

# Sectarian War Threat In Southwest Asia

by Hussein Askary

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Jan. 11—It is no exaggeration to say that the U.S. government under President Barack Obama has entered an alliance, planned and mediated by Great Britain and its intelligence agencies, with the remnants of al-Qaeda and sundry other Islamist terrorist groups, to overthrow the governments of North Africa and Southwest Asia. The British aim is to use local conflicts and wars to implement their long-advocated plan of reducing the world's population, through letting its rivals the United States, Russia, and China bleed each other to death and ruin civilization all around them.

The policy, which was initiated in 2006 by the Cheney-Bush Administration, to spark sectarian war in Southwest Asia to divide and conquer the region and use it as a launching pad for global wars, is intensifying under President Obama. While Russia and China have spoiled the British Empire's timetable for war against Syria and Iran immediately after Libya, regional assets such as Saudi Arabia and its allies in Lebanon, Turkey, and now Qatar are activating "Plan B," by creating a bloody pretext on the streets of Syria for international military intervention.

The plan, initiated during a visit by then-Vice President Dick Cheney to Saudi Arabia, was to create a Sunni alliance of the Gulf States, Jordan, Egypt, and Sunni forces in Lebanon to counter an alleged Shia Crescent consisting of Iran, Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and Shia groupings in Iraq. The tool of choice was the minority Salafi/Wahhabi militant Sunni movement (of which al-

Qaeda is just one asset). It might sound strange that the same jihadi forces which the U.S. is allegedly at war with are at this moment allies in the British-American war drive against Syria and Iran. The main clue is the Anglo-Saudi alliance,<sup>1</sup> which goes back to British support at the beginning of the 20th Century for creation of the al-Saud/Wahhabi kingdom over most of the Arabian Peninsula. The Anglo-Saudis used the jihadist movement to fight Russia in Afghanistan and the Caucasus, and attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001 to start the global war on terrorism, which is continuing to destroy nations in South Asia and Southwest Asia.

## Target: Syria

The recent suicide attacks against the Syrian capital and in Iraq carry the hallmarks of Salafi terrorism. The Saudi-Qatar-Turkey-backed so-called Syrian Free Army is simultaneously targeting Alawite<sup>2</sup> security and political forces, to give the conflict a sectarian character. Although dominated by the ruling Assad family's Alawite connections, the Syrian government and the ruling Ba'ath Party are secular and socialist. Their relationship to Iran is based on strategic interests, not religious ones. Syria has long been the supporter of the nominally Sunni Palestinian group Hamas.

The Saudi state-run media, such as the London-based *Asharq al-Awsat*, has made no secret of Riyadh's intention, and is opening the gates for Salafi propagandists to prepare the ideological ground for such an escalation. One such example is the interview posted on Jan. 2 with Omar Bakri, leader of the former London-based terrorist group al-Muhajiroon, who was allowed to leave London in 2007 to avoid arrest according to U.S. anti-terror de-



*The London-based terrorist leader Omar Bakri Muhammad is being given space in a Saudi state-run newspaper to call for violent overthrow of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.*



*Sheikh Adnan al-Arour is the Salafi militia's spiritual and political leader, who resides in the Saudi capital.*

mands, and to settle in Lebanon. Al-Muhajiroon was a propaganda, recruitment, and fundraising organization for war against the Russians in the Caucasus. Bakri is now given space in *Asharq al-Awsat* to brand the Assad regime and its allies in Iran and from Hezbollah as *kafirs* (unbelievers) according to Salafi theology, and to say that violence is the only way to overthrow that regime.

On Jan. 5 the same daily published an interview with a "Salafi fighter," codenamed Kiheilan, who admitted that he moves back and forth from the Sunni-dominated area in northern Lebanon where Bakri is active, and that he was participating in attacks on Alawite security personnel. He states that the Salafi movement is the spearhead of the armed targeting of the Syrian government, and admits that the Salafi militia's spiritual and political leader is Sheikh Adnan al-Arour, a Syrian cleric who sends his orders to his fighters in Syria by video, from his residence in the Saudi capital, and through the Kuwaiti-financed satellite TV channel al-Safa.

Al-Safa is totally dedicated to the war on Shi'ism in the region, and is contributing to the war drive against the "Alawite Assad regime."

Al-Arour is the theoretician of the militant groups inside Syria, and uses TV to give marching orders to his followers. In one, he raves that once Syrian President Bashar Assad is overthrown, what he will do personally to the Alawites who supported Assad is to "make dog food of them."

While al-Arour is the political leader of the Salafi militants, there is a "field operations coordinator" based in northern Lebanon. According to Kiheilan's interview in *Asharq al-Awsat*, this person is Luay al-Zoubi, a U.S./British-backed jihadist in Afghanistan in the 1980s, who moved to the Balkans during the war there in the 1990s and later joined bin Laden in Sudan. Al-Zoubi was interviewed in *Asharq al-Awsat* on Sept. 26,

1. See "Britain's Assault on the Muslim Nation-States and the World," *EIR*, Dec. 26, 2008; and "New British-Saudi Prescription for Permanent War in Southwest Asia," *EIR*, March 5, 2010.

2. A Shia sect to which Syria's Assad family belongs.

2011, and by Saudi-owned, Dubai-based al-Arabiya TV in October 2011.

The reason the Saudis are making so much space available for these fanatics is to tell their followers and others who are not decided yet, that the Saudi establishment is considering them as the leaders of the revolution. That would signal to rich Saudi and other Gulf financiers of terrorism where to send their contributions.

Al-Zoubi states clearly that he supports intervention by the Anglo-American NATO machine in Syria (working with the infidel enemies and crusaders is suddenly theologically justified!), that he is leading the fundraising and arming the Salafi militants in Syria, and that his

war is sectarian, since the Shia regime of Ayatollah Khamenei and Hezbollah in Lebanon are his main enemies. He said that he has channeled millions of dollars to the Salafi militants in Syria.

Although the so-called “defectors” from the Syrian Army are said to be the core of the armed resistance to the Assad regime, it is the Afghansi jihadists, with their urban irregular warfare experience from Afghanistan, the Balkans, and Chechnya who are the real force. The Afghans from Libya’s Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), which has always been an asset of British MI6, worked with NATO to overthrow Muammar Qaddafi’s regime, and are now moving into Syria through Turkey and Lebanon....

## U.S. Military Leaders Urge Restraint on Iran, Syria

**Gen. Martin Dempsey**, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in a Feb. 19 interview with CNN: “I think it’s premature to take a decision to arm the opposition movement in Syria because I would challenge anyone to clearly identify for me the opposition movement in Syria at this point. And let me broaden the conversation a bit. Syria is an arena right now for all of the various interests to play out. And what I mean by that is, you’ve got great power involvement. Turkey clearly has an interest, a very important interest. Russia has a very important interest. Iran has an interest....”

On Syria, Dempsey added that the U.S. should *not* arm the opposition, adding that “there are indications that al-Qaeda is involved, and that they’re interested in supporting the opposition.”

Asked about a pre-emptive strike on Iran, he replied: “I think it would be premature to exclusively decide that the time for a military option was upon us. I think that the economic sanctions and the international cooperation that we’ve been able to gather around sanctions is beginning to have an effect....”

On Tehran’s leadership: “We are of the opinion that the Iranian regime is a rational actor. And it’s for that reason, I think, that we think the current path we’re on is the most prudent path at this point.... We also know—or believe we know—that the Iranian

regime has not decided that they will embark on the effort to weaponize their nuclear capability.”

**Gen. James Clapper**, Director of National Intelligence (DNI), in testimony Feb. 15, to the U.S. Senate, in response to a question from Sen. Jim Webb (D-Va.), noted that the recent suicide bombings in Syria “had all the earmarks of an al-Qaeda-like attack. And so we believe that al-Qaeda in Iraq is extending its reach into Syria.”

On whether Iran intends to build a nuclear weapon: “It would probably take them about a year to be able to produce a bomb, and then possibly another one or two years in order to put it on a deliverable vehicle of some sort in order to deliver that weapon.”

**Lt. Gen. Ronald Burgess**, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), also testified to the Feb. 15 Senate hearing, where he said, “the Agency assesses Iran is unlikely to initiate or intentionally provoke a conflict.”

**Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta**, on Feb. 16, expressed “concern” about reports that al-Qaeda may be making inroads in Syria. “It means that I think we have to continue to work with the Arab League and determine what steps should be taken to try to deal with the situation in Syria. It does raise concerns for us that al-Qaeda is trying to assert a presence there, and that means that, you know, frankly, our concerns, which were—which were large to begin with because of the situation, the deteriorating situation in Syria—that the situation there has become that much more serious as a result of that.”