

The GIA: afghansi out of theater

Name of group: Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA: Armed Islamic Group).

Headquarters: The GIA has no official headquarters, but its various components are concentrated in Algiers, Algeria.

Other major offices, locations: Publications often produced in Pakistan, Sweden, and Poland, are printed in London. It has a small cell in Belgium. Its cell in London has been designated by Front Islamique du Salut (FIS: Islamic Salvation Front) representative Abou Oussama in Belgium, as the "branch of the GIA ultras." GIA members have received political asylum in Great Britain through rapid court procedures.

Founded: June 1992.

Location of operations, areas active: Algeria, especially capital Algiers, where 60-65% of their cadres operate; Boumerdes-Blida region; Bel-Abbes, Tiaret, Tlemcen; France.

Major terrorist actions:

- Assassination of President Mohamed Boudiaf, on June 29, 1992, attributed to "Islamists" but widely believed to be the work of "mafia" elements within counterintelligence/military security.
- Bomb in Algiers airport, Aug. 26, 1992.
- Assassination of economist, strategic think-tanker, former minister of education Djillali Lyabes, in Algiers on March 16, 1993.
- Assassination of Dr. Laadi Flici, former independent political candidate, poet, doctor, in Casbah on March 17, 1993.
- Assassination of Tahar Djaout, journalist and writer, in Algiers, on May 26, 1993.
- Assassination by knifing of Mahfoud Boucebsi, renowned psychiatrist in Algiers, on June 14, 1993.
- Throat cut of Muhamed Boukhobza, sociologist, in Algiers, on June 22, 1993.
- Assassination of former prime minister and ex-chief of military security Kasdi Merbah, who was trying to mediate contacts between Islamists and the government, in Algiers, on Aug. 21, 1993.
- First GIA assassination of foreigners, two French geometers, on Sept. 21, 1993.
- Throat cut of Youssef Sebti, poet, in Algiers, on Dec. 28, 1993.
- Killings of 12 Christian Croatian and Bosnian workers in December 1993.

- Assassination of singer Cheb Hasni in Oran on Sept. 29, 1994.

- Bomb at cemetery in Mostaganem, on Nov. 1, 1994, attributed to GIA, but reportedly the work of "the eradicators," the hard-liners inside the Algerian military who promote the eradication of all Islamists.

- Air France airliner hijacking, in Marseilles, France, on Dec. 26, 1994.

- Killings of priests from the Order of the White Fathers, three French and one Belgian, in Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria, on Dec. 27, 1994.

- Assassination of Algerian football federation president Rashid Haraigue in Algiers on Jan. 22, 1995.

- Car-bomb outside police station, killing 42 and injuring 286 in Algiers on Jan. 30, 1995.

- Assassination of Sheik Abdelbaki Sahraoui, 85-year-old imam, co-founder of FIS, moderate, in Paris, on July 11, 1995.

- Bomb at a Paris Metro station, on July 25, 1995, followed by another bombing at a Metro station on Aug. 17.

- Failed bombing attempt against Paris-Lyons train on Aug. 26, 1995.

- Bomb attempt against a Paris marketplace on Sept. 3, 1995.

Trademark terror signatures: Individual murders usually by throat-slitting and/or beheading; heads are often found in a location other than where the body is; shooting in the head. Mass terrorist attacks are usually done by bombing, using explosives of the type also used by military.

Leaders' names and aliases:

Mustapha Bouyali, early leader, shot by security forces, early 1987. Was the first to establish "Islamist" armed groups, in 1982. Was known as a "Robin Hood," who recruited impoverished youth for spectacular actions.

Mohamed Les Veilleux, originally linked to FIS, founded self-defense groups. After 1992, joined GIA, becoming commando leader.

Mourad Sid Ahmed, alias Djafaar al-Afghani, first leader; afghansi; shot in Algiers by Algerian security, with nine others, Feb. 26, 1994.

Abdel Haq Layada, first "emir" of GIA, commanding officer of Djafaar al-Afghani, condemned to death.

Mansouri Melliane, leader of autonomous group which merged with Mouvement Islamique Armé (MIA: Armed Islamic Group) to become GIA; sentenced to death and executed.

Dr. Abou Ahmad Bouamra, member of "death phalange" contingent.

Sayah Attia, GIA leader, killed.

Ahmed Abou Abdallah, Sherif Ghousmi, head of the "juridical commission" of the GIA, and of the "death phalange," made up of afghansi veterans and responsible for executions in the Algiers region. Ghousmi then became head of GIA after the death of Mourad Sid Ahmed in February

1994; known as an afghansi, but reportedly only 26 years old, he was killed by security forces on Sept. 26, 1994.

Si Abdallah, alias Abou Meriem, cadre, killed September 1994.

Ali Kouider Benyahia, alias Sheik Boualem, cadre, killed September 1994.

Djamel Zitouni, alias Abou Abderrahmane Amine, became head of GIA in 1994, took over direction of the "death phalange" from Ghousmi, when the latter became head of the GIA as a whole. He is 26 years old.

El Wed, alias "the Pakistani," co-founder of GIA, believed killed in Serkadjri prison massacre, in January 1995.

Abdul Abdallah Yahia, leader of cell which organized Air France hijacking, killed during storming of plane.

Sheik Abdennacer, arrested with Abou Houdhaifa Ahmed Ezzaoui in March 1995 in Belgium, along with eight others suspected of being part of a Belgian GIA cell. Formerly in the Armée Islamique du Salut (AIS: Islamic Salvation Army), he split and joined the GIA in 1994, after the FIS actively promoted dialogue.

Groups allied to nationally or internationally:

Al-Ansar (The Supporters), a weekly Arabic newsletter, mailing address: Box 3027, 13603 Hanninge, Sweden. Despite the Swedish address, the newsletter is printed in London. Also reportedly published in Poland, where it has a post office box.

Mouvement Islamique Armé (MIA: Islamic Armed Movement), joined with GIA in 1993, has no independent existence now.

Religious/ideological/ethnic motivating ideology:

- Anti-foreigner: In October 1993 the GIA issued warnings to foreigners to leave Algeria or be killed. Since the outbreak of violence in 1992, eighty-four foreigners have been killed, of whom 30 were French.

In January 1995, ultimata were issued to the embassies of Germany, France, the United States, Great Britain, Russia, among others, threatening them unless they closed shop.

Terrorist actions carried out on French soil have been justified by the GIA as acts of reprisal against the French government, for its economic, military, and political support of the Algerian government.

- Anti-Christian: The front-page headlines of *Al-Ansar*, April, 27, 1995, give a perfect image of the "clash of civilizations" and the fight between religions which the GIA promotes: "The 'Christian' government of the Philippines carries out annihilation operations against Arab migrants"; "The Crusaders' missionary campaigns continue in the Muslim areas of Central Asia," etc.

- Anti-Jewish: The same issue of *Al-Ansar* features anti-Semitic propaganda in its front-page headlines: "Rabin, the pig, says that the goal behind the new satellite is to help 'Jewish' intelligence detect Muslim movements."

The editorial of the same issue is dedicated to the attack on Rabin's government and the Jews, "the descendants of

pigs and apes." The Jews, the editorial reads, "have managed to survive and expand their territories, through treachery, expansion and oppression. They want to complete their schemes for a greater Israel 'from the Nile to the Euphrates.' "

- Anti-women: In May 1994, the GIA issued an edict, signed by Abu Abdallah Ahmed, saying that any woman married to an "atheist" must leave him or be killed. Furthermore, any woman who married any government official was sentenced to death. Any woman who refused the GIA's practice of "marriage of pleasure" was sentenced to death. Muslim moral codes regarding women are systematically trampled on by the GIA, which has frequently killed women wearing the veil.

- Anti-moderate: Leading targets have been members of the FIS, especially those actively engaged in probes and negotiations with the U.S. administration, as well as with other moderate opposition groups, to end the civil war and return to democracy. In November 1993, the GIA rejected "all dialogue, any truce and any reconciliation" with government forces. The GIA claimed responsibility for assassinating those favorable to dialogue, in a letter to major Algerian newspapers in 1994.

In July 1995, Sheik Abdelbaki Sahraoui, a founding member of the FIS and a moderate, was assassinated in a Paris mosque. The GIA issued communiqué 37, signed by Abou Abderrahmane Amie, days earlier, threatening that it would kill him, as well as six other FIS leaders in Europe, including Germany-based Rebah Kebir. They were "sentenced" for having sought a negotiated solution to the crisis. (The authenticity of communiqué 37 was questioned widely in the French and Arabic press, which suggested it could have been issued by the Algerian military security, which was considered possibly the author of the murder as well.)

- Anti-government, anti-technology: *Al-Ansar* (No. 94) contains reports of killing of civilians, men and women, and sabotage of infrastructure and industry: 1. "the Death Brigades in the Capital Algier carried out an operation against the 'doomed' Al-Hadji" (a woman, professor of civil engineering in the College of Harrash). She was immediately killed and her husband seriously injured. 2. "The Signers-with-Blood Brigade set off a car bomb in a residential area where prominent military officers and their families live." (A dozen people were killed, none of them was a military officer.) 3. "Member of a GIA brigade in Constantine kidnapped a grocer who was known for his loyalty to the tyrants [the regime]. After a brief interrogation he was beheaded by the mujahideen according to God's *Sharia*." 4. "Three agents of the regime were kidnapped and beheaded by the mujahideen in Belabbas." 5. "The sabotage and destruction units bombed and destroyed a major gypsum plant 20 kilometers to the south of Wahran."

- Death cult: The cited issue of the GIA publication *Al-Ansar* documents the ideas of some sheikhs who back the

GIA. The sheikhs try to justify the satanic murders of women and children, using Islam and the holy Qur'an as an ideological base. One of those is based in London, Sheikh Abu Qatadeh Al Falastini (see below).

A sampling of the newsletter's satanic expressions includes: "Death Brigades"; "Signers-with-Blood Brigades"; "Hang the last infidel ruler from the intestines of the last [Christian] priest!"; "this spirit is enriched with the love of death"; "my dear brothers . . . mutilated corpses . . . skulls . . . terrorism, how beautiful these words are!"; "no doubt that the crack of bullets and the glistening of knives are the best cure for the ill chests"; "the four knights [hijackers of the Air France jet] wrote with their blood in Marseille airport the message that nations cannot be built but with corpses, and glory with blood, states with bones and skulls, and that the greatest nations in history have been the nations that mastered the death industry"; "blood and corpses create glory . . . and death creates life."

Known controllers/mentors/theoreticians:

● Controllers:

Securité Militaire (SM: Algerian military intelligence): Since 1993 at least, it has become a commonplace in the French and other European press, to identify the GIA as "infiltrated" by the Algerian military intelligence. FIS reports have repeatedly pointed to manipulation of the GIA by the SM. *Le Monde* in January 1995 reported that Algerian police had themselves claimed to have infiltrated the GIA. In 1995, France took political action.

According to a report in *Le Canard Enchaîné* of Sept. 29, 1995, the French Interior Minister Jean Louis Debré ordered French police to break contacts with Algerian intelligence services, because "a team of the Algerian military security is suspected, according to Debré, of having manipulated the Islamist authors of one or two bombings committed in Paris."

In the month prior to the Paris Metro bombing, the Algerian newspaper *La Tribune* warned that terrorists would soon "carry out bomb attacks in Paris to punish the French government."

Eradicators: The group inside Algerian military intelligence (SM) known to manipulate the GIA is the group of "eradicators," the hard-liners who promote the eradication of all Islamists. Among them are the following:

Gen. Mohammed Lamari, Army chief of staff since July 1993.

Abderahmane Meziane-Cherif, former interior minister.

Maj. Gen. Khaled Nezzar, former defense minister; former officer of French Army.

Col. Selim Saadi, interior minister since September 1993.

Maj. Gen. Mohamed Tawfik Mediène, chief of Army intelligence.

Maj. Gen. Mohamed Touati, adviser to defense minister.

Gen. Mohamed El Moktar Boutamine, commander of air

forces since September 1990.

Gen. Bennabes Gheziel, chief of defense and security for the presidency, commander of police since June 1987.

Maj. Gen. Larbi Belkhair, interior minister (1991-92).

● Mentors/theoreticians:

Sheikh Abu Qatadeh Al Falastini, Salah Abu Ishaq, Omar Abdulhakim, and Abu Abdullah Almuhajir are listed as editors of *Al-Ansar*, issued in London.

Sheikh Abu Qatadeh Al Falastini ("the Palestinian") lived in Peshawar, Pakistan on the Afghani border until 1992, then moved to London, where he was given political asylum very quickly. Abu Musaab, Al Suri ("the Syrian"), married a Spanish woman to obtain a Spanish passport, and travels regularly between Sweden and London. Abdelkarim Denesh, who is a distributor of *Al Ansar* in Sweden and London, is an Algerian citizen, with regular passport, and permanent residence permit in Sweden. Denesh, who is sought by French authorities for the Paris Metro bombing, was engaged in Afghan "relief" operations before becoming active on the Algerian scene. Involved in shady financial operations, he reportedly received a \$70,000 check from London.

Abu Qatadeh, according to *Al Hayat* (Kamil Al Tawil, London, Aug. 22), was accused, together with Abu Musaab, by the FIS of "issuing *fatwas* [religious decrees] for the notorious Islamic Armed Group (GIA) of Algeria according to which he considered the killing of the wives and daughters of Algerian soldiers, police and security personnel as a legal act according to Islamic *Sharia*."

In an interview with *Al Hayat*, Abu Qatadeh confirmed having relations to the GIA and writing articles in *Al-Ansar*, but denied being the "theorist" of the group. "I did not issue these *fatwas* before they were announced by the leaders of the GIA," he said. He attacked the FIS and rejected the negotiations carried out by FIS with the regime. "They [FIS] should not deal with this regime. The rulers are apostates, and killing them is the only solution," he asserted.

Abu Qatadeh approved the killing of Christian priests on missions in Algeria. He also defends the killing of Western citizens residing in Algeria by the GIA, because "Algeria is a battlefield and the GIA warned all the foreigners to leave."

Abu Qatadeh writes "lectures" for *Al-Ansar* every week, in which he explains "why *Jihad* , in the form adopted by the GIA, accords with the teaching of true Islam." He attacks moderate Muslim leaders and the FIS, which he considers as a "group of infidels because they adopted 'democratic dialogue' with secular groups, which is a form of atheism." He also attacks Hassan Al-Turabi of Sudan, and the Sheikh of Al-Azhar University in Cairo. Abu Qatadeh accuses those "so-called thinkers of being the biggest barrier in the way of the *Umma's* greatness," adding that "there will be no salvation for the *Umma* unless we bear the slogan: Hang the last infidel ruler from the intestines of the last [Christian] priest." He concludes that the "only weapon we [Muslims] have to

face the modern machinery of the enemy is *jihad*, the continuation of *jihad* and 'love of death.' ”

Omar Leulmi, issued a *fatwa* justifying the execution of intellectuals.

Omar Abdulhakim, who appears to be the biggest enemy of the FIS, argues in *Al-Ansar* (No. 94) that today's FIS is nothing but a perversion of the original, the real mujahideen movement which started in 1993 after the leaders of FIS were arrested. He brings out documents upon which the Islamic Salvation Army was founded. Through these documents he claims that the true *jihad* is the one being presently carried out by the GIA.

Current number of cadres: Number of cadres estimated at upwards of 2,500. From 400 to 1,000 afghansi are reported to have been involved at some time.

Known arms suppliers/routes: Press reports refer to the Italian mafia in Sicily and Naples who supply weapons, legally purchased in Belgium and Switzerland from eastern European countries, which go through the Balkans to northern Italy, through Switzerland and Germany to the port of Hamburg, where they are shipped out to Algiers. Weapons are reportedly made available to the GIA by British intelligence networks.

Thumbnail historical profile: Following the December 1991 elections, which were won by the FIS, the Algerian government moved to outlaw the FIS, annul the elections, preventing the second round from taking place. The FIS, 9,000 of whose members were rounded up and jailed, maintained its commitment to the democratic process. Numerous government-instigated provocations were aimed at eliciting a violent response, which the FIS leadership rejected.

In June 1992, the first significant terror actions were organized in Algeria. These were carried out by groups composed of the following: radicalized, pro-violence youngsters who had abandoned the FIS, on grounds that violent struggle, not elections, were the correct strategy; lumpenized youth from urban slums; followers of Mustapha Bouyali.

Bouyali was active with armed groups in 1982. After his death in 1987, his followers split into two groups; one led by Abdelkader Chebouti and Said Makloufi (formerly an FIS member), which became the MIA; and another, led by Mansouri Melliane, which were autonomous, nameless groups. After the 1992 events, Melliane's group joined with Mohammed Les Veilletts (formerly an FIS member, who later established self-defense groups). The merger created many armed groups which called themselves Islamic, thence the name GIA.

It was afghansi in Algeria, among them Mourad Sid Ahmed, who transformed the relatively loose groups into a terrorist organization, with a markedly anti-FIS stance. Following the death of Les Veilletts, who refused to target the FIS, an uneducated youth, Abdel Haq Layada, was deployed as the GIA leader, and declared himself "commander in chief of the GIA" in January 1993. His explicit denuncia-

tion of the FIS was to become a trademark of the GIA. This occurred prior to the formation of the AIS, a regular, armed resistance force, under the FIS in early 1993.

On May 13, 1993, the GIA and MIA held a unification meeting, during which two former FIS leaders, Mohammed Said and Abdel Rezak Rajam, joined. In the course of 1993 and 1994, reportedly, numerous persons associated with the AIS split from it to join the GIA.

Following the merger of GIA and MIA, large-scale terror attacks were organized as well as targeted assassinations, in both cases hitting civilians, as well as selected government-related figures. Intellectuals, writers, journalists, persons involved in mass media, singers—anyone deemed hostile to their "cause"—was a target. It then moved to killing on the basis of guilt by association: relatives, particularly women and girls, of police or soldiers.

Following the death on Feb. 26, 1994 of the GIA leader Mourad Sid Ahmed, alias Djafaar Al-Afghani, the GIA has reportedly split into numerous "little GIAs" and a parallel atomization process has been noted in the Algerian intelligence services. In the Algerian war, it is said that "there are three kinds of Islamists: the 'honest' Islamists, the 'SM' Islamists, and the Islamists of the 'other' [foreign] intelligence services."

Afghansi-linked terror in the Philippines

by Gail Billington

Abu Sayyaf

Name of group: Abu Sayyaf.

Headquarters: Basilan Island, Sulu Archipelago, Philippines.

Founded: Early 1980s.

Locations of operations, areas active: Mindanao, Philippines.

Major terrorist actions:

- December 1993: Bombing of Davao Cathedral, Davao, Mindanao; eight killed, scores wounded.
- June 1994: Ambush of bus, Basilan Island, 17 killed, 43 taken hostage.
- Dec. 11, 1995: Bombing of PAL airliner, one Japanese passenger killed.
- January 1995: Assassination threat against Pope John Paul II, Manila, Philippines.
- April 4, 1995: 200-man land/sea raid on Ipil, Mindanao, 72 killed, 37 hostages. Town center, four banks razed to the ground.