

# German intelligence in Afghanistan from the 1950's to the present day

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“The German police re-established the police and secret service systems in Afghanistan” is boasted in a commemorative brochure published by the Foreign Affairs Office of the NSDAP 1939 (Baraki 1996, 62). Germany could already look back at a tradition of influence on the military and security system in Kabul, stretching back to the *Kaiserreich*, which was designed as a bulwark against the potential foes Soviet Union and Great Britain on other fronts. Shortly after the resumption of diplomatic relations in December 1954, the training programme for the Afghan police, which lasted from 1954 to 1979, was re-established. Mohammad Sacher Shah was officially the head of government since 1933, but in reality, his cousin, Mohammad Daud, the Prime Minister, held the reins firmly in hand. The secret service at that time, *Sabt Ahwalat*, was a tiny government agency with a staff of a mere 200. The agency was first headed by the Germanophile Ismail who was then followed by Rasul Khan, who died while leading an unsuccessful coup against Zaher Shah. The police were then called in to restore order, and under German guidance, developed intelligence methods in the process.

At the end of the 1950's, the BND had already set up a station in Kabul, which was instrumental in assisting the ruling power in suppressing opposition using intelligence methods. Germany also helped build a series of large prisons (Nuristani 1987). Meanwhile, the Shah took over government in 1963 as a reaction to Daud's having brought the country under Soviet influence from 1955 onwards and for having intensified the conflict with Pakistan. However, on July 17, 1973, Daud, supported by the army, led a coup against the ruling Saher Shah, and established Afghanistan as a republic. The only resistance he encountered came from the German-trained police units.

A number of these police officers emigrated to what was then West Germany, where they were able to find employment (Baraki 1996, 545). The BND profited by their presence: Both the former police chief of Kabul and the ex-Minister of Commerce proved to be valuable informants within the exile community. The former head of the secret service under the regent had also found refuge in the Ruhr Area of Germany; he operated under the cover name of “Francis” as a BND source.

Amongst the valuable information which he provided to the BND was an annotated map which showed the deployment of ethnic groups, tribes and clans in Afghanistan. Yet the BND failed to recognise the significance of these details, then as well as in the following years. Thus, the neglect of socio-cultural factors remains one of the failings of the BND in the Hindu Kush: The networks and frontline positions of the tribes and clans in Afghanistan, which play such a significant role in political relations, were disregarded. Only in the summer of 2008 after the growing number of attacks on the *Bundeswehr* in Kunduz, did it dawn upon the troops that these attacks originated with the Pashtun clans of the Ghilzai clan, which have complex tribal connections in the provinces Kandahar and Helmand in the south of Afghanistan. German security officers thus discovered the link to General Mohammed Sharif of the secret service in the north of Afghanistan (Der Spiegel, 37/2008).

A retrospective understanding of the historical developments is necessary here: The new secret service set up under Daud after his coup, the *Masuniat Meli*, was expanded under the aegis of its new head, Asis Achtari. Meanwhile, the assistance provided by the West German police and secret service continued without interruption. At the same time this ostensible assistance provided an opportunity to spy upon the Afghan secret service. For instance: A BND case officer, Hans Dieter Raethjen, supervised a Bavarian senior police officer in Kabul until March 1974, who worked under the cover name “Sterntaler”.

The two socialist-leaning parties *Partscham* and *Khalq* were unified in 1977 under the name People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA); shortly thereafter, their leader, Mohamad Taraki, overthrew the Daud regime. Within a short time, the secret service under Taraki, called *Afghanestan Gato Satunko Adarah*, became a full-blown organisation with the help of the KGB. A scant 18 months later, Taraki’s successor Hafisullah Amin was unseated when the Soviets marched into Afghanistan.

After Soviet troops crossed the border into Afghanistan during Christmas 1979, the German daily newspaper *Hamburger Abendblatt* blazed the headline: “Western Secret Services have Lost Face” (January 22, 1980). But the accusation of not having foreseen the invasion did injustice to the BND. Not only the BND analyst named Böll, who was responsible for military analysis in Department III, but also his colleague within CADIZ, the political analysis unit, had already given word in due time of the intent of the Soviets to invade Afghanistan (Schmidt-Eenboom 1997). But their supervisor Schauer gave no credence to these reports. Schauer reported their observations to the then president of the BND Kinkel, who also in turn did not trust the analysts. Therefore, he decided not to pass on these observations to the Office of the Chancellor under Kohl. Yet, the German Government was already fully aware of the intentions of the Kremlin: Egon Bahr, their expert with a direct line to the KGB general Wjatscheslaw Keworkow, had already cued them in.

The Soviet invasion cut the direct line of the BND to Kabul. The privileged access to the partner service AMSEL collapsed after 1980, even though the BND chief Kinkel undertook various efforts in this direction. In spite of all these fruitless efforts, the BND did not want to stand on the sidelines as others jockeyed for positions on the intelligence playground of Afghanistan. The only problem was that the most important warlords had already pledged allegiance elsewhere. For instance: the most powerful warlord in the opposition forces, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was closely connected to the CIA, receiving financial and military support from the US. Meanwhile, his archenemy within the splintered oppositional movement, the legendary commander Masoud, had connected himself with the French secret service DGSE. Thus, the BND could only occupy a small niche in the broad spectrum of resistance groups amongst Maoist cells.

The German Government had already frozen relations with Afghanistan in September 1979, thus forcing the BND to seek other operational platforms and coalition partners. It proved expedient that the BND enjoyed excellent relations with Pakistan’s secret service ISI Inter-Intelligence Service, having provided weapons among other support to them since the 1960’s. The BND already maintained a station in the capital city of Islamabad, and a further one in

the harbour city of Karatschi; so now a another station was established in Peschavar, which was to be the focal point for the delivery of weapons, money and training in the BND's efforts to support the Mudschahedin with all available means in the covert war in Afghanistan. Jan Kleffel went to Islamabad as Station Chief for the BND in 1980; from here, he established contact to the Afghan warlords over the following four years. The German Special Forces GSG 9 trained holy warriors near Peschavar together with Egyptian and Saudi Arabian special units. Volunteers from several Arabian countries were trained and instructed not only in Chaman in Pakistan, but also in Bavaria (Schmidt-Eenboom 1997). The next BND station chief named Lötzerich trained Paschtuns in Peschavar how to blow up Soviet tanks during his stay from 1984 – 1989.

Yet, in spite of all these efforts, the BND did not succeed in quickly renewing the close ties to the Afghan secret service which it had once enjoyed. Only after the withdrawal of Soviet troops could the BND once again play a role in the war-torn country. When the Communist regime in Kabul disintegrated, it was hoped that the coalition of warlords would establish a pro-Western government, in which the BND could again find a place. As soon as the Soviet troops withdrew in 1989 as agreed, the BND closed down the station in Peschavar.

But following the Soviet troop withdrawal in 1989, the competing Muhajedin leaders started a bloody civil war which left 70% of the country in devastation. Claude Silberzahl, the head of DGSE from 1989 to 1993, described the situation in the Afghanistan capital at the time: "A few months after the collapse of Najibullah in 1992, a number of Western nations, which had resumed diplomatic relations with Afghanistan after the fall of the pro-Soviet regime, broke off relations again. Bitter fights broke out amongst the warring factions of the revolutionists, bitter, horrible and murderous. This is a town in its death throes, abandoned by the French representatives who were rescued by a DSGE special forces plane, which also took on the last European diplomats who had remained to the last at their posts" (Silberzahl 1995, 186). The bloody slaughter also raged amongst the secret service factions. The BND still had their contact on the ground: General Ghulam Faruk Yakubi, Head of the secret service WAD since 1989, who had received a German police academy training (intelligence online 6 November 1991). But he was murdered in 1990 under orders given by Masoud shortly after assuming office.

The civil war raged until 1994 when the Taliban, which had conquered the country from the South, took over power in Kabul the following year. According to two generals from the Communist Ministry for Security in Kabul, the Taliban had been shaped into a counter-power to the Afghan warlords as early as 1986 with the joint assistance of the Pakistan intelligence service ISI and the British MI 6. The Pakistan Minister of Information, Sherry Rehmann, admitted officially for the first time in August 2008 that some parts of the ISI sympathised with and supported radical Islamists, thus publicly acknowledging the accusations of the Afghan President Hamid Karzai (Süddeutsche Zeitung, 4 August 2008). In the same month, August 2008, the Head of the new secret service NDS, Amrullah Saleh, accused the entire leadership of the Pakistan establishment and army of systematically supplying fundamentalist warriors to Afghanistan – and provided evidence to underscore his claims (Der Spiegel 33/2008).

After September 2001, the Mullah Omar regime and the parallel regime of Osama bin Laden suffered military defeat at the hands of the US and the various NATO partners with their air offensive - as well as from the Northern Alliance and their troops in the field. In the first phase, lasting to December 2001, the leadership and logistic structure of the Taliban and Al-Qaida were destroyed; in the second phase, starting March 2002 and lasting to August 2002, special intelligence forces battled remnants of resistance within Operation Anaconda. Phase 3 of Operation Enduring Freedom, which lasted from September to December 2002, had as its goal the stabilisation of the new Afghan government and the establishment of control over the provinces (Weiße 2007, 47). Starting November 2001, the *Bundeswehr* took part in the Operation Enduring Freedom, at first only tasked with overseeing maritime traffic at the Horn of Africa.

Yet in spite of these small beginnings, the provisional Afghanistan government was actually born in Germany. The shape and form of that government were negotiated in December 2001 at Petersberg near Bonn. More than half of the top politicians assembled there were BND sources. This was especially evident in the person of the Defence Minister for the provisional government Mohamed Fahim. In the winter of 1994 Fahim travelled together with the future Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah to Munich, where he was tasked with gathering money to fund the war and also to observe rival groups. Before returning to the Panjir Valley in January 2001, both Fahim and Abdullah travelled a number of times between Germany and Russia where they deepened their relations to the KGB successor SWR (Schmidt-Eenboom 2002, 100).

Starting January 2002, German soldiers were also stationed in Afghanistan as part of the ISAF operation. The German Parliament stipulated a maximum troop strength of 3,500 in the Autumn of 2008, which was further increased by 1,300 at the end of the same year. The German KSK (Kommando Spezialkräfte = Special Forces) provided additional support to the US Army from the end of 2001 to summer 2003 in their search for Taliban fighters (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung FAZ 8 August 2008). The KSK was especially successful in performing tactical intelligence regarding terror structures. After the elite KSK soldiers were able to discover several small weapon caches in the Northern Afghanistan – the remit of the *Bundeswehr* - they were able to uncover a larger Taliban weapons depot in the province Jowzjan (about 120 kilometers west of Masar-i-Sharif) in July of 2008 together with the Afghan police. Here they discovered 1,100 mortar shells as well as propellant and ignition charges (DER SPIEGEL 32/2008).

After 9/11 the BND re-activated a number of retired agents with experience in Afghanistan in order to expand their pool of experts. A number of chiefs-of-station in Kabul had experience in Arabian states, such as Jens-Uwe Birk in Oman. The BND set up additional stations in Kunduz and Faisabad. Starting in 2000, the BND received 300 new staff from the *Bundeswehr*. A third of these soldiers were commissioned to strengthen the departments in charge of intelligence gathering in Afghanistan and the Balkans. The BND also worked under the cover of NGO's in Afghanistan (Gujer 2006, 89 and 266).

The BND now established close relations with the Afghanistan intelligence service NDS with its 15,000 agents and spies. The Head of Intelligence, Amrullah Saleh, in place since 2002, is

– according to a statement of a BND officer in August, 2008 – “very close” to the Germans. The close relations are based on the fact that the BND trained NDS officers, and that the SIGINT equipment in Kabul had been supplied by the Germans. The BND relies upon the NDS for a regular supply of intelligence on mutual foes, as well as ad-hoc assistance in the case of the kidnapping of German citizens (ddp 7 August 2008).

Since 1961, a commission staffed with representatives of the German Department of the Interior, the BKA (Federal Office of Criminal Investigation), and the BND, determines the nature and extent of police assistance granted to foreign states; the co-operation has an intelligence component, which in itself has been instrumental in helping the BND maintain relations to its Afghan counterparts despite the numerous regime changes. The elite German special forces GSG 9, which had been active in Kabul since December 2001, tread in the same footsteps. “German security experts hope in any case that co-operation between terrorists with those terrorists living in Germany can be clarified with the help of the GSG 9 troops in Afghanistan,” claims a German newspaper (FAZ 13 February 2002). In 2002, the Germans re-established their tradition of assisting the Afghan police force. Between 2002 and 2006 over 49 m EUR was spent to train the Afghan police force and to built up a 12,000 strong border troop (Bundestagsdrucksache 16/6839 23.10.2007, 10). Besides the delivery of 10,000 police cars, the focus was on training 4,000 elite troops at the police academy in Kabul, where about 40 German policemen are on duty (FAZ 1 March 2006). The US took over the training of 50,000 civil police (street patrols) in 4-week courses – whilst at the same time sharply criticizing the German focus of training. The US security expert Anthony Cordesmann of the Center for Strategic and International Studies concluded at the beginning of 2007 that Germany has failed as an international leader in police work in building up an effective police force in Afghanistan, and has wasted three years. But the German experts always claimed that their concept has an intended sustainability. Their hidden intention is “Germanising” the security apparatus by concentrating on training the elite, thus insuring the usual exchange of staff from police to intelligence services as of old. The German influence in this regard still remains predominant even after the German police assistance was carried out as a EU mission after 2008. The German influence apparently also moved President Karzai to at least remove a part of the corrupt police officers caste, said to be co-operating with the drug barons (FAZ 22 January 2007). The German Cabinet approved the doubling of the number of police within the EUPOL mission from 60 to 120, as well as increasing the number of police trainers from 14 to 20, whilst at the same time approving the further assignment of 45 German military police trainers (FAZ 25 September 2008).

Starting 10 February 2003, the Germans together with the Dutch took charge of the ISAF troops in Afghanistan. Joop van Reijn, until January 2003 director of the MIVD, the Dutch intelligence service, has presented a detailed account of the intelligence co-operation between these two countries for this period (van Reijn 2005). In advance of their joint mission, the two countries agreed to work closely and co-ordinate their activities. On the German side, there was much inter-agency competition amongst the BND, ANBw (Office for intelligence of the German Federal Armed Forces) and MAD (Military Counter-Intelligence Service), whereas the Dutch intelligence responsibility lay in the hands of one agency; therefore the Dutch MIVD took on the role of co-ordinator. As Turkey, their common predecessor in the

ISAF leadership, did not hand over intelligence nor provide contacts, both Germany and the Netherlands conducted a fact-finding mission in Afghanistan in October and November of 2002. Another joint preparatory measure consisted in the carrying out of a seminar on Human Intelligence, with the aim of developing an understanding for the different approaches. Lastly, the MIVD staged a meeting of all of the involved intelligence agencies in December 2003 in Den Haag in order to co-ordinate efforts.

At military headquarters in Potsdam, Germany, the J2 officer (enemy positions) of the Operational Command was responsible for operational intelligence. The BND did not meddle in this area, nor did it take part in any co-ordinating meetings. The Dutch had to take the initiative, maintaining regular exchanges. At the tactical level in Kabul, the corresponding J2 of the German-Dutch corps, a German colonel, had responsibility for intelligence tasks; he was responsible for a separate J2X team for counterintelligence, security and co-ordination of tactical HUMINT under the leadership of a Dutch Lieutenant Colonel, which also took on a MAD representative. The whole J2 team comprised around 20 soldiers hailing from nine different nations, of which half came from Germany. Since there were difficulties in permitting non-NATO members engaged in ISAF to use the NATO system BICES (Battlefield Intelligence Collection and Exploitation System) the *Bundeswehr* allowed the Dutch access to the JASMIN (Joint Analysis System Military Intelligence) system.

The ISAF commitment had six priorities which were to be supported by intelligence efforts: the political development in Afghanistan and Kabul, the control over the warlords in and about Kabul, demobilisation, disarming and re-integration of their troops, establishment of the police force and the new Afghan army, containment of forces inimical to the provisional government and the ISAF, and provision of timely warnings concerning threats and attacks. The ISAF intelligence team relied upon a broad spectrum of intelligence gathering methods: Strategic remote intelligence (COMINT) from the BND, tactical radio reconnaissance, drones and surveillance radar, patrols of the multinational Kabul Brigade, and, as the most important weapon in the intelligence arsenal, the implementation of seven Human Intelligence Teams (HUMINT) of NICs (National Intelligence Cells). These NICs included four Germans and one team member each from the Netherlands, Austria and Turkey. Major General Joop van Reijn bemoaned in his retrospective report the fact that only two nations – besides the Dutch, Germans, Austrians and Belgians – were prepared to align their NICs to the ISAF Headquarters. Five other nations were independently involved in intelligence operations within Afghanistan, following only the orders of their individual countries, which, as can be imagined, led to constant conflicts within their intelligence services.

In addition to these sources came intelligence from open sources and exchanges with the Afghan security agencies – from the newly installed National Security Assembly to the Security Directors at the Ministries of Defence and State, and beyond to the Kabul police, whose input was judged to be of little value due to rampant corruption. Further sources included the United Nations and their aligned organisations, NGOs and the embassies of the countries engaged in ISAF. According to van Reijn, after initial problems, an acceptable degree of co-operation was achieved, even with the American liaison officer .

Within Europe, the BND and MIVD exchanged information on a daily basis per telephone; once a week telephone conferences were held. Yet again, the Dutch intelligence services had

to actively solicit the participation of the *Bundeswehr*. A monthly meeting took place in the Dutch capital of Den Haag of all 12 ISAF countries on a political level. A total of 150 intelligence report summaries were written between February and August 2003; a further 65 were submitted on counterespionage, which concentrated for the most part on the steady increase in terrorist acts.

Even after Germany and the Netherlands handed over command of ISAF III, the Germans continued their intelligence work in a similar manner. In this scope, in 2004, two illegal actions were committed by two *Bundeswehr* agents. On 18 August, field agents in Kunduz questioned the family of Mohammed Wazir, who was being held in Guantánamo, falsely claiming to be part of a TV team of the private channel RTL. The soldiers turned in a three-page Intelligence Report for the G-2 officer of the German Provincial Reconstruction Team (ZDF-Politikmagazin Frontal-21 14 March 2006). The German government denied any such episode, including involvement in similar cases within the ISAF in December 2003 and March 2004.

More serious still were the breaches of law committed by MAD members. On June 7, 2003, four German soldiers were killed and a further 33 injured – some seriously - in a targeted attack on the *Bundeswehr* in Afghanistan. After a partner intelligence agency gave their German counterparts within ISAF indications of the involvement of a leading member of the “Hesb e Islami Gulbuddin“, the Afghan Ministry of the Interior allowed him and others to be arrested on the premises of a company. Three MAD soldiers took part in the interrogations of the 12 suspects between 27 May and 2 June 2004 whilst they were in police custody. “According to Paragraph 14 of the Laws governing the actions of the MAD dated 9 March 2004, it is not permissible for MAD members to take part in interrogations of prisoners outside of the *Bundeswehr* premises within the operational area,” stipulates a Report of the German Government (Bericht der Bundesregierung 25 January 2006, 115ff.).

On July 10, 2004 a team of BKA investigators arrived in Kabul, and, after a further four days, a BND team arrived. The German investigators conducted a total of 13 individual interrogations in the following week. A few pieces of evidence could be gathered, incriminating the company on whose premises the suspects were apprehended, but no proof of terrorist activities, so that all suspects were subsequently set free. But as a side effect of these interrogations, the BND procured information about three Afghan agents between 19 and 21 July 2004 regarding their preparations for an attack on ISAF forces, which were foiled when the perpetrators were arrested on the 28 and 29 of June 2004. The suspects were interrogated by Afghan investigators and the American FBI; and the plot, which was uncovered by the BND, had targeted the US forces. Nonetheless, another BND interrogation team arrived on the scene on 7 August to 1 September to conduct further questioning.

A shadow, however, was cast upon the co-operation of German intelligence with their American partners in Afghanistan due to the American torture practice. The then prevailing German Red/Green government and the German Intelligence heads vehemently claim to know nothing about this, however. But already at the start of 2002 a BND man with the cover name of OEHLING was operating from Kandahar. This BND agent had a CD stuffed with information on Afghan detainees which the American intelligence services had given him, and which he passed on to the German headquarters (tagesschau.de 10 April 2008).

The BND has also aligned itself with an intelligence partner in Afghanistan with a questionable record in regards to human rights: The Annual Report of Amnesty International in 2008 laments the fact that the NDS, whose authority is described in a classified document, arrests, irrogates, indicts and sentences suspects using arbitrary means. The Amnesty Report claims that “There are reports being continually received concerning torture and abuse of prisoners remanded by the NDS“ (ai 2008, 56).

Technical intelligence plays an important role in and above the crisis area in the Hindu Kush. In 2007, 200 German army specialists near Kandahar were tasked with tactical SIGINT (Österreichische Militärische Zeitschrift 2/2007, 212). But the signals intelligence proved to be more difficult than planned: For example, it appeared that the members of the Islamic Jihad Union, originating from Uzbekistan, who were conducting training near the Pakistan-Afghan border, were communicating with each other via the Internet and using a variety of cell phones. “The communication would be initiated using code words, such as ‘Test’ or ‘Gift’, which gave no indication of their real content,” the BND complained in January 2008 (Bundesnachrichtendienst 47A – 54-75-47A-0008/08 14 January 2008, 3).

In order to improve air intelligence 10 MRCA Tornado ECR were stationed at Masar-i-Sharif in April 2007 (Hannoversche Allgemeine 2.4.2007). In the summer of 2008, the US General John Craddock, NATO Commander for Europe and Afghanistan, also ordered AWACs (Airborne Warning and Command Systems) from the NATO base in Geilenkirchen for airborne observation within the ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). A third of the crew was provided by the *Bundeswehr*. But as the direct connection between ISAF and OEF assignments was politically awkward, the German Government attempted to delay agreement until September in an effort to tie the decision with the expected parliamentary resolution to extend the mandate in Afghanistan (DER SPIEGEL 31/2008). But France vetoed the decision due to the anticipated 60 – 90 m EUR yearly deployment costs; so the German Government in turn postponed further decisions concerning their own deployment plans on September 24, 2008, until another solution – other than a federally financed – could be found (FAZ 25 September 2008). In August 2008, technical intelligence was further extended when the remaining two of a total of five satellites of the type SAR-Lupe (Synthetic Aperture Radar) were launched, thus allowing Afghanistan to be covered six times a day by these satellites.

Back to politics: In Germany there was much debate in 2007 concerning the possibility of negotiating with representatives of the moderate Taliban in order to sever their connection with Al-Qaida. The then Chairman of the German SPD Party, Kurt Beck, gave his support to the inclusion of moderate Taliban in new peace negotiations, whereas the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the CDU MP Ruprecht Polenz, voiced his concern that this would “undermine our moral justification for a German and international engagement in Afghanistan” (DER SPIEGEL 34/2007).

But the BND had actually already attempted to bring in a moderate Taliban faction into negotiations in July, 2005, with the support of the German chancellor and with the knowledge of the US and France, using a middleman from Department 1 (HUMINT) in Afghanistan. Two members of the Taliban, who claimed to be part of the leading council of Quetta-Shura, were flown to Zurich, where they negotiated with a BND delegation for three days in the Hilton Airport Hotel. The BND delegation made an offer: The German government would

extend their civilian projects in Afghanistan if the Taliban were to sever relations to Al-Qaida. The negotiations broke down, however, when the two Afghans could not convincingly prove that they were acting in the name of Mullah Omar and his tribal council.

Karzai's position became jeopardised in April of 2007 when the United National Front was formed. This Front is actually nothing more than a remake of the coalition of unscrupulous warlords, which had joined forces against the Soviet occupiers and who were now even willing to accept former Communist politicians into their fold. The newly strengthened influence of Russian intelligence can be felt in these developments.

The United National Front is led by the former head of state Burhanuddin Rabbani, who was able to win over Prince Mustafa, the favourite grandson of Sacher Shah, to the cause. The actions of the United National Front had all the makings of a palace revolution against Karzai: included in the circle are the Vice President Achmed Zia Masoud (brother of the murdered folk hero), the Minister of Energy Ismail Khan (a former governor, often dubbed "The Lion of Herat"), the head of Parliament Yunus Qanuni, the chief of staff and Uzbek general Raschid Dostum, as well as the former Minister of Defence Mohammed Fahim. Both the former general Olumi, once Nadschibullah's Head of the Army in Kandahar, and Sayyid Mohammed Gulabzoi, who in 1978 was one of the leaders of the coup which ousted Mohammed Daud and later was Minister of the Interior during the Communist rule, embody the re-awakened Russian influence in the Hindu Kush. (DER SPIEGEL 20/2007). The United National Front declares its goal as being the elimination of the presidential system and the election of governors, and thus the steering the country towards a lawless void.

At the beginning of June 2008, Karzai used an interview to criticize the brutal commanders of the civil war, who were now being coddled by the foreign helpers. Without naming names nor indicating which country he meant, mentioning only that "it is a close friend and ally", Karzai painted a picture of the dirty deals; he used the commander Nasir Mohammed from the province of Badakshan – where German troops are stationed – as an example. "We wanted to arrest a really nasty warlord but were prevented in doing so, because he is protected by a certain country. We discovered that they are paying him 30,000 \$ a month to keep him on their side. They even employ his soldiers as guards." (DER SPIEGEL 23/2008). But even attempts to remove corrupt officials have met with little success. The Dutch encountered difficulties after asking Karzai to remove the governor of the Province of Uruzgan, as himself a member of the Popalzai tribe. Even after losing his political office, the tribal chief Dschan Mohamen Chan still was exercising his control in 2008, using a "security firm", which he had privately founded, as a cover.

Joop van Reijn gave his estimate of the political situation in Hindu Kush in 2005: He saw the growing violence and the increasing drug trade as a cause for concern. He hoped, however, that Karzai could employ a policy of "divide and conquer" in the tribal culture with success. Yet he foresaw the likely outcome as being more or less a "muddling through", which would therefore require the presence of the ISAF for a number of years. (Reijn, van 2007, 230f.). Yet, even this estimate has proven to be too optimistic.

The Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington counted 7,072 attacks for the period 1 January to 4 November 2006 – as compared to 2,825 in the previous year (FAZ

22.1.2007). Even the Vice President for Military Affairs of the BND, Major General Georg Freiherr von Brandis, painted a dismal picture of the security situation on February 5, 2008 in Berlin: It has not been possible to establish the central government in Kabul as a state power throughout the country, even in the northern territories, where the *Bundeswehr* were stationed, and the situation posed comparatively fewer threats. Even the hard-won partial inroads, he warned, were eminently in danger of failing, should it not be possible to assert the role of the State. Furthermore, von Brandis lamented the fact that even yet there was no functioning economy, so that drug trafficking remained the largest business. In 2007, 93% of the total world's opium harvest came from Afghanistan (<http://www.hss.de/11305>).

The BND has not confined its intelligence efforts over the years to the territory marked by the Afghanistan borders, instead, the hotbed of international terrorism has remained a primary focus. This encompasses the murky border areas with, on the one side, the southern and south-eastern provinces of Afghanistan, which are well outside the pall of influence of the Afghan government, and, on the other side, neighbouring Pakistan, where virtually independent and uncontrollable emirates have developed in the Federal Administered Tribal Areas or the Region around Swat. These areas, light-years away from the influence of Kabul or Islamabad, are often dubbed *Talibanistan*, now a conglomerate of "local commanders, self-defence bands, tribal militia troops, drug gangs, unemployed youths or common street bandits" (Scheerer 2008, 22).

"Talibanistan" is not only fertile soil for home-grown terrorism or a retreat for Al Qaida troops caught in the crossfire of intelligence agencies, but is also the area favoured for training potential Jihadists from Europe, who would later target their countries of origin. In mid-August 2008, the President of the BKA, Jörg Ziercke, put the number of Al-Qaida advocates from Germany with training in the Afghan-Pakistan border area at 50 (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* 11 August 2008).

Perhaps the most significant piece of evidence for the danger posed by *Talibanistan* as the launch-pad for terrorists threatening Germany, was the roundup of the terror cell surrounding the German Islamic converts Fritz Gelowicz and Daniel Schneider, together with the Turkish citizen Adem Yilmaz on September 4, 2007 in Sauerland, a Western province in Germany. Two of the three had not only participated in a training camp in Pakistan in the Spring of 2006, but the convert cell also operated a proper travel bureau which was instrumental in helping 20 – 30 Jihadists to go into hiding (FOCUS 13/2008).

The Sauerland cell received instruction from the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), which had been established in Uzbekistan in November 2001; the group had first attracted international attention at the end of July 2004 after a number of suicide missions. An expert opinion provided by the BND for the German Attorney General, dated January 2008, offers insights on the actual status of intelligence concerning the IJU, which differs in quality from the vague terror warnings often fed to the press (Bundesnachrichtendienst 54-75-47A-0008/08 14 January 2008).

The six-page classified report elaborated: "The IJU is headed by the Uzbek citizen Nashmiddin Zhalolov, born 1972. His deputy is the Uzbek Suhail Buranov, born 1983 ... The training in Pakistan more than likely took place in the area around Mir Ali. According to our intelligence, the training camps were generally used by a variety of groups (e.g. Taliban, al

Quaida). But it appears that the IJU also maintained a number of its own camps ... The training is very comprehensive and includes instruction on forgery, conspirative behaviour, and the use of weapons and explosives.” The BND had detailed knowledge of the smuggling of terror suspects, starting in 2005, where the terror aspirants had left Europe, crossed Iran, and reached Pakistan. The BND had identified the Uzbek Gofir Salimov as the most important human trafficker in this regard. The paper states that the BND had analysed the press releases of the IJU and had obtained knowledge about their financing through organised crime channels. The expert opinion takes a stand on the central question of the relation between the IJU and Al-Qaida: “At present, we have reached the conclusion that the contacts between al-Qaida and the IJU are managed by Abu Laith al-Libl together with Zhalolov. According to our most recent intelligence, Zhalolov not only receives advice and financial support for the organisation and execution of terror attacks from Abu Laith al-Libl, but he also takes direct orders from him.”

But Ikrom Yakubov, a former officer of the Uzbek secret Service SNB, claims that the IJU was founded by the same agency (ARD-Magazin MONITOR 26. September 2008). He is currently seeking political asylum in the UK. He asserts that the Uzbek government under Karimov organised terror attacks within Uzbekistan, in order to justify their harsh treatment of the population and to qualify as a partner within the worldwide anti-terror coalition. One of the measures taken, he says, was the establishment of the IJU. The bombings in Tashkent in the Spring of 2004, which the IJU claimed as being of their own making, were actually, according to Jakubov, staged by the SNB.

The BND President has long decried the “Iraqisation” of the conflict in Afghanistan, but his representatives on the ground in Kabul have made exactly this claim in August 2008. They provide evidence of “developments along the same pattern we have seen in Iraq.” After the Americans routed the Al-Qaida fighters out of Iraq, these same terror groups seeped into Afghanistan. “They will attempt to capture global attention by kidnapping soldiers in an attempt to force the withdrawal of ISAF troops,” declared the BND expert (ddp 7 August 2008).

Further developments may be more bleak: Karzai could lose his power in 2009 to a coalition of former warlords. The NATO would then be squeezed between Scylla and Charybdis: Either it strives for a sort of cohabitation with the war criminals and relinquishes any hope of democratisation, disarmament of private armies and the end of drug cultivation – in which case the war has been lost morally. Or NATO takes on the warlords in order to prevent a failed state – then the war is militarily lost.

In the realm of intelligence, the BND would lose in any case – for two reasons: Firstly, the BND persists in underestimating the professionalism and strength of the Taliban intelligence structures, especially those of Gulbuddin Hecmatyar. Secondly, the BND is confronting an enemy it has never been a match for: Russian intelligence.

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