

# ICWA LETTERS

Since 1925 the Institute of Current World Affairs (the Crane-Rogers Foundation) has provided long-term fellowships to enable outstanding young professionals to live outside the United States and write about international areas and issues. An exempt operating foundation endowed by the late Charles R. Crane, the Institute is also supported by contributions from like-minded individuals and foundations.

## TRUSTEES

Bryn Barnard  
Joseph Battat  
Carole Beaulieu  
Mary Lynne Bird  
Steven Butler  
Peter Geithner  
Gary Hartshorn  
Pramila Jayapal  
Cheng Li  
Dasa Obereigner  
David Z. Robinson  
Carol Rose  
John Spencer  
Edmund Sutton

## HONORARY TRUSTEES

David Elliot  
David Hapgood  
Pat M. Holt  
Edwin S. Munger  
Richard H. Nolte  
Albert Ravenholt  
Phillips Talbot

**Institute of Current World Affairs**  
The Crane-Rogers Foundation  
Four West Wheelock Street  
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755 U.S.A.

**NES-10  
PAKISTAN**

*Nicholas Schmidle is a Phillips Talbot Fellow of the Institute studying identity and politics in Pakistan.*

## The Homebody:

### *How Abdul Rashid Ghazi Wages Jihad From His Living Room*

By Nicholas Schmidle

JANUARY 2007

**EVERY FRIDAY AROUND NOON IN THE CAPITAL OF ISLAMABAD**, on a leafy avenue lined with towering conifers, a dozen or so baton-swinging policemen dressed in riot gear congregate in front of a pink mosque. Meanwhile, worshipers — men — disappear like draining bath water through a gap in the pink wall, off to perform their ablutions, find a spot to unroll their prayer mat, and listen to a firebrand preacher praise jihad and Osama bin Laden, who he compares to Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sometimes after Friday prayers, parishioners spill back through the space in the wall, march through town and chant down the government. Sometimes they smash a window or two or burn tires; for this, the policemen are ready. Journalists too gather in the shade before the mosque to watch. Last year, when a few reporters dared enter the mosque, stick-wielding teenage madrassa students chased them out. Fortunately, the police were there.

In a small room tucked at the end of an alley behind the pink walls, Abdul Rashid Ghazi, the deputy imam of Lal Masjed, sits beyond the gaze of the riot police. Ghazi is in his mid-40s and short, with curly, grey hair that flips wildly around his ears and neckline. A fist-length beard and easy smile lend him a gentle, grandfatherly demeanor. With his wire-rimmed glasses, he bears a slight resemblance to former Grateful Dead front-man Jerry Garcia.

Ghazi has an eclectic sense of taste. The first time I visited him in his 15-foot-by-15-foot office, I noticed two framed items hanging on opposite walls: one, an ornate arrangement of gold-etched Quranic verses; the other, an arms-length silver sword. On another wall Ghazi had tacked up the "Spring Inks Color Process Chart" from Sherman Williams. A Kalashnikov tilted against a low table and a pistol, snug in its waist holster, lay on one of the large pillows that lined the walls. In the corner is his IT station, complete with fax machine, Hewlett-Packard printer and scanner, laptop and flat-screen monitor. "I am very good in computers," he told me without a trace of humility. "I've met many computer people who, after meeting me, say, 'You know a lot more than we know.' I have even designed a website for our madrassa." I said that I had seen the website, though it looked a little out of date. Ghazi smiled sheepishly and confessed: "That's because I forgot the password."

Ghazi spends most of his time entertaining guests in this well-equipped hovel. The roster of visitors includes Members of the National Assembly, other religious leaders, and prominent journalists. They often come to sit for hours, to share news of political developments "on the outside" — and to hear Ghazi's reaction to them. Ghazi, some believe, is a future leader in Pakistan. Given his promising future, coupled with articulate and energetic opinions, visitors are anxious to hear him. As one Pakistani journalist explained: "If a fundamentalist, Taliban-style government ever comes to Pakistan, Ghazi could easily become *Amir-ul-Momineen* [leader of the faithful]."

But for now, Ghazi is simply a homebody. He's confined to a small area behind the pink walls, only moving between his room and the mosque. At our last meeting

in late November, he wore a gray, wool cardigan sweater over his shalwar kameez, accentuating the beginnings of a potbelly.

If he stepped out for a walk down one of the leafy avenues around the mosque, he fears that he'd be either arrested or killed by the intelligence agencies. Ghazi has figured that someone wants him eliminated ever since the government accused him and an Egyptian militant of masterminding a plot to bomb a group of buildings in Islamabad and Rawalpindi in August 2004, including the Presidency, the Prime Minister's House, General Headquarters, the US embassy, the Chief of the Army Staff House, and the Convention Centre.

**LAL MASJED IS REPUTED TO BE A MAJOR HUB OF JIHADI ACTIVITY** in Pakistan. In a sermon last November, Abdul Aziz, the head imam and Ghazi's older brother, proclaimed that "the blood of the *shahadat* [martyrs] brings God's mercy on us." He later added: "When Osama challenged the enemy, Allah helped him succeed." Every Friday, newsies hawk jihadi publications around the mosque. Last fall, I bought the latest issue of *Zarb-e-Momin*, a banned weekly, and the treatise of Sepah-e-Sahaba, a banned sectarian organization, for a few Rupees each. The U.S. Embassy issues regular notices warning its citizens about the likelihood of raucous demonstrations in the area. Besides the riot police, undercover agents hang around. Last year, while I was sitting on a concrete ledge waiting for the Friday sermon to begin, a bald man approached me and asked in an authoritative voice why I was there. Even before he introduced himself as being from the Intelligence Bureau, the crackling sound of the walkie-talkie tucked inside his shalwar kameez gave him away. I'm here to listen to the sermon, I said. "Are you a Muslim?" I said no. He cocked his head, squished up his face, and rubbed his shiny, bald head. Then he copied all of my personal information into a small notepad and left.

Little more than a decade after the formation of Pakistan in 1947, Maulana Abdullah Ghazi, Abdul Rashid's father, founded Lal Masjed. Maulana Abdullah was teaching at the Binori Town madrassa in Karachi when Field Marshal Ayub Khan decided to move the capital from Karachi to Islamabad. Binori Town was (and still is) one of the biggest and most influential madrassas in Pakistan. The headmaster, Maulana Yusuf Binori, wanted to keep it that way. He knew he needed a big madrassa and mosque in the new capital. So he sent Maulana Abdullah, one of his top teachers, to start one.

Maulana Abdullah moved his family to Islamabad in the early 1960s, which at the time was nothing more than a few streets cut out of the jungle at the foot of the Margalla Hills. Abdul Rashid was a toddler. Not long after settling in Islamabad, Abdul Aziz, Abdul Rashid's only brother, returned to Karachi and enrolled at Binori Town. Abdul Rashid, however, attended secular schools, later

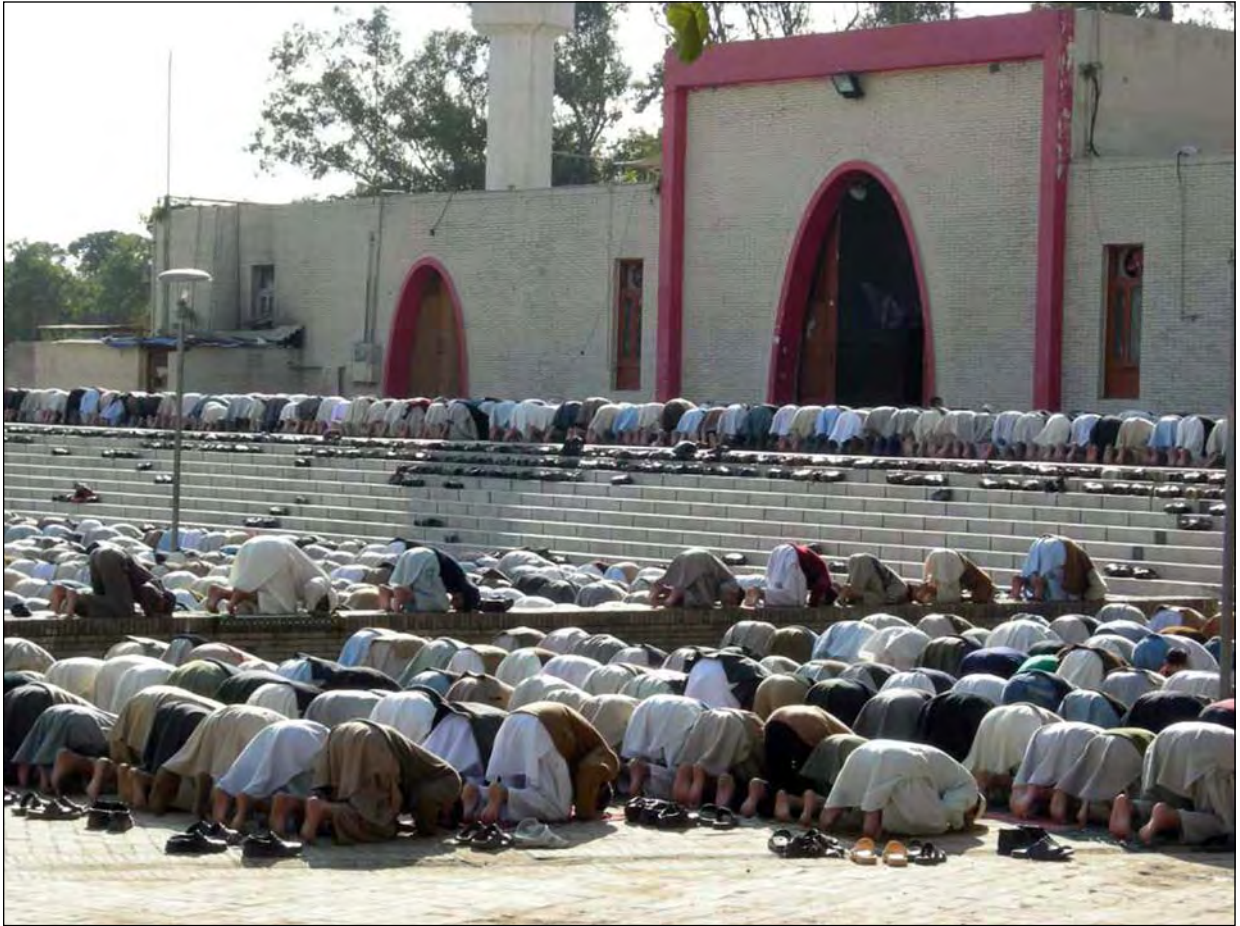
studying English at the National University of Modern Languages and International Relations at Quaid-i-Azam University. Meanwhile, Maulana Abdullah attracted a growing number of worshippers to Lal Masjed, and opened two madrassas: Jamia Hafza, for women, and Jamia Faridia, for men. Before long, Maulana Abdullah had succeeded in his mission: Lal Masjed was *the* mosque in the new capital.

**FROM THE DAY OF THE RED ARMY'S INVASION** of Afghanistan on December 25, 1979, the fate of the Ghazi family would be closely tied to Afghanistan. Moscow's intrusion into Kabul's affairs sparked a resistance movement across Afghanistan that eventually transformed into a global *jihad* against the Soviet Union. Around that time, two Pakistani mujahideen commanders, Fazlur Rehman Khalil and Qari Saifullah Akhtar, began paying frequent visits to Lal Masjed. "They came to see my father, not to see me" said Ghazi, who was only a teenager, studying English at National University of Modern Languages. But Akhtar and Khalil's stories, full of danger and adventure, inspired Abdul Rashid. He wanted in. Dismissing the idea that he's been motivated by jihad all of this life, Ghazi added, "The concept of jihad was not as clear to me then as it is now. I saw it as a defensive war for Pakistan."

Finally, around the time of his twenty-second birthday, Ghazi, a beardless and eager university student, asked his father for permission to go to Afghanistan. Maulana Abdullah said that he had no qualms, but that Abdul Rashid's mother would never allow it. "I had to find a way to convince her," Ghazi said, "So I told her I was 'going in the way of Allah.'" To "go in the way of Allah" is a euphemism for those embarking on a journey with Tablighi Jama'at, a missionary group. Ghazi figured that this language covered him sufficiently, without being deceitful. "I didn't want to lie to my mom, but in fact I went to Afghanistan with a few friends."

The first trip, Ghazi said, was a bust. He joined a camp of Arab mujahideen in Paktia province, where a trainer showed him how to use a Kalashnikov and a Rocket-Propelled Grenade Launcher. But they hardly ever fired them. "We just sat there. We were up on a mountain and we could see the Russians, but there was no activity and no fighting," he recalled. Plus, the Arabs brought their wives and families, further diluting the martial environment Ghazi was craving. ("Arabs cannot live or go anywhere without their wives," he quipped, "Sometimes even two.") After a few weeks, he returned to Islamabad.

In 1986, during his next university break, Ghazi approached Qari Saifullah Akhtar. That same year, Akhtar had formed Harakat-ul-Jihad-i-Islami (HUJI), the first Pakistani-based jihadi organization. Akhtar was a tall man with a reputation as a tough disciplinarian. Some of the mujahideen, Ghazi said, those who "liked to have a careless life," didn't get along with him. But Ghazi appre-



*Thousands of worshippers during Friday prayers last November*

ciated the discipline. And Akhtar, in turn, favored Ghazi. He would later buy him his first weapon and they would travel to Afghanistan together several times.

When the Soviet army retreated in 1988, Ghazi returned to his studies in Islamabad. Akhtar stayed in Afghanistan, running training camps for his group of mujahideen. In the early 1990s, Pakistan's ISI was funding and supporting the jihad in Kashmir against India and constantly needing new fighters. HUJI eagerly supplied them. Then, in 1994, Akhtar conspired with an Army general to overthrow Benazir Bhutto's government and install an Islamic state. The attempted putsch failed, and Akhtar returned to Afghanistan. In 1998, Osama bin Laden released a joint statement from the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders. HUJI was amongst the nine signatories. When I asked Ghazi about the extent of his connections with HUJI today, he replied, "They love me. I love them. We know each other. We have a good relationship."

That same year, Maulana Abdullah received a personal invitation from bin Laden. The al-Qaeda chief was living under the protection of the Taliban government and wished to see Maulana Abdullah in Kandahar. "My father wanted to know what his opinions were," Ghazi said. Maulana Abdullah asked Abdul Rashid to accompany him, and the two men flew to Quetta, from where they drove across the border into Afghanistan. Bin Laden

waited to greet them. The next day, Abdul Rashid and Maulana Abdullah met with bin Laden "from breakfast until late night." One day was enough. "He was convinced by Osama's ideas," Ghazi said about his father.

Maulana Abdullah and Abdul Rashid returned to Islamabad, excited by their new friendship and equipped with new ideas. Maulana Abdullah exalted bin Laden and his struggle. I asked Ghazi what kinds of things was he saying. "That Osama is right. That 'I have discussed and argued with Osama, and he convinced me why the Americans being in his country is wrong.'" The authorities might have overlooked Abdullah had he come from a neighborhood mosque, or even one outside the capital city. But from his influential position as imam of the largest mosque in Islamabad, he attracted a flood of attention.

On October 17, 1998, less than three months after his meeting with bin Laden, an assassin fired two magazines of ammunition into Abdullah when he was walking across the courtyard of Lal Masjed, holding a bag of fruit in either hand. Abdullah collapsed in a pool of blood underneath a young dogwood tree and died. Bin Laden sent a letter of condolence.

**AFTER MAULANA ABDULLAH'S DEATH,** the Ghazi brothers took over at Lal Masjed, picking up



right where their father had left off. Abdul Aziz, the madrasa graduate, led prayers and gave Friday sermons, praising bin Laden and denouncing the United States. Ghazi handled public relations and the media. "It's a balance [between me and my brother]," he said, reflecting on their different education backgrounds and strengths. "He knows the Quran perfectly. But I know the civil and army bureaucracy, as well as the media people. He is taking full control of one side and I am taking full control of the other. And that's why we are making it!" For three years after Abdullah's assassination, the Ghazi brothers kept up a normal schedule without major incident, running two madrassas and a mosque. Mujahideen leaders stopped in regularly, without raising much suspicion. Pakistani policy then endorsed support for the Taliban in Afghanistan as well as militants waging jihad in Kashmir.

The September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks prompted a sudden policy shift. Between 9/11 and the ensuing U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, Ghazi helped form the Pak-Afghan Defense Council (PADC). PADC, as a support group for the Taliban and a platform for protesting the bombardment of Afghanistan, staged several large rallies in Pakistani cities. Ghazi was arrested at a demonstration and thrown into jail. During one interview, he nearly burst with excitement when a Member of the National Assembly paid an unscheduled visit. Ghazi introduced him to me and gushed: "This man and I shared a prison cell." Though the PADC eventually disbanded, Ghazi found another ally.

In 2004, a close associate of bin Laden named Sheik

Essa met with Ghazi several times. Essa was an Egyptian and a *takfiri*, an adherent of the ultra-radical ideology prevalent among Egyptian jihadis, including al-Qaeda's doctor-leader Ayman al-Zawahiri. Takfiris, or "excommunicators," define "true" Muslims in the narrowest of terms. Those who don't qualify, they contend, are infidels. And in order for "true" Muslims to prosper, infidels need to be killed. Essa told Ghazi, for instance, that even a clerk in the Pakistani bureaucracy, serving Musharraf who is serving Bush, is a legitimate target. My eyes widened as Ghazi described Essa. "I disagree [with him]," he assured me. "Even Osama bin Laden disagrees with this point." But the intelligence agencies didn't care whether Ghazi agreed or not. His association with Essa fueled suspicions that they were up to something, and in August 2004, the agencies moved in.

Ghazi was outside the mosque one afternoon, leading a demonstration against "disappearances" and kidnappings, when someone pulled him aside and whispered that he should run away: "You are in danger." Ghazi assumed that the man was one of his sympathizers inside the agencies. "There are a lot of people in the agencies who favor us mentally," he said. Despite Pakistan's cozy official relationship with the United States, suspicion still surrounds the loyalty of Pakistan's intelligence agencies, which have nurtured mujahideen fighters in Afghanistan and Kashmir for decades. Ghazi started home, yet the man's warning did not fully convince him. He had never seen him before. For all Ghazi knew, he was being led into a trap. But when he got closer to his home, another man stopped him and told him to flee, adding that, "War



is just behind you.” “That’s when I knew something was wrong,” Ghazi told me.

He rushed into the house and darted for the bedroom, where he changed his clothes, took off his glasses and wrapped a cloth around his face. He told his wife he was leaving for a while. “Don’t ask about me or say anything about me,” he instructed. He slipped out the back door onto a busy street. Then he hailed a taxi and fled.

Over the coming days, while Ghazi hid in a safe-house, news reports surfaced about a disrupted terrorist plot involving Ghazi, Essa, and a young Pakistani named Usman. Usman was driving Ghazi’s Suzuki hatchback when the agencies arrested him. The Minister of Information alleged that Usman planned to blow up the American Embassy, General Headquarters, the Prime Minister’s House, the Chief of Army Staff’s House and the President’s House. “I have a Suzuki Mehran [a small hatchback] with a CNG tank in the back,” Ghazi said in a calm, rational tone. “There is no room for all the ammunition it would take to blow up all the places they listed.” In the middle of telling the story, Ghazi excused himself to retrieve a manila folder overflowing with newspaper clippings from that period. He proudly showed one of his daughters holding a placard that read: “My abbu [daddy] is not a terrorist.”

Meanwhile, the government had a problem. Not only could they not find Essa, but both Ghazi brothers had disappeared. While agents continued to hunt, the government launched a campaign to discredit them. First, they appointed another imam to replace Abdul Aziz. But that didn’t work out. “Many of the people of this locality are government servants,” Ghazi said, “And even they resisted the replacement.” Then, the Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) at the time, General Ehsan, brought a couple of dozen leading ulema together. He wanted to draft a statement with their signatures denouncing the Ghazi brothers as being terrorists and anti-Pakistan elements. When that too didn’t work, the Ministry of Interior de-escalated, dropping the charges and casually dismissing the whole episode as “a misunderstanding.” Ghazi found the explanation hard to accept, after almost three months of “living with that tension,” but he keeps a sense of humor about the episode. “The script of that drama had a lot of loopholes and lacunas, since it was not written by a good writer. They should have gotten it written by the FBI,” he said. “Maybe they could have written it better.”

Ghazi eventually returned home and resumed his normal schedule, shuttling between Lal Masjed and the men’s madrassa his father built on the other side of town. One morning, just after dawn, he was driving along a four-lane highway in the shadow of the Margalla Hills when Ghazi noticed that, in the car next to him, someone in the back seat was aiming a gun barrel at him. Ghazi reached for the pistol under his shalwar kameez and intended to fire a warning shot in the air. But in all the

excitement, he fired two rounds through the roof of the car, nearly blasting out his eardrums and filling the car with smoke. Unable to see anything, he shot twice more, this time through the windscreen in the general direction of the other vehicle. “That made them confused,” he said, and they sped away. Ghazi blamed the intelligence agencies for trying to kill him again.

In July 2005, shortly after the 7/7 bombings in London, British intelligence reports alleged that the bombers, all native-born Pakistanis, had received terrorist training in Pakistan. Under pressure, Pakistani authorities cracked down on a few madrassas. On July 19, police raided Jamia Hafza, the female madrassa attached to Lal Masjed. More than 100 students were injured, some carried away on stretchers. “I had a lot of photographs but my elder brother said we should not show human beings,” Ghazi said. (Islamists consider depictions of the human form *haram*, or forbidden.) Infuriated by the police brutality, rioters burned tires and looted stores around Islamabad. The government pressed charges stemming from the Anti-Terror Act against the Ghazi brothers for their apparent role in inciting the violence. A court date was set. They never showed up.

“Since we did not go to the court, summons after summons, we were declared absconders,” Ghazi said. “But an absconder is someone whose whereabouts are unknown. We are here. My brother leads the prayers every Friday. I am here, having guests and sometimes entertaining the media. How can I be an absconder?” Ghazi’s tone changed, sounding almost like a taunt. “You know why they are not coming? They do not want another thing like Jamia Hafza to happen again. They know we are wanted. But they are afraid that if they arrest us, it will make big trouble in Islamabad.”

Nonetheless, behind the bravado, Ghazi knows that if he leaves the mosque, he’ll be snatched or killed. So, he stays home.

**ON A RECENT, CRISP NOVEMBER DAY, I** wound through the maze of alleys behind Lal Masjed to briefly see Ghazi before Friday prayers. We sat on a jute-string bed for a few minutes talking before Abdul Aziz, flanked by bodyguards and clutching the Quran to his chest, emerged from a back door, on way his way into the mosque. Abdul Aziz, who wears big spectacles with misty, scratched lenses that hide beady eyes, smiled cordially and paused to shake my hand. Earlier that same week, Abdul Aziz and I had conversed for almost an hour about the mid-term elections in the United States. He wanted to know why Americans didn’t just overthrow Bush.

A few minutes later, Abdul Aziz began his *khutba*, or sermon, by sharing a story about Abraham. In the story, Abraham smashes a collection of stone idols that some villagers believe are gods. Afterwards, he lays the ax in

the hand of the biggest stone idol to make him appear the guilty one. No one, however, doubts that Abraham had done it and so they throw him into a blazing fire. But Allah, so the story goes, changes the properties of fire, saving Abraham. Abdul Aziz tied the story to the present. "Today, people have no idea who Allah is," he said. "In every age, Allah sends someone down to show that those things people think are great are really meaningless. The great powers of the world are so proud, but they are blind to the power of Allah. When the World Trade Center fell, Osama said, 'This was your pride, the expression of your power and success.' Allah has shown that those things can fall in the blink of an eye." As the service ended, Abdul Aziz praised those who gave their lives to jihad and to the lives of the mujahideen.

Later, I asked Abdul Rashid Ghazi why the war in Afghanistan was a jihad for Pakistanis living in Islamabad. "If someone isn't capable of defending themselves, then jihad becomes obligatory for those people in the surrounding areas," he said. "Afghans, by themselves, are not sufficient to stop America's aggression against innocent people." The closer you are to Afghanistan, the more obligatory it is. "Unfortunately," he added, "this hatred against America has been created. We are trying to tell people that there is a difference between people of America and the government." But the longer Bush stays in power, he said, the less this statement appears tenable. "Hatred against the U.S. is increasing day by day."

But if you kill innocent people in Afghanistan, are you still a martyr? I asked. Ghazi adjusted his tunic, lifted a hand to his mouth and fixed a serious-looking face. "If someone only targets innocent people," he started, "he is a murderer. Nothing else. But if your enemy is surrounded by innocent people, the amir has to make a decision." Is the enemy dangerous enough to ignore the lives of the innocent? "If so," Ghazi said, "you can kill them. There won't be any burden on the amir's shoulder." He ran through other scenarios that might seem complicated for an amateur jihadi: an enemy using a Muslim as a human shield (can you kill another Muslim?), declaring jihad against another Muslim (not allowed but remedied if your opponent, like some Afghans today, are supporting the Americans), and protecting a non-Muslim who is in need. "That is jihad," Ghazi said. By the end, he had reiterated one point over and over: the amir decides all.

In this respect, Ghazi sees the jihad in Afghanistan as not only one to beat back the Americans, but also one to restore the Taliban's emirate of Afghanistan. "The ideal form of governance is Islamic governance and it was in Afghanistan under Mullah Omar," he said. "Sure, there were lots of problems. But there was peace. The warlord has been a constant in Afghanistan's history, but at the time of Mullah Omar, it was not there. He issued one order and it was implemented. He banned poppy cultivation with just one decree! No incentive was given."

That doesn't sound like Islamic democracy to me, I

said. "I don't like democracy. Islam is not about counting people. In democracy, the weight of one vote is the same for a man who is taking drugs and doesn't care about his country as it is for the man with a vision for the future. The majority of people are ignorant people. This doesn't bring us a good system. But in Islam, for example, if I am amir and I make a decision that the majority disagrees with, I can still do it." I asked if Mullah Omar's government was replicable in Pakistan. "Soon, it will be like that here," Ghazi answered. According to him, the same conditions that bred the Taliban in Afghanistan during the 1990s are facilitating their expansion in Pakistan today. "Taliban is a reaction to a chaotic situation. In Afghanistan, it was lawlessness and warlords. When the Taliban killed these *dacoits* [robbers] in North Waziristan [a Tribal Agency in Pakistan] last year, local people were very happy. But these dacoits are also all over Punjab. So this will start here in Pakistan too.

"We don't want Pakistan to become a chaotic, fighting field. From the core of our hearts, we don't want that. But like-minded young people are coming closer to one another," he said.

**GHAZI HAS THE SLIGHTLY HUNCHED POSTURE** of someone who's deteriorating in middle age. It is understandable, since he spends most of the day sitting around meeting people and making plans in one of two or three rooms, each within spitting distance from each another. Occasionally, he shuffles through one of the back allies, but the idle lifestyle is taking its toll. When I showed up for our last meeting in late November, I saw black leather couches and office furniture in the place of the traditional pillows that had been previously strewn along the edges of the room. I joked with Ghazi that he must be getting old. "My back has been hurting, so I bought the chair for me," he said, pointing to the high-back desk chair. "But everyone was still sitting on the floor, so I got chairs for all my guests."

When I asked if he gets stir crazy, he assured me that he gets out, even if it means lying across the backseat of a car.

"When was the last time you left the mosque?"

"This morning I went out to meet some people," he replied with a devilish smile. "I have things to do like anyone else. I like the outdoors. This [self-imposed house arrest] is comparable to jail, but better because I am with family. Still, sometimes I get bored."

"Who did you see this morning?"

"I went to my sister because she is ill. I was also thinking to go to [mujahideen commander] Fazlur Rehman Khalil, but I decided not to go. Perhaps there is surveillance for him and then if they see me..." His words trailed off before he could finish the sentence, but his raised

shoulders, upturned palms, and long facial expression conveyed concern.

I pointed to a Kalashnikov leaning against the computer station. "That's new too," I said. No, he replied, shaking his head. But I was gesturing at the short, fat cylinder fixed to the underside of the barrel. "Oh, that. That is a grenade launcher." He picked up the gun and demonstrated how the 40 millimeter grenade launcher works. "I recently got it from a friend," he said. "It was a gift." The accessory has a range of 400 meters. "A few days ago, I received one friend from the government. When he saw this" — pointing to the grenade launcher — "he said 'that is illegal.' I said that I am also illegal. When I am illegal, whether or not I have a grenade launcher, the whole thing is illegal."

The only part of Ghazi's life that remains within the bounds of legality is the two madrassas he and his brother run: one, he boasts, is the second-largest men's madrasa in Pakistan; the other, the biggest women's madrasa in the world. I asked how he uses them to recruit for the various jihads he supports. "The subject of jihad we do teach," he admitted. "Teaching is one thing and recruitment is something else... We teach them Islam. And Islam is not only jihad. Islam has prayer, relationships, hajj, zakat — and then jihad. But we don't recruit in madrassas. Remember," he said, "when I joined the Russian war, I was a college student. I was not a madrasa student. And it wasn't because my father was an alim [that I went], but because of the environment of my institute then."

"Today, young people come to us all the time and ask us to call a jihad against all Americans. But we cannot give this general fatwa. The young ones who say 'let us go to the Americans' are mostly college students, not madrasa students. Why? Because madrasa students understand the concept [of jihad] in its totality — in its correct format, like where it is implemented and where it is not implemented." Those who haven't studied in a madrasa, Ghazi said, are often too eager to fight.

You've said that Afghanistan is a jihad, I asked. Are any of your former students there?

"Maybe, there could be a lot of students of mine, but they were not routed through me," he answered. "They know where to go. There is a system. When they complete their education from our institution, they are

free. They know who to contact."

Ghazi shared a story to illustrate how it wasn't only madrasa students who were filling the ranks of the mujahideen. According to him, the younger brother of a "very high-ranking police officer in Islamabad" recently came and said how he wanted to go to Afghanistan. "I am reading the newspaper every day," the young man said, "And our brothers are being killed in Bajaur [the site of a missile attack in the Tribal Areas in September that killed 80]." "If you want to go, go," Ghazi recalled saying. "But don't come to me."

"This was a university student," he later said, "and his family is not overly religious. Yet it's because of a reaction [to the chaos and the killing] that he goes."

"But if this man goes," I asked, "will he become a mujahideen?" It seemed that someone going off to fight because they are aggravated by the news wouldn't qualify as a "holy warrior."

Ghazi responded, "I don't know whether he ever went, but he was so determined, he must have gone. When he goes, he will get training and learn that 'this is' or 'this isn't' according to Islam. There is a lot of fighting, of running, and of lessons. And so, he will become a mujahideen."

I steered the topic back to his madrasa students and to what he expected from his alumni. "When they have completed their studies we tell them: 'You are free from us. We have taught you our best. You can go into any field.' Some go to preaching, some go to business, then some go to jihad. But at least we have taught them the real concept of jihad."

"Our goal is to produce a Muslim intelligentsia — those who can go into the world and tell people what Islam is. Our students are working in the world. We just got a note from a student who has been working in Birmingham, England, for four years." Ghazi's face lit up as he recalled reading the note with his brother. "'Oh wow, look what our students are doing!' We have to give them the spirit — the knowledge alone will not work." Ghazi, seemingly satisfied with that answer, leaned back against the wall and blinked purposely through his wire-rimmed glasses. "Mainly, I am an educator" he said, "I am not mainly a jihadi." □

---

# INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

## Current Fellows

**Richard D. Connerney • INDIA • January 2005 - 2007**

A Phillips Talbot Fellow, Rick is studying and writing about the intertwining of religion, culture, and politics in India. Rick is a former lecturer in philosophy and Asian religions at Rutgers University and Iona College. He holds a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College and a master's degree from the University of Hawaii, both in religion.

**Kay Dilday • FRANCE/MOROCCO • October 2005 - 2007**

Kay is studying the relationships of the French and North African immigrants in France and in North Africa. A former editor for The *New York Times* Op-Ed page, Kay holds a master's degree in comparative international politics and theory from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, a bachelor's degree in English literature from Tufts University, and has done graduate work at the Universiteit van Amsterdam in the Netherlands and the *Cours de Civilisation de la Sorbonne*.

**Suzy Hansen • TURKEY • April 2007 - 2009**

A John O. Crane Memorial Fellow, Suzy will be writing about politics and religion in Turkey. A former editor at the *New York Observer*, her work has also appeared in Salon, the New York Times Book Review, the Nation, and other publications. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1999.

**Nicholas Schmidle • PAKISTAN • February 2006 - 2008**

Nick is a freelance writer interested in the intersection of culture, religion, and politics in Asia. He's in Pakistan as an ICWA fellow, examining issues of ethnic, sectarian, and national identity. Previously, he reported from Central Asia and Iran. His work has been published in the *Washington Post*, the *Weekly Standard*, *Foreign Policy*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, and elsewhere. He holds a master's degree in International Affairs from American University.

**Raphael Soifer • BRAZIL • April 2007-2009**

An actor, director, playwright, musician, and theatre educator, Raphi Soifer is a Donors' Fellow studying, as a participant and observer, the relationship between the arts and social change in communities throughout Brazil. He has worked as a performer and director in the United States and Brazil, and has taught performance to prisoners and underprivileged youth through People's Palace Projects in Rio de Janeiro and Community Works in San Francisco. He holds a bachelor's degree in Theatre Studies and Anthropology from Yale University.

**Andrew J. Tabler • SYRIA/LEBANON • February 2005-2007**

Andrew's ICWA fellowship bases him in Beirut and Damascus, where he reports on Lebanese and Syrian affairs. He has lived, studied, and worked in the Middle East since a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Fellowship enabled him to begin Arabic-language studies and work toward a master's degree at the American University in Cairo in 1994. He was an editor with the *Middle East Times* and *Cairo Times* before moving to Turkey, Lebanon, and Syria, where he worked as a senior editor with the Oxford Business Group and a correspondent for the *Economist Intelligence Unit*. In 2004, Andrew co-founded *Syria Today* – Syria's first independent English language magazine. He has contributed op-ed pieces on Syria over the last year to the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune*.

Institute Fellows are chosen on the basis of character, previous experience and promise. They are young professionals funded to spend a minimum of two years carrying out self-designed programs of study and writing outside the United States. The Fellows are required to report their findings and experiences from the field once a month. They can write on any subject, as formally or informally as they wish. The result is a unique form of reporting, analysis and periodic assessment of international events and issues.

ICWA Letters (ISSN 1083-4257) are published by the Institute of Current World Affairs Inc., a 501(c)(3) exempt operating foundation incorporated in New York State with offices located at 4 West Wheelock Street, Hanover, NH 03755. The letters are provided free of charge to members of ICWA and are available to libraries and professional researchers by subscription.

Phone: (603) 643-5548  
E-mail: [icwa@icwa.org](mailto:icwa@icwa.org)  
Fax: (603) 643-9599  
Web site: [www.icwa.org](http://www.icwa.org)

**Executive Director:**  
Steven Butler

**Program Assistant/  
Publications Manager:**  
Ellen Kozak

©2007 Institute of Current World Affairs, The Crane-Rogers Foundation.

The Information contained in this publication may not be reprinted or republished without the express written consent of the Institute of Current World Affairs.