

Preparing the Mujahidin: The Taliban's Military Field Manual

By Imtiaz Ali

THE TALIBAN ARE currently engaged in intensifying insurgencies on both sides of the Pakistan and Afghanistan border. To train new recruits and reinforce military lessons in its existing cadres, the Taliban have published the fourth edition of their military field manual, *Nizami Darsoona - Da Mujahideeno Da Aghdad La para'* (Military Teachings for the Preparation of Mujahidin).¹ The 158-page hard copy book is written in Pashtu, demonstrating that its purpose is primarily to assist Taliban fighters in Pakistan and Afghanistan.² The detailed manual contains information and diagrams of various small-arms, ammunition, light and heavy weaponry, communication tools and chemical and explosives formulas.

According to Ashraf Ali, a researcher at Peshawar University, the significance of *Military Teachings for the Preparation of Mujahidin* is that it uses simple and convincing language to assist "new jihadist recruits" in military tactics and religious justifications. Furthermore, the book's first edition was released in early 2007, and considering that this is already the fourth edition it "speaks to the volume of its popularity among Taliban fighters."³ This article will outline key points mentioned in each of the book's 10 chapters.

Chapter One: Religious Justifications for Jihad
Chapter one offers religious justifications for jihad. Utilizing verses from the Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, it provides the definition of jihad, in addition to its proper codes and conduct. It emphasizes that the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are absolute jihads, and it is an obligatory duty for all Muslims to fight in these two countries against what it calls the foreign and "infidel occupant forces."

1 The author received a copy of the book from a former member of the Taliban who is based in Peshawar. See Figure 1 for a cover image of the manual.

2 Many similar training manuals can be found on Islamist websites, although they are typically in Arabic.

3 Personal interview, Ashraf Ali, Peshawar, August 10, 2008.

The book addresses controversial questions frequently raised by critics regarding jihad. For example, it strongly denounces the notion that only a Muslim ruler is entitled to wage a holy war, arguing that this is not necessary if a Muslim ruler is a puppet of infidel forces; instead, "jihad is a prerequisite for the establishment of an Islamic state." The book instructs Muslims to join groups such as al-Qa`ida and the Taliban to fulfill their religious duty of jihad.

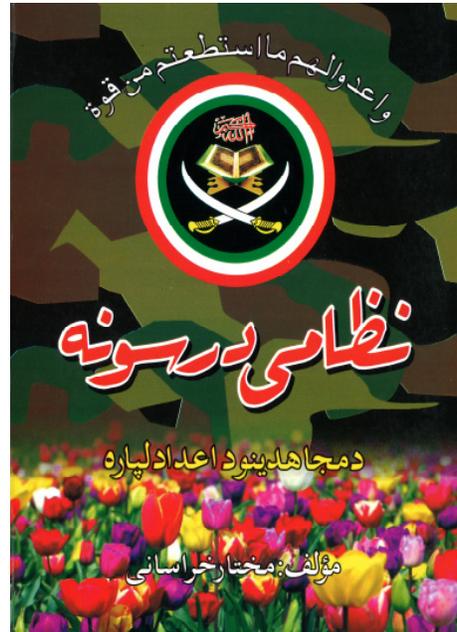


Figure 1. The front cover of the manual.

The document supports the use of suicide attacks, explaining how such martyrdom tactics inflict maximum damage on enemy forces. It answers questions such as whether it is necessary to receive parental permission before participating in jihad, and offers religious justifications behind suicide bombings. Similarly, it strongly supports the killing, and even the beheading, of spies who provide information to the enemy. Much of the information references *al-Zakbayr al-Azzam*, authored by Shaykh `Abdullah `Azzam, the famous jihadist ideologue who is also considered to be Usama bin Ladin's mentor.

Chapter Two: War Tactics

The second chapter describes the various types of war, such as military, guerrilla, terrorist, spy, propaganda, economic and nuclear. It concentrates on guerrilla and terrorist methods of war since it argues that these are

most relevant in today's world. For Afghanistan, it emphasizes guerrilla war and instructs readers how to be a competent guerrilla fighter.

It places more importance, however, on a "terrorist war" with the broader objectives of terrorizing the enemy and forcing them to fulfill jihadist demands. A "terrorist holy warrior," according to the documents, must live for a longer period of time among the enemy in locations such as the United States and Europe. Such "warriors" should be able to avoid detection while operating in an enemy state, constantly changing their outward appearance. This type of fighter should be the embodiment of patience and serenity because he may live in one place for a few years without undertaking any military activity. Similarly, he should have full knowledge of his eventual target, and should have a great understanding of the enemy's police and intelligence services.

The book cautions that in a terrorist war, the enemy's front-line military forces should not be targeted. Instead, targets should be the enemy's military, political and economic installations around the world. It offers as evidence of a "terrorist war" the examples of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the 1998 bombings of the U.S. Embassies in Tanzania and Kenya.

Chapters Three to Seven

Chapter three emphasizes the importance of spycraft and intelligence work in an insurgency and a war. It lays down the criteria for recruiting and utilizing spies, explaining how to properly disguise them in the local population so that they can gather information and intelligence.

Chapter four outlines war strategies, techniques and planning. It provides advice on how and where to set up military training camps. In addition to teaching the techniques of ambushes, camouflage and combat in mountains and deserts, the chapter also instructs its readers how to survive in difficult circumstances and how to escape from a prison in case of arrest or capture.

Chapter five stresses the importance of navigation and maps in wars and insurgencies. It details how to properly

develop and comprehend a war map.

Chapter six explicitly outlines various types of weapons, and how and where they should be used. With the help of different diagrams, it explains how to fire various weapons and the proper firing positions to increase accuracy. It provides the weights for a multitude of weapons, their respective target ranges, calibers, and information on explosives.

Chapter seven provides detailed information on various communication tools such as the ICOM IC-V8 and Kenwood TH22 radio transceivers, and Global Positioning System navigation devices. With the help of user-friendly diagrams and pictures, it identifies the different components of communications equipment and their effective use during a war or insurgency.

Chapter Eight: Remote-Controlled Detonations

Chapter eight provides information on the components needed for remote-controlled detonations. It highlights that the bomb's placement should be visible to the individual responsible for triggering the explosion, and outlines

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the proper spacing of explosives if more than one bomb is used. It specifies how far the individual tasked with triggering the detonation should be from the bomb; in mountainous areas, the charge should be detonated from a distance of 1-1.5 kilometers, while in flat, plain areas, the distance should be four kilometers.

With the help of diagrams, the book specifies that bridges and parking

areas are the best places to blow up the enemy’s vehicles. The section also explains the utility of emplacing an explosive near an artificial or natural landmark so that it is easier to time the detonation with an enemy movement if triggered from a far distance.

Similarly, it also warns of the various failures that can occur preventing a remote-controlled detonation: enemy jamming, faulty batteries, out of range, and improper installation of the bomb or its components.

Chapters Nine and Ten: Explosives

Chapter nine provides details on primary, secondary and compound explosives, and how they should be employed in bombs and hand grenades. It lists explosive mixtures and details how to create a detonator. It outlines the exact chemical make-up of a homemade bomb, discussing the required amounts of specific chemical agents. Furthermore, it explains how and where to acquire hand grenades, such as the F-1, M-46, RGD-5 and RG-42. It also provides details on personal landmines. The chapter outlines the most effective way a hand grenade or mine should be used so that it inflicts the greatest number of casualties on enemy forces. It also differentiates between the different amounts of explosives for attacks on personnel, vehicles, tanks and ships.

Chapter 10 educates its readers on how to produce explosives with chemicals. The chemical instructions are specific, also advising the proper handling techniques when dealing with volatile substances.⁴

Conclusion

Military Teachings for the Preparation of Mujahidin serves the purpose of preparing a new breed of jihadists by providing them with simple, yet instructive lessons of waging war and engaging in insurgency. The distribution of the manual attests to the Taliban’s growing strength and organizational capabilities. Already in its fourth edition, there is clearly a demand among Taliban cadres for the lessons outlined in the manual.⁵ Furthermore,

the document is in hard copy format and written in Pashtu, which distinguishes it from other jihadist manuals found on various jihadist internet websites; this signifies that its intended audience are committed fighters operating in Pakistan’s Pashtun tribal areas and in Afghanistan. The importance of *Military Teachings for the Preparation of Mujahidin* may have been best described by veteran Pakistani-Pashtun journalist Mukhtar Ahmad Khan, who warned that the manual’s continued existence “reveals the frightening revival of the Taliban seven years after their fall by the U.S.-led invasion.”⁶

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war, August 2008.

6 Personal interview, Mukhtar Ahmad Khan, Washington, D.C., September 5, 2008. Khan covered the Taliban and military issues in Pakistan’s tribal region for more than 10 years.

4 The chapter provides extensive details on chemical formulas.

5 Personal interview, former member of Taliban, Peshawar,

