

4 Producers

4.1 Iraqi Insurgent Groups

4.1.1 Islamic State of Iraq (ISI/Al-Qaeda)

ISI/Al-Qaeda was previously known as the **Mujahidin Shura Council**; **Al-Qaeda Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers** (Tanzim Al-Qa'idah fi Bilad Al-Rafidayn); and the **Monotheism and Jihad Group** (Jama'at Al-Tawhid wa Al-Jihad). All three predecessor organizations were led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, who was killed by multinational forces in June 2006. The "establishment" of the **Islamic State of Iraq** took place in October 2006, in all likelihood as an attempt to "Iraq-ize" a group with a large and prominent contingent of foreign fighters.

➤ **Who they are:** Known in Western media as **Al-Qaeda in Iraq**, the **Islamic State of Iraq** by its own account was established in October 2006 as a counter to the Kurdish region and the Shi'ite south, and purportedly includes the **Mujahidin Shura Council** and other groups. The "state's" media wing pledged to impose Islamic law on the inhabitants of the areas it claims to govern. The group is led by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, whom the Iraqi government claimed to have killed on May 1.¹ Although **ISI/Al-Qaeda** falls under the general ideological rubric of **Al-Qaeda**, it operates with considerable independence, and it is not at all clear that the **Al-Qaeda** central leadership, in whatever form it currently exists, is capable of exerting operational control or influence over **ISI/Al-Qaeda**.

➤ **Ideology:** **ISI/Al-Qaeda** adheres to a hard-line jihadist-Salafist ideology, including the strict imposition of Islamic law and a view of jihad as a global struggle between faith and unbelief.

➤ **Who they target:** The group has vowed to fight both multinational forces, Iraqi forces, and Shi'ite militias; it has also targeted civilians in several instances since 2003. It views the Shi'a as heretics.

¹ See *RFE/RL Newslines*, May 3, 2006.

➤ **Area of operations:** Al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din, Ninawah, and parts of Babil and Wasit governorates.

➤ **Media Production Logo:**



4.1.2 Mujahidin Army in Iraq

➤ **Who they are:** Active in Iraq since 2004, the group claims to comprise solely Iraqi fighters, some of whom once served in the Iraqi Army under Saddam Hussein. Its members, however, claim no loyalty to Hussein or the Ba'ath Party's "infidel creed." The group's official spokesman is Sheikh Abd al-Rahman al-Qaysi. It claims to reject national reconciliation or negotiations with the U.S. or Iraqi governments.

Al-Qaysi told *Al-Jazeera* television in a November 2006 interview that the founding members of the group were part of an underground religious movement prior to the 2003 war. They foresaw the fall of the regime and planned accordingly, seizing weapons and equipment from abandoned Iraqi Army positions.

➤ **Ideology:** A Sunni jihadist-Salafist group whose primary goal is to drive "occupation" forces from Iraq and install an Islamic government adhering to Shari'a law.

➤ **Who they target:** U.S. and Iraqi forces, and other "tools" of the occupation. Al-Qaysi has said that the group does not target civilians, including Shi'ite civilians.

➤ **Area of operations:** Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Diyala, and Salah Al-Din Governorates.

➤ **Media Production Logo:**



The Mujahidin Army in Iraq, which includes many former Hussein-era officers, claims to have anticipated the current conflict by seizing and stockpiling equipment abandoned by Hussein's army.

4.1.3 Islamic Army in Iraq (IAI)

► **Who they are:** Purportedly established in 2002 before the U.S.-led invasion as an underground organization, the **IAI** was proclaimed in May 2003. The group, which is purely Iraqi, claims to be bigger than **IS/Al-Qaeda**. It includes former members of the Iraqi Army not loyal to the Ba’ath Party. It supports negotiations with the United States if certain conditions are met, including a timetable for the withdrawal of troops, and recognition of the legitimacy of the resistance rather than the portrayal of fighters as terrorists. It claims to hold no hostility toward Iraqi Shi’a, but sees Iran as a major threat to Iraq. Spokesmen include Ibrahim al-Shammari, Ali al-Nu’aymi, and Imad Abdallah. Al-Shammari stated in an April 11, 2007, interview with *Al-Jazeera* that the group has killed approximately 25,000 U.S. and coalition soldiers.

► **Ideology:** The group’s primary goal is to drive coalition forces from Iraq. It also seeks to eliminate Iranian influence in Iraq. Only then, and once other conditions are met, will it seek the establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq based on Shari’a law.

► **Who they target:** Coalition and Iraqi forces and Shi’ite militias supported by Iran. The **IAI** says it does not target civilians, unless they are working in support of the United States, Iran, or the Iraqi government. It permits attacks on oil installations and other vital infrastructure.

► **Area of operations:** Although it claims to be everywhere in Iraq, the group mainly operates in Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Diyala, and Salah Al-Din governorates.

► **Media Production Logo:**



4.1.4 Ansar Al-Sunnah Army (previously Ansar Al-Islam)

► **Who they are:** **Ansar Al-Sunnah** describes itself as an army of jihadists, scholars, and political and military experts dedicated to creating an Islamic state in Iraq. An outgrowth of the terrorist group **Ansar Al-Islam**, the army, established in September 2003, purportedly acts as an umbrella organization for several smaller jihadist groups. It is led by Abu Abdallah al-Hasan Ibn Mahmud. Comprised of both Iraqi and Sunni Arab (foreign) fighters, the group does not believe in “man-made laws” or democracy, and rejects negotiations with the United States and the Iraqi government.

► **Ideology:** The group seeks the establishment of an Islamic state in Iraq adhering to Shari’a law.

► **Who they target:** U.S. and Iraqi forces, including Kurdish peshmerga, and those that work for them, as well as Shi’ite militias.

► **Area of operations:** Mosul, Baghdad, Al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah Al-Din governorates.

► **Media Production Logo:**



4.1.5 Iraqi Resistance Movement—1920 Revolution Brigades

► **Who they are:** A nationalist, jihadist movement established in June 2003, the group seeks to drive coalition forces from Iraq and establish a state upholding Islam and its tenets, including justice and no discrimination according to race, ethnic group, or religion. As the group’s name suggests, it is more nationalist-leaning than Islamist in outlook. The group, which includes former army officers, is an umbrella for more than a dozen “brigades.” Its creed vows to continue jihad until victory or martyrdom. The movement has denied numerous allegations of a connection to the

Ba'ath Party. Its spokesman is Shaykh Abdullah Sulayman al-Umari.

► **Ideology:** To implement God's law on earth and to rid Muslims of any and all deviations and non-Islamic practices.

► **Who they target:** U.S. and Iraqi forces and those working for them. It reportedly does not permit attacks on civilians or valuable targets such as electricity and oil installations, and does not permit attacks on schools. The group purports to have carried out more than 5,000 attacks in 2006, killing over 2,000 U.S. service personnel and injuring more than 7,000.

► **Area of operations:** Al-Anbar, Baghdad, Diyala governorates.

► **Media Production Logo:**



4.1.6 The Islamic Front of Iraqi Resistance (JAMI)

The Islamic Front of Iraq Resistance (JAMI) was established in May 2004 and comprises a mixture of former military officers and civilian fighters. The front's main military wing is known as the **Salah Al-Din Al-Ayyubi Brigades**.

Despite its name, JAMI is more nationalist than Islamist in outlook. Its key goal is to drive coalition forces from Iraq. As a policy, JAMI does not target Iraqi government personnel or installations, including the military. The group's attacks are aimed exclusively at coalition forces, and exhibit a fair amount of sophistication. While members of the group may possess superior fighting skills—due largely to its many former military officers—it does not appear to be particularly well-equipped. In March 2006, it issued a booklet on jihad in Iraq that stressed the need to take care of and safeguard weapons. It also warned against individual or small-group confrontation against the “occupier,” since the latter possessed military superiority.

JAMI's political wing has strongly criticized all post-Hussein governments, and has rejected offers of national reconciliation with Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's administration. It has on occasion, however, stipulated the terms under which it would be willing to join a national-reconciliation initiative.

In May 2007 JAMI merged with **Hamas-Iraq**, a breakaway group of the **1920 Revolution Brigades**. The groups vowed to completely merge their political and military units.

4.2 Virtual (Transnational) Organizations

In the vast majority of cases, it is impossible to determine who actually creates the media products disseminated on the Internet. Products are almost always “branded,” however, bearing the logo and name of either a specific insurgent group (see above) or a “media center.” The latter are virtual organizations usually associated with a particular group, or groups, and serve to confirm the official status of a media product. In many cases, a product may be associated with both an insurgent group and a media center. For example, press releases issued by **ISI/Al-Qaeda** appear on the **World News Network's** statements section marked with the **ISI/Al-Qaeda** logo (see Figure 51). At the bottom of the actual text of the press release, a note indicates, “Source: Al-Fajr Media Center” (see Figure 52). We present below an

In the vast majority of cases, it is virtually impossible to determine who actually creates the media products disseminated by insurgent groups and their supporters via the Internet.



Figure 51. An operational statement from ISI/Al-Qaeda posted to World News Network on March 28, 2007 (underlined)



Figure 52. The ISI/AI-Qaeda’s March 28, 2007, statement posted to World News Network; the underlined note at the bottom reads: Source: Al-Fajr Media Center

overview of the main virtual (transnational) media organizations associated with the creation and distribution of insurgent media.

4.2.1 Al-Sahab Institute for Media Production

Al-Sahab [Clouds] is primarily associated with **Al-Qaeda’s** central leadership and leading figures in the Taliban, and it produces audio and videotaped statements by such figures as Ayman al-Zawahiri (see Figure 53). **Al-Sahab** also produces videos showing attacks on U.S. and coalition forces in Afghanistan, including the series *Holocaust Of The Americans In Khorasan* and a magazine about the mujahidin in Afghanistan. **Al-Sahab’s** products are usually of high quality, with DivX the preferred format,



Figure 53. A statement by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the number two figure in Al-Qaeda, produced by the Al-Sahab Institute for Media Production

and frequently feature English subtitles. The subtitles, which are likely aimed both at English-speaking Muslims worldwide and journalists in English-language media, reflect the globally directed focus of the **Al-Qaeda** core. **Al-Sahab** products are normally distributed to forums through the **Al-Fajr Media Center** (see below) (see figure 54).

4.2.2 Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF)

The **Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF)** produces a variety of materials, including the monthly magazines *Sada al-Jihad* and *Sada al-Rafidayn*, as well as written materials and foreign-language translations of addresses by figures from **Al-Qaeda’s** central leadership (such as a recent French translation of a statement by Ayman al-Zawahiri). **GIMF** also produced a French translation of an **Al-Furqan**-produced **ISI/AI-Qaeda** statement on the Baghdad security plan. **GIMF** is strongly sympathetic to **Al-Qaeda** and **ISI/AI-Qaeda**. Against a backdrop of disputes among leading insurgent groups since the **IAI’s** early-April statement criticizing **ISI/AI-Qaeda**, **GIMF** has begun distributing articles as part of a series titled *Suppressing Strife In The Cradle*, apparently intended to bolster **ISI/AI-Qaeda’s** position in its conflict with rival insurgent groups (see Figure 55).



Figure 55. The banner logo of the Global Islamic Media Front

4.2.3 Al-Fajr Media Center

As noted above, the **Al-Fajr [Dawn] Media Center** acts primarily as a distribution channel for products branded by **Al-Sahab**, **ISI/AI-Qaeda**, the **ISI/AI-Qaeda**-affiliated **Al-Furqan**, and other groups. For example, press releases issued by **Ansar al-Sunnah** on the **World News Network** are sourced to **Al-Fajr**. **Al-Fajr** occasionally appears in the guise of a production unit, as in an early-May release of a film announcing the “martyrdom” of **ISI/AI-Qaeda’s** official



Figure 54. The banner logo of the Al-Sahab Institute for Media Production





Figure 56. A banner advertising a release from the Al-Fajr Media Center

spokesman, Abu Abdallah Muharib al-Juburi. (see Figure 56).

4.2.4 Al-Boraq Media Center

Al-Boraq mainly focuses on text production, although the organization also runs a forum with a wide variety of statements and archived products by other media organizations. Recent **Al-Boraq** products include a slickly produced, Flash-format text version of **ISI/Al-Qaeda's** announcement of its cabinet (see Figure 57). In October 2006, **Al-Boraq** released a much-quoted essay on jihadist media titled *Media Exuberance*; the essay warns that jihadists must create legitimate, authoritative “brands” to release media products that can compete with the offerings of mainstream media such as *Al-Jazeera* and *CNN*. The **Al-Boraq** website



Figure 58. The banner logo of the Al-Boraq Media Organization

(www.al-boraq.com) offers two basic sections, one with statements and media products from a variety of insurgent groups, and one dedicated to statements by the **IAI**. The site also includes archives of **Al-Sahab** and **Al-Furqan** releases (see Figure 58).

4.2.5 Al-Furqan Institute for Media Production

Al-Furqan is the primary media production center for **ISI/Al-Qaeda**. It produces virtually all **ISI/Al-Qaeda** films, audio and videotaped addresses, and the **ISI/Al-Qaeda**-affiliated periodical *Biographies Of Notable Martyrs*. An **Al-Qaeda**-affiliated center, **Al-Furqan** distributes its products to websites through the **Al-Fajr Media Center**.



Figure 57. The ISI/Al-Qaeda announcement of its “cabinet of ministers” on April 20, 2007, produced by the Al-Boraq Media Center



4.3 Individual Producers

Thanks to the decentralized, “do-it-yourself” nature of the insurgent media enterprise (see Section 3.3.1, The Decentralized, ‘Do-It-Yourself’ Media Factory), virtually anyone can, in theory, create a pro-insurgent media product. In practice, this is discouraged. The **Al-Boraq Media Center** published a study in October 2006 titled *Media Exuberance*, warning that the ease of Internet-based media production is a threat to the credibility and authority of jihadist—and, by analogy, insurgent—media. Nevertheless, some prominent individuals are also producers of pro-insurgent media, as are contributors to jihadist forums.

4.3.1 Hamid al-Ali

The Kuwait-based radical cleric Hamid al-Ali is an example of an authoritative individual producer of pro-insurgent media products. He maintains a popular website (www.h-alali.net) with numerous materials on Iraq’s Sunni insurgency (see Figure 59). For example, al-Ali posted a bitterly anti-Shi’ite poem to his website within hours of an interview by *Al-Jazeera* with a woman identified as Sabrin al-Janabi, who charged that she had been raped by Iraqi Interior Ministry personnel during a raid (see Section 7.2, The Sabrin al-Janabi Case). Al-Ali



Figure 59. The website of the Kuwait-based radical preacher Hamid al-Ali

writes frequently on the threat of mounting Iranian influence. In the recent conflict between **ISI/Al-Qaeda** and the **IAI**, al-Ali was critical of **ISI/Al-Qaeda**, and his position earned him the enmity of many pro-**Al-Qaeda** contributors to jihadist forums.

4.3.2 Forum Contributors

Contributors to forums, from mainstream to jihadist, frequently comment on insurgent activities in Iraq (see Figure 60). Some of these comments are sufficiently extensive and detailed to qualify as media products in their own right. The most popular of these are often posted to several forums and gain widespread distribution on the Internet.

Thanks to the decentralized, “do-it-yourself” nature of the insurgent media enterprise, virtually anyone can, in theory, create a pro-insurgent media product.

رد	التاريخ	المستخدم	الموضوع
111	2007-02-24 00:24:28	موجة التوجه الإسلامي	موجة التوجه الإسلامي [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
174	2007-03-09 00:00:00	دارود	الفرقة التي اعتمدت في منطقة الشرق الأوسط
85	2007-03-09 00:00:00	دارود	الفرقة التي اعتمدت في منطقة الشرق الأوسط
2504	2007-03-09 00:00:00	فني التجهيز	فني التجهيز / جهة التجهيز / جهة التجهيز
1345	2007-03-09 00:00:00	دارود	بعض أدوية حرم حوز نجف من منتجاتها
96889	2007-03-09 00:00:00	محمدا سلطان	محمدا سلطان [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
134	2007-03-09 00:00:00	فني التجهيز	فني التجهيز / جهة التجهيز / جهة التجهيز
4891	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
179	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
206	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
71	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
1883	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
1428	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
34816	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
326	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]

رد	التاريخ	المستخدم	الموضوع
111	2007-02-24 00:24:28	موجة التوجه الإسلامي	موجة التوجه الإسلامي [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
174	2007-03-09 00:00:00	دارود	الفرقة التي اعتمدت في منطقة الشرق الأوسط
85	2007-03-09 00:00:00	دارود	الفرقة التي اعتمدت في منطقة الشرق الأوسط
2504	2007-03-09 00:00:00	فني التجهيز	فني التجهيز / جهة التجهيز / جهة التجهيز
1345	2007-03-09 00:00:00	دارود	بعض أدوية حرم حوز نجف من منتجاتها
96889	2007-03-09 00:00:00	محمدا سلطان	محمدا سلطان [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
134	2007-03-09 00:00:00	فني التجهيز	فني التجهيز / جهة التجهيز / جهة التجهيز
4891	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
179	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
206	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
71	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
1883	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
1428	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
34816	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]
326	2007-03-09 00:00:00	ابو بكر	ابو بكر [المدعوون للتوجه الإسلامي]

Figure 60. Threads from the Al-Tajdeed and Ana al-Muslim forums discussing IAI/Al-Qaeda (underlined)