Sri Lanka Attacks
New Openings by Islamic State

Changing Nature of Terror
A Profile of Attackers
The Indian Connection
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 04   | SUBCONTINENT NEXT  
|      | J.M. PHELPS AND PHILIP B. HANEY |
| 12   | ISLAMIC STATE ACROSS  
|      | THE PALK STRAIT  
|      | COL UTKARSH S RATHORE (RETD) |
| 16   | USING INTERNET TO BRAINWASH  
|      | COL SHAILENDER ARYA |
| 22   | DEVILISH INTER-PLAY OF IDEAS, MONEY AND ARMS  
|      | DR NAVNIIT GANDHI |
| 28   | PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE  
|      | EVA J. KOULOURIOTIS |
| 32   | LESSONS FOR INDIA  
|      | MANISHA CHAURASIYA |
| 36   | DEADLY ATTACKS - FIERCE ATTACKERS  
|      | UMA SUDHINDRA |
| 40   | SAUDI-INDIAN RELATIONS  
|      | ROSS MACKAY |
| 44   | PAKISTAN AND ITS “SLEEPER” ASSETS  
|      | CECIL VICTOR |
| 48   | NEED FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION  
|      | AASTHA VOHRA |
To effectively counter the stated goals of this powerful AQIS coalition, counter-terrorism experts, intelligence agencies, and policy makers around the world should take the clear Sharia-based statements found in the Code of Conduct to heart, and accentuate this threat by paying much closer attention to the global Deoband madrassa system.

In addition, at least 14 major, international Salafi organisations pledged loyalty to this new AQ coalition, including at least seven that were directly linked to the Deoband branch of Islam (highlighted in bold font below).

These original 14 organisations include the **055 Brigade** (aka the Shadow Army, a mixture of mercenary Jihad fighters from the Middle East, Central Asia and Southeast Asia that were integrated into the Taliban from 1995-2001), the Islamic Jihad Group (Egypt), Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Turkistan Islamic Movement (or Party), Abu Sayyaf in the Philippines (Jihadist pirates also known as the Islamic State in the Philippines), Chechen & North Caucasian Jihad Groups, **Uyghur Jihad Groups** (Xinjiang Province, Western China), Harkat-ul Mujahideen (Pakistan), Lashkar-e-Taiba (Pakistan), **Sipah-e-Sahaba** (Pakistan), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (Afghanistan), Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (Pakistan) and the Taliban, aka the **Deobandi Taliban** (Afghanistan).

**Note:** For additional background on the connections between the AQ/IS and/or global MB network, two resources include a 6 May 2019 article entitled *The Terrorist Ties That Bind*, as well as 11 May 2019 study entitled *The Muslim Brotherhood’s Ties To ISIS And Al-Qaeda*.

**Brief Background - The Easter Sunday Bombings In Sri Lanka**

At 08:45 on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019, eight ‘well-educated’ Salafi Sunni Muslims of ‘wealth and privilege’ simultaneously detonated explosive vests at St. Sebastian’s Church in Katuwapitiya (Negombo) and St. Anthony’s Church in the...
capital city of Colombo (both in western Sri Lanka), and at St. Mary’s Cathedral and/or the Evangelical Charismatic Zion Church in Batticaloa (300 miles away in the eastern part of the country).

The six coordinated bombings by members of the Deobandi-influenced National Tawheed Jamaat (NJT), also targeted the Cinnamon Grand, the Kingsbury and Shangri-La hotels, all located in the heart of Colombo, Sri Lanka.

The NTJ, aka Jamaat At-Tawheed Al-Wataniyah, aka دیحوتلا لةینطولا تةعامج دحوتلا، aka National Monotheism Organisation, is affiliated with at least nine other Thawheed Jamaat groups, including the All India Thowheed Jamaat (AITJ), Sri Lanka Thowheed Jamaat (SLTJ), Tamil Nadu Thowheed Jamaat (TNTJ India), Qatar India Thowheed Centre (QITC), UAE Thowheed Jamaat (Dubai TNTJ), United States Thowheed Jamaat (USTJ), United Kingdom Thowheed Jamaat (UKTJ), France Thowheed Jamaat (FRTJ), and Australia Thowheed Jamaat (ATJ).

*Despite immediate and vigorous denials, it is important to note that NTJ was once part of Sri Lanka Thowheed Jamaat (SLTJ); this is also confirmed by this 23 April 2019 article by Middle East Media Research Institute.

At 13:45, a seventh blast occurred at the New Tropical Inn in Dehiwela, near the national zoo, killing two people. At least 250 people were killed and more than 500 were seriously injured in these seven bombings.

One half hour later, at 14:15, an eighth bombing occurred in the Colombo suburb of Dematagoda, when police officers executed a breach and clear warrant at the palatial home of Ilham Ahmed Ibrahim, one of the Shangri-La Hotel bombers. As they approached the house, Ilham’s pregnant wife, Fatima, detonated an explosive vest, destroying the entire villa, and killing...
The current leader of AQIS is Pakistani-born jihadist Asim Umar (aka Asim Umer, aka Maulana Asim Umar, aka Sanaul Haq)

*Pictures of the bombings show hundreds of uniform-sized holes in the church walls.

On 22 April 2019, the government of Sri Lanka declared a national state of emergency, granting police and the military extensive powers to detain and question terrorism suspects without court orders, and on 27 April 2019, Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena banned the NTJ and Jamathei Millathu Ibrahim (JMI) under the emergency regulations that came into effect five days earlier.

On 5 May 2019, as part of the ongoing national emergency, Sri Lanka announced that it was conducting a ‘security crackdown’ by tightening visa restrictions for religious teachers, while adding that it had already expelled at least 200 ‘Islamic preachers,’ along with 600 foreign nationals, mainly from Bangladesh, India, the Maldives and Pakistan (all known centers of Salafi Islamic activism).

Training Ground
On the same day, a 10-acre NTJ training camp was discovered by Sri Lankan police in the eastern town of Kattankudy, where Jihadis linked to the Easter Day attacks are believed to have practiced their shooting and bomb-making skills.

On 11 May 2019, Sri Lanka’s army commander Mahesh Senanayake declared that the threat of more terror attacks had been contained, and that the security services had dismantled most of the network linked to the Easter bombings. In addition, while investigators had established that the plotters had links to ISIS, authorities were still trying to establish how deep those contacts were. He also observed that “up to now the investigations do not go beyond many areas, so we don’t have to worry about the situation; it is controllable, it is contained.”

Finally, on 14 May 2019, at least four sources revealed that Aadhil Ameez, a 24-year-old Sri Lankan software engineer, had been arrested on suspicion of providing technical and logistical support to the NTJ bombers, and that he had been monitored three years earlier by Indian intelligence agencies,

all three police officers, herself, her unborn child, their three children and Ilham’s sister.

At 08:30 on the morning of 22 April 2019, a van parked near St. Anthony’s Church in Colombo exploded. The vehicle detonated while police were attempting to safely defuse it. Fortunately, no one was hurt in this explosion.

On Friday afternoon, 26 April 2019, as Sri Lankan security forces approached a suspected NTJ / Islamic State safe house in the southeastern town of Sammanthurai (part of Kalmunai), the father and two brothers of Mohamed Cassim Mohamed Zahran, aka Mohammed Zaharan, aka Zahran Hashim, leader of the NTJ and Shangri-La bomber, began detonating explosives and started a fierce gun battle, which ended early on Saturday morning.

Fifteen people were killed (all relatives of Zaharan), but no law enforcement or military personnel were seriously injured. In the aftermath, police found more than 150 sticks of plastic explosives (probably TATP), trigger devices, chemicals and about 100,000 ball bearings* in the house.

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for suspected recruiting and fundraising activities linked to the Islamic State.

**Connecting The Dots - N. M. Ameen Spills The Beans**

On November 9, 2016, Muslim Council of Sri Lanka (MCSL) President N. M. Ameen made the following public announcement:

“The Thableeq Jamath [Tablighi Jamaat], Sunnath Jamath [Tamil Nadu Sunnath Jamaat], Thowheed Jamath and Jamaithe Islam [Jamaat-e-Islami Hind and/or Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan] and several other organisations are all Muslim religious and social service organisations. They do not promote any form of violence as implied by the Minister Rajapaksa. Certain parts of his statement are verbatim of the hate speech spewed by the extremist priest Ven. Galagoda Aththe Gnanasara Thero.”

In hindsight, this statement is very revealing, because in his effort to insulate these Deoband-linked Jamath (= Jamaat) groups from being investigated for suspected links to Jihad activity, Ameen (perhaps inadvertently) confirmed that they were all closely affiliated with one another. As can be seen now, Ameen’s emphatic assertion that these groups ‘do not promote any kind of violence’ was terribly misleading.

**Aftermath - AQIS Targets The Indian Subcontinent**

A 2 May 2019 article entitled Islamic State Planning ‘New Strategy’ To Target Smaller Countries, proposes that an emerging IS battlefield will be in South Asian countries. Other recent articles discussing this emerging IS / AQIS threat include the 5 May 2019 article entitled The Next Islamic State Battlefield Will Be in South Asia, and the 14 May 2019 article entitled A Network Of Extremism Expands.

If this premise is correct, then two important questions must be asked: [1] *How did we get to this point,* and [2] *What can be done?*

**Question One: How did we get to this point?**

On 3 September 2014, Ayman Al-Zawahiri, who is globally recognised as the Emir of the original Al-Qaeda (AQ), announced the formation of a new AQ branch, which is called Al-Qaeda of the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), aka Qaedaat Al-Jihad Fi Shibhi Al-Qarrat Al-Hindiya.

During his 55-minute announcement, Al-Zawahiri, who has been a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) since 23 September 2001, stated that the purpose of AQIS was to “wage Jihad against its enemies, to liberate its land, to restore its sovereignty, and to revive its Caliphate.”

Less than five years later, the AQIS coalition has numerous affiliated groups operating in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India (including Kashmir), Bangladesh, and Myanmar (Burma).

The current AQIS leader is Pakistani-born Jihadist Asim Umar (aka Asim Umer, aka Maulana Asim Umar, aka Sanaul Haq), who is openly loyal to Al-Zawahiri, and has also been a SDGT since 5 July 2016.

As the AQIS leader, his goal is to help the Taliban (a Deoband organisation) re-conquer and take control of...
Afghanistan, while also expanding the influence of AQIS throughout the entire Indian subcontinent.

Eight years after Osama bin Laden was killed (on 11 May 2011), AQIS is attracting Deoband-linked Jihadist groups across the Indian subcontinent. This trend intensified immediately after Al-Zawahiri’s September 2014 announcement, when the US-led international coalition in Iraq and Syria began encountering thousands of Jihad fighters from Central Asia.

For example, in January of 2019, the Central Asian terrorist group Katibat Al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad (KTJ) publicly renewed its original 2015 pledge of Bayah (Loyalty) to Ayman Al-Zawahiri. And, while it is true that IS has lost its caliphate and may
no longer have a secure base of operations in the Middle East (Syria and Iraq), it is still dangerous, and more than capable of reaching out to cause mayhem in countries thousands of miles away, as we saw in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019.

Meanwhile, on 18 May 2018, Al-Zawahiri announced that US President Donald Trump’s 6 December 2017 decision to recognise Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and to relocate America’s embassy there, was evidence that negotiations and “appeasement” had failed the Palestinians, and urged Muslims to carry out Jihad against the United States.

On 23 August 2018, Al-Zawahiri called for the global Islamic Ummah (Community) to unite in Jihad against the “international infidel alliance” and to “fight against the tyranny of the infidels.” The NTJ bombers used some of the same language in their declarations, as confirmed on 23 April 2019, when the IS issued the following statement on Telegram:

“A security source to Amaq [News] Agency: Those that carried out the attack that targeted members of the US-led Coalition and Christians in Sri Lanka the day before yesterday are Islamic State group fighters.”

On 11 September 2018, Al-Zawahiri described America as the main enemy of Muslims all over the world, and encouraged Muslims to fight Jihad against the US and its allies on different fronts, as part of a unified strategy to wear down America and the West [= the Crusader Coalition] until they are defeated and repelled from all Islamic countries.

The AQIS Code of Conduct
To continue, the primary goal (strategy) and the authorised tactics of this ominous new coalition of Deoband-linked Jihadist organisations, which includes the NTJ in Sri Lanka, are plainly described in a 20-page document, known as the Code of Conduct, which was released by AQIS (in English) in June of 2017.

Just as with the Muslim Brotherhood’s 1991 strategic document entitled An Explanatory Memorandum on the General Strategic Goal for the Brotherhood in North America (aka the Explanatory Memorandum), the Code of Conduct reveals the precise goals of AQIS, the Sharia-authorised methods (tactics) to accomplish these goals, and exactly how they intend to fight against any opposition to these goals.

In summary, the Code of Conduct is an explicit warning to the West, which should be taken literally (at face value) by those who wish to defend sovereignty and liberties from the influence of the Global Islamic Movement.

Focus On Deoband Madrassas
Question Two: What can be done? Worldwide Focus Turns To Deoband Madrassas (aka Madaris)
In the weeks since the Sri Lanka bombings, another development has confirmed the assertions made in the May 2019 DSA article, Madrassas Ingrained Worldwide.

Fortunately, it appears that analysts and members of the international intelligence community have begun to realise that the core of the ‘nuclear reactor’ of the Salafi, pro-Jihad, pro-Sharia Global Islamic Movement (GIM), especially in the Indian subcontinent, is centered within the extensive Deoband madrassa (madari) network.

Some earlier (pre-Sri Lanka) examples include the 11 April 2013 research paper entitled Balochistan - The State Versus the Nation, which notes a ‘vast network of Deobandi madrassas,’ the 27 March 2014 discussion of Deoband madrassas, which ‘boasts the largest network of satellite madrassas all over Pakistan, Bangladesh, neighboring countries in Asia and beyond, and as far afield as the Caribbean, South Africa, Britain, and the United States,’ a June 2015 article entitled Religious Education of Pakistan’s Madaris and Radicalisation, and a 23 March 2019 article entitled Terrorism Fears As 3,000 UK Children A Year Go To ‘Jihadi’ Schools In Pakistan, Secret Government Report Reveals.

Subsequent to the Sri Lanka bombings, several more articles have expressed concern about Deoband madrassas, including a 29 April 2019 post entitled
Pakistan Says It Will Take Over 30,000 Madrassas, a 4 May 2019 piece entitled Secret Government Report Warns Over 48 British Islamic Schools Are Teaching Intolerance And Misogyny To Future Imams, and a 6 May 2019 article entitled The Terrorist Ties That Bind.

At the same time, national security agencies in the subcontinent have declared their intention to assertively monitor the Deoband madrassas in their countries. Examples include a 5 May 2019 article entitled Sri Lanka Expels 200 Islamic Clerics After Easter Attacks, the 7 May 2019 story entitled Islamic Elementary Schools Teaching Taliban Curriculum, a 9 May 2019 piece entitled Pakistan Islamic School Reforms Aim to Curb Extremism, and a 22 May 2019 article entitled Pulwama Attack, Sri Lanka Blasts Strengthened Resolve To Fight Terror.

Expected Consequences - More Jihad Attacks
From the perspective of sovereignty and national security, cooperative monitoring of the Deoband madrassas operating throughout the world is a wise, necessary step.

However, as stated plainly in Section XIII of the Code of Conduct, one should be prepared for a violent response. As seen ahead, AQIS members consider themselves the guardians of the Ulamaa (Scholars) and the Madaris (Madrassas), and as plainly stated in XIII-4, they will become a ‘strong force’ (for Jihad). Any effort to reform or oversee their madrassas will be met with fierce opposition and resistance, aka Jihad.

Conclusion

These groups are not only operating as overlapping coalitions across the entire Indian subcontinent, but are also closely affiliated to the global Muslim Brotherhood network, and to the kaleidoscopic web of intertwined AQ / IS organisations.

To effectively counter the stated goals of this powerful new international coalition, counter-terrorism experts, intelligence agencies and policy-makers around the world should take the clear Sharia-based statements found in the AQIS Code of Conduct to heart, and take steps to augment this threat by paying much closer attention to the global network of Deoband madrassas.