Haqqani Network

Name: Haqqani Network

Type of Organization:
- Insurgent
- non-state actor
- regional
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:
- Deobandi
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Pashtun
- Salafist
- Sunni
- Wahhabi

Place of Origin:
Afghanistan

Year of Origin:
1996

Founder(s):
Jalaluddin Haqqani

Places of Operation:
Afghanistan and Pakistan

Overview

Executive Summary:
The Haqqani network is a militant Islamist group operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is considered a branch of the Afghan Taliban, but operates independently from the organization and has a more diffuse command structure. It originated in the late 1970s but rose to prominence in the resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. After the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, Jalaluddin Haqqani formed an alliance with the Taliban and supported the growth of al-Qaeda. When the Taliban violently assumed de facto control of Afghanistan in 1996, the group appointed Haqqani as minister of tribal affairs. Ever since, the Haqqani network has been subsumed under the larger Taliban, although the Haqqanis preserve distinct command and control. In December 2018, three representatives of the Haqqani Network accompanied the Taliban delegation to the Pakistan-sponsored peace talks between the Taliban and United States held in the United Arab Emirates.
Since the Taliban regime’s overthrow in 2001, the Haqqani network has been a lethal and sophisticated arm of the Afghan insurgency against the Western-backed government in Kabul. The Haqqani network’s base of operations is located near Miramshah, in North Waziristan, part of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Although it has cooperated with and even praised al-Qaeda, the Haqqani network’s focus is regional, not global like al-Qaeda’s. Indeed, according to declassified U.S. intelligence, the Haqqanis enjoyed close ties with the United States from the time of anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s until September 11, 2001.5

Jalaluddin Haqqani and his Islamist fighters received considerable military assistance from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the anti-Soviet struggle. In July 2015, a senior member of the Haqqani network claimed that its founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani, had been dead for more than a year. Neither U.S. intelligence nor the Taliban confirmed his death.6 Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency has also given extensive support, including safe harbor and access to weapons, to the Haqqani network, enabling the group to expand. However, the Afghan government and coalition forces have inflicted great damage on the Haqqani network in recent years, bringing its total force size down from as many as 10,000 in 2011 to as few as 2,000 in 2012.9

Since the network’s leader, Jalaluddin Haqqani, grew ill, his son Sirajuddin became the operational director of the organization, enhancing its cooperation with al-Qaeda and other violent Islamist groups in the region.10 The Taliban reported Jalaluddin Haqqani’s death in September 2018, but observers did not expect Haqqani’s death to have an impact on the group’s operations.11 The U.S. intelligence community regards the Haqqani network as the leading insurgency force in South Asia, with more intimate ties to Arab jihadist groups and Pakistani intelligence than any other faction.12 In 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, then-chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the Haqqanis a “veritable arm” of the ISI.13

Doctrine:

The Haqqani network seeks to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan and Afghanistan and build a caliphate under Islamic law. Like the Taliban, the Haqqani network endorses an austere and radical interpretation of sharia (Islamic law), positing that Muslims must aspire to live in accordance with the actions of the Salaf, the first generation of Muslim leaders after the Prophet Muhammad.14

The Haqqani network gained momentum during the Soviet occupation and came to play a central role in the Afghan mujahideen movement. Like the Taliban, they embrace a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam known as Deobandi.15 This school of thought was a branch of Hanafi Islam that developed in the late nineteenth century in the madrassas (religious schools) of the Indian subcontinent.16 What set the Deobandis apart was their habit of instructing youth in Islamic theology and little else. They strove to inculcate students with a fierce respect for piety. This rigorous instruction turned out pious Muslims who were able to recite the Quran and aimed to adhere as closely as possible to the lived experience of Islam’s prophet Muhammad as revealed in the Hadith (the sayings and actions of Muhammad). The Deobandis’ vision put faith at the center of life, drawing a stark distinction between the kuffar (unbelievers) and the ummah (community of believers).17

After seizing power in Kabul in 1996, the Taliban announced its aims to impose order and enforce sharia. All this was done to defend the special Islamic character of the “Emirate of Afghanistan.”18 The Taliban banned most sporting events and forms of entertainment, from poetry and music to kites. They closed all-girls schools, and women were allowed in public only under strict male supervision. Even when women were in the home, the windows were painted black to prevent passersby from glimpsing women in their private quarters.19

In 2008, Jalaluddin Haqqani stated that “all the Mujahideen wage Jihad under the leadership of [Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar] against the American invaders and their lackeys.”20 In September 2012, Haqqani’s son Sirajuddin declared, “We are one of the fronts of the Islamic Emirate… and we are proud of our pledge to its Emir [Mullah Omar] and we carry out its orders and all its regulations… and we obey completely in good deeds the Emir of the Believers Mullah Mohammad Omar.”21 The Taliban even released a statement on its website stating that there is “no separate entity or network in Afghanistan by the name of Haqqani” and that Jalaluddin Haqqani is “a member of the Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate and is a close, loyal and trusted associate” of Mullah Omar.22 In August 2015, the Taliban appointed Sirajuddin Haqqani as a deputy to Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour, further integrating the Haqqani network into the Taliban.23
No events since have altered the Haqqani network’s pledge of allegiance to the Taliban. With the rise of ISIS, for instance, the Haqqani network has fallen in line with its Taliban and al-Qaeda allies in calling for pan-Islamic unity. The Taliban has advised ISIS to “avoid extremism” that risks splintering the violent Islamist movement across the broader Middle East. Despite these warnings, hundreds of Taliban members have joined ISIS’s Pakistani branch and some evidence indicates that ISIS’s ranks are growing throughout the Hindu Kush.

Organizational Structure:

The Haqqani network’s leadership is largely clan-based and hierarchical. It is located near Miramshah, in North Waziristan, part of Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Although the Haqqani network has been responsible for some of the most gruesome violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent years, Pakistani intelligence has nonetheless labeled it as a potential partner in peace—a “moderate” Taliban.

The Haqqani network’s leadership structure is akin to the Taliban’s former 10-member leadership council (Supreme Shura) previously based in Kandahar. Jalaluddin Haqqani served as the minister of “Frontier Affairs” in the Taliban’s Supreme Shura until the regime was deposed by the U.S.-led intervention in 2001. Ever since, the Taliban have operated as an insurgent force out of Pakistan under its modified Quetta Shura, a combination of the leadership and consultative councils. This more recent form of leadership was founded in the winter of 2002, when Mullah Omar fled across the Pakistani frontier. The Quetta Shura is responsible for much of the Taliban’s operations in southern and western Afghanistan. As of 2009, the Shura consisted of an estimated 23 to 46 members.

The Quetta Shura appoints a governing structure in Afghanistan, dispatching “shadow” governors to many Afghan provinces. In 2009, it established a committee to redress grievances from the indigenous population. The Quetta Shura “[installs] ‘shari’a’ courts to deliver swift and enforced justice in contested and controlled areas. [It levies] taxes and [conscripts] fighters and laborers.” It claims “to provide security against a corrupt government, ISAF forces, criminality, and local power brokers [and] to protect Afghan and Muslim identity against foreign encroachment.”

The Taliban also operates a military base in Peshawar, Pakistan, from which leaders direct the insurgency in Afghanistan’s north and east. The Peshawar military commission reportedly oversees a total of 20 provinces, divided into six command zones, one of which falls under the Haqqani network’s purview.

The Haqqani network’s Miramshah Shura, its most direct leadership organ, features both military and political wings and consists of Haqqani family members along with veteran commanders trusted by the family. As of 2015, Sirajuddin Haqqani leads the Miramshah Shura and is the chief liaison to the Quetta Shura as well as the Pakistani Taliban and al-Qaeda. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Haqqani network has been critical in building and maintaining this insurgency infrastructure on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border. It operates as a conduit between the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani intelligence, along with al-Qaeda and other insurgent groups.

Financing:

The Haqqani network has long been financed by its local allies, ranging from Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The group also receives funding from wealthy donors across the Arab world, especially in the Gulf states. These associations have been deeply entrenched since at least 1980, when Jalaluddin Haqqani—with the help of one of his Arab wives living in the United Arab Emirates—opened fundraising offices in several Gulf states. Jalaluddin Haqqani’s sons have personally traveled to meet these patrons on several occasions.

The Haqqani network also boasts a range of criminal enterprises, from smuggling jewels and precious metals to kidnapping. It also operates legitimate commercial enterprises, especially ones tied to Pakistan’s military and intelligence elite.

Recruitment:
Haqqani Network

The Haqqani network runs an elaborate network of madrassas in North Waziristan, from which they cull members. It has also used the Taliban’s larger network of Saudi-funded Wahhabi madrassas to find new recruits. These religious schools can be found on both sides of the Durand line, and represent the primary recruiting grounds for the Taliban as well. Several of the Haqqani Network’s and Taliban’s leaders, including Sirajuddin Haqqani, studied at Pakistani cleric Maulana Sami ul Haq’s officially-sanctioned seminary in Pakistan. Haq, known as the “father of the Taliban,” was killed in a knife attack in his home in Pakistan on November 2, 2018.

Training:

The Haqqani network is known to train its fighters in camps on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border. According to U.S. intelligence, for instance, a 2011 training video put out by the Haqqani network was recorded in Pakistan’s tribal-controlled North Waziristan. This video features Haqqani recruits enrolled in a kind of basic training course replete with mock ambushes, other simulated other battlefield conditions, and weapons training.

In 2011, the Haqqani network published a field manual of its training methods and tactics. The field manual runs 144 pages, and was published under “Khalifa Sirajuddin Haqqani,” the operational commander of the Haqqani network. It details methods to obtain financing and directs readers to recruit and train new members. It also documents ambush methods, explosives, and instructions for suicide missions. Further, it features religious propaganda and praise for al-Qaeda.

24 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 22.
25 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 90.


28 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 250.


44 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 43.


Key Leaders

Jalaluddin Haqqani
Founder of the Haqqani network

Sirajuddin Haqqani
Reported deputy emir, head of the Quetta Shura

Abdul Aziz Ahbasin
Haqqani network governor of Pakita province, Afghanistan

Khalil al-Rahman Haqqani
Gulf-based fundraiser and facilitator

Haqqani Network
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History:

- **May 27, 2020**: The United Nations releases a report claiming that the Taliban and especially the Haqqani network, continues to work closely with al-Qaeda, despite the Taliban’s peace deal with the American government. According to the report, about 400 to 600 armed al-Qaeda operatives are stationed in Afghanistan. The February 29 peace agreement saw the Taliban agree to prevent al-Qaeda from operating in Afghanistan in order for U.S. troops to gradually withdraw from Afghanistan. Despite the conditions of the negotiations, the U.N. report claims that the Taliban regularly consulted with al-Qaeda during the peace process, promising to not break its “historical ties” with al-Qaeda for any price. According to the report, discussions were held among senior Haqqani network figures to form a new unit of over 2,000 armed fighters which would be funded by and in cooperation with al-Qaeda. Sources: Ryan Browne and Jennifer Hamslar, “UN report says Taliban is maintaining relations with al Qaeda despite deal with US,” CNN, June 1, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/01/politics/un-report-taliban-al-qaeda/index.html?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1259405.; Karen DeYoung and Dan Lamothe, “Taliban continues to back al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, despite deal with Trump administration, report says,” Washington Post, June 1, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/taliban-continues-to-back-al-qaeda-in-afghanistan-despite-deal-with-trump-administration-report-says/2020/06/01/996b159c-a41c-11ea-8681-7d471b2f0207_story.html.


- **May 7, 2020**: Afghan security forces carry out an operation targeting a joint ISIS-Haqqani network cell in Kabul. The operation kills five insurgents and leads to the arrest of eight others. Although the two insurgent groups targeted each other in the past, Afghanistan’s National Directorate of Security (NDS) believes that the militant groups are now working together and were responsible for the attack against a Sikh temple in March. According to the NDS, the hideouts were controlled by a militant named Sanaullah who was allegedly responsible for recruitment for ISIS’s Wilayat Khorasan and was the urban coordinator for the Haqqani network in Kabul. Source: Shishir Gupta, “Taliban-linked Haqqani network not just ISKP, plotted Kabul gurdwara strike: NDS,” Hindustan Times, May 7, 2020, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/taliban-linked-haqqani-network-not-just-iskp-plotted-kabul-gurdwara-strike-nds/story-Hh177wo5ZeVic3CrNeWUtJ.html.


- **November 12, 2019**: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announces that Afghanistan will release two senior Taliban commanders and Anas Haqqani, a leader of the Haqqani network, in exchange for an Australian and American soldier who were kidnapped in 2016. Kabul releases the insurgents in hopes of securing direct talks with the Taliban to de-escalate the violence in the country. Anas Haqqani is the younger brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the leader of the Haqqani network and second-in-command in the Afghan Taliban. Source: Hamid Shalizi, “Afghanistan to swap Taliban militants for American, Australian captives,” Reuters, November 12, 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban/afghanistan-to-swap-taliban-militants-for-australian-american-captives-idUSKBN1NX0M01.

- **August 4, 2019**: The Afghan Special Forces arrest Sardar Mohammad, also known as Khalifa Daud, in Kabul. Mohammad is allegedly a key Haqqani network member who was responsible for facilitating the supply of weapons, munitions, and military kits to the Taliban and other militants. Source: “Special Forces arrest Khalifa Daud, Haqqani network’s key member in Kabul,” Khaama Press, August 14, 2019, https://www.khaama.com/special-forces-arrest-khalifa-daud-haqqani-networks-key-member-in-kabul-03625/.


- **November 22, 2018**: An unidentified group bombs a Haqqani Network meeting place in south Waziristan, Pakistan, killing three and...
November 2, 2018: Pakistani cleric Maulana Samiul Haq, who taught many Taliban and Haqqani leaders, including Sirajuddin Haqqani, is killed in a knife attack in Pakistan.


September 3, 2018: The Taliban announce the death of Jalaluddin Haqqani at age 71 from health complications.

According to the statement, Haqqani had been "ill and bedridden for the past several years." It is the first time the Taliban release an official statement about Haqqani’s death. The statement does not list a specific date of death, leading Afghan officials to reaffirm their belief that Haqqani had died several years earlier. Sources: Kathy Gannon, "Death of Afghan group’s founder unlikely to weaken militants," Associated Press, September 4, 2018, https://www.apnews.com/953f1310497f86dca011f3b8f9f/taliban:-founder-of-haqqani-network-dies-inside-


Sirajuddin Haqqani is appointed as a deputy to Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammed Mansour.


June 1, 2015: The Afghan government leaks a letter from President Ashraf Ghani to the Pakistani government urging Islamabad to detain members of the Taliban and the Haqqani network.


January 15, 2015: Pakistan ousts the Haqqani network after the Taliban’s attack on a Peshawar school leaves 134 children dead.


July 15, 2014: The Haqqani network uses a truck to deliver a bomb to a crowded market in eastern Afghanistan, killing 72.


The U.S. creates a special military unit headquartered in Kabul dedicated to dismantling the Haqqani network.


A U.S. drone strike in Pakistan kills five Taliban members in addition to a senior commander in the Haqqani network, Maulvi Ahmad Jan.


Militants allegedly affiliated with the Haqqani network kidnap Canadian citizen Joshua Boyle and his pregnant American wife, Caitlan Coleman, in Afghanistan.


September 7, 2012: The U.S. Department of State designates the Haqqani network a Foreign Terrorist Organization under Executive Order 13224.

Haqqani Network


- Following al-Qaeda’s 9/11 attacks and the subsequent U.S. war in Afghanistan, Haqqani fighters flee across the Pakistani frontier and establish a base of operations in North Waziristan. The Haqqani network spurs an offer from Pakistan and the United States to turn against the Taliban and instead extends a safe harbor to retreating al-Qaeda forces. Source: Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 224.

- Mullah Omar is made Amir ul-Momineen, the leader of the Taliban, when it captures Kabul by force and asserts control over most of Afghanistan. Source: Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 12.

- Jalaluddin Haqqani expands his area of operations from the Zadran tribal areas to the cities of Khost and Urgun, which his forces seize from the
Afghan government forces and their Soviet backers.

- Jalaluddin Haqqani begins to train Islamist militants in North Waziristan, with the goal of ousting Afghan President Mohammad Daud Khan, who had recently seized power in a coup.
Violent history:
The Haqqani network has employed violence since its founding. Haqqani fighters first acquired battlefield experience during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. Members later honed their capabilities in the realm of terrorism through deep cooperation with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, especially after 2001.\(^5\) For a period, the Haqqani network was regarded by both the U.S. and Afghan governments as the most dangerous outfit operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By 2011, Haqqani operations accounted for 10 percent of attacks on coalition forces and about 15% of casualties.\(^52\) Since 2011, the group has sustained heavy casualties from the Pakistani military as well as from U.S. drone strikes, but it remains a formidable fighting force in the region.

The Haqqani network has executed a number of violent attacks, including:

- **September 2006:** The Haqqani network orchestrates a suicide bombing that kills Abdul Hakim Taniwal, the governor of Paktika province and a close associate of Afghan President Hamid Karzai. A second suicide bomber struck Taniwal’s funeral procession on the following day, killing 7 and wounding more than 40.\(^5\)
- **September 2007:** The Haqqani network deploys a suicide bomber aboard a bus carrying Afghan Army recruits, killing 31.\(^5\)
- **January 2008:** The Haqqani network attacks the Serena Hotel in Kabul, killing eight people.\(^5\)
- **April 27, 2008:** The Haqqani network executes an assassination attempt on Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The president escapes, but three people are killed.\(^5\)
- **July 7, 2008:** A car bomb explodes at the Indian embassy in Kabul, killing 54. The Haqqani network claims responsibility.\(^5\)
- **January 2010:** The Haqqani network launches attacks on government buildings in Kabul, killing five and wounding 70.\(^5\)
- **March 2011:** The Haqqani network claims responsibility for an attack on the International Hotel in Kabul that kills 11 Afghan civilians and two policemen.\(^5\)
- **September 2011:** The Haqqani network launches a nearly day-long assault on the U.S. embassy in Kabul and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). At least sixteen Afghan civilians, including six children, are killed in the attack.\(^5\)
- **April 2012:** The Haqqani network launches an assault in Kabul that leaves 36 insurgents and 11 others dead.\(^6\)
- **October 2012:** Militants allegedly affiliated with the Haqqani network kidnap Canadian citizen Joshua Boyle and his pregnant American wife, Caitlan Coleman, in Afghanistan. The couple give birth to three children during their five-year captivity. In August 2016, the captors release a video of the hostages reading a script demanding the release of Taliban prisoners in exchange for their lives. Haqqani militants release another video in December 2016 in which the family demands the release of Haqqani family members. Pakistani forces rescue the family in October 2017. Boyle alleges that his wife was raped during their captivity and that their captors killed a fourth child, an infant daughter who was born during the ordeal.\(^5\)
- **July 15, 2014:** The Haqqani network uses a truck to deliver a bomb to a crowded market in eastern Afghanistan, killing 72.\(^6\)
- **January 2015:** Pakistan outlaws the Haqqani network after the Taliban’s attack on a Peshawar school leaves 134 children dead.\(^6\)
- **August 7, 2016:** Haqqani gunmen dressed in Afghan military uniforms kidnap American professor Kevin King and Australian professor Timothy Weeks from the Kabul campus of the American University of Afghanistan. The militants demand the release of Jalaluddin Haqqani’s youngest son, Annas Haqqani, who is imprisoned in Afghanistan. The United States offers a $1 million reward for information leading to King’s safe return. In October 2017, the Taliban release a video message detailing King’s deteriorating health.\(^6\)
- **May 31, 2017:** A fake sewage tanker truck carrying 3,000 pounds of explosives explodes in a high-security district of Kabul, Afghanistan, killing 150 people and wounding 400. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but the Afghan government accuses the Haqqani network of orchestrating the attack.\(^6\)
- **January 20, 2018:** Gunmen wearing army uniforms storm the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul late and take hotel guests hostage during a 14-hour standoff with Afghan security forces and NATO troops. At least 22 civilians are killed, according to the Afghan government, but local news outlets report the death toll is at least 43. At least 14 foreign nationals are among the fatalities. Ten others are wounded, including six security officers. The Taliban claim responsibility. The Afghan government accuses Haqqani militants of carrying out the attack.\(^6\)
- **January 27, 2018:** A militant drives an explosives-filled ambulance into a fortified area of Kabul home to government buildings and hospitals, killing at least 103 people and wounding 235. Investigators believe a second ambulance may have been involved but the attackers escaped.
Taliban claim responsibility for the bombing, calling the attack a “warning to U.S. President Donald Trump against the U.S. “policy of aggression” in Afghanistan.” U.S. authorities suspect the Haqqani network of orchestrating the attack.\textsuperscript{68}

- **May 9, 2018:** Gunmen and suicide bombers kill at least seven and wound 17 in two separate attacks on a police station and near a bank, both in Kabul. The Taliban claim responsibility for the attack near the bank, claiming the attack targeted the nearby Afghan intelligence agency. The Afghan National Directorate for Security blames the Haqqani network for both attacks.\textsuperscript{69}

- **November 23, 2018:** Unidentified assailants detonate a bomb at a mosque in Khost province, Afghanistan, killing 27 and wounding scores more. No group claims responsibility. However, the area is a known stronghold for the Haqqani network.\textsuperscript{70}

- **May 14, 2020:** A car bomb detonates in Gardez, eastern Afghanistan. The attack kills five people and wounds 14 others. Tariq Arian, an interior ministry spokesman, claims the Haqqani network is responsible for the attack.\textsuperscript{71}


\textsuperscript{60} Ahmed Rashid, \textit{Taliban} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 230.


\textsuperscript{63} Ahmed Rashid, \textit{Taliban} (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 232.


Designations:

Designations by the U.S. Government:

March 2008: The U.S. Department of State added Sirajuddin Haqqani to its list of specially designated global terrorists in March 2008.\textsuperscript{72}

September 7, 2012: The U.S. Department of State designated the Haqqani network a Foreign Terrorist Organization under Executive Order 13224 on September 7, 2012.\textsuperscript{73}

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:

November 2012: The United Nations designated the Haqqani network as a Proscribed Terrorist Organization in November 2012.\textsuperscript{74}


Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:

**Al-Qaeda**

The Haqqani network maintains extensive links to al-Qaeda in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. U.S. intelligence findings indicate that the network has supplied vital assistance to al-Qaeda in the realm of training, propaganda support and networking channels. This record has solidified a robust collaborative relationship between the Haqqani network and core al-Qaeda.

**Taliban**

The Haqqani network is considered an integral part of the Afghan Taliban, but it operates independently from the core organization. Drawing on its own fundraising network, it is financially independent from the Taliban. Despite its largely autonomous status, the Haqqanis continue to advance the objectives of a resurgent Taliban. In May 2014, the Haqqanis orchestrated the release of five Taliban commanders held at Guantanamo Bay in exchange for the U.S. serviceman, Bowe Bergdahl. They also pledge allegiance to the Taliban.

Ties to Other Entities:

**Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**

The Haqqani network has had extensive ties with Pakistan’s ISI dating back to the 1980s. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Haqqani network has been critical in building and maintaining this insurgency infrastructure on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistani border. It operates as a conduit between the Afghan Taliban and Pakistani intelligence, along with al-Qaeda, and other insurgent groups. In 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the Haqqanis a “veritable arm” of the ISI.

Ties to Extremist Individuals:

**Mullah Mohammed Omar**

The Haqqanis had long pledged allegiance to Mullah Omar and recognized the Taliban leader as amir al-momineen (the commander or leader of the faithful).

**Mullah Akhtar Mansour**

After the announcement of Mullah Omar’s death, members of the Haqqani network recognized his successor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, as their leader.

**Osama bin Laden**

The Haqqanis praise al-Qaeda and have shared training personnel with the terrorist organization. Al-Qaeda’s legendary al-Farouq training camp was even located at the Haqqani base at Zawara, Afghanistan.

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Media Coverage:

Western Media

Western media have recognized the Haqqani network’s character as a “militant” Islamist group in open alliance with the Taliban. For the most part, the media concur with the widespread assumption among Western intelligence agencies that the Haqqani network is the most lethal arm of the insurgency in Afghanistan.

Certain media outlets have followed the lead of the Pakistani government in recognizing the Haqqani network’s potential to serve as a negotiating partner with the United States in its ongoing fight against the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The London-based Telegraph, for one, has played up the Haqqanis’ willingness to enter into “peace talks” with the United States. It has referred to the organization as a “militia.”

Arab Media

Al Jazeera has cast the Haqqani network in a relatively positive light, referring to it as an “armed group” aligned with the Taliban. In its coverage of the Haqqani network, Al Jazeera has generally refrained from describing it as a “terrorist” organization, despite its long-established record of targeting civilians. Al Jazeera has been one of the few media outlets to obtain an interview with Sirajuddin Haqqani, the group’s operational commander.

Al Jazeera’s coverage of the faltering peace process between the United States and the Taliban has been more suspicious than its Western counterparts of the role played by the Afghan government. In 2013, when the Afghan-Taliban peace talks collapsed, Al Jazeera attributed this failure to the objection of the Afghan government “to fanfare surrounding the opening of a Taliban office” in Qatar.

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Rhetoric:

Sirajuddin Haqqani, operational commander of the Haqqani network, 2010

“Our Mujahedeen were not involved in the attacks, but we are happy that they took place because all foreigners who come to our country are working for the continuity of the current occupation and they help the crusaders in various areas and issues.”

Sirajuddin Haqqani, operational commander of the Haqqani network, 2010

“We must give sacrifices in the fight against the crusaders. In this fight, whether we are killed, martyred or thrown in jail we are proud of it.”

Sirajuddin Haqqani, operational commander of the Haqqani network, 2010

“When we have the direction of Islam with us, we do not need the spoiled and filthy civilization of the West to tell us about women’s education.”

Jalaluddin Haqqani, Date Unknown

“All the Mujahideen wage Jihad … against the American invaders and their lackeys.”