

Who is Behind the Mask?

by Mary Beaudoin

Concrete information about Abu Bakr Al Baghdadi, reputed to be the most evil of all evil ones, is extremely scarce, but Western media reports that he was once a relatively obscure Islamic scholar and then suddenly burst on the scene as the leader of the ISIS-Daesh caliphate in possession of a fierce array of talents.



He is credited with being a military strategist with abilities worthy of a five-star general and yet at the same time possessing the business acumen of an oil tycoon, in addition to being “a prolific fundraiser and a ruthless killer.”(1) He also has considerable skills in the public relations area as he is able to issue proclamations for ISIS-Daesh at opportune times and act as an ideological motivator and recruiting agent in a call to arms to Muslims worldwide via social media,(2) while adept at eluding capture. The Rewards for Justice program, administered by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Diplomatic Security, is offering a bounty of up to \$10 million for him(3) but it hasn't proved to be incentive enough for anyone to turn him in—quite interesting in light of the fact that there were people motivated to

turn in hundreds of innocent men in Pakistan and Afghanistan (to be sent to black sites or Guantanamo in the “War on Terror”) for \$5,000 tops each.(4)

Rumors about him abound: Like other high-profile terrorists before him, he has been reported critically wounded, dead, and resurrected again by major media. He is said to only appear to his followers wearing a mask. Photographic evidence of his existence is confined to a few hazy images. One is from 2004 in which he wears a prison uniform at Camp Bucca, Iraq, where he either collaborated with fellow inmates for violent jihadist extremism, or was trained as an agent provocateur by the CIA, or was never there at all. Dates of his reported incarceration conflict with each other. Many Iraqis suspect that Al-Baghdadi is an agent of the Israeli intelligence agency, the Mossad. Officials in the Iraqi government say that a video of him delivering a sermon on July 4, 2014, in Mosul, is "a fake."(5) Tyler Durden of the blog, Zero Hedge, dug up a 2007 New York Times report that says U.S. military and intelligence believed that he was a fictional character and that his audio recordings are those of an actor, in order to “mask the dominant role that foreigners play in that insurgent organization.”(6)

Whatever the reality, this masked marvel serves somebody’s purpose in serves in generating genuine zealots, recruiting bloodthirsty mercenaries, stoking fear, and carving up Iraq and Syria.

Mary Beaudoin is the editor of the Women Against Military Madness newsletter. Polly Mann and Jay Kvale contributed to weapons information.

Endnotes

1. A few examples: “How ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi became the world’s most powerful jihadist leader.” McCoy, Terrence. June 11, 2014, Washington Post. washingtonpost.com; “Who is Isis leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi?” The Guardian. November 13, 2014. guardian.com. Also shown on Today, November 17, 2014, as “Guardian Explainers.”

2. His proclamations have been through audio with the exception of a video claiming that it is he delivering a July 4, 2014, speech that can be found on YouTube. Other videos by various posters say Al Baghdadi has other identity, including as an agent of the Israeli Mossad.

3. Abu Du’a, also known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, described as “the senior leader of the terrorist organization, Iraq and Levant,” is listed among the “Most Wanted” terrorists. rewardsforjustice.net

4. “Bounties paid for terror suspects.” Samari, Mona. Amnesty International Australia magazine, Human Rights Defender, January 16, 2007: “More than 85 percent of detainees at Guantanamo Bay were arrested, not on the Afghanistan

battlefield by US forces, but by the Northern Alliance fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, and in Pakistan at a time when rewards of up to US\$5,000 were paid for every 'terrorist' turned over to the United States.”

5. “URGENT: ISIL video of al-Baghdadi is fake says Ministry of Interior.” Iraqnews.com, July 5, 2014

6. “The ploy was to invent Baghdadi, a figure whose very name establishes his Iraqi pedigree, install him as the head of a front organization called the Islamic State of Iraq and then arrange for Masri [head of Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia] to swear allegiance to him. From: “Leader of Al Qaeda group in Iraq was fictional, U.S. military says.” Gordon, Michael R., July 18, 2007. [New York Times](http://NewYorkTimes.com).