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“The Use of Islam in Insurgent Propaganda”

By: Omar H. Altalib, Ph.D.
(Science Applications International Corporation [SAIC], VA)

Violent Muslim groups throughout history have attempted to use Islam to promote their militant agendas. Since this is particularly true for Muslim insurgent groups today, this paper will focus primarily on how these groups gain legitimacy in the eyes of Muslims by emphasizing the requirement of Jihad in their efforts to recruit Muslim youth to engage in suicide bombings and violent acts against innocents and non-combatants. In Iraq, for example, such groups as Al-Jaysh Al-Islami, and Rafidan use and abuse Islamic symbols and themes to promote their violent agenda by (1) Associating their actions with Qur’anic verses related to jihad; (2) Mentioning the names of such historic Muslim figures as Khadija and Fatima in their statements; (3) Using pictures of the Qur’an in their videos; (4) Reciting Islamic songs (*nasheed*) that praise their actions against *occupiers* and *invaders*; (5) Labeling their battalions with names of such historical Muslim warriors as Salahaddin and ‘Uqbah ibn Nafi’; (6) Mentioning various statements attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and interpreting them to justify their suicidal operations; and (7) Responding to moderate Muslims who call for non-violent action with selective examples from Muslim history that seemingly justify violent action. To gain legitimacy in the eyes of other Muslims, insurgent groups in Iraq, as well as other radical groups as al-Qaeda cloak their acts of murder and destruction in Islamic garb. This study will focus primarily on the deceitful practices employed by such insurgent groups as Al-Jaysh Al-Islami, and Rafidan in Iraq to recruit future fighters. By misusing the principle of jihad and martyrdom in their propaganda these groups foment hatred and encourage suicide bombings. This actually misguides impressionable Muslim youth and convinces them that this violent behavior is actually *Islamic* and worthy of God’s reward in Heaven. This propaganda not only promotes a narrow-minded interpretation of Qur’anic verses and Prophetic sayings, but it also misrepresents the essence of Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, as it gives them the impression that Islam is a bloody faith rooted in violence. In fact, this presentation will also expose how the mischaracterization of early Islamic history as a violent period, rather than a peace-promoting period has helped create the perception that self-defense extends to offensive operations against an alleged aggressor, which justifies the killing of innocent civilians and non-combatants. Since this study primarily examines how insurgent groups have created greater confusion regarding Islam and Muslims throughout the world, an analysis of how Muslims and non-Muslims need to work together to preempt, expose, and de-legitimize the insurgents’ abuse of Islam will be highlighted. The methodology used in this research involves reviewing websites pertaining to the topic, identifying statements and videos that capture propaganda initiatives, and analyzing the content in which Islam is represented and misrepresented.