

Bin Laden Puppetmasters Smoked Out In Balkans

by Umberto Pascali

The mid-October revelations that an Osama bin Laden terrorist training camp is operating in the U.S.-controlled zone of Kosovo, are only the tip of the iceberg. Now, in a sort of "Operation Truth," Macedonian and other sources have begun to reveal publicly what until now had been known to only a relatively small group of people, about the narco-terrorist connections between the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and the Taliban, and between these two groups and high-level U.S. and British intelligence agencies. Operation Truth is now affecting the strategic domain, provoking a reevaluation of the conventional way of viewing "international terrorism." The path leads to those strategists who have used terrorism as a weapon of irregular warfare.

The story of bin Laden's right-hand man, Ayman "The Doctor" Zawahiri, and the Balkan activities of the latter's brother, have shocked a large number of people. How is it possible that such a high-level official of the bin Laden gang is able to run a training camp for the KLA near the Kosovo village of Ropotovo, in the middle of an area controlled by the United States? How is it possible that Zawahiri's brother, as reliable sources report, was (and still reportedly is) in charge of KLA operations in the KLA-occupied area of neighboring Macedonia? How is it possible that the Zawahiri-led gang of international mercenaries could move, without any hindrance, from NATO-controlled Kosovo into Macedonia?

Bin Laden And The Albanian Mafia

"A group of 50 mujahideen has reportedly entered Macedonia via Kosovo and taken up positions in the mountains of Skopaska Crna Gora nearby Skopje. They are digging trenches and preparing the terrain," according to the Macedonian daily *Dnevnik*, which quoted intelligence sources. "An Egyptian national, the younger brother of Ayman al-Zawahiri—the commander of al-Qaeda responsible for the Balkan operations—is in charge of the terrorist groups that recently entered Macedonia." Intelligence sources said that Zawahiri intends to expand the al-Qaeda struggle in the Balkans, while his younger brother Mohamed has been charged with recruiting Islamic fundamentalists, to be trained for terrorist suicide actions.

"The mujahideen gang of the [KLA's] 113 Brigade,

named Ismet Jashari, comprised of 25 to 30 people, and the rapid intervention unit called Baruti entered the Macedonian village of Matejce on Oct. 18 and prevented a convoy of displaced persons from entering the village. The terrorists had been stationed at a Kosovo training camp near the village of Ropotovo in the U.S.-run sector [Multinational Brigade East]. Zawahiri was in charge of the terrorist training camp."

Interpol Discovers Mafia-Terror Links

As shocking as these revelations are, they are only the beginning. Macedonian sources have confirmed what *EIR* has detailed concerning the drug connection between Afghanistan's Taliban and the "Albania mafia." On Oct. 23, Gwen McClure of Interpol's Criminal Subdivision officially informed a group of parliamentarians from NATO countries that Interpol has evidence that bin Laden is linked to Albanian gangs which have taken over the growing web of crime across Europe. Their investigations have also shown that bin Laden deployed one of his top military commanders for an elite KLA unit during the NATO war in Kosovo.

The Interpol confirmation of the direct collaboration between bin Laden networks and the NATO-KLA operations during the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, is further confirmed by an article in the Swiss financial daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, on Oct. 25: "According to Egyptian and French intelligence services, in the late 1990s, bin Laden brought 500 Arab mujahideen to Tirana [Albania]. They are reported to have fought side by side with the KLA and to have been involved in the most brutal acts of revenge against Serbian civilians."

McClure also stated that a meeting took place in Albania, in the presence of bin Laden, according to Albanian police. Several Algerian terrorists were present at the meeting. "It was during this meeting," she stressed, "that many structures and networks were established for propaganda and fundraising activities and for providing the Algerian armed groups with logistical support." During and immediately after the Kosovo war, when the KLA took over the province, heroin and weapons trafficking exploded unchecked. The so-called "Albanian mafia" ended up controlling 80% of the heroin distribution in Western Europe, when Kosovo had become a NATO protectorate.

The criminal and the terrorist networks have become an indistinguishable entity, with a multiplying destructive effect. "These crime syndicates have formed alliances of convenience and are willing to cooperate or make business arrangements with other organized crime groups," McClure told the parliamentarians. She also said that Interpol has evidence of the involvement of anti-Russia Chechnya separatists in the crime/terrorist ring.

Al-Zawahiri's brother is most likely right now inside Macedonia leading a gang of ideological mercenaries in another major KLA assault against the country. Al-Zawahiri was in Albania participating in the KLA offensive against



The NATO command in Kosovo. All the ethnic Albanian guerrilla groups in Kosovo and in Macedonia turn out to be connected to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda; yet these groups have been continuously supported and favored by U.S., British, and NATO forces there, against the moderate, mass-based ethnic Albanian political leadership inside Kosovo.

Yugoslavia in 1999. According to the Arabic daily *Al-Sharq al-Awsat* of April 16, 1999, "Sources close to the fundamentalist tendency in London have revealed that Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of the [Egyptian] 'Armed Jihad' organization, is currently" in Albania. One source reported, "Al-Zawahiri and Abu-al-Faraj travelled to Albania some weeks ago, heading a company of Arab mujahideen." The sources quoted by the newspaper said that al-Zawahiri was living "in tragic conditions in Albania" because Albania "is now in the grip of U.S. intelligence." Al-Zawahiri was tried *in absentia* in a military court in Cairo as a prime suspect in the case of the "returnees from Albania," a group of Egyptian terrorists who had been active in Albania.

'The Afghan Trap'

However, despite the "grip of U.S. intelligence," al-Zawahiri was not arrested while "under siege" in Albania. He was able to return to Afghanistan. Why?

Observers call attention to a short article which appeared from the Egyptian Mideast News Agency on Sept. 8, 1996, entitled "Al-Jihad Terrorist Claims Strong CIA Terror Ties." It read: "An important cadre in the al-Jihad organization, who has returned from Afghanistan, has disclosed that there are strong relations between the CIA and British intelligence on one side, and terrorist leaders in Egypt and the Arab countries. Ahmad Rashid, the former ideologue of the Jihad, said that *Ayman al-Zawahiri, the military commander of the Jihad organization, had asked the CIA for \$50 million early in the 1990s to stage a coup in Egypt*" (emphasis added).

Other reports say that it was actually a man called al-Amriki ("the American" in Arabic) who made the offer. The \$50 million offer was accompanied with the assurance that the United States would not interfere with an "Islamist" takeover of Egypt, and allegedly proposed a *modus vivendi* between U.S. forces and the "Islamists" in the Balkans.

Reportedly, al-Amriki was known among Islamist circles as a CIA go-between to various militant groups especially connected to the Afghan Jihad. And, connections among the CIA, British intelligence, and Afghan "fighters" are nothing secret or surprising, given that Western agencies provided support, training, logistics, and financing for those who were willing to fight against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

In January 1998, in an interview with the French journal *Le Nouvel Observateur*, former U.S. National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, an advocate of a "Clash of Civilizations" between the West and Islam, confirmed that, indeed, secret CIA support to the mujahideen started six months before the date given officially. The secret support was intended as a provocation to the Russians, to lure them into the "Afghan trap." Brzezinski stated: "According to the official version of history, CIA aid to the mujahideen began during 1980, that is to say, after the Soviet army invaded Afghanistan, on Dec. 24, 1979. But the reality, secretly guarded until now, is completely the opposite: Indeed, it was July 3, 1979 that President Carter signed the first directive for secret aid to the opponents of the pro-Soviet regime in Kabul. And that very day, I wrote a note to the President in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention."

When asked if he regretted that provocation today, Brzezinski replied, "Regret what? That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap—the day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: 'We now have the opportunity of giving to the U.S.S.R. its Vietnam War.' Indeed, for almost ten years, Moscow had to carry on a war that was unsustainable by the government, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire. What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some whipped-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"

The Strange Saga Of 'Mohamed The American'

So, it is not hard to see why the "Islamists" would have an open channel with Western agencies including the CIA. The man who reportedly presented to al-Zawahiri the \$50 million proposal and the encouragement to destabilize Egypt, is known as Abu Mohamed al-Amriki, "Mohamed the American."

An Egyptian military man, al-Amriki joined the Jihad organization in 1981, the year that the Jihad claimed credit for the Oct. 6, 1981 assassination of President Anwar Sadat. Among the persons arrested for that assassination was Ayman al-Zawahiri, charged with illegal weapons possession.

The stories of al-Amriki and al-Zawahiri tend to intersect not only in Afghanistan and Egypt, but also in the United States. It was al-Amriki who organized the visit of al-Zawahiri to New York, California, and Texas, to collect money, officially, for the families of the Afghan war victims. In reality, part of the money, according to the courtroom testimony of Khalid Abu-al-Dhahab in Cairo in 1999, was used to finance the bombing of the Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Al-Amriki reportedly began his career as the elusive "American" in 1981, when he first arrived in the United States immediately after having joined the Jihad organization, and was enlisted in a U.S. Special Forces school for foreign officers at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. In 1985, after leaving the Egyptian Army, he came to California and married. In 1986, he joined the U.S. Army. As a sergeant, he was stationed again at Fort Bragg's Special Warfare center, and in the late 1980s he popped up at an Afghan refugee center in Brooklyn, New York. There he gave combat training to Afghan and Muslim recruits who were to be sent back to Afghanistan to fight the Russians. Al-Amriki in 1992 went to Pakistan and Afghanistan to train the bin Laden men, providing especially "military and basic explosives training," according to U.S. court records.

Al-Amriki's terrorist career took off from there, putting him in contact and in a position of leadership with virtually every major Islamist terrorist organization.

Macedonians Told, 'Hands Off!'

Based on just the short background outlined here, it is not surprising that the Macedonians pursuing the al-Zawahiri track have come under strong pressure not to investigate. However, sources have told *EIR* that the track will not be abandoned; quite the contrary. A deputy director in Macedonian intelligence was even quoted in an interview in the Canadian *Halifax Herald*, stressing: "We have already provided a substantial dossier to the CIA, and obtaining further proof [of the link between bin Laden and the KLA] is our ministry's number-one priority."

The intelligence official revealed that the Macedonian forces had contained the KLA assault in May, despite the KLA's superior armaments, because Ukraine supplied helicopter gunships. However, the KLA was able to neutralize this Macedonian advantage. He said, "Shortly after that, our helicopter pilots reported being targeted by sophisticated [U.S.-made] Stinger [anti-aircraft] missiles. It is our information that the [KLA] received these Stingers from their mujahideen connections in Afghanistan."

Despite the information supplied by the Macedonians to the CIA, they haven't received so much as a "thank you." Instead, the Macedonian intelligence officials say that the major obstacle to their investigation comes exactly from NATO, including direct interference from the United States.

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