
RETIRED EGYPTIAN COUNTERTERRORISM EXPERT SPEAKS ON ISLAMIC MILITANT TACTICS

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Understanding how other nations cope with terrorism is an ongoing learning process that has taken on immense importance as the United States pursues the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).

In 1996, Egyptian Journalist Karam Khabr, of the Arabic intellectual and former leftist magazine *Rose-el-Youssef*, assisted General Fuad Alam who spent over three decades investigating Islamic militants, rising to Chief of Religious (Militant) Affairs in Egypt's Interior Ministry, the section of national security investigations. A police officer by training, General Alam has combated violence perpetrated by the Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian Islamic Jihad (EIJ), Al-Takfir Wal Hijrah (Excommunication and Migration) and the Gamaa Al-Islamyiah (The Islamic Group aka IG).

His book entitled *Al-Sadat Al-Mabahith Wal Ikhwan* (translated as *Sadat, Investigators and the Brotherhood*. Cairo, Egypt; Dar-al-Khiyal Press, 1996) offers rare insights into the person Ikhwan leader Omar Al-Tilmissany calls the king of interviewers or interrogators. General Alam considers Tilmissany the long-range strategist of the Muslim Brotherhood, who put forth a 50-year political, economic, and social plan that included infiltrating unions, colleges, and schools to formulate a mass movement against the Egyptian government. Although in Arabic, it offers American military readers an opportunity to draw from Alam's wisdom in dealing with urban militant movements that have plagued Egypt since the Muslim Brotherhood attempted to assassinate Egyptian leader Nasser in 1954. It is these urban tactics used in the assassination of Sadat, and the incitement in southern Egypt that followed Sadat's murder that are employed by Baath loyalists and Islamic militants in Iraq today. Those interested in Islamic militancy must devote time to understanding Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood which is a template used to organize such groups as Hamas, the Sudanese National

Islamic Front and many other jihadist organizations.

General Alam served under every Interior Minister the Egyptian Republic has produced, from Zachariah Moheiddine in 1957 to Hassan Al-Alfy in the nineties. In 1963, Interior Minister Abdul-Azeem Fahmy dispatched General Alam to Yemen on a 90-day mission to advise two governors in the pacification of their provinces.

Nasser and Islamist Expectations

When the Free Officers Movement took power in June 1952, overthrowing the monarchy of King Farouk, there was an expectation by the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwan Al-Muslimoon) that Nasser would create an Islamic government. However, the Egyptian leader knew that the majority of Muslim Egyptians and the Coptic Christians who represent under 20 percent of Egypt's population would not accept living under the radical Islamist vision espoused by the Ikhwan. He compromised and offered them senior positions in religious affairs but was rebuffed. According to Alam this led to no less than 11 attempts on Nasser's life from 1954 to 1970. The most infamous was the 1954 assassination attempt in the Manshieh District of Alexandria, which was heard by millions of Egyptians listening to Nasser as he was giving a speech. Nasser retaliated by having seven condemned to death and generating 864 civil cases, 254 military cases and the detention of 2,943 Ikhwan members and affiliates.

Alam discusses several assassination attempts on Nasser that were both creative and sophisticated. In 1965, the Ikhwan was able to recruit a member of the Presidential Security (Police) Unit, Ismail Al-Fayoumi, a sharpshooter, to await Nasser's arrival at Cairo International Airport and assassinate him as he returned from his trip to Moscow. The discovery of the sniper through informants and the eventual apprehension of Al-Fayoumi did not occur until 30 minutes prior to Nasser's plane landing.

General Alam feels it was sheer luck that this attempt was foiled.

A second attempt in 1965 included detonating a truck as Nasser's presidential railcar passed by as he went from Cairo to Alexandria. Upon discovering the bomb, it was determined that the detonation device was radio-controlled. A third attempt involved a sophisticated analysis of bottlenecks in Alexandria, as Nasser's motorcade went from Mamoura to Ras-El-Tin Palace. This plot involved placing two hit squads at what is now the Sheraton Montazah and a (third) second hit-squad at a bottleneck along Sidi Bishr Boulevard. After the 1967 Six-Day War, an elaborate plot to kill Nasser was discovered as he visited the city of Suez. This attempt involved Egyptian investigators using primitive bugging devices against the perpetrators instead of immediately staging arrests. Although the device malfunctioned, it revealed an elaborate trail in which Egyptians were recruited in Saudi Arabia during their visit to Mecca as they performed the Hajj pilgrimage.

Aboud Al-Zummur and the Sadat Assassination

It is important for readers to gain an appreciation that Sadat's assassination on October 6, 1981, (while he was amidst the Egyptian armed forces conducting a pass and review parade) was part of a wider plot to overthrow the Egyptian government. It also was meticulously planned. General Alam focuses on aspects of the events of October 1981 that if successful could have spun out of control after Sadat's murder. According to the book, as Sadat rode to the reviewing stand, one of the conspirators, Lieutenant Colonel Aboud Al-Zummur (Intelligence Officer), ordered one of his soldiers to provide pastries laced with drugs to a battalion responsible for the security of Defense Minister Abu-Gazala. The soldier was to tell the battalion that Zummur was offering the sweets as he was blessed with a new child. Upon Sadat's murder a group of

Islamic militants would raid their base and take their weapons and armored vehicles. Alam narrates that it was luck that the pastries were prepared the evening of October 5th and contained high levels of disabling drugs that caused them to taste sour. Only one soldier died as a result of this operation, as other members of the battalion refused to eat the pastries due to their taste.

Al-Zummar knew something was wrong when at an appointed time 30 minutes after the Sadat assassination, the group that was supposed to raid the armory never showed up at Cairo's Tahreer Square. This was to be the start of a series of takeovers in and around Cairo of the television, radio stations, and key ministries. A prepared revolutionary statement was found with Al-Zummar. Key Cairo mosques were programmed to announce the coming of a new Islamic revolution in Egypt. Upon Sadat's murder, the Egyptian government enacted Plan 100 to secure Cairo from such a scenario. It involved mobilizing forces to key ministries, protecting key officials, and cordoning off parliament, and Cairo Radio and TV.

Alam recalls some of the lessons learned from the Sadat assassination. He criticizes Interior Minister Nabawi Ismail for not having access to communications at the reviewing stand. He could have directed and commanded police and security forces from the murder site instead of being driven to the Interior Ministry and wasting precious time. The author also notes the warning signs before Sadat's assassination that included the apprehension of Islamic militants affiliated to EIJ that attempted to rob a safe of the Cairo postal authority. Witnesses were let go and leads not followed up, but Alam believes this group was attempting to secure funds for the attempted coup that followed after Sadat's murder. Three hours before Sadat's murder, Ahmed Mohammed Al-Aswani appeared at the Al-Saahil Investigative Office; this upset the office chief Mohammed Idris, who considered Al-Aswani an important internal source on EIJ and did not want to be seen with him. Aswani informed Idris that Sadat would be killed that day at the reviewing stand. Idris attempted to call Interior Minister Ismail, but he and his staff were incommunicado, either preparing for the pass and review or watching the parade. October 6 is a national holiday in Egypt, commemorating the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. Al-Aswani attempted to have it both ways: by turning informant he took out insurance on the failure of the operation. Idris said that if four third class guards from central security had been placed in front of Sadat they could have protected the president.

Another criticism of Alam's: after Nasser escaped an attempt on his motorcade in Port Said, the policy was to change the President's movements and itinerary 30 minutes before an event to ensure his safety. This was not done on October 6, 1981, the day Sadat was killed. After Sadat's assassination, Alam argued with his chain of command for the need to infiltrate extremist Islamist organizations in order to gain the quality human intelligence particularly needed in uncovering the military cells that succeeded in killing Sadat. His ideas were not listened to and during the first two years, roundups were the order of the day.

Essam Al-Qamary Group

Mentioned in Ayman Al-Zawahiri's 2002 book *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, Lieutenant Colonel Essam Al-Qamary was a tank commander who participated in the 1973 Yom-Kippur War and ended up being an important militant leader in the Islamic

Jihad terrorist group. It was Al-Qamary who collected weapons and stored them in several locations in Cairo in preparation for the 1981 revolt that would follow Sadat's assassination. According to the author, Al-Qamary was stopped and questioned in September 1981; fearing police, he managed to escape, leaving behind his bag which contained weapons and papers that tipped off authorities. Alam writes that Egyptian investigators focused on terrorist operations perpetrated by members of the armed forces and made several attempts to capture Al-Qamary to learn more of what they considered a military conspiracy against the regime.

Officers like Al-Qamary and Al-Zummar used their combat training learned on active duty to train other Islamic militants in Egypt in combat planning, urban guerilla tactics and effective means of destroying objectives. Among the techniques used by Egypt's counter-terrorism units to catch Al-Qamary:

- o Informants and human intelligence gathering.
- o The cordoning off of several city blocks, which Al-Qamary narrowly escaped.
- o Discovering where Al-Qamary attended his Friday prayers and setting a trap; his followers noted unfamiliar faces praying and alerted him.
- o The Al-Qamary case brought with it a closer coordination between Egypt's General Intelligence Service (EGIS) and Department of Military Intelligence (DMI), which afterwards worked together to catch terrorists.

Montasser Al-Zayat and the Plot to Break Al-Zummar Out of Military Prison

Montasser Al-Zayat is a jihadist lawyer who intimately knew Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Today he publicly renounces his former associate and his tactics. His Arabic book *Zawahiri As I Knew Him*, published in 2002, is perhaps the best autobiography of Al-Qaeda's second in command. Before the end of 1981, Al-Zayat assisted Al-Zummar and his group in their escape from Cairo's military prison. The plot involved prisoners destroying their beds and using the wood and sheets to manufacture a ladder. Bombs were made using smuggled items like matchboxes, sulfur, razor blades, marbles and nails. These primitive bombs were to be used to hold guards hostage; and the items to make the bombs were indeed smuggled into the military prison. The plan was discovered; amazingly it was not just to set Al-Zummar and his group free, but to proceed to the prison armory and take over weapons, armored vehicles and tanks to foment an Islamic revolution.

Little known History of the Muslim Brotherhood

Established in 1928 by Hassan Al-Banna, the Ikhwan Al-Muslimeen began as a social organization that in time would become a mechanism to impose the Salafist brand of Islam on Egypt. Hassan Al-Banna would model his organization along the lines of the Young Muslim Men Association (YMMA) but his motive was to address the dismantlement of the Caliphate in 1924 by Kemal Attaturk (*Read the November-December 2003 edition of Military Review that focuses on the evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood*). By 1932, Al-Banna convened his 5th Ikhwan Conference and announced his intent to enter Egypt's political fray; his organization had to choose whether they would support

the Royalists of King Fuad, or the Wafdists of Saad Zaghlul. This book goes into the crucial period after World War II, in which the Ikhwan politically competed with the Wafd (The Delegation) and Misr-Al-Fatat (Young Egypt) political parties. Al-Banna seemed to support the royalists, at first filling King Fuad with dreams of becoming the next Caliph and Commander of the Faithful, a position occupied by the Ottomans and which was abolished by Kemal Attaturk in 1924. The Ikhwan would only cease its support of the monarchy after the February 1942 incident in which Sir Miles Lampson, atop an armored vehicle and having the palace surrounded by British tanks, gave King Farouk an ultimatum to form a pro-British government.

Alam writes that the Ikhwan began to apply the label of apostasy more freely on Egyptians starting in 1948 as a means of wresting control from the other political parties in Egypt. The problem of political violence would be exacerbated when the Ikhwan sent a few thousand fedayeen to the 1948 Arab-Israeli War; that polarized the organization, making it more violent and leading to assassinations of Egyptian political figures that ultimately led to the demise of Al-Banna at the hands of Egypt's secret police in 1949. The most revealing aspect of Alam's book are two pages that implicate Hassan Al-Banna in a plot to kill the 80-year old Imam Yahya of Yemen as a means of establishing an Islamic state with several Yemeni ministers. Their plans were rendered useless when Imam Yahya died of natural causes and was succeeded by his son.

The Brotherhood Splits into Three Factions

After the failed assassination of Nasser in 1954, the Egyptian strongman bore down on the Muslim Brotherhood. Many fled to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf and would later reemerge in the 1970s, but those who stayed in Egypt saw the Islamist organization split into three elements. The most violent, the Qutbists named after Sayed Qutb would form an ideological foundation of today's Islamic militants. The following is the breakdown of the three main factions:

o *Al-Banaeeun (The Bannaists)*: Named after Hassan Al-Banna, the original founders of the Muslim Brotherhood. They advocated the status-quo and social work as a means of attracting Egyptians to their ranks.

o *Al-Hudabeeun (The Hudaibeeists)*: Named after the Supreme Guide of the brotherhood during Nasser and Sadat's period, Hassan Al-Hudaibee. They espoused a new vision of working within the framework of Egypt's constitution and government system to gain power in parliament, unions and guilds as well as within the universities and schools.

o *Al-Qutbeeun (The Qutbists)*: The new young faction of the Muslim Brotherhood who preached that the Egyptian regime was in an anti-Islamic state of jahiliyah (pre-Islamic ignorance) and that waging jihad on the state was the only means of cleansing Egypt of sin. They were stimulated by the writings of Sayid Qutb and held up his book *Maalim (Guideposts)* as the strategy the Muslim Brotherhood must adopt.

Alam witnessed 37 court cases that centered on the ideas of apostasy, militancy and intolerance incubated by Sayid Qutb in Cairo's prisons from 1954 until his execution in 1966. Understanding the divisions within the organization was a priority for Alam so as to sow dissension among the Muslim Brothers and focus efforts on violent factions.

Inside Sayid Qutb

There are a few works that form a central core of ideology for today's Islamic militants. To truly understand Al-Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hamas and many other radical organizations and personalities it is vital to spend time reading Sayid Qutb's *Maalim Fee Al-Tareeq (Guideposts Along the Road, hereafter referred to as Maalim)* and his 15 volume *Fee Zhilal Al-Quran (In the Shade of the Quran)*. As a law-enforcement official who combats Islamic militants in Egypt, Alam devotes large sections of his book to Qutb and has healthy respect for his writings and the violent influence he has had on the Muslim Brotherhood.

Alam's book assumes that the reader understands the basic philosophy of Qutb, of which most Egyptians have a rudimentary knowledge. Most Islamists have only read his shorter *Maalim*, not his 15-volume analysis of the entire Quran. As such Alam's description of the psychological operation campaigns and ideological discrediting of Qutb centers on his smaller book *Maalim*.

The author writes that sections of Qutb's writings were smuggled out of prison by his family members and given to Zainab Al-Ghazally, who led the women's section of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qutb essentially applied the theories of the 13th century Islamic radical Taqi Bin Taymiyyah who declared that even though the Mongols had accepted Islam they did not practice Islamic law and preferred their own tribal or Yasa laws, and should therefore be declared apostates and subjected to jihad until they accepted Shariah (Islamic law). Qutb applied these theories on the Egyptian government and added a new concept declaring that the state was living in *jahiliyah* (a reference to pre-Islamic ignorance) and only jihad would save the state. Qutb was also stimulated by the writings of Pakistani jihadist ideologue Abu Ala Al-Mawdudi, who postulated that jihad would establish an Islamic state in India.

Qutb's writings first found a following among Muslim Brotherhood prisoners and then spread to the young members of the organization who saw in them a call for violent action. Alam writes that Hassan Al-Hudaybee, Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, went to see Qutb and warned him that his theories would split the organization. With the encouragement of Egyptian internal security, Al-Hudaybee published a rebuttal to *Maalim* entitled *Duaah Wa Lasna Qudah* [Proselytizers and not Judges (of Muslims)]. Qutb had always been involved in conspiracies to overthrow the Egyptian government; in 1953 he allied the Muslim Brotherhood with Wafdists and Communists to form a Revolutionary Rejection Front that came close to ousting Nasser in March 1953. Qutb would spend most of his adult life in Cairo's prisons, where he undertook the majority of his Islamic radical writings. He would be implicated in another plot to overthrow the government in 1965 and was hanged in 1966. Alam was present at his execution and witnessed a man who believed he was going to his death a great Muslim scholar. Qutb threatened that his execution would cause a revolution in Egypt and the Arab Muslim world. Qutb's ideology so worried Egyptian authorities, that another Muslim Brotherhood leader, Omar Al-Tilmissany, was approached by authorities to curb Qutb's violent appeal among the newer generation of Muslim

Brotherhood members.

Zainab Al-Ghazally, the leader of the female branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, was the vehicle used by Qutb to disseminate his notes, 20 pages at a time. She proceeded to Beirut after Qutb's death and had his writings published in book form in 1974. This is the volume most in use by militants today.

Mustafa Mahshoor: A Portrait of Violent Action

Qutb was primarily a proponent of conspiracies and violent ideology. Among the persons who have embraced violence as a means for political or social change is Mustafa Mahshoor. He was the earliest Ikhwan member to form secret military cells for the organization in the 1930s. Coming to the attention of Egyptian police in 1948, it was discovered he was acquiring surplus military hardware from British sources including jeeps for a clandestine Ikhwan Army. It is likely the Ikhwan Fedayeen sent to the first Arab-Israeli war were armed through Mahshoor's efforts. He believed the only way for the Muslim Brotherhood to dominate the other two political parties (Wafd and Misr Al-Fatat) was through violence. He was among those who planned the assassination of Prime Minister Nookrashi Pasha in 1948.

When the 1952 Revolution toppled King Farouk, there was a brief period in which Nasser's Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) encouraged its officers to join the Ikhwan. It became clear that the Ikhwan attempted to take control of the revolution and not work with the Free Officers Movement. From 1953 to 1954, the Ikhwan and RCC relationship deteriorated into a battle for control of Egypt through its youth. When imprisoned in 1954, Qutb organized violent prison riots forcing the Egyptian government to move him to an open oasis camp surrounded by desert.

The Cairo Airport Plot: Among the boldest plots revealed in Mahshoor's 1965 trials is an operation eerily similar to September 11th, a plan by Qutbists to draft Egypt Air pilots and use them to crash their planes into Cairo International Airport. The two pilots, Yahya Hussein and Mohammed Ghanaam, were members of the violent faction of the brotherhood and sought to recruit more pilots. A third pilot escaped to Sudan. It is important to pause and realize that Alam's book was written in 1996, five years before the events of September 11th. Reading this particular passage one cannot help but wonder if Ayman Al-Zawahiri gave this idea to Osama bin Laden.

Discovery of Mahshoor's Weapons Stash: In 1965, 11 years after the 1954 trials ended, investigators uncovered quantities of weapons stored in locations varying from holes in the ground to apartments and warehouses. Authorities found weapons in Ismailiyah, Al-Shamaliyah, Mukatam Hills and Hilwan. Some of the weapons were World War II surplus. In one instance, an 8-year old girl helped Egyptian police uncover the Ismailiyah weapons cache.

Mahshoor's Activities After His Release in 1971: Mahshoor would be released as part of an amnesty granted by Sadat on imprisoned Ikhwan members. He focused his activities on managing the Islamic fundamentalist youth movement and coordinating Ikhwan centers outside Egypt. He would be implicated in the September 5, 1981, weapons smuggling case that preceded Sadat's murder and would remain in exile outside

Egypt, traveling between Ikhwan centers in Germany, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and London. Alam writes that Mahshoor would eventually return to Egypt where he would live during Mubarak's regime.

1971: Alam Comments on the Low Point in Egypt's Internal Security

Alam is highly critical of Sadat in 1971, the year in which he declared himself Raiees Al-Mumineen (President of the Faithful) and set about distinguishing himself from his charismatic predecessor Gamal Abdul-Nasser. Sadat proceeded to use the Ikhwan as a means of countering Nasserists and Communists who were determined to unseat him from power. Alam and Egypt's internal security apparatus were reined in as Sadat released dozens of militants, including the violent Mustafa Mahshoor. Police investigators watched and could hardly touch those who called for resistance against authorities.

During this period some Ikhwan exiles of 1954, who lived in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf became millionaires, people like Abdul-Azeem Luqman. Many began to finance terror acts in Egypt and established centers like the Islamic Center in Geneva, Switzerland whose mission was to revive Ikhwan activities in Egypt. Salim Azzam, head of Muslim Brotherhood activities in London, financed the activities of Ayman Al-Zawahiri. The exiles of 1954 pooled massive financial resources from the Persian Gulf and established the Al-Taqwa Bank in the Bahamas that laundered funds and financed terror activities primarily in Egypt. Alam also discusses a meeting many of these exiles had during Sadat's binge with religiosity which led to these developments. This resulted in a summit during the late '70s that brought together Egyptian Islamic Jihad, Gamaa Al-Islamiyah, and several Salafist groups. They settled on a detailed plan to rid Egypt of Sadat and proceed with dividing governance amongst themselves.

Final Comments

Alam writes that since the 1965 trials of Muslim Brotherhood members and the plot to destroy Cairo airport using Egypt Air commercial planes, Egypt realized that cooperation among defense, interior and the two intelligence agencies (military and general) was needed to combat terrorism. He also warns that this war cannot be fought only through military means and police investigation; an ideological war must occur to reveal the faulty religious logic behind Qutb and other ideologues whose sole purpose is to cause anarchy in order to usurp power and create a theocracy that has little room for the various practices of Islam or, much less, the non-Muslim world at large. Recently published works by retired Arab officials such as General Alam which deal with Islamic militancy should be carefully analyzed. These works discuss and analyze tactics and methods used by terrorists and the possibility of increasing lethality brought about by the information age and potential access to weapons of mass destruction.

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