

It's Time to Get Real About the Al-Qaeda Benghazi Connection

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By William F. Wertz, Jr.

On Dec. 28, 2013 the *New York Times* published an article by David Kirkpatrick entitled "[A Deadly Mix in Benghazi.](#)" [1] falsely claiming that Al-Qaeda was not involved in the Sept. 11, 2012, attack on the U.S. mission and CIA annex in Benghazi. David Kirkpatrick now reports that the State Department is moving to apply the terrorist designation to two Libyan organizations, Ansar al-Sharia in Benghazi and Ansar al-Sharia in Derna, and also to Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia. The designation reportedly will also apply to Sufian bin Qumu, the head of Ansar al-Sharia in Libya based in Derna and to the head of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, Seifallah ben Hassine, who is believed to be in Libya.

At a State Department briefing on Jan. 8, State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki nonetheless claimed that these branches of Ansar al-Sharia are not official affiliates of al Qaeda.

The reality, [as documented in the fact sheet](#) [2] initially produced by LaRouchePAC in January 2013 and then updated on May 4, 2013, is that it was well known to anyone who wished to know that Obama knowingly allied with the al-Qaeda-affiliated Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) led by Abdelhakim Belhadj, Sami al-Saadi, Khalid al-Sharif and Abd al-Wahhab Mohammad Qaid in Libya to overthrow Qaddafi and that the attack on the U.S. mission and CIA annex on Sept. 11, 2012 was carried out by Obama's allies under orders from the leader of core Al-Qaeda, Al-Zawahiri.

The LIFG was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department, the UN, and the UK. Sufian bin Qumu, the head of Ansar al-Sharia, was a member of both Al-Qaeda and the LIFG.

[Breitbart.com](#) [3], citing an April 24, 2011, article in the *New York Times*, reports that Abu Sufian Qumu was once considered an ally to the current administration during the toppling of Libyan President Colonel Moammar Qaddafi.

But that is only part of the story. Qumu is essentially a subordinate of the top leadership of the LIFG.

Furthermore, what is being blacked out is that three months prior to the attack on Benghazi, Abu Yahya al Libi, the younger brother of Abd al-Wahhab Mohammad Qaid,

was killed by a U.S. drone attack in Pakistan, and that just prior to Sept. 11, 2012, Al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri produced a video calling for revenge to be exacted for this assassination. Abu Yahya al Libi was a member of LIFG and a leader in Core Al-Qaeda.

Furthermore, it is known that all decisions regarding al-Qaeda deployments in Libya were made by Al-Zawahiri. Al-Zawahiri sent his personal emissary Abd al-Baset Azzouz to Eastern Libya in 2011, where he recruited at least 200 al-Qaeda operatives prior to the attack on Benghazi.

It has also been reported that another al-Qaeda/LIFG operative, Faraj al-Chalabi, was arrested in Libya in connection with the Benghazi attack, but then later released by Libyan authorities. It is believed that he traveled to Pakistan immediately after the attack in Benghazi with documents seized from the mission. Since 1998 Al-Chalabi has been wanted for the murder in Libya of Germans Silvan and Vera Becker in 1994. Also, named in his indictment was Osama bin Laden.

As reported by LaRouchePAC, one of the key Al-Qaeda operatives in Libya is Wisam bin Hamid, leader of Libya Shield. In March 2012, he held a demonstration in Sirte, Libya, at which the head of Al-Qaeda in Magreb, Mokhtar bel Mokhtar, was his invited guest. Even David Kirkpatrick's article in the NYT reports that bin Hamid, who was a trusted ally of the U.S., with whom State Department Libya political section chief David McFarland met in Benghazi on Sept. 9, 2012, was complicit in the attack.

When Mokhtar bel Mokhtar later led the terrorist attack on the gas field in In Amenas, Algeria, in January 2013, Algerian authorities reported that Egyptians who participated in that attack had also been involved in the Benghazi attack. These Egyptians have since been associated with the Al-Qaeda Egyptian terrorist group led by Muhammad Jamal, which in October 2013 was designated as a terrorist group associated with Al-Qaeda by the United Nations. An excerpt from the UN designation follows: "Muhammad Jamal formed the Muhammad Jamal Network after his release from prison in 2011 and established multiple terrorist training camps in Egypt and Libya. Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has provided funding to the Muhammad Jamal Network (MJN). Muhammad Jamal set up a training camp in Libya where Libyan and foreign violent extremists were trained. Some of the attackers of the U.S. Mission in Benghazi on September 11, 2012, have been identified as associates of Muhammad Jamal, and some of the Benghazi attackers reportedly trained at MJN camps in Libya. The Algerians also reported that they had evidence that Abelhakim Belhadj had prior knowledge of the Al-Qaeda attack on the Algerian gas field. In February 2013 the Algerians declared Belhadj persona non grata.

On October 2, 2013, Tayeb Oqaili, a member of the national initiative in Tunisia working to uncover the truth behind the assassinations of opposition leaders Chokri Belaid and Mohammed Brahmi, made public documents implicating Abdul-Hakim Belhadj of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in the assassinations. Oqaili said: "It was Belhadj who handled the training of Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia, including the cell that would go on to assassinate Belaid and Brahmi. This confirms that the Libyan leader was involved in both murders."

Two of the documents used by LPAC as resources in investigating the attack on Benghazi are *A view to Extremist Currents in Libya* by Kronos Advisory, LLC, published on December 16, 2011, and ["Al Qaeda in Libya: A profile,"](#) [4] published by The Library of Congress in August 2012. What follows are relevant excerpts from those two documents.

From A view to Extremist Currents in Libya:

Many Libyans who were members of the LIFG would become important figures within Core al-Qaeda, particularly after 1998, when the Qadhafi regime effectively quashed their insurgency in Libya and forced much of the group into exile in Afghanistan.

History reveals that inasmuch as al-Qaeda helped train and supported the LIFGs fighters, the LIFG played a critical role preparing al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters for operations targeting Western forces.

Gen. Yunus was assassinated late in July 2011 allegedly at the hands of LIFG-affiliated rebels.

On October 6, 2001, the United Nations Security Council added the LIFG to its consolidated list of entities associated with al-Qaeda.

The LIFG was designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the U.S. State Department on December 8, 2004. The announcement of this designation explained: 'Its leadership has had a close association with al-Qaeda. Some senior members of LIFG are believed to be or have belonged to al Qaedas senior command structure, and now are part of the support network of the broader international jihadist movement.

Although AQIM (Al-Qaeda in Maghreb) would focus on advancing al-Qaedas interests in North Africa and the Sahel, Core Al-Qaeda leaders kept Libya out of this franchises operational purview. According to Noman bin Othman, Libyan matters remained subject to 'central decision from al-Qaeda command in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions. He explained, 'Dr. Al-Zawahiri issued orders to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb countries, that is, to the Algerians who took command of the organization, not to interfere in Libya unless ordered to do so by him personally. I also know that Dr. al-Zawahiri considers Libya to be directly tied to Egyptian affairs since it can, in his view, affect the jihadist political situation in Egypt. (P. 23)

'The command in Algeria would not have the prerogative to issue orders, make decisions or take actions regarding the Libyan theater. These orders would be issued from the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran triangle, specifically by Dr. al-Zawahiri who considers this his personal project; and he dispatched directives (to al-Qaeda in Algeria) not to interfere in Libyan affairs. (P. 25)

From Al Qaeda in Libya: A profile:

Although Al-Qaeda Senior Leadership, based in Pakistan, is most likely building a clandestine network in Libya, al-Qaeda may remain for some time without an official Libyan affiliate, as the terrorist organization continues to prize secrecy and to follow its

recent trend of distancing itself from its local affiliates, for obvious security reasons. Ansar al-Sharia, a militia group led by Sufian Ben Qumum, former Guantanamo Bay detainee, could be the new face of al-Qaeda in Libya despite its leaders denial. (P. 2)

Various militias, also known as katibas (battalions/brigades), from throughout Libya are thought to be cooperating with Ansar al-Sharia and probably make up the bulk of al-Qaedas network in Libya, as indicated by the attendance of the first gathering of groups supporting sharia held June 7-8, 2012, at Liberation Square in Benghazi, hosted by Ansar al-Sharia. (P. 3)

Some former members of LIFG may be among those helping to create the al-Qaeda network. (P. 3)

- a katiba commanded by Wisam Ben Hamid and his lieutenant Hayaka Alla that fights under al-Qaedas flag (P. 7)

A December 2011 *CNN* report states that al-Qaedas leadership has sent experienced jihadists to Libya in an effort to build a fighting force, including veteran operative AA. A *CNN* source stated that al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri personally dispatched AA to Libya in mid-2011 and that AA has since begun recruiting fighters in the eastern region of the country, near the Egyptian border. He now has mobilized more than 200 fighters. AA likely is Abd al-Baset Azzouz. (P. 11)

Presently, Al-Qaeda seems to have opted for a decentralized approach that concentrates on infiltrating local Islamist-dominated militias. For instance, a March 2012 report from *Dunia al-Watan*, a Palestinian newspaper, published a video-illustrated article describing a military parade reportedly organized by Katiba al-Ahrar Libya (Free Libya), commanded by Wisam Ben Hamid, in the city of Sirt, a former Qadhafi stronghold, that looked like an al-Qaeda-type demonstration. The article pointed at Wisam, a 35-year-old Libyan from the town of Darnah, as the leader of al-Qaeda in Libya. The same article reported that Mokhtar bel Mokhtar, the leader of AQIM in the Sahara, attended the parade as the honored guest of Wisam. However, Wisam was also cited by *Thawrat Libyas*, a Libyan news outlet, as the leader of *Dir Libya* (Shield of Libya.). (P. 12)

Indeed, al-Qaeda and former members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group have converged on Darnah to train and organize. Hundreds of Islamic militants are in and around Darnah, and there are camps where weapons and physical training are available to activists. Senior al-Qaeda operative Abd al-Baset Azzouz, sent to the region last spring by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, among them and has been operating at least one training center. (P. 23)

It is probable that Ansar al-Sharia in Libya and in Tunisia are communicating, a fact that points to possible coordination between the two groups. Indeed, their Facebook sites appear similar in design and content, and their leaders, Ben Qumu and Sayfallah Bin Hussein, alias Ayyadh at-Tunsi, likely know each other because they were both al-Qaeda members in Afghanistan and former Guantanamo detainees. (P. 37)

Links:

- [1] <http://www.nytimes.com/projects/2013/benghazi/#/?chapt=0>
- [2] <http://larouhepac.com/factsheet>
- [3] <http://www.breitbart.com/>
- [4] <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/aq-libya-loc.pdf>

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