

AL-QAEDA AND TALIBAN

Stephen L. Bakke – February 21, 2010

Al-Qaeda and Taliban - I have heard the terms and used the terms many, many times during the last few years. But I reflected that, if asked, I couldn't, confidently, give a very satisfactory explanation of who they were or how they had originated. I decided to do a little research and hopefully learn a just a little more. Below, I share that initial research with anyone interested. Please know that if you have any **corrections or clarifications please advise me**. I consider this a **work in progress**. And my goal is to make it **useful while keeping it simple!**

There's nothing original here I assure you, and all the information is taken from the following sources: *The Handy History Answer Book* by Rebecca Ferguson; *A Patriot's History of the United States – From Columbus's Great Discovery to the War on Terror* by Larry Schweikart and Michael Allen; *Zionism-Israel.com* – online encyclopedia; *Answers.com*; *Wordig.com*; and of course, *Wikipedia.com*.

Al Qaeda ...

... is a **global network** of terrorists who banded together during the 1990s and proclaimed to be carrying out a holy war on non-Islamic nations. This group **knows no national boundaries**. Certain nations, however, are known as Al Qaeda strongholds. The group is led by a Saudi, Osama bin Laden. The origin of this movement can be traced to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan those who later became al-Qaeda joined the anti-Soviet resistance. This conflict increased bin Laden's resolve to perpetuate a jihad (holy war). By the 1990s he was proclaiming his goal to reinstate the Caliphate (unified Muslim state). According to the 9/11 commission he declared war on the U.S. in February 1998 by issuing a "fatwa" against the U.S. He called for retaliation for all the U.S. had done as an enemy of Islam and for being responsible for all conflicts involving Muslims.

Under bin Laden's direction, al Qaeda carried out several attacks on American targets as follows: August 7, 1998 – bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, killing 258 and injuring 5,000; September 11, 2001 – attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, killing nearly 3,000 people. And the beat goes on.

Taliban ...

... was the **ultraconservative Islamist faction that ruled Afghanistan from late 1996 until December 2001** when the U.S. military campaign caused it's government to crumble. The group was primarily Afghan refugees who had fled their country during the Soviet invasion (1979 through 1989). They had fled to Pakistan where they "prepared" for the time they could return and rise in prominence following the Soviet withdrawal and the resulting vacuum. In 1996 they had taken the capital of Kabul. While in power, they put into force strict laws based on fundamental Islam. For example they excluded women from any role in the society – and many

more human rights abuses. It also allowed Pakistan to become a training ground for Islamic terror groups – most prominently al-Qaeda.

After 9/11, the U.S. asked the government of Pakistan (the Taliban) to extradite the expressly admitted mastermind of the WTC attack, Osama bin Laden. They refused and the overthrow of their government by the U.S. led forces was fairly quick and effective. That operation was code-named “Operation Enduring Freedom.” That’s when Karzai’s government was installed following a U.N. led conference in Bonn, Germany.

The group continues to operate unofficially and clandestinely in Afghanistan and has an ever-larger presence in Pakistan.

So, more simply stated, *al-Qaeda* is the radical terrorist group, with membership affiliated with **no national boundaries** trying to achieve a world dominated by Islam. It has its roots in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and those who later became al-Qaeda, first joined the anti-Soviet resistance. The *Taliban* is the **ultraconservative Muslim government that ruled Afghanistan** following within a few years the withdrawal of the Soviet Union from its occupation of Afghanistan. They now have a growing presence also in Pakistan. **Both al-Qaeda and the Taliban have their roots in the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.**

Once again, even more over-simplified, the distinction is:

Taliban – Islamist faction **associated primarily with Afghanistan** as its rulers, and overthrown by U.S. led forces.

Al-Qaeda – Islamist terrorist group affiliated with **no national borders**.

Both have their roots in the Soviet invasion, occupation, and war in Afghanistan.

One friend adds that really, more simply, one is a terrorist group, while the other is a political party. OK, sort of.

Next I will be putting together a layman’s summary of the 27 amendments to the United States Constitution.