



25 September 2006

Letter Exposes New Leader in Al-Qa`ida High Command

On 7 June 2006, American military forces executed an air strike on an al-Qa`ida safe-house near Baqouba, Iraq, killing Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, al-Qa`ida's commander in Iraq. U.S. and Iraqi forces subsequently acquired numerous documents from that safe-house. On 18 September 2006, the Iraqi National Security Advisor, Muwaffaq al-Rabi`i, released one of those documents to Iraqi media. As part of an ongoing collaboration with the Department of Defense to declassify, collect, and disseminate documents that provide new insights into the internal functioning of salafi-jihadist organizations, the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point has made this letter available at <http://ctc.usma.edu>.

The captured letter sheds new light on the friction between al-Qa`ida's senior leadership and al-Qa`ida's commanders in Iraq over the appropriate use of violence. The identity of the letter's author, "Atiyah," is unknown, but based on the contents of the letter he seems to be a highly placed al-Qa`ida leader who fought in Algeria in the early 1990s. `Atiyah's letter echoes many of the themes found in the October 2005 letter written to Zarqawi by al-Qa`ida's deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri; indeed, it goes so far as to explicitly confirm the authenticity of that earlier letter. `Atiyah's admonitions in this letter, like those of Zawahiri in his letter to Zarqawi, also dovetail with other publicly available texts by al-Qa`ida strategists.¹

Although `Atiyah praises Zarqawi's military success against coalition forces in Iraq, he is most concerned with Zarqawi's failure to understand al-Qa`ida's broader strategic objective: attracting mass support among the wider Sunni Muslim community. `Atiyah reminds Zarqawi that military actions must be subservient to al-Qa`ida's long-term political goals. Zarqawi's use of violence against popular Sunni leaders, according to `Atiyah, is undermining al-Qa`ida's ability to win the "hearts of the people."²

According to `Atiyah, Zarqawi's widening scope of operations, culminating with the November 2005 hotel bombings in Amman, Jordan, has alienated fellow Sunnis and reduced support for the global al-Qa`ida movement. In this vein, `Atiyah instructs Zarqawi to avoid killing popular Iraqi Sunni leaders because such actions alienate the very populations that al-Qa`ida seeks to attract to its cause.³ `Atiyah also encourages

¹ See, for example, "The Management of Savagery" by Abu Bakr Naji. A translation of this book can be found at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/naji.asp>

² For more discussion of how these differences in strategic perspective may affect Al-Qa`ida in Iraq's future operations, see: Brian Fishman, "After Zarqawi: The Dilemmas and Future of Al-Qa`ida in Iraq" in the Autumn 2006 edition of *The Washington Quarterly*. This can be accessed at <http://ctc.usma.edu>.

³ The Combating Terrorism Center released a series of letters captured during military operations against the Zarqawi network in Iraq that detail the organization's operating procedures for conducting targeted assassinations of tribal sheikhs and popular religious figures. The documents can be found at: http://ctc.usma.edu/harmony_docs.asp

Zarqawi to forge strategic relationships with moderate Sunnis, particularly tribal and religious leaders, even if these leaders do not accept Zarqawi's religious positions.⁴

`Atiyah instructs Zarqawi to follow orders from Usama Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri on major strategic issues, such as initiating a war against Shiites; undertaking large-scale operations; or operating outside of Iraq. `Atiyah goes on to criticize Zarqawi's board of advisors in Iraq for their lack of adequate political and religious expertise, and he warns Zarqawi against the sin of arrogance. Because al-Qa`ida is in what `Atiyah calls a "stage of weakness," `Atiyah urges Zarqawi to seek counsel from wiser men in Iraq— implying that there might be someone more qualified than Zarqawi to command al-Qa`ida operations in Iraq.

`Atiyah closes with a request that Zarqawi send a messenger to "Waziristan" (likely, Waziristan, Pakistan) in order to establish a reliable line of communication with Bin Laden and Zawahiri. `Atiyah confirms in the letter that al-Qa`ida's overall communications network has been severely disrupted and complains specifically that sending communications to Zarqawi from outside of Iraq remains difficult. Interestingly, he explains how Zarqawi might use *jihadi* discussion forums to communicate with al-Qa`ida leadership in Waziristan.

`Atiyah's unequivocal confirmation of the Zawahiri letter's legitimacy, his authoritative tone, and his insider knowledge, indicate that he is among the highest ranking leaders in al-Qa`ida. But unlike most of al-Qa`ida's known senior leadership, who remain isolated in the tribal areas of Pakistan or under house arrest in Iran, `Atiyah appears to have remarkable freedom of movement and a functional communication network.

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⁴ Al-Qa`ida strategist, Abu Bakr Naji, discusses the need for *jihadis* to build alliances and broaden the base of public support in his book, "Management of Savagery." A translation of this book can be found at: <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/naji.asp>

TITLE: 30031006-english-25639-05

DATE: 11 DECEMBER 2005

TRANSLATION BEGINS

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

To the dear brother, beloved friend, and noble gentleman Abu-Mus'ab, may God protect him and keep him safe and remedy his mistakes, and may He raise his rank in the two realms and honor his abode; from his loving brother, 'Atiyah, may God forgive him.

May God be praised resoundingly, and may peace and prayer be upon Muhammad, His servant and His messenger, as well as upon his family, his companions, and his soldiers.

Greetings and God bless you. We pray to God that you are safe and sound, enjoying the strength you have been granted through the grace of God, the Almighty, and All-Powerful. We pray to God for your victory over the enemies, and that He will grant you patience, keep you steadfast, and extend to you His support. We pray that He brings tranquility to you and all of your brothers, and that He covers you with mercy, and that He is a support and help to you, for indeed grace is from God and God alone.

Dear brother, I will be brief and rely on God Almighty. Then I will trust in your patience, your high manners, the sincerity of your love for me, and that you think well of me. I trust that you remedy shortcomings and guard against flaws and errors, and that you will overlook things if there arises something inappropriate from your brother. I shall get right to the point and skip the generalities and get into the details. The purpose of the path belongs to God, and from Him I derive aid and guidance. Any success that I may attain shall come only through God. I have put my trust in Him and on Him I rely.

My dear brother, who is content, God willing, Abu-Mus'ab the worthy, may God grant him success. God knows how highly we think of you and how much we are confident in you and in your faith and loyalty, we consider you as such and God is your Judge. You are better than us. You forged ahead and you were true and you didn't hesitate, falter, or lay down arms. Instead, you persevered in God the Jihad and the struggle. God gave you good attributes and bestowed honorable characteristics upon you, such as sincerity of direction, fervor for the religion, empathy for the afflictions of his people and support for them, high aspirations to do what you see as right and true, even if the whole world opposes you, a strength of will and determination that many people lack, even among the people of righteousness and knowledge, and courage and truthfulness.

We think of you this way, among other good qualities and innate characteristics, along with good faith. We perceive you as such, for my thinking of you has not altered and has not changed. I have known people and their tribulations, since there is hardly any grief that goes unnoticed by a hired mourner-woman, except by God's will. I am not any smarter than you here, for you know yourself and your flaws and faults more than anyone else, oh servant. However, I am reminding you of God's blessing upon you and what He

has granted you, which we ourselves know.

I am setting this out as an introduction to what I am going to say to you in the way of opinion, advice, and instruction, for my discourse will be primarily about the negatives and cautioning against things that are perilous and ruinous. I won't be touching on the positives and good things, since they are the true nature, praise and credit be to God, and they are the overwhelming majority, by the grace of God. So, don't trouble yourself about that, because the topic is one of correction and instruction, not a topic of appreciation, praise, and interpretation. If God wanted, and He were to present us to you, then you would find us to be your loved ones and your brothers, the most just of people towards you, the most sincere of them, the most sympathetic towards you, the most protective of your right, and the most forgiving of them, God willing.

After all, you are truly the mujahidin against the enemies of God, standing on the edifices of truth and allegiance with God, making the religion manifest while being endorsers of it. You are the ones who have spited America, the greatest unbelieving crusader power in history; and you are the ones who have spited it, and you have broken its prestige and thrown it to the ground. May God will for you a good reward with which you would continue the path at a critical time for the vast good work of awakening the generation and resurrecting the Muslim nation. May God bring you to it through His grace and blessing. Just some of this would be enough for renown in this world for someone who would want that, and for loftiness in the hereafter for someone who has earned it. We ask God that He guide us and you and that He grant us understanding in religion. He is Magnanimous, Generous, Kind, Benevolent, and Merciful.

So, my brother and my dear one, may God bless you and may He strengthen you and protect you. Listen to these words from me. Put them before your eyes and commit them to memory. Know that if something within them disagrees with you somewhat, they are actually good, by God; and perhaps you would not hear them from anyone except someone who loves you, and perhaps you have needed someone to say them to you, and you won't find someone in your present position, except if God wills.

My dear brother, today you are a man of the public. You have attracted people's attention, and your actions, decisions, and behavior result in gains and losses that are not yours alone, but rather they are for Islam, and [they affect] Islam, Muslims, and especially the mujahidin, the faction waging jihad, on the ground today. This, even though it may be a blessing from God in some ways, is a trial, a burden, and a great test in other ways. God is testing you and burdening you, and you do not know whether you will be saved or not. You are at great risk, for rightly guided people have often wanted to get out of a test like this altogether!

My brother, you have been entrusted with this position (the position of leader of the largest group of mujahidin on the ground today who are fighting the Americans and spiting them), and this glory and reputation has happened to you. People have differed regarding you, between lovers and haters, praisers and insulters; or, fanatics for one side or another. You have ended up with a voice that reaches the enemies and the Muslim

nation. Your actions have come to impact the entire world, and they are monitored and analyzed.

It is hard for you, my brother, to bear the burden of this position and carry it out. Perhaps you have been remiss in it, or been unable to do it. Perhaps you thought, because of some influencing factors, that you are doing something good, while you are going afoul and making mistakes in important and grave things sometimes. Because of this, corruption and havoc, which God wouldn't have intended, are taking place.

This is a matter that requires great perfection, which does not exist in any of our men today. So, it is necessary to employ the principle of complementing deficits, which is the basis of what I want to draw your attention to. It is necessary that you review this matter, my brother, because general leadership of the Muslim nation and the position of guidance bind you greatly. Indeed it is hard for the one who is higher than you. You cannot handle it if you act alone and think that you can do it. Your assuming of responsibility for it in such a manner bears difficulty and danger. Please consider this issue, because your mistakes may grow numerous and you won't be able to absorb people, govern them, lead a community of people and populations, and guide them.

It is necessary, then, to perfect the deficits through people who help and the brothers who consult and are supportive, and by going back to the leadership which is higher than you and more capable, and so forth. You need to keep in mind that you are leader in the field that is under a greater leadership that is more potent and more able to lead the Muslim nation. You must leave some of your ideas or many of them to the advising brothers, especially your leadership and those who came before you in this matter.

My dear brother, you are achieving successes and striking the enemies of God and hitting and doing much, which is a good and great thing that we are not lowering at all and we ask God to bless and increase, but this isn't everything. The path is long and difficult, and the enemy isn't easy, for he is great and numerous and he can take quite a bit of punishment as well. However, true victory is the triumph of principles and values, the triumph of the call to Islam. True conquest is the conquest of the hearts of people, and the regard for seeing the Treaty of Hudaibiyah as a victory.

Policy must be dominant over militarism. This is one of the pillars of war that is agreed upon by all nations, whether they are Muslims or unbelievers. That is to say, that military action is a servant to policy. We as people of Islam are people of policy, wisdom, reason, and are good at applying its fundamentals of justice, mercy, good deeds, et cetera.

Our shari'a is the most perfect of the orthodox, merciful shari'as, praise be to God. Our religious scholars said, "That which is absolute in its monotheism (perfection in monotheism), is merciful in its shari'a tenets (ease, simplicity, clarity, practicality, and other characteristics of it). Therefore, unless our military actions are servant to our judicious shari'a policy, and unless our short-term goals and successes are servant to our ultimate goal and highest aims, then they will be akin to exhaustion, strain, and illusion. It will be a bit like the happiness of children over something at the beginning of the day,

which wears out by the end of the day and its evening! We ask God for security and safety.

Therefore, don't be misled, my dear brother, by quick and incremental successes. Be watchful of your mistakes, however small, for if mistakes pile up upon you, they will destroy you. Don't underestimate any shortcoming from any angle that comes over you, but rather hasten to plug it and shore it up. You should be thinking about the consequences while relying on God in all of this and while taking what is in shari'a opinions.

I had previously talked with you and with many of the brothers about what happened in Algeria, so do remember that. My brother, what use is it for us to delight in some operations and successful strikes when the immediate repercussion is a defeat for us of our call, and a loss of the justice of our cause and its logic in the minds of the masses who make up the people of the Muslim nation, who are ignorant and simple, and upon whom the afflictions of stultification, misguidance and corruption pile, and increased domination by the enemies, more oppression, more humiliation visited upon us, and more ills, troubles, loss in capabilities, and wasted opportunities?! We must take heed of this and adopt all of the shari'a opinions and push ourselves to do this, for "the mujahid is he who strives with his life for the cause of God," as our Prophet said, peace be upon him. Indeed, we will persevere in the jihad and the struggle against the enemies of God until the last spark of life, and last drop of blood, God willing; whether we are successful in Iraq, or not, or if we reach something, or not. However, it is shameful for us to waste the opportunities that God has granted through our own negligence and carelessness and our not adopting the [shari'a] opinions.

For, in terms of abiding by the [shari'a] opinions that the shari'a has advised to be considered, and which experience and perception has shown to be a cause of attaining what is desired, I say that dereliction and negligence in this is not permissible if the aim, the desired goal, is a duty!! Therefore, our command here is the sum of two things: A legal regulation from shari'a and monotheism, which means taking [shari'a] opinions and reliance on God.

Yes, what you are in, is a matter that has taken you by surprise and happened to you without any planning on your part, or seeking of honor or desire. Yes, that is true, and God willing it is hoped that God the Generous, the Almighty will help you with it and not weary you, but it is also incumbent on you to know your own capability and all our capabilities and to take into account what you are capable of and able to do, and not to rush into things or be hasty, since perhaps someone who rushes may end up late! All right, then, what is to be done? What am I commanding you to do?

If you were to ask am I commanding you to abandon the matter that you are in? My response: No, not necessarily, which means that it is not required, although it is a possibility if you find at some point someone who is better and more suitable than you, as I had previously advised you. Unless, something prevents that, such as weakness or fear of some harm, or things of that nature, and that is something that you are more capable of

determining and evaluating. However, I order you, my brother, to remedy the deficiency, as previously mentioned.

As you know, this is the principle of legal powers in the shari'a: That proper fitness be ordained, and if not possible, then that which is better should be sought as much as possible; also, that the shortcoming of the one who is flawed be fixed with what legitimate means and ways are possible. Therefore, it is incumbent on you to mend your flaws in many things. It is not sufficient that you have with you a shari'a council and groups of guys who lack expertise and experience, no matter who they are.

On the whole, I will advise you on a number of measures in this arena:

- That you abstain from making any decision on a comprehensive issue (one with a broad reach), and on substantial matters until you have turned to your leadership; Shaykh Usamah and the Doctor, and their brothers there, and consulted with them. Also, you should consult with your mujahidin brothers who are with you in Iraq itself, such as our brothers Ansar al-Sunnah and others, no matter how much you have to say about, or reservations about, them, or some of them. An example of this is the issue of announcing a war against the Shi'ite turncoats and killing them. Another is, expanding the arena of the war to neighboring countries, and also undertaking some large-scale operations whose impact is great and whose influence is pervasive, and things of that nature.

Furthermore, there should even be consultation with good people who are not mujahidin, among which are the people of the country where you are, the Sunnis and the like; even if they are religiously unorthodox at times, or even hypocritical, as long as they are Muslims who agree with us in the resistance and jihad, not standing by the unbelievers. An example would be many of the religious scholars and tribal leaders and so forth. This is because consulting with them (and this does not necessarily mean accepting their opinion every time, or even most of the time) and having them participate in the matter is a wise policy that is supported by evidence from religious law, reason, history, and the knowledge of nations and their experiences.

I will speak further about embracing the people and bringing them together and winning them over and placating them and so forth, for this, my brother, is a great way towards victory and triumph that is not lesser than military operations, but rather in truth is the foundation while military operations must be a servant that is complementary to it. Therefore, when you embrace the people and enjoin them through your morals, kind words, your conduct and upbringing, you will have gained a greater means of victory over your enemy, with God's permission. If the people love you and are grand in their love of you and affection, and God brings their hearts to you, then that is more successful and helpful to your word, and more safeguarding of you against all harm that your enemy is planning.

- I command you, my brother, and I am your brother and I have nothing except these words that are between the two of us and God as the third party, that you send messengers from your end to Waziristan so that they meet with the brothers of the

leadership, and the rational and experienced people and the shaykhs here, because you have a greater chance to send messengers (brothers that you choose) than your brothers have here. God willing, you have the ability to enlist guys and men who have not been exposed, and who can move about and carry messages and convey responses to you and such.

Just make this one of your most important priorities and be serious about it and strive for it, and may God make it easier for you. I am going to say something to you that may seem to you like an exaggeration, but you should think about it: Readyng the brothers and mobilizing them and preparing them to be messengers between you and the leadership here is more important than preparing and sending the brothers for some operations like the recent operation of the hotels in Amman!

Truly, I am not joking, but the significance of your correspondence with your brothers here, and continued mutual discourse and consultation, as well as going along with them in well-laid plans, and mutual understanding, harmonizing, and guidance, are more important than many of the large scale operations. So strive, my brother, God bless you, and send your men so that they can bring you instructions, advice, ideas, suggestions, consultation, criticism, and mature opinion from your brothers.

I am now on a visit to them and I am writing you this letter as I am with them, and they have some comments about some of your circumstances, may God guide you, with due confidence, affection, respect, and esteem. They wish that they had a way to talk to you and advise you, and to guide and instruct you; however, they too are occupied with vicious enemies here. They are also weak, and we ask God that He strengthen them and mend their fractures. They have many of their own problems, but they are people of reason, experience, and sound, beneficial knowledge. I saw that their opinion centered on a group of observations and instructions, of which you will find a summary in the Doctor's message that the Americans published. It is a genuine letter and it represents the thoughts of the brothers, the shaykhs, and all of the intellectual and moral leadership here. Please meditate closely on it, focus thoroughly on all of its ideas, apply what you can from it, and make them part of yourself. You should leave the path of excuses and of starting differences. This letter represents the majority of, and a synopsis of, what the brothers want to say to you, especially in the following areas:

- Winning over the people, bringing them close, being cautious about alienating them, befriending them, helping them, accepting their foibles (which means [accepting] what they possess, including strength, weakness, propriety, impropriety, goodness, and ill; which doesn't negate the continuation of guiding them towards goodness and betterment), molding them, gaining their sympathy at all their levels and ranks, using the utmost caution to not be harsh with them or degrade them or frighten them or be hasty in judging them or even be hasty in reforming them in a way that they might not comprehend, which might cause them provocation, wherein they would turn on us and you with hostile animosity. However, [you should do this] with gentleness, gradual open-mindedness, while overlooking and being quiet about many of their mistakes and flaws, and while tolerating a great deal of harm from them for the sake of not having them turn away and turn into enemies on any level.

- Paying attention to the class of religious scholars and shaykhs in Iraq in particular, and in the world as a whole, and respecting them as a whole, and not opposing any of them, no matter what, and no matter what errors they made in shaping the hearts of the public, until such time as God opens the way. At that time, we will have another message. All except for situations that are particular, specific, and very narrow, in which the theologian's deviation is very clear, such as that of Sayyid Tantawi, or the evil 'Ubaykan, for example. [This should be the tack taken] even though we could get by without talking with any one of them, because shari'a policy sets this [tack] for us and confirms it for us. The long and short of the matter is that the Islamic theologians are the keys to the Muslim community and they are its leaders. This is the way it is, whether you like it or not. Thus, we address them with utmost kindness in word and speech, and we demonstrate respect and reverence for them in phrasing, in order to be harmony with them and with the public behind them, which are the masses of the Muslim nation. Therefore, if you appear before the community in the guise of a pariah to the class of religious scholars, contradicting them, disrespecting them, and insulting them, then you will lose the people and you will fail in any call [to religion] or political act.

For this reason, we should win them over by keeping quiet, overlooking things, and saying nice things, in spite of disagreement with them in most things both theoretical and practical. This involves trying to contact the rightly guided religious scholars and those with good in them, even if it involves humoring them a bit, harmonizing with them, consulting them, asking them questions, and win them over in Iraq, in the [Arabian] Peninsula, and elsewhere. It also includes praising them and urging them to fulfill the obligation to help and wage jihad, and to command [that which is right], and forbid [that which is wrong], and to carry the mantle of this religion. It also includes lauding them for the good they do, and being quiet about their shortcomings.

Since this is necessary, it is highly advisable to be polite and to show complete respect, regret, compassion, and mercy and so forth. You must incline yourself to this, and be humble to the believers, and smile in people's faces, even if you are cursing them in your heart, even if it has been said that they are "a bad tribal brother," and what have you.

Among the most crucial of things involved is exercising all caution against attempting to kill any religious scholar or tribal leader who is obeyed, and of good repute in Iraq from among the Sunnis, no matter what. Instead, we should confront anyone evil by many other means of discourse and fervor of speech, and such, and with a bit of wisdom, patience, and deliberateness. We should continue in our jihad, and when God opens the way, and we have the wherewithal, then we can behave differently in accordance with what is appropriate for that time. Perhaps it will be he, himself (the one who was your enemy) who will come to you humbled, belittled, apologizing, frightened, cowering as he asks for forgiveness. Then, God will spare you any act that has a bad end, and you will have the deciding hand, and there will be other modes, the highest of which is forgiveness and good deeds, and the very least of which is justice.

- The other matter is to take caution against being zealous about the name "al-Qa'ida", or any name or organization. Although all mujahidin are our brothers, the Sunni are our

brothers and our friends, as long as they are Muslims, even if they are disobedient, or insolent; whether they come into the organization with us or not, for they are our brothers, our friends, and our loved ones. We should cooperate with them, help and support them, and work together. Besides, how do you know you won't be humbled tomorrow, while they will be strengthened? You may diminish while they increase! You draw your strength from God first, and from your brothers second. It is by God's grace that people's hearts are with you. Otherwise, many people will have waged jihad before you and attained more than you will have gained.

Ask me whatever you like about Algeria between 1994 and 1995, when [the movement] was at the height of its power and capabilities, and was on the verge of taking over the government. The government was on the verge of a downfall at any moment. I lived through that myself, and I saw first hand; no one told me about it. However, they destroyed themselves with their own hands, with their lack of reason, delusions, their ignoring of people, their alienation of them through oppression, deviance, and severity, coupled with a lack of kindness, sympathy, and friendliness. Their enemy did not defeat them, but rather they defeated themselves, were consumed and fell. God reigns as He commands, as the Almighty, and He controls the matter from beginning to end.

It wouldn't hurt, indeed it is a desired gesture, for advice to the effect that they unite with us or enter al-Qa'ida and go under Shaykh Usamah to continue to go from us to our brothers in the form of guidance, debate, and discussion between the brothers and loved ones in order to reach what is preferred, and proper, and the best of all. However, there should not be bias or injustice, or animosity or oppression, but rather it should be through sincere advice, discussion, courtesy, and good dialogue about knowledge, jurisprudence, and opinion, with complete civility and maintaining rights. After all, if your brother does not end up convinced and does not agree with you, he is still your brother and your friend. It would be a dispute between you and him, which does not require hatred, clashing, hostility, or enmity. It is, rather, of the sort of dispute of the companions [of the prophet] within the branches of shari'a and in the understanding of legal judgments, indeed even in some conceptions and beliefs; even while maintaining fraternity, friendship, affection, mutual respect, amity, mutual sympathy, etc.

These were the most important critical points as they come to me now. I will now enumerate for you all of the various fragments of advice and thoughts. I hope God makes us, as well as you, beneficial through them:

Brother Abu-Musa'b, may God protect and guide you. Bless you, my brother. Know that we, like all the mujahidin, are still weak. We are in the stage of weakness and a state of paucity. We have not yet reached a level of stability. We have no alternative but to not squander any element of the foundations of strength, or any helper or supporter. We are unceasing in our efforts to unite our nation's strength and resources.

Yes, we do have some strength, thanks to God, of the type that our enemy does not have, faith in God Almighty, ideology, absolute monotheism, reliance upon God Almighty, et cetera, as well as the righteousness of the cause, brotherhood, connectedness, and many other things from among the elements of strength.

Among these, meaning the elements, is the fact that our strength lies in our weakness and determination, being as we are a part of this great nation, the nation of Muhammad, whom God has blessed, and being as the Muslim nation is with us, loving us, harboring us, supporting us, sympathizing with us, and concurring with us. Also among these, are our mettle and the mettle of our soldiers, which are the waters that our fish inhabits. So on, and so forth of that which is obvious. So, if we waste this great foundation, then we would be remiss, profligate, and liable to fail.

Thanks to God, there is plenty of good, my brother. Our jihadi ranks and you and your brothers are good, God willing. However, do not act alone and do not be overzealous. Beware of becoming arrogant because of people's praise, or because of their pressure upon you to constantly act. Instead, you have to complement your shortcomings by consultation and queries with your brothers. Do not be hasty in reforming and mending the Muslim nation. Do not rush victory over the enemy, for the war and our journey are truly long. The important thing is to keep your reputation and that of the mujahidin pure, especially your organization, and to gain peoples' affection and love, and to strive for it. Of course, this is subject to the limits of our shari'a. Thanks to God, what our shari'a allows is a wide scope, including keeping quiet and looking the other way until you have total power and control, as I said before. In summary, this is the correct Islamic jurisprudence that is very important for a person to learn. Among its lessons are when we ought to speak and when silence is better; what we should say in every situation, position, and stage, what issues we should lay on people and what we should postpone, and so forth.

You need to preserve the integrity of the ranks of the mujahidin, irrespective of organization and designation, and you must preserve the fraternity, solidarity, harmony, and mutual support. The most important thing, my dear brother, is that your inner rank must be closely knit and solid. Its foundation must be of affection, respect, and absolute, true sympathy. When I say "your ranks", it is all of the mujahidin and the general public (Sunnis) around you who are your ranks. I don't just mean the rank of fighters and the elite who are officially with you. This is the most important thing. You should be patient and forbearing, and stand firm, and we are with you with all that we possess, and God is with us. I swear, I wish that I could fly now and be with you, but God help us, and it is unto Him that we complain. Perhaps God will facilitate things, who knows? For this is definitely something desirable, and we ask God that he make it easier for us to be with you, at your side, helping you with all that we have of opinions, knowledge, and experience.

I say: the most important thing is that you be patient, forbearing, and persevere until the final moment, for indeed your enemy is also patient and he is betting that there will be a moment in which you are weak, that you fail and fall apart internally, may God not make this His judgment. Therefore, seek aid in God and frustrate your enemies and achieve the hope of your loved ones and friends. Be as God the Almighty said, "Humble towards the believers, mighty against the disbelievers." But gently, gently, remember what the prophet, peace be upon him, said on the authority of 'Ali, "Penetrate [the enemy] through

your messengers.” There is a meaning in there, if you ruminates on it!

This is also the way it is in what pertains to the faith and the bringing of people to it, so do not be hasty in this; I mean in giving out lessons to them, and in the issues that are laid upon the community and the way that they are delivered. I will tell you something, my dear brother: It is true that the community needs someone to elucidate the particulars of the victorious faith for it, and to incite it to fight the enemies of God, and to explain the principle of fealty and absolution and judgment and some of the tenets of identifying unbelievers, and to show them the demonic apostates and incite them against them, and things of that nature. Praise be to God, this has begun to spread and broad segments of the people of knowledge, religion, and jihad are participating in this, and the knowledge is useful, sound, and necessary.

However, the community also needs a great deal of other concepts for a comprehensive, complete view of Islam to become integrated in the community and its consciousness. It needs the values of mercy, justice, and good deeds, and it needs the goodness of Islam and its comprehensive concepts of life to be illuminated. It has something it needs from us, we who embarked on the war and the fighting and have come to be in a struggle over possession and the leadership of the community. I say that it needs to see in us that which will make it love us, and will make it soften its hearts and sympathize with us, and which will fill it with affection, trust, and reassurance towards us. The community needs good words from us, and needs to be convinced that we have empathy with it and mercy towards it, and not feel that we are oppressors or haughty or violent! So, if the collective voice of the community were to say to us, “what you want is to be a tyrant on the earth and you don’t want to be among the peacemakers,” then this harms us and sours the hearts of the people towards us and pushes them away from us, or at least makes them feel negatively towards us.

Additionally, our cohort, which is the cohort of mujahidin, needs nurturing, discipline, continuous guidance, and abandoning temptations like injustice, arrogance, conceit, haughtiness, superciliousness, excessive harshness and violence, impoliteness with people, especially those who disagree, and the like. These are some of our ills, and many of us are asking God to reform us. Our cohort needs to be educated in fairness, creating balance between severity and softness, between violence and gentleness, and between mercy and harshness.

Let us not merely be people of killing, slaughter, blood, cursing, insult, and harshness; but rather, people of this, who are unopposed to mercy and gentleness. Let us put everything in perspective. Let our mercy overcome our anger and precede it. We need to give our followers and our coming young meanings that have balance, completeness, and moderation in ethics and concepts. It is wisdom and perfection, my dear brother, to combine several things, especially for those of us who are looked up to, such as your elevated position; may God advance your rank among his virtuous worshipers, Amen.

You are a political leader, a chief, and an administrator, especially in your own surroundings. You have other jobs and great missions. The most important thing is for

you to be a successful leader to the mujahidin, and then, to practice what is available to you, and what is within your ability, in terms of moral and ethical leadership, for the benefit of the Muslim nation.

Regarding whatever issues you cannot solve, and whatever issue your brothers oppose you in, you should be patient and not rush in forming an opinion until you consult with your leadership and your brothers who supercede you in knowledge, grace, and experience. When you are loved, a few words are all you need. These nice, easy, and simple words, which are uncomplicated, accomplish what books and thousands of tapes from someone else would not. However, the crucial matter is that you be loved in the Muslim nation when you enter the hearts of the entire Muslim nation; then, your word will combine with your determination, your great works, and your ravaging of the enemy of Almighty God.

One of your important jobs is to bring closer together the people of scholarship and the people of jihad in all sectors of Muslims. By that I mean the good people of scholarship, the people of good works who work hard for God, even if they disagree with us or if we disagree with them in some or many issues, opinions, and positions such as a position regarding a certain government or another, and such; exactly as I said regarding the people of jihad, the people of jihad who are virtuous, truthful, and disciplined towards the shari'a of the Lord of the two realms.

One of your important jobs is to educate our jihadi cohort in good conduct, by providing them with a good model in manners, respect, modesty, the giving of advice, accepting advice, admitting mistakes, respecting others, proficiency in dialogue, politeness with those who disagree, mercy, justice, kindness, et cetera. These are the good qualities that are required, and from which our jihadi cohort is suffering a deficiency, as professed by all of our brothers who are shaykhs among the mujahidin and their leaders. As mentioned, we need to make a great effort to educate and guide our cohort, because there are within our mujahidin cohort a lot of bad qualities that need to be treated.

For a man like you, in your position, this must be one of his missions and priorities. Of course, all of this goes hand in hand with your definite missions in terms of military and combat effort, political effort, and social effort in co-opting people, harmonizing with them, perfecting relations with them, and, at a minimum, avoiding those who cannot be co-opted, and so on. God willing, you are worth such goodness, just place in your focus and make it among your greatest priorities, and consult and ask and rely upon God.

It is clear, dear one, that your deeds and tasks are many and great. We ask God on our behalf and yours for aid and direction. Your success in your field projects success onto our plan, and to us as the faction waging jihad in general. If you suffer defeat, and if mistakes occur, then we all bear its consequence as well.

My dear brother, there must be attention paid to raising the mujahidin through continuous modification and not being quiet about our mistakes, especially the exorbitant mistakes. Indeed, it is necessary to try rapidly to treat them and rectify them. The leader is

obligated to engage in complete and strong guardianship over his subordinates by commanding that which is right and forbidding the wrong and enforcing upon the hands of the negligent, the corrupt and the derelict that this is serious and not something to be done through play nor through chaos. If it is not in our power to right ourselves, reform ourselves, and bring ourselves to what is best, righteous, and proper, then how can we aspire to reform the Muslim nation?!

Thus anyone who commits tyranny and aggression upon the people, and causes corruption within the land and drives people away from us and our faith and our jihad and from the religion and the message that we carry, then he must be taken to task, and we must direct him to what is right, just, and for the best. Otherwise, we would have to push him aside and keep him away from the sphere of influence and replace him and so forth, for this is an important matter.

You need to look deeply within yourself and your character, and don't let your subordinates, close ones, the ones who praise you, and those who raise your esteem and those who extol your greatness dominate, but rather you should know that the one who is strict with you, advises you, though it may be loathsome, is the one who is truly your friend. He who gives you sincere advice and doesn't flatter you, is the one whom you will find beside you in times of hardship. God willing, you shouldn't need such experiences. May you also not miss out on perceiving the signs of such a path.

Please know that you need each one, each in accordance with his ability and his capacity, and in accordance with his position and capability, so don't ignore anyone and don't dismiss anyone no matter how weak or small. Rather, you should pay attention to all the people, especially their weak ones, and urge them to advise you and assist you. Show them your need for them and their solidarity with you, so that they will love you and so that God grants you benefit through them. This is one of the means of winning over the people and bringing them in and gaining their hearts. It is the path of consulting with them, and paying attention to them, and even involving them in something sometimes, and making it clear that we can't do without their help and that we are stronger with them, with God's permission, and that a brother is strong through his brother, and things of that nature.

So, strive in this, my brother, with all of the people around you who are Sunnis, even with the derelict ones and those who are not without sin or immorality, as long as they are prominent individuals and influential in their communities; indeed even the ones who are hypocrites. Strive for this and put yourself to the task and don't ignore it, so that you may co-opt people and capture their hearts, or at least so that you could make them neutral and eliminate the vehemence of their hostility and enmity towards you, and so forth. The people are of various ranks, and our dealings with them should be in accordance with these ranks, of course.

Everything that I have said in this vein does not contradict the fact that we should continuously persevere in calling the people to what is best and advise them and order them and enjoin them and forbid them and lead them to what is best and right. However,

as I said, it must be on the basis of friendship, by degrees, and with guidance in accordance with what our pure Law indicates. Thus, as I previously mentioned, there is no harm in a certain amount of keeping quiet, overlooking things, forgiving, and reserving things to a time of an end to weakness and the attainment of complete authority or something close to it; otherwise there would occur a greater harm than what we are striving to eliminate!

Allow me to make an analogy for you:

You, for example, have in the field factions of people (here I mean Sunnis), and they are of degrees that no one but the Almighty who created them knows in terms of righteousness, and depravity, good and evil, and proximity to what is right and distance from it. If you were to demand a person who is refined, immaculate, and well mannered, you would only find a measly few. If you were hostile to and argued and pushed away everyone who didn't please you, then most people would shun you, be hostile towards you, argue with you and try to make war on you as well, and they would turn towards your enemy. They may fear you today because you are strong; you terrify them and alarm them, but if you were weakened and they saw weakness from you, then they would seek to expose that and they would be against you! May God not determine that this should happen to you or us.

What you have, for example, are the Muslim brothers in their levels as well, and you have the council of Muslim religious scholars with its mixture and permutations, and you have distinguished men of the community, clans, and tribes, and you have all of this, and you then you have the people in their various classes.

Therefore, you, as a leader and a jihadist political organization who wants to destroy a power and a state and erect on its rubble an Islamic state, or at least form the building block on the right path towards that, need all of these people; and it is imperative for someone like this to get along with everyone in various degrees as well, for the brothers are of varying calibers, in my belief.

So, we may skip over the traitor Muhsin 'Abd-al-Hamid and others like him, since they have obviously become unbelievers and heretics, may God save us from that, and since from the aspect of shari'a, their status is clear and apparent, and from the aspect of politics, their treachery appeared before the people as did their loyalty to the apostate state and the evil of their position, such that their enmity does not hurt but benefits us; although it is not appropriate to turn towards killing or fighting them now and it is not good, indeed harmful, as God knows best.

However, whoever belongs to the brothers from other sects and many different people, like some of the people of Harith al-Dari and those who work with the council and others, those are people we should get along with, and we shouldn't consider them like the previous ones, rather we should treat them better and accept their good points and call them to what is best, to relinquish their mistakes and corruption and so forth. We should praise them for the good they have and converse with them with knowledge, justice, and

politeness.

You also have the tribal leaders and the likes from the upper echelons of society, and they are of different levels as well, so the good among them who is close, we should consult them in some of our matters and give them value and give them some praise and involve them in some matters and vest them with some things because they love prestige. In this way we should try not to cause them to believe that we are going over their heads or infringing upon them in political and social leadership, or that we are overstepping them and not considering them and not giving them value and not taking them into account. Rather, we should make them feel that we want to work with them to establish the religion, liberate the country and the servants, establish the Islamic state and the rule of the shari'a of God, et cetera; and that, in our opinion, they have a large role to play, as we need every Muslim and everyone of us at the right time.

In the meantime, we should call them to commit to the shari'a and to all that is best and of merit, and we should advise them against what is wrong and from all bad deeds, and we should try to perfect them and encourage them. Whenever the people feel that we value them and appreciate their efforts and that we respect them and want the best for them and that we sympathize with them, this is what will draw their hearts to us, just as there are people we bring close through gift giving and money, but that is another matter. So, what is meant here is that it is possible that we could embrace, encompass, and win over many of the factions of the people into our ranks with a kind word and acts of goodness that are very simple.

We warn against all acts that alienate, from killing to any sort of other treatment. Even insofar as the corrupt ones and traitors from among the Sunnis, we shouldn't kill them unless the people would understand and think that it was a good thing due to the obviousness of their corruption, their treason, and their evil. However, if we come and kill some people whom we know to be corrupt and treasonous, but who are respected and beloved by the people, then this leads to great trouble and it is an act against all of the fundamentals of politics and leadership. So be warned of that, my dear brother, as God knows best and is wiser.

Concerning foreign activities, my brother, that is to say, outside of the Iraq arena, I would advise you not to expand that way until you have reviewed it with the brothers, and their collusion in such a thing. This is the opinion of the brothers here. They have some ideas and conceptions that they want to convey to you about this topic. They want to make arrangements with you regarding it. If only you could do your utmost to forge quick lines of communication with them to coordinate on it. Strive, may God bless you, to avoid repeating the mistake of lack of precision in execution, like what happened in Jordan. God determines all things, and He does as He wills. We ask God that He mend the rift and that He protect from the error and misjudgment, and that He make the outcome of what happened favorable for Islam and its people.

The most important thing is that you continue in your jihad in Iraq, and that you be patient and forbearing, even in weakness, and even with fewer operations; even if each

day had half of the number of current daily operations, that is not a problem, or even less than that. So, do not be hasty. The most important thing is that the jihad continues with steadfastness and firm rooting, and that it grows in terms of supporters, strength, clarity of justification, and visible proof each day. Indeed, prolonging the war is in our interest, with God's permission. The best acts are those that last, however few they may be, provided that we guard against mistakes building up and that we have integration in the jihadist enterprise. The only thing that you have to fear is yourselves and your own mistakes, not your enemy. By God, your enemy will never defeat you as long as you are patient and steadfast, not having caused damage that is great or frequent; and you seek help in God. It is the grace of God and the grace of the Supporter, and the Almighty will not neglect us. "Now surely the help of God is nigh".

My dear, beloved, faithful brother waging jihad, may God protect you and watch over you and support you and strengthen you. Here I have come to a close concerning what ideas and advice had come to me at this time. I am sorry for going a bit long on you, and for some repetition. Where I was correct, that was from God, and where I made mistakes, that is from the devil and me, and God and His messenger are innocent of that. All I want is to improve what I could. I have no success other than through God, upon Whom I rely and act on behalf of. There is no god other than Him, nor Lord besides Him. There is no power and no strength save in Him, the Almighty. Pardon me if the pen made a mistake, or a thought went awry, or a word slipped that was inappropriate, for I swear that I only wanted to perfect you and to advise you and the Muslims, for all of us are responsible.

Forgive us also if our conception of your situation there and your circumstances is lacking and unclear, for this is possible and not unlikely, especially with the disruption that exists and the loss of communications. We advise you to maintain reliable and quick contact, with all the power you can muster. I am ready to communicate via the Internet or any other means, so send me your men to ask for me on the chat forum of Ana al-Muslim, or others. The password between us is that thing that you brought to me a long time ago from Herat. Then, after that, we would agree with them about e-mails, or you should instruct your men who are in the country that I live in to develop communications with us. We are ready to write to you and to consult with you regarding opinions anytime directly. "By the time, Surely man is at a loss, Except for those who believe and do good, and exhort one another to Truth, and exhort one another to patience."

I give you my regards again and once more, and also to all the noble loved ones who are with you.

I send you the regards of Abu-Layth, Abu-Sahl, al-Hubayb, al-Muhajir, and all of the brothers here.

I ask God the Almighty that He make you a rightly guided guide.

We ask God that He protect you and facilitate your affairs and ours, and that He relieve the anxieties and grant victory soon. We ask God that He strengthen you and fortify you and support you with that which He has, as He is the firm Provider Who has power,

amen.

Goodbye and God bless you.

Your brother, 'Atiyah.

10th of Dhu Qa'dah, 1426.

TRANSLATION ENDS