when a shaky cease-fire exists on the area of former bloody conflicts, the factor of one of militant components of Islamist ideology or *mujaheddin factor* is apparent. This is especially evident in the example of post-war Bosnia. Some of Arab volunteers, who arrived in Bosnia to fight against the Serbs and Croats in 1992-1995, settled here institutionalizing their presence by mixed marriages. Others took part in the Chechen war or joined in the forming *al-Qaeda* structures in Afghanistan.¹

A similar process developed in Azerbaijan after the establishment of a cease-fire in Nagorno-Karabakh. The first cells of *al-Qaeda* in the territory of the former USSR appeared in Azerbaijan, when the organization opened its office in Baku and started to assist Azerbaijani forces in their struggle for control over Nagorno-Karabakh.²

After the end of the Afghan war former Arab mujaheddins, who had fought against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan, made so-called "conflict-cruises" across the ethnic confrontation areas of the Eurasian continent, such as Tajikistan,

¹ Yaroslav Trofimov, 'Mujahedeen Factor: Militant Islam Gains in Postwar Bosnia', *The Wall Street Journal Europe*, March 19, 2002. See also Yossef Bodansky, 'Chechnia. The Mujaheddin Factor', Online edition, at http://www.freeman.org/m_online/bodansky/chechnya.htm

² P. Polkovnikov, 'al-Qaeda in Caucasus. Hundreds of its fighters fought in Karabakh, Chechnya, and Central Asia', *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, No. 2 (317), January 24, 2003, (in Russian).

Nagorno-Karabakh, Chechnya, Bosnia and others. It is noteworthy that Turkey became and remains to be among countries harboring the transfer of Arab and other mujaheddin groups from one conflict zone to another. In the first half of the 1990s, this assistance was primarily an expression of Ankara's intention "to return" to the Balkans and "revive the Ottoman glory". The interest of Turkish secret services and military structures in collaboration with various Islamic groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina was due to Turkey's objective to secure itself in the Balkans, as well as to recruit Islamic mercenaries as mediators and promoters of Turkish foreign policy goals in the Balkans and Caucasus as a whole³.

In the early 1990s, the president of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria, Johar Dudaev, paid visits to Turkey, the unrecognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and other Middle Eastern countries. These visits were successful in reaching agreements on arms supply to Chechnya. As early as in the fall of 1994, cargo aircraft of the Chechen National Aviation Company carried out flights on the route of Khartoum-Baku with unidentified cargo. Soviet-made weapons purchased by Turkey in East Germany were sent by air through the city of Bitlis, Turkey, and then to the Azeri military airport Nasosnaya located near the capital Baku. Simultaneously, the commandos of the Turkish and Azeri branches of the ultra-nationalist "Grey Wolves" organization launched their operation in Chechnya. Part of this operation included military training by the Turkish secret services⁴.

The main geopolitical goals of Chechen leaders in the Caucasian region were described by Johar Dudaev in the Turkish newspaper "Zaman" in March 1994: "My plan foresaw the creation of a union of Caucasus countries directed against Russian imperialism, signifying a united Caucasus. Our chief goal was the achievement of independence and liberation, acting together with the Caucasus republics, which have been oppressed by Russia over the course of 300 years. After that, we proposed together to exploit the rich natural resources and oil of the Caucasus and transport it across Turkey to world markets"⁵.

In late 1995, in the territory of the non-recognized Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, where the bases of the Turkish "National Intelligence Organization" (Turkish abbreviation: MIT) were established, several hundred Arab mercenaries were trained to participate in the military actions in the Balkans, on

the side of Bosnian Islamists. Other mujaheddins were trained for further transfer to Chechnya, Afghanistan and Eastern Turkey. On the Turkish, as well as in the Northern Iraqi territories they were used in fights against Kurdish guerrilla⁶.

Azerbaijan in turn made attempts to recruit mercenaries from Islamic states to involve them in its war against the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh.

It should be noted that terrorist and radical Islamist groups had settled down in Azerbaijan before the proclamation of state independence. However, it is accepted to think that these organizations found a fertile soil in Azerbaijan after Heydar Aliiev came to power and started to recruit foreign mercenaries from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Turkey and other states to fight against the Karabakh Armenians⁷. It is symptomatic that Aliiev continued the tradition of his predecessors. The presidents of Azerbaijan sought to solve the Karabakh problem and increase fighting efficiency of the Azerbaijani Army by using foreign military forces. For example, Ayaz Mutaibov, the first president of Azerbaijan, successfully used the Soviet internal troops for carrying out a policy of ethnic cleansing in Armenian populated regions of northern Karabakh. During Abulfaz Elçibey's presidency military advisers from Turkey, Russia and the USA instructed the Azerbaijani armed forces. Azerbaijan tried also to utilize links with Islamic states, as well as with radical Islamic organizations to diplomatically isolate Armenia and acquire financial and military assistance to continue its military campaign in Nagorno-Karabakh.

The recruitment of foreign mercenaries, in particular Chechen combatants and Afghan mujaheddins during the military campaigns of 1992-1994 against the Karabakh Armenians became one of these practicable ways for Azeri government.

Chechens in Karabakh

In its policy of secession from Russia, Chechen leadership gave a great significance to gaining allies, especially in the Caucasian region. From this perspective, Grozny considered Azerbaijan the main buttress in the South Caucasian region, especially taking into consideration the fact that Baku did not join the CIS until late 1993. This solidarity was based also on the idea of a common "Caucasian home", which was supposed to consolidate Caucasian peoples and countries against the Russian influence. In the early 90s, the leader of

³ Yossef Bodansky, 'Some Call It Peace Waiting For in the Balkans', http://members.tripod.com/Balkania/resources/geostrategy/bodansky_peace/index.html

⁴ See Viatcheslav Aviotiskii, 'The Northern Caucasus as Russia's "Internal Abroad"', *Central Asia and Caucasus*, No. 5 (23), (Stockholm: 2002): 64.

⁵ See John B. Dunlop, 'Russia Confronts Chechnia. Roots of a Separatist Conflict' (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 140.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Congressional Research Services, (CRS, 9/10/2001).

Azerbaijani Popular Front Abulfaz Elçibey visited Grozny and established friendly relations with General Johar Dudaev⁸.

In the spring of 1992, a delegation of Muslim leaders of from Azerbaijan visited Chechnya and met with Gen. Dudaev. In the Azerbaijani delegation, according to some sources, *incognito* were presented also representatives of Azerbaijani Ministry of Defense. During bilateral meetings, apart from discussions of protocol character (such as establishment of bilateral friendly relations between both Azeri and Chechen nations and states, joint efforts on revival of Islam in the region, etc.), military cooperation was discussed, in particular the possible participation of Chechen armed forces in the military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh. Moreover, Azerbaijan side promised to equip Chechen detachments with armored vehicles and ammunition from its own stores.⁹

However, Johar Dudaev most apparently was not interested in open involvement of Chechnya in the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict. The sides agreed to recruit only Chechen volunteers for military operations with corresponding salaries. According to various sources, the salaries of Chechen mercenaries ranged from 600 to 1000 rubles per day.¹⁰

The recruitment of Chechen mercenaries took place on a former military base located on Boutirin Street in Grozny. Chechen fighters first arrived in Azerbaijan with the ideas of Islamic and Caucasian solidarity under the leadership of well-known commander Shamil Basaev. With the Chechen support, Baku authorities hoped to crash the fighting spirit of Karabakh Armenians at the expense of foreign blood. In early June of 1992 the number of Chechen mercenaries in Karabakh totalled approximately 300. During the first clashes with Karabakh Armenians, many casualties occurred among the Chechens. As a result, Armenian soldiers often found Russian citizens from Chechnya on the battlefields.¹¹

Chechen mercenaries admitted that one of the decisive factors for their involvement in the Karabakh battlefields was their sense of Islamic and Caucasian solidarity with Azerbaijan, as well as the proximity of the conflict region to Chechnya¹². Taking into account the discipline and courage demonstrated by the Chechen fighters, the Azerbaijani army leadership appointed them as

commanders of platoons. Very often with the help of these fighters, barrage detachments were organized to shoot deserters and retreating Azeris.

Shamil Basaev was less successful this time compared with fighting against the Georgian troops in Abkhazia. After heavy losses, Chechen fighters left Karabakh battlefields, partially in connection with the inter-Chechen and Russian-Chechen problems. The Armenian forces of self-defense captured several Chechen soldiers during the military operations in Karabakh. A representative of Grozny authorities arrived in Stepanakert and reached an agreement on the extradition of Chechen POWs with the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic's Armenian authorities. The Chechens among the bodyguards of the Azeri president were also recalled. By a strange coincidence, this occurred just on the eve of the armed mutiny of Colonel Surət Hüseynov in the city of Gence and his further march on Baku in June 1993. It should be noted that a group of Chechens was also among Surət Hüseynov's militants¹³.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Chechen mercenaries played a certain role in the internal political rearrangements of Azerbaijan.

After the cease-fire agreement in Bishkek¹⁴ in May of 1994, Chechen leaders frequently promised to support the Azeri side "to liberate Karabakh" from the Armenians as soon as domestic problems "will be settled"¹⁵.

In case of Chechen participation in Karabakh fighting, the motivation was a desire to get military experience in anticipation of armed conflict at home. On the other hand, the arrival of Chechens in Azerbaijan and their participation in the battles had been organized as a reaction to the inefficiency of the Azerbaijani Army.

The character of military operations, which by many parameters varied from those in Abkhazia, led to the inefficiency of Chechen units in the Karabakh war. In particular, "Chechen experience" was ineffective in the open places, where tactics of offensive and counteroffensive were used and more or less fixed frontlines and communications existed. The essence and advantage of "Chechen experience" of conducting military operations was based on the tactics of street fighting and combat in the highlands.¹⁶

⁸ Sanobar Shermatova, 'Islamic Factor in the hands of Political Elites' in *Islam on the Post-Soviet space: The view from inside*, eds. A. Malashenko and Marta Brill Olcott, (Moscow: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001): 221, (in Russian)

⁹ *Ekspress Khronika*, No. 28. 1992.

¹⁰ See *Spravedlivost*, No. 16, 1992; *Ichkeria*, No. 8, June 25, 1992; *Respublika Armenia*, August 1, 1992.

¹¹ *Ekspress khronika*, No. 28. 1992. See also *Journalists in the Karabakh war*, (Moscow: Prava Cheloveka, 2002): 63.

¹² *Respublika Armenia*, August 1, 1992.

¹³ Sanobar Shermatova, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

¹⁴ Ministers of Defense of Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh Republic with the mediation of Russian president's representative V. Kazimirov and the Head of Inter-Parliamentary Assembly on Nagorno-Karabakh M. Sherimkulov signed Bishkek Protocol in May 5 1994. Originally Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh representatives signed this protocol. Azerbaijan joined it 3 days later.

¹⁵ For example see *Obshchaya Gazeta*, Moscow, October 28, 1999.

¹⁶ Interview with vice rector of Caucasus Media Institute, political analyst Mr. Alexander Iskandarian.

There is a pertinent question: what was the main attraction for Chechens to get into the Karabakh war? Material interest or religious solidarity? Most probably neither. By the assertion of "Ichkeria" newspaper, an agreement was reached with Azeri side to transfer armament from Azerbaijan to Chechnya. Apparently, this served as a good incentive for the Azeri-Chechen cooperation. Through this cooperation Grozny intended to reinforce its army arsenals.

In early July of 1992, a large quantity of arms and ammunition supplies formerly used in military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh was transported from Azerbaijan to Chechnya. The arms traffic to Chechnya passed by the following routes: Samur (Azerbaijan) – Kasumkent – Dulbugh – Khadjalmakhi – Glokh – Kharami pass (Daghestan). Taking into consideration the involvement of the National Guard of Chechnya in the process of recruitment of mercenaries and the fact that this was going to its military base, undoubtedly the officials in Grozny were also involved or at least were *au courant* of the arms traffic and mercenary recruitment¹⁷.

Assumedly, the armaments acquired by Chechens during the short-term Karabakh campaign were used against Russian federal forces during the very first days of the Chechen war. On many occasions, Russian military sources have indicated the existence of the mentioned route of arm supply from Azerbaijan and Turkey during the first Chechen campaign (1994-1996). Moreover, during the initial stage of the war, a transportation of military supplies by air from Azerbaijan to Chechnya was also organized.¹⁸ Military supplies were also transported from Azerbaijan to Chechnya by sea through the territory of Daghestan. The Azeri branch of the Turkish ultra-nationalist organization of "Gray wolves" and its Azeri leader Iskender Hamidov played an active role in providing Chechen warriors with armament, logistical support and volunteers from Azerbaijan.¹⁹

Various kinds of support to Chechen guerrillas from the territory of Azerbaijan continued during the second stage of the Chechen campaign as well. As in the first stage, one of the main routes of ammunition, armament and mercenary supply from Turkey to Chechnya was organized through the territory of Azerbaijan.

Afghan Mujaheddins in Karabakh

One of the main factors influencing the activation of radical-terrorist organizations in today's Azerbaijan is the collaboration of Azerbaijani authorities with Afghan mujaheddins during the Karabakh war. It was in this period that a number of radical Islamic organizations having multilevel links with international terrorist organizations, including Osama bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* at a later point, launched operations on the territory of Azerbaijan. For *al-Qaeda*, Azerbaijan became one of its strongholds to carry out terrorist activity.

Following the defeat of the Azerbaijani Army in the Karabakh frontlines in mid 1993, Baku turned to Afghan authorities for supply of Afghan mujaheddins to fight against the Armenian self-defense forces of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Deputy Interior Minister of Azerbaijan Rovshan Javadov visited Kabul in July 1993, where he met with Afghan Premier Minister Gulbeddin Hekmatyar, who at the same time was the leader of "Hizb-i Islami" (Islamic Party). The meeting was aimed at reaching an agreement on sending Afghani fighters to Azerbaijan.²⁰ Later, in mid December of the same year, the son-in-law of the Afghani Prime Minister visited Baku with the representative of his ally Gen. Rashid Dostum.

Hekmatyar's party of "Hizb-i Islami" "was one of axes of the "Afghani branch" of training of Algerian and Egypt mujaheddins".²¹ It should be mentioned that at the beginning of the 1990s Hekmatyar, the main recipient of foreign aid, faced financial difficulties due to withdrawal of Soviet troops and considerable decrease of financial support from external donors, who started to look for new and more effective mediators for their interests in Afghanistan.²² Most probably, these circumstances played an essential role in the consent of Afghan leaders to cooperate with Azeri officials by supplying manpower to support totally failed Azerbaijani army. One must suppose that the driving force for such a decision was not the sense of Islamic solidarity, but quite obviously financial interest. It should be noted that during the recruitment of the Afghans, a claim, by now a cliché, was made that the fight was in support of "Muslim Azerbaijan" against "the Christian Armenians who are backed by Russia."²³

²⁰ Azerbaijan Enlists Afghan Mercenaries, *RFE/RL Records*, November 8, 1993, SB&Eurasian Archive, Azerbaijan, HU-OSA, 300/80/6/3; Joseph A. Kechichian and Theodore W. Karasik, 'The Crisis in Azerbaijan: How the Clans Influence the Politics of an Emerging Republic', *Middle East Policy*, vol. IV, 1995, No. 1-2, p. 63.

²¹ Rolan Jaqqar, 'In the name of Osama bin Laden' (Moscow: OLMA PRESS, 2002): 196, (Russian edition).

²² Yuri. V. Bosin, 'The Role of Religious-Ethnic factor in internal Afghani Conflict', in *Afghanistan: the Problems of War and Peace*, (Moscow: Institute of Israeli and Middle East Studies, 2000): 71-72, (in Russian).

²³ David Filipov, 'For Afghan Everyman, War is in his Body, Soul', *The Boston Globe*, December 19, 2001.

¹⁷ *Ekspress Khronika*, No. 28, 1992; *Respublika Armenia*, August 1, 1992.

¹⁸ Sebastian Smith, 'Allah's Mountains. Politics and War in Russian Caucasus', (London-New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 1998): 186.

¹⁹ Zurab Todua, 'Azerbaijani patience', (Moscow: KON Liga Press, 2000): 45, (in Russian).

As certain analysts have rightly noted, the recruitment of Afghan mujaheddins by Azerbaijan to fight in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict could be a precedent for a new wave of escalation. As a matter of fact, the Afghans could do nothing essential to bring changes in the further developments on the Karabakh battlefields except for drawing attention to the critical situation of Baku, which was "on its knees...grabbing for anything they can get".²⁴

Afghan mujaheddins in Nagorno-Karabakh mainly represented Hekmatyar's faction. A person named Vaidallah started to act as a mediator between the Azerbaijani government and the mujaheddins, organising and coordinating the recruitment and deployment of Afghan mercenaries in Azerbaijan.²⁵

According to American journalist Thomas Goltz, US citizens who were engaged in the Iran-Contra affair and formerly were members of the US Special Forces brought mujaheddins to Azerbaijan and at the same time instructed Azeri pilots in Texas for this mission. Moreover, American military instructors trained Azerbaijani army units to fight against Armenian forces.²⁶

In fact Afghan mujaheddins were the first foreign military forces involved in inter-ethnic and inter-state conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union. Afghan militants fought in the Tajik civil war and Nagorno-Karabakh. However, if in the first case, mujaheddins made a common cause with Tajik opposition ethnically and ideologically, in the case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict material interests were paramount. Hattab, a Jordanian Arab with Chechen descent not so well known at that time, was among the first to arrive in Nagorno-Karabakh to fight Armenians. In mid the 1980s he was in Afghanistan together with many Arabs to join the struggle against the Soviet Army and later became known as "Arab Afghans".²⁷

There were about 15,000 Arab veterans of the Afghan war. Their role was essential in the bloody civil war in Algeria. The presence of Arab religious fanatics in Bosnia in certain cases served as a cause for displeasure and discrepancy among secular Bosnians.²⁸ In Hekmatyar "Hizb-i Islami", the number of Arab Afghans

²⁴ Alexis Rowell, 'US Army Veterans "Drill" Azeris Under Cover of Oil Firm', *The Observer*, October 28, 1993; John Auerbach, 'Azerbaijan hires Afghan Troops to Bolster Army', *Boston Globe*, November 8, 1993.

²⁵ Up To 2500 Afghan May Be Fighting in Azeri Army, *RFE/RL Records*, April 27, 1994, Azerbaijan, HU-OSA, 300/80/6/2.

²⁶ Thomas Goltz, 'Azerbaijan Diary: A Rogue Reporter's Adventures in an Oil-Rich, War-Torn, Post-Soviet Republic', (New York: Sharpe, 1998): 270-279.

²⁷ Sanobar Shermatova, 'Islamic Factor in the Hands of Political Elites', p. 221.

²⁸ James Bruce, 'Arab Veterans of the Afghan War', *Jane's Intelligence Review*, April 1, 1995, Vol. 7, No.4, p. 175.

reached about 3,500.²⁹ Undoubtedly, there were groups of "Arab veterans" of the Afghan war among the mujaheddins who arrived in Azerbaijan, especially since many of them were then ready to leave Afghanistan in search of new areas to use their military skills in the name of Islamic solidarity.

The Azeri side was well prepared to host the Afghan mujaheddins. Translators of Dari and Pushtu were hired for the army. Judging from Azerbaijani army officers' secret documents and reports captured by the Armenian forces, shortly after their arrival the Afghans became a serious burden for Azerbaijanis, since many of them were very demanding for food and medical service. According to Azeri Lieutenant Colonel D. Lyatifov, "it seems that they came here for taking treatment, rather than to fight".³⁰ Apart from this, the Armenian forces obtained evidences of "Afghani presence" in Azerbaijan, such as Islamic literature printed in Afghanistan and Pakistan, records and unsent letters in Dari and Pushtu languages, as well as military maps and instructions for organization of artillery crews. In addition, some photographs taken in Gence allowed identifying that some Afghan mujaheddins were deployed on the territory of the training center of the former Soviet Army's 104th Gence Airborne Division.³¹

In late August of 1993 on the battlefields of Fizuli and Zangelan regions of Karabakh frontlines and to the surprise of Armenian forces, some corps of Afghan mujaheddins were discovered dressed in traditional Afghani costumes. In reports of Azeri officers and commanders the Afghan detachments were named as a "special contingent." It is noteworthy that Azeri leaders spied on the mujaheddins to prevent agitation against the leadership of Azerbaijan.³²

According to Karabakhi Armenians, mujaheddins fought persistently, but were unable to make any essential break-through in the Karabakh war. In spite of all attempts of Baku to refute the presence of Afghan soldiers in the Republic of Azerbaijan, some informed sources pointed to the presence of about 1,500-2,000 mujaheddins fighting against Armenians. Around two or three hundred out of them were participating in military actions on a permanent basis. The Afghans took part in military operations according to a prescribed schedule: one day per week they were in the positions and the remaining days they could have a rest. During their

²⁹ Shaul Shay and Yoram Schweitzer 'The "Afghan Alumni" Terrorism Islamic Militants against the Rest of the World', (The International Policy Institute For Counter Terrorism), November 6, 2000), at www.ict.org.il

³⁰ The report of Lieutenant colonel D. Lyatifov addressed to the head of Azerbaijani Armed forces' headquarters. See attachment No. 3. See also Azg, January 13, 1994.

³¹ Daniel Shneider. 'Afghan Fighters Join Azeri-Armenian War', *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 13, 1993; *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 29, 1994, see APPENDIXES.

³² *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, January 15, 1994; *Conflict International*, April 1994, Shaul Shay and Yoram Schweitzer, *op. cit.*

days off, they were allowed to leave for Baku, Mingechaur or other cities of Azerbaijan. In some cases, special flights were organized for some of them to spend their days off in Afghanistan.³³

Most Afghan mujaheddins were deployed in the southern part of the Karabakh frontline towards the Iranian border. One of the Afghan POWs, Bahtior Verballah Baberzai (from the tribe of Rashiddustan) from the city of Mazari Sharif fought on the side of Gen. Abdul-Rashid Dustum and participated in the armed operations in the Fizuli region. According to him, the Azeri side promised a bonus of up to 5,000 US dollars to each Afghani soldier upon the expiration of their contracts. During the first months in Azerbaijan, each Afghan mercenary received an honorarium of one 1,000 *manats* (1 manat is slightly more than 1 USD). Depending on their further performance and success in the frontlines, the Afghans were granted the right to get payment in foreign currency also³⁴.

In Karabakh frontlines Afghan mujaheddins were mainly attached to the infantry, especially in assault detachments, taking advantage of their skills in conducting military operations in mountainous areas. Their skills of using various kinds of small arms, especially those of Soviet production, as well as their military experience against Soviet type armored vehicles acquired during the Afghan war, in the first stages of fighting forced the Armenian side to retreat, especially in the southern frontline, such as Fizuli. The "Afghan experience" of the struggle against tanks was the following: if one grenade thrower was unable to destroy a Soviet made infantry military vehicle (Russian abr. BMP), or a regular tank, then a simultaneous strike with several grenade throwers from all sides was able to detonate the ammunition of the tank and the latter exploded afterwards.³⁵

It should be noted that the living conditions of Afghan mercenaries were much better compared with Azeri soldiers. At the same time, Afghans usually stayed isolated from the Azeri troops and rarely got in contact with them. There were several reasons for this. **First**, Azerbaijani soldiers did not follow the rules of Shari'a concerning abstention from alcohol. Afghans strictly observed all daily rituals prescribed by the Koran. Consequently, they had prepared and ate food separately.³⁶ Afghans destroyed the winery near the Azeri city of Agdam because of too excessive use of wine by Azeri soldiers. This resulted in casualties in the

³³ The deposition of Afghani prisoner of war Bakhtior Verballah Baberzai, see *Golos Armenii*, May 26, 1994.

³⁴ Afghan Mujahid Ready To Fight For Nagorno-Karabakh, *RFE/RL Records*, May 4, 1994, Slavic, Baltic&Eurasian Archive, Azerbaijan, IIU-OSA, 300/80/6/2.

³⁵ I am grateful to Mr. Levon Melik-Shahnazaryan for providing this information.

³⁶ Galina Kovalskaya, 'The war. During the time of Mutalibov, Elchibey and Aliiev', *Novoe vremia*, No. 11, 1994, p. 20.

Azeri side. Clashes between Afghans and local Azeri population regarding Islamic rituals and traditions were quite frequent. For example, there were some cases of beating of Azeri women by Afghans because they did not practice the wearing of headscarves and veils. **Secondly**, among Azerbaijani forces there were also many Slavic mercenaries, referred to as "shuravi" by Afghans. The clashes between Afghan mujaheddins and Slavic mercenaries sometimes resulted in losses on both sides. On several occasions, local Russian draftees (or Azeris with light hair and blue eyes) had to be removed from sectors dominated by Afghans to prevent confrontations between them".³⁷ Some clashes occurred among Afghans too, particularly because of affiliation with different Afghan parties. **Finally**, the Azerbaijani army leadership tried to avoid excessive advertising of Afghani involvement in Karabakh fighting by isolating them from the main contingents of the Azerbaijani army. To avoid scandals and anger of relatives of the killed mujaheddins, Azerbaijani officials thoroughly hid the actual number of losses among the "Afghan contingent". For this very reasons not all bodies of killed mujaheddins were sent back home.³⁸

However, some Azerbaijanis did have contact with the Afghans. These were mainly the persons interested in establishment of links with Afghans to import drugs from Afghanistan and organize further drug-traffic.³⁹ In search for new funds the Hekmatyar group since 1991 started to specialize in the production of heroin. It was controlling more than 86 field labs. To make it clearer would suffice to note that during the period from 1992 to 1995 about 2,200-2,400 tons of drugs per year were produced in Afghanistan.⁴⁰

Drug trade in Afghanistan and its further traffic to other regions was a very profitable business. At times the money gained by Afghans for military services could not be compared with that earned from drug traffic.

Despite Baku's continuous denial of Afghan involvement in the Karabakh war, the officials in Stepanakert have periodically declared that there are enough materials to dispel any doubts on this issue.

Facing existing realities, the President of the Republic of Armenia Levon Ter-Petrosyan was obliged to address to write to the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Burhanuddin Rabbani and Prime Minister Gulbeddin Hekmatyar. In his message, the Armenian President expressed his anxiety

³⁷ Thomas Goltz, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

³⁸ *Golos Armenii*, May 26, 1994.

³⁹ *Moscow News*, No. 23, May 5-12, 1994.

⁴⁰ Ahmed Rashid, 'Taliban. Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism', (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 119; R. Jaqqar, *op. cit.*, p. 263.

regarding the participation of Afghan mujaheddins in the Karabakh conflict on the side of the Azerbaijani army.

In reply to Levon Ter-Petrosyan, President Rabbani condemned the participation of Afghan citizens in the military actions in Nagorno-Karabakh and called for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Rabbani's message read as follows: "... The Afghani side understands well the feelings of Armenian authorities. With regret I would like to inform you and in your person the Armenian nation that, indeed, certain groups of adventurers damaging severely the social and political stability in Afghanistan, for financial securing of their goals...are deteriorating the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan... The participation of some group of mercenaries under the name of mujaheddins cannot worsen the relations between Afghanistan and Armenia. The Afghani side does its best to prevent such an inhuman business, which the extremists practice, thus using the incomes from this business to deepen the instability in Afghanistan. Afghanistan will do its best to stop this business in the nearest future..."⁴¹

This letter is an excellent example of a diplomatic *manœuvre*. The involvement of Afghan authorities in the export of military forces thousands kilometres away from the homeland received publicity in the Western mass media. On the other hand, this letter speaks of diplomatic efforts to deny such facts.

In certain cases the involvement of Afghan mujaheddins in Karabakh was perceived unequivocally in the Muslim world. For example, in a letter addressed to the Afghan leaders, the Muslims of Canada expressed their anger and called on to end the recruitment of mujaheddins.⁴²

The Chechen and Afghan mercenaries continued to participate in the military operations on the side of the Azerbaijani forces until the spring of 1994. After the protocol signed in Bishkek in May 1994, certain part of mujaheddins settled in Azerbaijan providing fruitful soil for further formation of various Islamic charity organizations.⁴³ Their role was more than significant during the counter-terrorist operation of the Russian Federal Army in Chechnya, especially in the organization of military and financial supplies from Turkey to Azerbaijan and from Azerbaijan to Chechnya. Interestingly, during the Karabakh campaign charter flights from Kabul to Baku were organized. These flights brought Afghan

⁴¹ *Respublika Armenia*, May 31, 1994; *Moscow News*, No. 23, June 5-12, 1994; Afghan Mujahideen Said To Be Involved in Karabakh Fighting, *RFE/RL Records*, December 23, 1993, Azerbaijan, IHU-OSA, 300/80/6/2.

⁴² *Azg*, January 18, 1994.

⁴³ According to Azerbaijani mass media the number of Afghans in Azerbaijan in 2002 was encountered as six thousand, of which 2-3 thousand settled in the republic during the 1993-1999, see *Zerkalo*, September 7, 2002.



General Johar Dudaev
From © <http://www.slaptai.it>



Shamil Basaev
From © <http://www.slaptai.it>



Ruslan Gelaev
From © <http://www.lenta.ru>



Hattab
From © <http://www.compromat.ru>



Gulbeddin Hekmatyar
Prime Minister of Afghanistan,
leader of Hizb-i Islami Party
From © <http://www.mine.nc.jp>



Rovshan Javadov
(on the right)
Deputy Interior Minister of Azerbaijan
© Zurab Todua, 2001



Afghani mujaheddin posing in front of
a car with Azerbaijani number plates
Archive of NKR State Department of
National Security



Afghani mujaheddin in front
of Azerbaijan Hotel in Baku
Archive of NKR State Department
of National Security



Barhanuddin Rabbani
President of Afghanistan in 1992-1996
From © <http://www.afghanology.com>



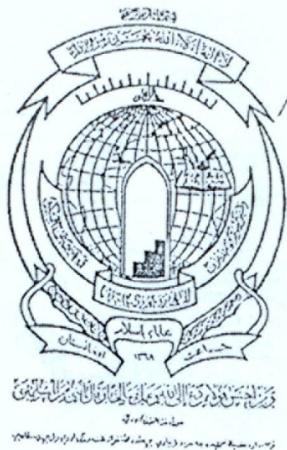
Osama Bin Laden
World terrorist No. 1
© The Economist, 2002



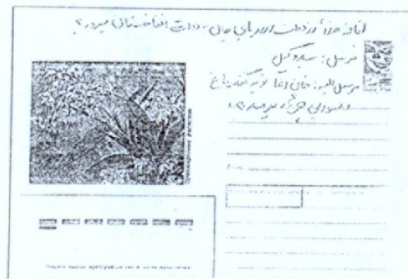
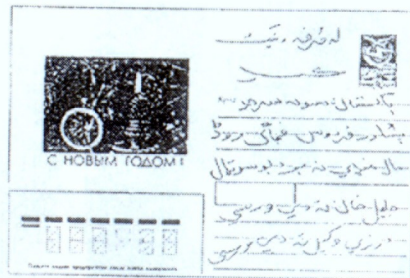
Afghani mujaheddins in
Azerbaijani city of Gence
© Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1994



Bakhtior Verbolah Baberzai
Afghani from Mazari Sharif taken
prisoner in Karabakh war
© Golos Armenii, 1994



Emblem of Afghani
Hizb-i Islami Party
Archive of NKR State
Department of National Security



Postcards addressed to
Pakistan (left) and Afghanistan (right)
Archive of NKR State Department of National Security

mujaheddins from Kabul to Baku and flew back to Afghanistan carrying Chechen combatants for training near Kunduz and Tolukan. The bases of Tajik opposition (some detachments of which at that time were expelled from Afghanistan) were located in the above-mentioned places. It was this very location where Hattab met with Tajiks and Chechens. Hattab joined Tajik opposition forces in spring of 1994 and participated in the assault on the 12th Russian outpost of Phyanje frontier guards together with the group of "Afghan Arabs" of the joint Afghan-Tajik detachment (around 20 persons).⁴⁴

Later on Hattab, using his Chechen links established in Karabakh, appeared in Chechnya, where he started to lead Chechen forces against the federals until his death in early 2002.

There is no doubt that Azeri and other Islamic radical-extremist organizations operating in Azerbaijan were in contact with bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* group. Moreover, even before the September 11 events the American mass media had touched upon possible an "Azerbaijani connection" in the attacks on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. After the terrorist attacks on the US embassies in Africa, the FBI was able to trace about 60 phone calls made from the satellite phone used by bin Laden to his associates of "Islamic Jihad" in Baku and from them to partners in Africa. Reportedly in August of 1998, the Azerbaijani branch of the "Islamic Jihad" organization, which by then had merged with Osama bin Laden's *al-Qaeda*, coordinated the bombings of the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania that killed 224 people and wounded nearly 4,600.

A month after the September 11 events, the Azerbaijani authorities started a real raid against the Islamic missionary organizations operating in the republic, being suspicious of their connection with bin Laden's *al-Qaeda*. Shortly, several citizens of Jordan, Katar and Saudi Arabia were arrested in Baku following the detection of big sums of money they had illegally brought into the republic. The raids against Islamic radicals in Azerbaijan had started back in September 1998, when Ahmed Salam Mabruk, who was the assistant to the leader of "Jihad" militant organization and comrade-in arms with bin Laden Doctor Ayman al-Zawahiri was deported from Baku.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Sanobar Shermatova, *op. cit.*, p. 221; Sanobar Shermatova, 'Khatib and Central Asia', *Moscow News*, September 13, 2000.

⁴⁵ R. Jaqqar, *op. cit.*, pp. 242, 302.

Gradually, Azerbaijan turned into an asylum for concentration of facilities and force not only for Chechen combatants, but also for various Islamist extremist forces acting on the territory in Russia and other CIS member countries.⁴⁶

Mainly because of the presence of "Arab Afghan" and other radical Islamic groups, both post-war Bosnia and Azerbaijan became a "new center" for Islamic radicals, which established nets of training camps, attaching charity organizations and underground cells. Suffice to stress that Ibrahim Aydarus arrested by the FBI for the explosions of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 was heading the Azerbaijani branch of *al-Qaeda* in 1995-1997.⁴⁷ Additionally, a training camp for Vahhabites under the aegis of "World League of Islamic Youth" was opened in Azerbaijan in the Genclik outskirts of Baku. Muhamed Salem Abdel Hamid from Saudi Arabia, Mohamed Ali Khoroko from Somali, and Aref Abdalla and Kharuzi Kaid Abd ar-Rahman from Yemen were among the teachers, who trained Islamic cadres and distributed religious literature and videocassettes in the North Caucasus, including Chechnya.⁴⁸

It is noteworthy that the local Islamic radicals also planned a terrorist attack on the American Embassy in Baku, but at the last moment the radicals cancelled this operation "having no intentions to spoil good relations in Azerbaijan."⁴⁹ To legitimize their presence on Azerbaijani territory, these organizations as a rule supported the official policy and position of Baku in the Karabakh question. According to a report issued by the Congressional Research Service individuals and groups affiliated with the international terrorist Osama bin Laden and his *al-Qaeda* organization used Azerbaijan as one of the bases in their elaborate terrorist network.⁵⁰

The Azeri side perceived the resolution of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict either in total deportation of Armenian population from their homes or limitation of their cultural and administrative rights with further attempts to drive them out of their homeland. To implement this policy, Azerbaijani authorities used force and relied on the help of Soviet troops, as well as Chechen and Afghan mercenaries. This, however, is not the full list of fighters on the side of Azerbaijanis against the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh. Permanent failures of the Azeri Army in the summer of 1993, forced Baku authorities to request the help of foreign military

force hoping to secure some breakthrough in the war. In fact, this was an attempt "to import" various kinds of militarized religious extremism, the consequences of which are clearly evident today. Big number of losses among Afghans obviously decreased their willingness and military spirit, thus weakening their hopes to strengthen their positions in Karabakh proper and in Azerbaijan. Thus, the non-recognized NKR became the first state to fight against the dispersal of international terrorism around the world. It would not be an exaggeration to say that in many cases military success of Karabakh army weakened the incidence of export and dispersal of religious extremism and terrorist organizations. Therefore, it is not difficult to foresee consequences that would have arisen from the elimination of the "Karabakh barrier" in case of another *status quo*.

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⁴⁶ Yossef Bodansky, The New Azerbaijan Hub: How Islamist operations are targeting Russia, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh, *Defense and Foreign Affairs' Strategic Policy*, October, 1999, see APPENDIX I.

see also at http://www.anca.org/anca/action_docs.asp?docid=38

⁴⁷ R. Jaqqar, *op. cit.*, p. 196, *Golos Armenii*, November 28, 2002.

⁴⁸ *Nezavisimoe voennoe obozrenie*, October 5-21, 1999.

⁴⁹ *Zerkalo*, Baku, July 22, 2000; *Ekho*, Baku, September 28, 2001; *The Washington Post*, May 3, 2001.

⁵⁰ *Ekho*, Baku, September 1, 2001; *Congressional Research Service* (CRS, October 9, 2001).

Conclusion

The study of escalation of interethnic conflicts on the territory of the former Soviet Union and post-communist area makes researchers attach more attention to the issue of third parties' direct involvement in the conflict zones.

The case of Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is not an exception from this point of view. Presented facts clearly reveal certain aspects of the interference and impact by third parties, including countries and ethnic groups from non-contiguous as well as bordering regions.

The political élite of Azerbaijan tried to use the advantages of ethnic and confessional solidarity for the purpose of gaining the external support, in particular from Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Chechnya.

Turkish interference in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was manifested particularly in the forms of ammunition and armament supplies, as well as involvement of Turkish military instructors in the planning of military operations, as well as their direct participation in them. As a rule, this assistance was provided indirectly, through non-government organizations or secret services. The problem of "Turkish presence" in Karabakh conflict zone needs thorough analysis in the future, in parallel with the disclosure of new facts and sources.

The recruitment of foreign mercenaries in the conflict zones of the former Soviet Union was widely practiced in Tadjikistan, Georgian-Abkhazian conflict, in Bosnia, Azerbaijan, etc. In the case of the Karabakh war, the material interest of those recruited was evident, while the manipulation of ethnic, religious and ideological solidarity factors was obvious on the side of Azerbaijan.

Turkish military and political support to Azerbaijan and recruitment of foreign mercenaries from Chechnya, Afghanistan and other regions to fight against Armenians added to further escalation and internationalization of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. For Azerbaijan, this policy subsequently promoted the appearance on its territory of various organizations that had direct links to international terrorist networks.

APPENDICES

The New Azerbaijan Hub: How Islamist operations are targeting Russia, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabagh

by Yossef Bodansky, Senior Editor*

Defense and Foreign Affairs' Strategic Policy

October, 1999

An ongoing study by *Defense & Foreign Affairs* has cited a significant number of highly-placed sources in Russia and the Caucasus who advise that radical Islamist forces are expanding their infrastructure in Azerbaijan in preparation for a sustained escalation, both in the Caucasus and at the heart of Russia. Planned terrorist "spectaculars" include the use of suicide bombers.

Significantly, these developments are based on long-standing relationships and understandings between Azeri officials and the Islamist leaders involved in Chechnya, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The escalation began in 1997 when the Islamists basically agreed with the Azerbaijan Government of Heydar Aliyev that they would -- in exchange for allowing a free flow of people, weapons and ordnance through Azerbaijan -- not interfere with or overthrow the Aliyev Government. As well, they committed to providing outside mujahedin to undertake operations against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh, which could be credibly denied by the Aliyev Government.

This Azerbaijan-based infrastructure is aimed at both pushing arriving mujahedin to the forward training and operational bases in Chechnya, as well as launching operations against Russia and Armenia (including Nagorno-Karabakh) in the event of Russian bombing and raids on the Islamist bases in Chechnya. At present, the most important function of the infrastructure in Azerbaijan is the absorption, handling and initial acclimatization and indoctrination of foreign volunteers, mainly Arabs and Afghans/Pakistanis, as well as growing numbers of Central Asians, before being sent forward to terrorism and military training bases in central Chechnya, mainly the Saudi-born Islamist leader Khattab's main rear-area base near Urus-Martan, Chechnya. Among the mujahedin presently handled in Azerbaijan are numerous would-be shahids (suicide terrorists) who had been trained in Osama bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan. The Islamist infrastructure in

Azerbaijan is built on the experience of bin Laden, Khattab and their companions in not only absorbing volunteers for Afghan jihad during the 1980s, but of transforming them into a cohesive elite corps (which is still cohesive and most active more than a decade after the Afghan jihad).

The current Islamist build-up constitutes a major expansion of the so-called covert pipeline, which has been running since the winter of 1997-98. The primary objective of the original pipeline was to smuggle weapons, money and people arriving from Pakistan/Afghanistan into Chechnya. The two primary methods of transportation:

* By truck from the Baku region through the mountains and into Dagestan and Chechnya; or

* By light aircraft from several sites in Azerbaijan into the Vedeno gorge or to Nozhay-Yurtovskiy Rayon in Chechnya.

The weapons delivered have been both shipments from Pakistan/Afghanistan, as well as large consignments of weapons purchased locally either from the ex-Soviet stockpiles of the Azerbaijani armed forces or specially acquired from Ukrainian and other suppliers (these weapons were purchased the Azerbaijani official channels with Baku providing end-user certificates and the buyers paying large commissions to all involved).

The current phase started in early September 1999 following a decision in Baku to upgrade the support for the Chechen-Dagestani Islamist forces. The new policy was elucidated publicly on August 20, 1999, by Vafa Guluzade, an Adviser to Heydar Aliyev and the Azeri Government on State Policy issues. "Chechen and Dagestani fighting should be regarded as a national liberation struggle, not as terrorism as the Russian authorities are trying to present it," Vafa Guluzade declared. He said that "today Russia is actually continuing in the Caucasus the policy of serf Russia which in 19th Century subjugated with fire and the sword the freedom-loving Caucasian nations. . . . Carrying out a military campaign in the Caucasus today, the biggest campaign after the first Caucasian war, Russia is declaring itself a successor of Tsarist Russia." Having gained their independence after hundreds of years of Russian subjugation, Guluzade believes, all Muslim states of the Caucasus should unite their efforts to compel Russia to "change its policy regarding the Caucasus and other national regions before it is too late".

The modalities for the running of the new facilities in Azerbaijan were defined during most of September. The new activities in support of Chechnya and Dagestan were defined in late September/early October during a supposedly- secret

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visit to Georgia and particularly Azerbaijan by Selim Beshayev, the Vice Speaker of the Chechen Parliament. Beshayev's talks with Azeri officials were aimed at ensuring the smooth flow of mujahedin and the specialized equipment they need without undue interference.

In Baku, Beshayev has spent a lot of time convincing the Azeri authorities to expand their direct involvement in the Islamist "cause" in the aftermath of the Russian exposure of the Turkey-Georgia pipeline. Beshayev used both carrots and sticks. He promised lavish "unofficial" foreign aid to Azerbaijan: large quantities of cash from diverse sources in Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states which will most likely go to private pockets. Beshayev, also reiterated the Islamists' promise to assist Baku in "resolving the Karabakh problem" as expeditiously as possible. He was also willing to "guarantee" the security of the Baku-Novorossiysk oil pipeline. The concurrent expansion of Islamists activities in Azerbaijan proves the success of Beshayev's visit to Baku.

The key Islamist facilities are concealed as charity and educational organizations affiliated with the web used by bin Laden's networks. Moreover, the headquarters of these organizations are stuffed with Arab "teachers" and "managers" from the ranks of such organizations as the International Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamic Salvation Front, several branches of Islamic Jihad, and the National Islamic Front of Sudan. The key organizations are:

- * World Assembly of Islamic Youth (sometimes translated as World Islamic Youth Assembly). Its headquarters is located in Baku's residential district of Dzhandzhlik/Janjilk. The key principals are Muhammad Salim Abd-al-Hamid (Saudi papers), Muhammad Ali Khoroko (Somali papers), Arif Abdallah Abd-al-Hamid and Hayruzi Qa'id Abd-al-Rahman (both Yemenite papers). Another Saudi, Salah Salman, is the contact man with Islamist charity and financial organizations in Saudi Arabia:

- * The International Organization of Islamic Salvation. Its headquarters is on Narimanov Street, in the settlement (essentially remote suburb) of Azizbekovo near Baku. The three main functionaries are Muhammad Shama, Muhammad Salih al-Jarni and Arif Abdallah Abd-al-Hamid (same as above), all with Yemenite papers;

- * Al-Ibrahim Foundation. Very little is known about this Baku-based charity except that its Arab principals have huge amounts of cash in hard currency. They are involved in acquisition of real estate among other "educational" projects.

In the fall of 1999, these charities began setting up several camps near Baku, where

their students should be able "to study the Koran in a quiet setting". The primary function of the camps in the overall vicinity of Baku is the training of professional agitators. The students are a mixture of Arabs, Caucasians and Central Asians. Their primary mission is intended to be to "brainwash" the Muslim population of Dagestan (as well as of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan) into supporting Islamist causes, subversion and terrorism. The Islamists have just established in these camps facilities for the production of printed, audio and video incitement and agitation material advocating anti-Russian and anti-Western jihad. Significantly, these "camps" are also engaged in agitation against hated Muslim governments, particularly the House of al-Saud. On one wall there is the slogan in Arabic: "The fate of the Shah of Iran, who was driven out of his own country by Islamic organizations, awaits the [Saudi] royal family."

THE SECOND PHASE in the expansion of the Islamist facilities has begun in the past few days. A group of Arabs -- all with documents from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan -- left the Baku area to newly established "religious field camps" in the remote mountains of north-eastern Azerbaijan, on the road to Chechnya and Dagestan. All three Islamist "charities" mentioned above established such camps virtually simultaneously. These are paramilitary camps where the students undergo basic military training as well as equipping before they move on toward Chechnya and Dagestan. Some of the leaders and commanders of these camps have been identified as "proxies of terrorist Osama bin Laden".

Meanwhile, in anticipation for escalation and expansion, senior officials of the International Muslim Brotherhood, the National Islamic Front, and several branches of Islamic Jihad arrived in Azerbaijan in the latter days of September 1999. By the first week of October, they were mainly arranging contacts with local Islamists in order to establish new routes for moving money, weapons and mujahedin into Chechnya. One of their priorities is the shipment of Stingers from Pakistan. In their conversations with Azerbaijani Islamists and "forth-coming" officials, these emissaries acknowledged that their primary objective is the consolidation in Azerbaijan of a "springboard for inserting their main forces [into Chechnya and Dagestan]". They also set up a flow of cash into the accounts of the Islamist charities and camps. Since late September 1999, there have been repeated transfers of funds from Saudi Arabia via Beirut, totaling tens of millions of dollars.

Much of this money is then transferred to Chechnya by couriers. For example, one of the camps received an electronic transfer of \$ 2-million from Al-Barakah Bank Lebanon (which is owned by the Saudi Sheikh Salih Abdallah Kamil). An Arab called Bin-Abdallah (UAE papers) received the money in cash and immediately carried it across the border into Chechnya. On October 5, 1999, Azerbaijani border guards arrested two Arabs (with Iraqi papers) near the village of Pashbir. They had

US\$ 300,000 in cash on them. They claimed they were volunteers working for a charity in Chechnya. All available evidence suggests that these known cases are but a small fraction of the present shipment of funds from Arab countries to Chechnya as well as the "Koranic camps" in Azerbaijan.

Another indicators of impending Islamist activities in and via Azerbaijan are the reconnaissance trips of Arab experts near the borders with Chechnya and Dagestan. For example, in the first week of October, a team from the Islamic Jihad traveled twice from Baku to the Azerbaijani-Dagestani border and carefully studied mountain passes and roads near the border. On October 5, 1999, a Turkish citizen called Yegid Rejeb was arrested on the Azerbaijani-Dagestani border en route to Khasavyurt with a Russian passport in the name of Magomed Sattarov. Rejeb is a graduate of one of the Baku area camps.

Meanwhile, the build-up of expert terrorist cadres has begun through other venues as well. On September 20, 1999, Chechen field commander Shamil Basayev announced the forthcoming establishment of a battalion of 400-500 shahids: would-be martyrs; that is, suicide terrorists. "These people will be ready and capable of carrying out the most difficult of tasks," he declared in Grozny. "Time and circumstances will tell" what specific tasks he had in mind for them.

Again, this was not an empty threat. Between October 3-5, 1999, a group of about 50 veteran Arab mujahedin -- carrying papers from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Palestinian Authority -- arrived at Khattab's main camp at Urus-Martan in central Chechnya. They traveled into Georgia legally on transit visas issued by the Georgian Consulate in Turkey. They are the first of about 100 Arab mujahedin known to have received Georgian visas together. Once this type of travel was exposed, the Georgian authorities in Turkey began dragging their feet in providing visas to walk-in Arabs. Therefore, the Islamists have expanded their search for new alternate routes into Chechnya and Dagestan via Azerbaijan.

Source in Internet: http://www.anca.org/anca/action_docs.asp?docsid=38

Translated from the Russian typewriter text

Ministry of Defense of the
Republic of Azerbaijan
Military Unit No. 160

INFORMATION - REPORT

Military-political situation in our region and policy of local authorities regarding influence on military units

The military unit is stationed on the territory of Yevlakh district. The nearest localities are station Geran, Geranboy district, and city of Mingechaur. In the given region the population is mainly occupied with agriculture. The region is bordered with Nagorno Karabakh. In other regions [the situation] is quiet in general. There is no any sign of disturbance, psychological intensity or suspicion among locals. This is reflected on the discipline and efficiency of population. Certain circles of the population using this moment are shirking from the work. This of course has its negative impact on our unit. The authorities of this region do not keep close contact with our unit. But in case of request they try to assist. For example, we receive certain kinds of products from Mingechaur and Geranboy districts. Humanitarian aid is received also from the farther regions such as Zakatala, Sheki and Shemakha. Special contingent is located in our unit. They are in fighting mood and keep good relations with us and locals. They leave for Mingechaur, Geranboy, and Gence accompanied by recruited translators. However, it should be mentioned that the authorities of neighboring regions do not keep close contacts with the command of special contingent in order to be able to help in case of need. In future we would like to improve the relations between authorities of adjacent regions and the command of unit. In addition, I think that such meetings and links would have positive influence on the mood of staff and keep their military spirit. There were no attempts of throwing up agitation leaflets against the leadership of the republic. Population expressed its mistrust against Elchibey.

Commander of military unit No. 160
Lieutenant-Colonel D. Lyatifov
19. 09. 1993.

Source: Archive of NKR State Department of National Security

The book of orders of military unit 160

Code No. 328
02. 10. 1993.

TO THE GENERAL HEADQUARTER HEAD
OF ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF
AZERBAIJAN

COPY TO: DEPUTY MINISTER OF THE
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE – THE
COMMANDER OF FRONT

REPORT

October 12, 12.30 a.m. The fronts headquarter head Major-General N. Sadikhov called me and informed that special contingent was complaining about the absence of kettles and a number of other products and belongings. Complaints and pretensions are satisfied at all levels as far as possible.

29. 09. 1993: additional 26 kettles brought from Baku by helicopter were given out, and 12. 10. 1993 - 60 kettles (invoices are available)

Additional 65 complete sets of ammunition and boots were given out (not counting those distributed in Hadjikabul).

Delivered and given out: as an additional ration of grape - 7 ton, apples from Ghuba and Zakatala - 4 ton, cookies - 3 boxes, walnuts - 50 kilos and pomegranate - 300 kg.

Greenery was bought for 25.000 rubles of private money (receipts are kept).

Geranboy executive authority distributed 80 afta^a and 30 kettles as humanitarian aid.

Cattle are slaughtered daily and fresh meat is provided 400gr. Butter 90 gr. The cost of meals per day is 500.000 rubles.

They require:

- an additional blanket per person,

^a Ritual pitcher for wash.

- cigarettes with filters ("Astra"^b is categorically refused),
- boots and ammunition,
- toilet soap and loofa,
- toothpaste and shoe-polish,
- motor car (taxi),
- spices for pilaff preparation,
- they are not satisfied with tea we have in the store,
- chicken and milk products, eggs (shortages with egg supplies occur because of absence of egg in the store),
- improvement of the quality of medical service (but the total absence of medical equipment in the medical unit does not allow this). The attendance to the sanitary unit – 1350 person for the period of [their] stay and 41 were hospitalized. It seems that they came here for taking treatment, rather than to fight.

Because of the small number of unit staff (only 37 soldiers), sergeants face difficulties during the service, there is no possibility for replacement of detail. We are forced to clear off their garbage and dishes they threw everywhere.

I ask to take measures to satisfy [their] requests, since the unit cannot satisfy or provide funds for organization of purchases.

I think that the receipt of complaints will go on since they are occupied with nothing.

Commander of military unit No. 160

Lieutenant-Colonel D. Lyatifov

Source: *Archive of NKR State Department of National Security*

^b No-filter cigarettes.

APPENDIX IV

FRONT'S HEADQUARTER

August 26, 1993.

Starting from August 1993 to include arrived "Afghani" soldiers ("Afganci" in the text – H. D.) 522 (five hundred twenty two) in number in the list of the unit's staff and provide all kinds of demands.

Head of staff of military unit No. 200

Major-General N. Sadikov

Source: Archive of NKR State Department of National Security