

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Name: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Type of Organization:

- Insurgent
- non-state actor
- regional
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Taliban
- al-Qaeda
- Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Salafist
- Sunni

Place of Origin:

Uzbekistan

Year of Origin:

1998

Founder(s):

Tahir Yuldashev, Juma Namangani

Places of Operation:

Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan

Overview

Executive Summary:

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is an internationally designated terrorist organization founded in 1998 with the goal of overthrowing the Uzbek government and replacing it with an Islamic state.¹ The IMU long pledged its allegiance to al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but in 2015, the group's emir and most of its fighters publicly shifted their affiliation to ISIS. Dissident factions, however, continued to assert fidelity to their longstanding patrons.²

The group was created in Afghanistan, receiving sanctuary from the Taliban government, and was initially based in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.³ The group received support early on from the Taliban and reportedly from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency as well.⁴ The IMU has attracted recruits from Central Asia, South Asia, Europe, Africa, China, Russia, and the Philippines.⁵

The IMU has conducted attacks across the region, targeting both civilians, community leaders, and security forces in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.⁶ These attacks include kidnapping, suicide bombings, and other operations coordinated with the Taliban, al-Qaeda, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), and later ISIS.⁷

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

After the U.S.-led war against al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan commenced in 2001, the IMU shifted its focus to fighting alongside the Taliban against NATO and Afghan government forces.⁸ The group suffered heavy losses fighting U.S. forces, including the death of its cofounder and emir, Juma Namangani.⁹ The group consequently retreated in 2002 to South Waziristan in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).¹⁰ Internal disputes led to a split within the IMU and a small splinter faction, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), formed in the FATA.¹¹ In 2009, the IMU's other cofounder, Tahir Yuldashev, was killed by a U.S. drone strike, while another strike killed his successor, Abu Usman, in 2011. Thus, by the end of 2011, all of the IMU's original leadership and most original members had been killed, and the group struggled to maintain operational and recruitment ties to Uzbekistan.¹²

Between 2010 and 2013, the IMU focused its recruitment efforts on the Uzbek and Tajik populations in northern Afghanistan, from which the NATO-led coalition forces had recently withdrawn.¹³ Coalition forces carried out six anti-IMU raids in the first quarter of 2012, including three in these northern provinces.¹⁴ However, all but one of the 12 anti-IMU raids conducted in the first quarter of 2013 occurred in this region, emphasizing the IMU's expanded presence here.¹⁵ General Zalmay Wesa, 209th Afghan National Army Corps commander in the north, stated in April 2013 that "IMU fighters are the main focus of our special forces operations. They are all over north-eastern Afghanistan [where] they train locals in IEDs, suicide attacks and other sophisticated attacks and are behind the assassination of a number of officials and tribal elders."¹⁶

The IMU publicly allied with ISIS in September 2014 and the IMU's then-leader, Usman Ghazi, formally swore allegiance to the latter in August 2015.¹⁷ The Taliban demanded that the IMU disclaim its oath of allegiance to ISIS or leave Afghanistan. Subsequently, several IMU members reaffiliated with the Taliban, but Ghazi and others rejected the ultimatum and remained in Afghanistan. The Taliban then launched a major military campaign against IMU strongholds, killing Ghazi and largely wiping out the group.¹⁸

A January 2017 United Nations report stated that the IMU continues to fight in northern Afghanistan, with some splinter groups attempting to spread into Central Asian states.¹⁹ However, analysts believe the group operates at only a fraction of its past strength and no longer poses a serious threat to regional stability.²⁰

Doctrine:

IMU cofounder Tahir Yuldashev is considered the group's spiritual founder and was a local mullah in Namangan, Uzbekistan. In 1990, he and his followers were members of the Islamic Renaissance Party (I.R.P.) but they quickly left it and formed the Adolat party, claiming that the I.R.P. was too slow to implement an Islamic revolution.²¹ The Uzbek government outlawed Adolat in 1992 following increased militancy within the group and initiated a brutal crackdown of its supporters.²² Yuldashev and Namangani fled to Tajikistan, where Namangani led a group of Uzbek and Tajik militants—many of whom were former Adolat members—against the Tajik government.²³

Upon its founding in 1998, the IMU claimed that its main goal was to overthrow the Uzbek government and replace it with an Islamic state.²⁴ The group changed its name in April 2001 to "the Islamic Party of Turkestan" as its territorial ambitions grew to establish a caliphate across all of Central Asia and even Muslim-majority provinces of China.²⁵ However, after IMU cofounder Juma Namangani swore allegiance to the Taliban's Mullah Omar in 2001, the group has focused its fighting against the United States, NATO, and later Taliban targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and largely has not carried out attacks in Uzbekistan.²⁶

The IMU had deep ties to the Islamic extremist Lal Mosque in Islamabad, Pakistan. Yuldashev said in 2007 that:

We consider them [Lal Masjid] a part of us before, during and after the [siege]... their shaheed are our shaheed... their prisoners are our prisoners.... every member of the Harakat [i.e. IMU] will stand up against the terrorist act that took place on Lal Masjid. ... After Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan ranks 3rd in the ?????? ????? ("jihadi operations") launched on its territory. We will always be a part of these activities.²⁷

The Lal Mosque was infamous for its militant activism, including facilitating the transport of foreign fighters to Afghanistan, kidnapping prostitutes, ransoming police officers, and supporting violent anti-Shia groups.²⁸ Following the Pakistan security forces' violent siege of the Lal Mosque in July 2007, the IMU released two videos showing its fighters executing Pakistani soldiers.²⁹

The IMU sided with ISIS in its fight against the Taliban in September 2014, fully pledging allegiance to the organization in August 2015.³⁰ Following this, the Taliban launched a major military campaign against IMU strongholds, killing its emir and largely wiping out the group.³¹

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Organizational Structure:

The IMU originally consisted mostly of Uzbeks and was led by a military leader, Juma Namangani, and a spiritual leader, Tahir Yuldashev.³² The organization set up training camps in northern Afghanistan in the late 1990s, from where it carried out attacks in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.³³ The Taliban also allowed the group to open political offices in Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif to aid recruitment.³⁴

After NATO invaded Afghanistan following the September 11, 2001, attacks, the IMU suffered heavy losses fighting against U.S. forces, including the death of Namangani.³⁵ The group consequently retreated in 2002 to South Waziristan in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).³⁶ Internal disputes led to a split within the IMU and a small splinter faction, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), formed in the FATA.³⁷ In 2009, the IMU's other cofounder, Tahir Yuldashev, was killed by a U.S. drone strike, and another strike killed his successor, Abu Usman, in 2011. Thus, by the end of 2011 all of the IMU's original leadership and most original members had been killed, and the group struggled to maintain operational and recruitment ties to Uzbekistan.³⁸ Following Yuldashev's death in 2009, a Bangladeshi sheikh became the group's new spiritual leader.³⁹

After pledging allegiance to ISIS in 2015, the IMU lost an estimated 90 percent of its strength in southern Afghanistan to sustained Taliban attacks.⁴⁰ It is estimated that the group retained 200-300 fighters in northern Afghanistan, including men from Africa, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, and China that fight alongside ISIS.⁴¹ IMU Emir Usman Ghazi was killed in fighting against the Taliban and the group has not publicly named a successor.⁴²

Financing:

The IMU has financially supported itself both through external fundraising and participation in black-market economies. According to the Australian government, Uzbek expats in Saudi Arabia, Turkish foundations, Islamist and pan-Turkic organizations, and like-minded Arab foundations and banks have been crucial sources of revenue for the group.⁴³ The IMU also received financial support from the Taliban and al-Qaeda from its founding until 2014, when it switched its allegiance to ISIS.⁴⁴

The IMU has also resorted to illegal financing, including drug trafficking and racketeering.⁴⁵ Ten Europeans were arrested in May 2008 for operating a network funneling at least 300,000 euros to the IMU in Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. On January 8, 2013, French authorities sentenced Irfan Demirtas, a Turkish-Dutch national charged with leading the network, to eight years in prison.⁴⁶ In August 2015, Fazliddin Kurbanov, an Uzbek national, was sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment in the United States after being found guilty of attempting to provide material support to the IMU, as well as seeking to obtain bomb-making materials in order to carry out attacks on the United States.⁴⁷

Recruitment:

The group has successfully exploited the widespread poverty of the Ferghana Valley—a region bordering Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan—to recruit.⁴⁸ Initially, most of the IMU's fighters came from Central Asian countries like Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, but also included Chechens and Uighurs.⁴⁹ Between 1998 and 2001, the group ran Taliban-approved political offices in Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar e-Sharif to assist recruitment efforts. In these early years it was reported that Namangani paid IMU members between 100 and 500 U.S. dollars per month, a huge incentive for impoverished men in the region to join.⁵⁰

By the mid-2000s, as Yuldashev established the IMU as the most powerful non-Arab regional group supportive of al-Qaeda, the organization was able to expand its recruitment base to include Turkmen, Turks, Afghans, Pashtun and non-Pashtun Pakistanis, Arabs, Chinese, Germans, Norwegians, and Russians.⁵¹ The group has particularly targeted Germans, including via German-language recruitment videos displaying attacks on Pakistani forces and inviting prospective German fighters and their families to leave Germany to go to the IMU's base in Pakistan's tribal areas.⁵² In 2011, German authorities suspected the IMU of operating the largest militant recruitment network inside the country. The German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation confirmed that as of 2010, nearly 100 individuals joined militant groups in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.⁵³ However, after most of the group was killed in fighting against the Taliban in late 2015,⁵⁴ recruitment efforts were significantly harmed, as potential recruits instead traveled to Syria to join new Uzbek and Central Asian jihadist organizations fighting against the Assad regime.⁵⁵ Much of the IMU's remaining membership consists of men from Africa, Pakistan, the Philippines, Bangladesh, China, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan that fight alongside ISIS.⁵⁶

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Training:

Between 1995 and 1998, IMU cofounder Tahir Yuldashev lived in Peshawar, Pakistan, where he obtained the support of the pro-Taliban Jamiat Ulema Islam Party, which trained his Uzbek followers in their Pakistani madrassas.⁵⁷ When the IMU formed in 1998, the Taliban supported the group financially and allowed it to set up training camps in northern Afghanistan, from where it launched attacks against the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.⁵⁸ These Afghan camps used instructors and manuals written in several languages to train members in operating weapons, rigging booby traps, and assembling car bombs.⁵⁹

The IMU has also taken charge of training their allies' members, with a focus on developing suicide squads.⁶⁰ The IMU provides manpower and training to operations planned by these groups, although they do not appear to contribute to strategic planning.⁶¹

¹ "Pakistan's 'Fanatical' Uzbek Militants," BBC News, June 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27801257>.

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³ "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), last modified March 2015, <https://www.start.umd.edu/baad/narratives/islamic-movement-uzbekistan-imu>.

⁴ Noah Tucker, "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Uzbekistan: A Risk Assessment," United States Agency for International Development, August 14, 2013, 5, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JSSQ.pdf.

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<https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicMovementofUzbekistan.aspx>; "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," United Nations, accessed May 24, 2019, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan; Jacob Zenn, "On the Eve of 2014: Islamism in Central Asia," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 15 (June 2013), 73, https://www.hudson.org/content/researchattachments/attachment/1378/zenn_vol15.pdf.

⁶ Qishloq Ovozi, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: An Evolving Threat," Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, May 31, 2014, <https://www.rferl.org/a/islamic-movement-uzbekistan-roundtable/25405614.html>; "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, August 17, 2018, <https://www.nonproliferation.org/islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-imu/>; "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," United Nations, accessed May 24, 2019, https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan.

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⁸ "Pakistan's 'Fanatical' Uzbek Militants," BBC News, June 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27801257>.

⁹ David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," Institute for the Study of War, January 27, 2011, 1-2, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/BackgrounderIMU_28Jan.pdf.

¹⁰ David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," Institute for the Study of War, January 27, 2011, 1-2, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/BackgrounderIMU_28Jan.pdf.

¹¹ "Islamic Jihad Union," Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, U.S. Department of State, July 19, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2016/>.

¹² Noah Tucker, "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Uzbekistan: A Risk Assessment," United States Agency for International Development, August 14, 2013, 5, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JSSQ.pdf.

¹³ Bethany Matta, "Uzbek Fighters Gain Support in Afghan North," Al Jazeera, April 10, 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/04/20134910314648770.html>; "Tajikistan: Changing Insurgent Threats," International Crisis Group, Asia Report no. 205, May 24, 2011, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/central-asia/tajikistan/tajikistan-changing-insurgent-threats>.

¹⁴ Bethany Matta, "Uzbek Fighters Gain Support in Afghan North," Al Jazeera, April 10, 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/04/20134910314648770.html>.

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¹⁷ Merhat Sharipzhan, "IMU Declares It Is Now Part of the Islamic State," Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, August 6, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/imu-islamic-state/27174567.html>; Damon Mehl, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Opens a Door to the Islamic State," *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 6 (June 2015), <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-opens-a-door-to-the-islamic-state/>.

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²¹ Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.

²² Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.

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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Key Leaders



Tahir Yuldashev

Cofounder, Emir (deceased)



Juma Namangani

Cofounder, Emir (deceased)



Abu Usman Adil

Emir (deceased)



Abbas Mansour

Military commander
(deceased)



Abdul Aziz Ukasha

Key media operative
(deceased)



Usman Ghazi

Emir, former deputy Emir
(deceased)



Abu Dher al-Barmi

Former mufti and spokesman
(deceased)

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

History:

- **June 10, 2016:** A dissident faction of the IMU announces their continued loyalty to the Taliban and denouncing Ghazi's defection to ISIS. The faction claims it has always remained loyal to the Taliban but was unable to make any media statements until this time. The statement was issued in English and Arabic on Telegram and Twitter. Source: Bill Roggio and Caleb Weiss, "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan faction emerges after group's collapse," Long War Journal, June 14, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/06/islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-faction-emerges-after-groups-collapse.php>.
- Ghazi is killed by Taliban forces.
Source: "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan." Australian National Security, March 3, 2018, <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicMovementofUzbekistan.aspx>.
- **August 6, 2015:** Ghazi formally pledges allegiance to ISIS.
Source: Merhat Sharipzhan, "IMU Declares It Is Now Part of the Islamic State," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, August 6, 2015, <https://www.rferl.org/a/imu-islamic-state/27174567.html>.
- Ghazi announces that the IMU is "siding with the Islamic Caliphate" in Afghanistan, although he does not formally pledge allegiance to ISIS.
Source: Damon Mehl, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Opens a Door to the Islamic State," *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 6 (June 2015), <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-opens-a-door-to-the-islamic-state/>.
- - : Coalition forces conduct 12 anti-IMU raids, 11 of them in the northern provinces of Afghanistan.
Source: Bethany Matta, "Uzbek Fighters Gain Support in Afghan North," Al Jazeera, April 10, 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/04/20134910314648770.html>.
- IMU deputy leader Usman Ghazi becomes the group's new emir after Abu Usman Adil, Yuldashev's successor, was killed in an April drone strike.
Source: Bill Roggio, "IMU announces death of emir, names new leader," Long War Journal, August 4, 2012, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2012/08/imu_announces_death_1.php.
- - : Coalition forces carry out six anti-IMU raids in the first quarter of 2012, three of which occurred in the northern provinces of Afghanistan.
Source: Bethany Matta, "Uzbek Fighters Gain Support in Afghan North," Al Jazeera, April 10, 2013, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/04/20134910314648770.html>.
- The IMU announces the deaths of military commander Abbas Mansour and key media operative Abdul Aziz Ukasha in U.S. airstrikes earlier that year.
Source: Christopher Anzalone, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: Down but Not Out," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/20/the-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-down-but-not-out/>.
- **August 29, 2009:** Shaukat Makhmudov, a key IMU figure in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is killed in a shootout with Uzbek security forces. Makhmudov was implicated in February 1999 bombings in Tashkent that killed 16. Source: "Uzbekistan: Closed Trials Commence in High-Profile Criminal Cases," Eurasianet, January 21, 2010, <https://eurasianet.org/uzbekistan-closed-trials-commence-in-high-profile-criminal-cases>.
- Yuldashev is killed in an American drone strike in Waziristan, Pakistan.
Source: Bill Roggio, "Tahir Yuldashev confirmed killed in US strike in South Waziristan," Long War Journal, October 4, 2009, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/10/tahir_yuldashev_conf.php.
- Yuldashev promotes veteran member Abbas Mansour to chief of military operations.
Source: Christopher Anzalone, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: Down but Not Out," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/20/the-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-down-but-not-out/>.
- Coalition forces arrest two IMU members possessing explosives in Afghanistan.
The men admit to planting mines in roads used by pro-government security forces. Source: "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, <https://bit.ly/2KeHpgE>.
- Coalition forces arrest seven IMU members attempting to plant a mine in northern Afghanistan.
The arrested men admit to overseeing suicide missions, other attacks, and recruitment in the area. Source: "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, <https://bit.ly/2KeHpgE>.
- Large groups of IMU fighters move into Deh Chopan in Afghanistan's Zabul province in the latter half of 2007.
This marks the beginning of a period of renewed IMU violence in Afghanistan. Source: Andrew R. Feitt, "Countering the IMU in Afghanistan," Small Wars Journal, March 11, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20110429193204/http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/386-feitt.pdf>.
- Fighting breaks out between a group of Taliban fighters in Pakistan and the IMU. Reports state that 200 IMU militants are killed in the hostilities.
Source: Hassan Abbas, "South Waziristan's Maulvi Nazir: The New Face of the Taliban," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 9 (May 14, 2007), <https://jamestown.org/program/south-waziristans-maulvi-nazir-the-new-face-of-the-taliban/>.
- **April 11, 2006:** Yuldashev releases a video message in which he calls for the fall and "punishment" of the presidents of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.
Source: "Leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Tahir Yuldashev Threatens Presidents Karimov, Bakiyev, and Rakhmonov," Ferghana News, September 13, 2006, <https://enews.ferghananews.com/articles/1595>.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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- Namangani's nephew claims in an interview that the IMU comprises 2,000 fighters, mostly based in Pakistan.
Source: Igor Rotar, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: A Resurgent IMU?," *Jamestown Foundation Terrorism Monitor* 1, no. 8 (May 5, 2005), <https://jamestown.org/program/the-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-a-resurgent-imu/>.
 - **April 3, 2003:** Australia lists the IMU as a terrorist organization.
Source: "Terrorist Organisations: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicMovementofUzbekistan.aspx>.
 - **May 27, 2002:** The European Union lists the IMU and Tahir Yuldashev as affiliates of al-Qaeda.
Source: "Council Regulation (EC) No 881/2002 of 27 May 2002," European Council, May 29, 2002, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32002R0881&from=EN>.
 - An IMU splinter group, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), forms due to internal disputes.
According to a USAID report, the IJU's ideology and methods of attack are much closer to those of other transnational Salafist jihadist movements than to the IMU's at the time. Source: Noah Tucker, "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Uzbekistan: A Risk Assessment," United States Agency for International Development, August 14, 2013, 6, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JSSQ.pdf.
 - Yuldashev and the IMU retreat to South Waziristan, Pakistan, following Namangani's death and severe military setbacks in Afghanistan.
Source: David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," Institute for the Study of War, January 27, 2011, 1-2, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/BackgroundonIMU_28Jan.pdf.
 - IMU cofounder and Emir Juma Namangani is killed fighting against U.S.-led NATO forces in Afghanistan.
Source: Jeffrey Donovan, "U.S.: Diplomat Sees Growing Terrorism Challenge in Central Asia," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, October 30, 2003, <https://www.rferl.org/a/1104836.html>.
 - **September 20, 2001:** U.S. President George W. Bush links the IMU to al-Qaeda in a speech following the September 11, 2001, attacks.
Source: Ehsan Ahrari, "Countering the Ideological Support for HT and the IMU: The Case of the Ferghana Valley," George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, October 2006, https://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/mcdocs/files/College/F_Publications/occPapers/occ-paper_3-en.pdf.
 - **September 25, 2000:** The United States designates the IMU as a foreign terrorist organization, six weeks after the IMU kidnapped four American mountain climbers.
Sources: "Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, accessed June 10, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>; "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, <https://bit.ly/2KeHpgE>.
 - Namangani founds the Islamic Movement of Turkestan, an umbrella group intended to unite the Islamic movements in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan.
Source: Ehsan Ahrari, "Countering the Ideological Support for HT and the IMU: The Case of the Ferghana Valley," George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies, October 2006, https://www.marshallcenter.org/mcpublicweb/mcdocs/files/College/F_Publications/occPapers/occ-paper_3-en.pdf.
 - Juma Namangani and Tahir Yuldashev found the IMU in northern Afghanistan with the intent to overthrow the Karimov government and install an Islamic state in Uzbekistan.
Yuldashev swears allegiance to the Taliban. "Pakistan's 'Fanatical' Uzbek Militants," BBC News, June 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27801257>; Noah Tucker, "Violent Extremism and Insurgency in Uzbekistan: A Risk Assessment," United States Agency for International Development, August 14, 2013, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00JSSQ.pdf.
 - Uzbek President Karimov renews his crackdown on Muslims after unknown militants beheaded a policeman and two civilians in Namangan. Uzbeks fleeing persecution arrive in the town of Hoit and pressure Namangani and Yuldashev to respond. Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - Namangani settles his militants around the town of Hoit, Tajikistan, following the end of the Tajik civil war.
Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - -: Yuldashev bases himself in Peshawar, Pakistan, while he builds ties with various Salafist groups and donors across the world.
Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - Yuldashev moves to Afghanistan after civil war breaks out in Tajikistan.
Namangani remains in Tajikistan, where he leads a group of Uzbek and Tajik militants against the Tajik government. Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - The Uzbek government cracks down on Islamist parties, arresting 27 members of Adolat and forcing Yuldashev and Namangani to flee to Tajikistan.
Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - -: Yuldashev and his followers form the Adolat party, calling for an Islamic revolution.
Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - **December 9, 1991:** Yuldashev debates Uzbek President Islam Karimov in Namangan over Yuldashev's desire to implement strict sharia law.
Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
 - Tahir Yuldashev starts a Wahhabi mosque in Namangan, Uzbekistan, for his 5,000 followers with the help of Juma Namangani and funding from Saudi Arabia.
Source: Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>.
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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Violent history:

- **February 2015:** IMU militants kidnap 31 people from a bus in Afghanistan. In April they released a video showing the beheading of one of the hostages.⁶²
- **July 30, 2014:** Three suicide bombings target the U.S. and Israeli embassies in Tashkent and the headquarters of Uzbekistan's chief prosecutor, killing two Uzbek security guards at the Israeli embassy.⁶³
- **June 8, 2014:** A joint IMU-TTP raid on the Karachi Airport in Pakistan leaves 39 people dead, including 10 gunmen.⁶⁴
- **April 15, 2012:** Over 150 IMU and TTP fighters attack the Bannu prison in Pakistan, freeing nearly 400 militants, including TTP commander Adnan Rashid.⁶⁵
- **December 25, 2011:** An IMU suicide bomber kills at least 22, including a member of parliament, and wounds 50 at a government official's funeral in Takhar province.⁶⁶
- **May 28, 2011:** The IMU assassinates Afghan National Police commander General Mohammad Daud Daud, and the police chief of Takhar province, Afghanistan, in the headquarters of the provincial governor. The governor and a German general are wounded.⁶⁷
- **September 19, 2010:** The IMU claims an ambush attack that kills 25 Tajik soldiers and wounds 20 others. The soldiers were part of a convoy searching for escaped IMU militants from a prison in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.⁶⁸
- **September 3, 2010:** The IMU is accused of executing a suicide bombing outside a police unit office in Khujand, Tajikistan that killed two officers and wounds 25. The unit focused on combating organized crime.⁶⁹
- **August 22, 2010:** A prison break in Dushanbe, Afghanistan kills six guards and frees 25 inmates, some of them IMU members.⁷⁰
- **August 14, 2010:** IMU militants kill a police officer in an attack on the Ali Abad District police headquarters in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan.⁷¹
- **May 18, 2010:** IMU, al-Qaeda, and TTP carry out a suicide bombing on NATO forces in Afghanistan's Bagram Air Force Base. The attack kills one American and wounds nine.⁷²
- **August 9, 2009:** An IMU cell in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is suspected of murdering the Uzbek interior ministry's anti-terrorism and anti-corruption officer investigating the prior murders at the Kukeldash Mosque.⁷³
- **July 31, 2009:** An IMU cell in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is suspected of murdering the senior imam of the Tashkent's Kukeldash Mosque.⁷⁴
- **July 25, 2009:** The IMU is suspected of bombing the headquarters of Tajik Air in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, following several weeks of clashes between the Tajik army and IMU militants in the eastern Tavil-Dara district.⁷⁵
- **July 20, 2009:** Five IMU militants are killed in their failed attack on a Tajik military checkpoint near Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.⁷⁶
- **July 16, 2009:** An IMU cell is suspected of murdering an assistant at the Kukeldash Mosque.⁷⁷
- **May 26, 2009:** Militants attack the Khanabad police and security department building in Uzbekistan. While the Uzbek government accuses IMU of carrying out the attack, the IMU splinter group Islamic Jihad Union also claims responsibility.⁷⁸
- **May 26, 2009:** The IMU reportedly carries out an unsuccessful attack on the Uzbek special service and the city police department in Tashkent.⁷⁹
- **April 2009:** IMU militants carry out a suicide bombing in North Waziristan, Pakistan, killing a Pakistani soldier and wounding seven civilians.⁸⁰
- **September 5, 2008:** An IMU member shoots and wounds a police officer in Isfara, Tajikistan.⁸¹
- **August 28, 2008:** IMU militants fire on two police officers in Isfara, Tajikistan.⁸²
- **September 27, 2006:** The Tajik government alleges that the IMU was responsible for an attack carried out against supporters of Tajik President Imomali Rakhmonov that wounded two.⁸³
- **May 12, 2006:** IMU militants attack Kyrgyz and Tajik border and customs posts.⁸⁴

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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- **January 25, 2006:** IMU militants kill the chief of a pre-trial detention center in Kairakum, Tajikistan.⁸⁵
 - **January 31, 2005:** The IMU attacks Tajikistan's emergencies ministry in the capital of Dushanbe with a car bomb, killing one and wounding four.⁸⁶
 - **July 30, 2004:** Two suicide bombers detonate outside the Israeli and U.S. embassies in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The Uzbek government blames al-Qaeda and its affiliates within Uzbekistan. The attack remains unclaimed.⁸⁷
 - **April 1, 2004:** A car bomb explodes after the vehicle fails to stop at a checkpoint 15 km from Tashkent. Several police officers are injured. Immediately after the explosion, militants in another car open fire on the remaining officers and flee. The preceding firefight and explosions kill three policemen and wound five more. All three militants were killed in the firefight. No one claims responsibility for the attack, but officials have most frequently identified the IMU and Hizb-ut-Tahrir as the perpetrators.⁸⁸
 - **March 29, 2004:** A suicide bomb explodes in Chorsu market in Tashkent, Uzbekistan killing 19 and wounding 26. While no group claimed responsibility, the attack used similar explosives to those employed in the IMU's 1999 assassination attempt on Uzbek President Karimov.⁸⁹
 - **May 8, 2003:** The IMU bomb a currency-exchange office in Osh, Kyrgyzstan, killing one.⁹⁰
 - **December 27, 2002:** IMU members bomb a market in Bishek, Kyrgyzstan, killing six and wounding 40.⁹¹
 - **August 12, 2000:** The IMU takes four American climbers hostage in Kyrgyzstan. The United States designated the IMU as a foreign terrorist organization six weeks later. The hostages escape after six days in captivity.⁹²
 - **September 28, 1999:** The IMU takes four Japanese geologists and eight Kyrgyz soldiers hostage, eventually releasing them.⁹³
 - **August 21, 1999:** The IMU kidnaps a district officer and three Kyrgyz officials in Osh, Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz government meets the militants' demands for money, supplies, and a helicopter to take them to Pakistan.⁹⁴
 - **February 16, 1999:** The Uzbek government accuses the IMU (as well as other Islamist and nationalist groups) of detonating five or six car bombs in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, killing 15 or 16 and wounding more than 100. The attack was an apparent attempt to assassinate Uzbek President Islam Karimov. The IMU never claims responsibility for the attack.⁹⁵

⁶² Susan B. Glasser, "U.S., Israeli Embassies Hit in Uzbek Bomb Attacks," *Washington Post*, July 31, 2014, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A26869-2004Jul30.html>.

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⁶⁴ "Karachi Airport: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Claims Attack," BBC News, June 11, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27790892>; "TTP," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, last modified July 2018, <https://internal.fsi.stanford.edu/content/mmp-tehrik-i-taliban>.

⁶⁵ Christopher Anzalone, "The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan: Down but Not Out," *Foreign Policy*, November 20, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/11/20/the-islamic-movement-of-uzbekistan-down-but-not-out/>.

⁶⁶ "Deadly Suicide Attack on Afghanistan Funeral in Takhar," BBC News, December 25, 2011, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-16329156>.

⁶⁷ "In Afghanistan, IMU-Taliban Alliance Chips Away at the Stone," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, June 9, 2011, http://www.rferl.org/content/in_afghanistan_imu_taliban_alliance_chips_away_at_the_stone/24230127.html.

⁶⁸ Bill Roggio, "25 Tajik Soldiers Killed in Islamist Ambush," *Long War Journal*, September 19, 2010, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/09/40_tajik_soldiers_ki.php.

⁶⁹ "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20130731093140/http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/WWW/nationalsecurity.nsf/Page/What_Governments_are_doing_Listing_of_Terrorism_Organisations_Islamic_Mo.

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⁷¹ "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20130731093140/http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/WWW/nationalsecurity.nsf/Page/What_Governments_are_doing_Listing_of_Terrorism_Organisations_Islamic_Mo.

⁷² Hamid Shalizi, "Afghan Taliban Launch Brazen Attack on Bagram Base," Reuters, May 18, 2010, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-attack/afghan-taliban-launch-brazen-attack-on-bagram-base-idUKTRE64I0KV20100519>; Christopher Anzalone, "Al Qaeda Loses Bridge to the West," *Foreign Policy*, January 28, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/28/al-qaeda-loses-bridge-to-the-west/>.

⁷³ "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20130731093140/http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/WWW/nationalsecurity.nsf/Page/What_Governments_are_doing_Listing_of_Terrorism_Organisations_Islamic_Mo.

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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Designations:

Designations by U.S. Government:

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- September 25, 2000:** The U.S. Department of State designates the IMU as a foreign terrorist organization.⁹⁶

Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:

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- Australia lists the IMU as a terrorist organization on April 11, 2003.⁹⁷
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- Canada lists the IMU as a terrorist organization with ties to al-Qaeda on April 2, 2003.⁹⁸
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- The European Council enacted Regulation 881/2002 on May 27, 2002. The regulation imposed “certain specific restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities associated with Usama bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda network and the Taliban” and froze “funds and other financial resources in respect of the Taliban of Afghanistan.” Targeted groups include the IMU.⁹⁹
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- The IMU is listed as a terrorist organization in Kazakhstan.¹⁰⁰
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- Russia lists the IMU as a terrorist organization on February 14, 2003.¹⁰¹
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- The United Kingdom designates the IMU as a proscribed terrorist organization in November 2002.¹⁰²

⁹⁶ “Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-terrorist-organizations/>.

⁹⁷ “Terrorist Organisations: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan,” Australian National Security, accessed June 11, 2019, <https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/IslamicMovementofUzbekistan.aspx>.

⁹⁸ “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, February 15, 2018, <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crmt-lstd-ntts-en.aspx#34>.

⁹⁹ “Council Regulation (EC) No 881/2002 of 27 May 2002,” European Council, May 29, 2002, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:32002R0881&from=EN/>.

¹⁰⁰ “Fight against Terrorism and Extremism in Kazakhstan,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Kazakhstan, last modified May 9, 2014, <http://mfa.gov.kz/en/content-view/borba-s-terrorizm-i-ekstremizm-v-kazakhstane>.

¹⁰¹ “?????? ?????????? ?????? ??????????, ? ??? ?????? ?????????? ? ?????????? ??????????, ?????????? ? ?????????? ? ?????????????????? ?????????? ?????????? ??????????????????” ?????????? ?????? ?????????? ?????????? ??????????,” accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>.

¹⁰² “Proscribed Terrorist Organisations,” Home Office, April 12, 2019, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/795457/Proscription_website.pdf.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:

- [Al-Qaeda](#)

The IMU's ties to al-Qaeda date back to just before its founding, when Osama Bin Laden provided funding to Yuldashev and Namangani to help the two men establish the group.¹⁰³ Bin Laden also provided weapons, training, and logistical support to the group until 2002, by which time the IMU had moved to Pakistan and come under the protection of TTP.¹⁰⁴ The IMU and al-Qaeda maintained close ties afterward, with senior IMU leaders reportedly holding positions within al-Qaeda.¹⁰⁵ The two groups also conducted joint attacks against NATO and Afghan security forces in Afghanistan. For example, on May 18, 2010, the IMU, al-Qaeda, and TTP launched a joint suicide bombing against NATO forces in Afghanistan's Bagram Air Force Base, killing one American and wounding nine others.¹⁰⁶

- [Taliban](#)

IMU's ties to the Taliban date back to the former's founding in 1998. The Uzbekistan government had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance against the Taliban government in Kabul, making the ideologically close IMU and Taliban natural allies.¹⁰⁷ The Taliban supported the IMU financially and allowed the group to set up training camps in northern Afghanistan in the late 1990s from where it attacked Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.¹⁰⁸ The Taliban also allowed the group to open political offices in Kabul, Kandahar, and Mazar-e-Sharif and accept recruits.¹⁰⁹ The IMU pledged allegiance to Taliban leader [Mullah Omar](#) when the U.S.-led alliance invaded Afghanistan in 2001.¹¹⁰ The two organizations spent the next 13 years assisting each other and coordinating attacks against NATO and Afghan government security forces.

However, with the rise of ISIS, the IMU began to drift away from the Taliban. In September 2014, IMU Emir Usman Ghazi announced that he was siding with ISIS in its fight against the Taliban and fully pledged allegiance to the organization in August 2015.¹¹¹ Following this, the Taliban launched a major military campaign against IMU strongholds, killing its emir and largely wiping out the group.¹¹²

- **Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan**

Tehrik-i-Taliban (TTP) and the IMU's relationship dates back to Tahir Yuldashev's tenure as IMU's emir from 1998 to 2009. As Emir, Yuldashev forged close ties with both TTP founder Baitullah Mehsud and his successor Hakimullah Mehsud. Following Yuldashev's death in 2009, new IMU Emir Abu Usman Adil maintained this relationship, meeting with senior TTP leaders and local Pashtun tribal supporters and featuring TTP's emir and other members frequently in IMU videos. This includes the first footage of TTP's trainer of suicide bombers—Qari Hussein Mehsud, who was himself taught by IMU chief cleric and spokesmen Abu Dher al-Barmi at the Jami'at Faruqiya Islamic university in Karachi.¹¹³

The IMU and TTP have coordinated closely in carrying out violent attacks on Pakistani and NATO security forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan. For example, on May 18, 2010, IMU, al-Qaeda, and TTP militants carried out a suicide bombing against NATO forces in Afghanistan's Bagram Air Force Base, killing one American and wounding nine others.¹¹⁴ On April 15, 2012, approximately 150 IMU and TTP fighters attacked the Bannu prison in Pakistan, freeing nearly 400 militants, including TTP commander Adnan Rashid.¹¹⁵ On June 8, 2014, 10 IMU and TTP militants besieged the al-Jinnah international airport in Karachi, Pakistan, resulting in 29 people being killed, along with all 10 attackers.¹¹⁶

- [ISIS](#)

In September 2014, IMU Emir Usman Ghazi announced that he was siding with ISIS in its fight against the Taliban and fully pledged allegiance to the organization in August 2015.¹¹⁷ The IMU joined ISIS-Khorasan forces in northern Afghanistan, first fighting jointly against the government and then against the Taliban.¹¹⁸

¹⁰³ "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, August 31, 2018, <https://internal.fsi.stanford.edu/content/mmp-islamic-movement-uzbekistan>.

¹⁰⁴ Ahmed Rishad, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 6, 2002, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping>; "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Mapping Militant Organizations, Stanford University, August 31, 2018, <https://internal.fsi.stanford.edu/content/mmp-islamic-movement-uzbekistan>.

¹⁰⁵ "Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," Australian National Security, March 15, 2012, https://web.archive.org/web/20130731093140/http://www.ema.gov.au/agd/WWW/nationalsecurity.nsf/Page/What_Governments_are_doing_Listing_of_Terrorism_Organisations_Islamic_Mo.

¹⁰⁶ Hamid Shalizi, "Afghan Taliban Launch Brazen Attack on Bagram Base," Reuters, May 18, 2010, <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-afghanistan-attack/afghan-taliban-launch-brazen-attack-on-bagram-base-idUKTRE64I0KV20100519>; Christopher Anzalone, "Al Qaeda Loses Bridge to the West," *Foreign Policy*, January 28, 2011, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2011/01/28/al-qaeda-loses-bridge-to-the-west/>.

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Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

Rhetoric:

Abu Dher al-Barmi, September 30, 2011

“Our objective is to enforce Allah’s system in Allah’s universe.”¹¹⁹

Abu Dher al-Barmi, September 30, 2011

“America invaded Pakistan ten years ago, and that’s when we started jihad against America, against the occupiers, against the system in Pakistan, against the armed forces of Pakistan, and this jihad will continue, Allah willing.”¹²⁰

Unidentified IMU Member, December 30, 2007

“[T]ribesmen would bring in the [Pakistani] soldiers for the mujahideen to slaughter. Thus avenging the death of innocent boys and girls killed during the Lal Masjid attack.”¹²¹

Tahir Yuldashev, July 2007

“We consider them [Lal Masjid] a part of us before, during and after the [siege]... their shaheed [martyrs] are our shaheed... their prisoners are our prisoners.... every member of the Harakat [i.e. IMU] will stand up against the terrorist act that took place on Lal Masjid. ... After Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan ranks 3rd in the [jihadi operations] launched on its territory. We will always be a part of these activities.”¹²²

Tahir Yuldashev, September 2006

“We appeal to all Moslems... in the light of the event that dramatically changed world politics five years ago, on September 11, 2001. A strike at America, the fortress that had considered itself impregnable, changed politics throughout the world... Bush launched a war on Afghanistan.”¹²³

¹¹⁹ Bill Roggio, “IMU Cleric Urges Pakistanis to Continue Sheltering Jihadis in Waziristan,” Long War Journal, November 23, 2011, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/imu_cleric_urges_pak.php.

¹²⁰ Bill Roggio, “IMU Cleric Urges Pakistanis to Continue Sheltering Jihadis in Waziristan,” Long War Journal, November 23, 2011, https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/11/imu_cleric_urges_pak.php.

¹²¹ Qandeel Siddique, “The Red Mosque Operation and Its Impact on the Growth of the Pakistani Taliban,” Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), October 8, 2008, <https://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/08-01915.pdf>.

¹²² Qandeel Siddique, “The Red Mosque Operation and Its Impact on the Growth of the Pakistani Taliban,” Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI), October 8, 2008, <https://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/08-01915.pdf>.

¹²³ “Leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Tahir Yuldashev Threatens Presidents Karimov, Bakiyev, and Rakhmonov,” Ferghana News, September 13, 2006, <https://enews.ferghananews.com/articles/1595>.