

Tabled by Senator
 Trenawardi-Wells, 30/10/06

Supplementary
 Estimates

Al-Jazeera – 'Taqiyya Television' - Begins in Australia

The Opening move: Cairo 2001

Sheikh Hamad bin Thamer al Thani Chairman of the Board of Al-Jazeera was in a discursive mode as he spoke to TBS Senior Editor Abdullah Schleifer and the then managing Editor Sarah Sullivan in 2001. "We have now encrypted Al-Jazeera in Australia."

(Source: TBS Archives: No 7 Fall/Winter 2001 #2)

The "Incredible Stroke of Timing" 2001

Optus television customers who subscribed to Arabic-language channels in Australia were amongst the select few to see Usama Bin Laden deliver his video statement, the first since September 11 attacks. Channel 43 was the new home of the Arabic –language 24 hours news channel Al-Jazeera which what has been described as 'an incredible stroke of timing' was added to the Optus platform in Australia on 1 October 2001. About 230,000 viewers currently subscribe to a package of Arabic-language channels through Optus International and World Media International.

(Source: The Age 11 October 2001.)

The Australian-Al Jazerra link 2003



Jordanian –born 45 year old 'freelance journalist' Salef Saqqaf is reportedly due to head Al-Azeri's Australian operation in late 2003. He migrated to Australia in 1985 and reported for Al-Jazeera since 1997, the year after al-Jazeera was established.

Saqqaf has resided in Australia for the past three years working from his home in Sydney NSW. He joins al-Jazeera's network of 90 correspondents. He also engages in 'occasional' work for SBS radio. Saqaaf modestly refuses to disclose the number of Al Jazerra viewers in Australia.

In press interviews Saqqaf is critical of Australian media coverage of the Arab world and perhaps reveals his concept of fair and balanced reporting:

'Generally, I don't think the Australia media is covering all aspects of this conflict in Iraq. ... That has been the same with the Palestinian issue. They are concentrating on the surface... They talk for instance, about the conflict between Iraq and Kuwait, and when Iraq invaded Kuwait. They're not looking at the historical aspect of what happened.'

'It's easy to say. "Oh look; Iraq (has) lots of mass destruction weapons." For Arab countries, mass destruction (is) something they're proud of. And when Iraq started (becoming) a country which had mass destruction weapons, around 15 or 20 years ago, they think: "yes, it's our right". It's a (source of pride), because they want to compete with Israel'

(Source: The Age March 20 2003 (emphasis added))

Rarely has the Iraq invasion of Kuwait or the right of Arab countries to weapons of mass destruction or the WMD threat to Israel been so tortuously delineated.

Al-Jazeera :Al-Qaida's media asset

Al-Jazeera is favoured by Bin Laden and Al Qaida for issuing terrorist threats against the United States Australia and other western countries, and as a post-office box for dropping anonymous 'tapes and other non-verifiable sources of information and as a source of information through its agents, sympathisers, assets and sources within al-Jazeera journalistic networks and offices.

Al-Jazeera 'reporters' throughout the world and the Middle East are well placed to ask 'trick' questions at public and media conferences. Some of these 'questions', may be in the form of requirements for bin Laden and Al Qaida and used for intelligence counter intelligence or targetting purposes as Al-Jazeera has a valuable quality in information collection: access. For example, a senior manager and two other Al-Jazeera staff were recently exposed as agents of the Iraqi intelligence service.

In the context of Al-Jazeera's relationship with Bin Laden and Al Qaeda, the al-Jazeera upgrade in Australia is more than symbolic; it is a subtle extension of extremist and prospectively, terrorist interest in Australia.

Al Jazeera's form of Taqiyya television has three operational purposes: Pre-terrorist attitude formation or conditioning amongst Australia target audiences; strategic disinformation aimed at Western governments, the US and Israel in particular and rationalisation ('explaining' or 'contextualising') terrorist acts against Asian US and Western targets.

Al-Jazeera is terrorism by other means: the psychological and strategic dimension of terrorism which aims to de-authorise resistance or opposition or even awareness of terrorism by repetitive denial: in two words: **Taqiyya television...**

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Henderson, Mark

From: MEMRI [memri@memri.org]
Sent: Thursday, 24 August 2006 7:43 AM
To: Henderson, Mark
Subject: Tunisian Reformist: Al-Jazeera TV- A Mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood

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Special Dispatch-North African Reformist Thinkers Project/Reform Project August 24, 2006 No. 1262

Tunisian Reformist Intellectual: Al-Jazeera TV - A Mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood

To view this Special Dispatch in HTML, visit:
http://www.memri.org/bin/opener_latest.cgi?ID=SD126206 .

In an article posted July 29, 2006 on the reformist website Elaph, Tunisian intellectual Dr. Khaled Shawkat, director of the Netherlands-based Center for Promoting Democracy in the Arab World, attacked Al-Jazeera TV because, he says, it has become the mouthpiece of the Muslim Brotherhood. (1)

The following are excerpts from his article:

"Al-Jazeera has Become [a Channel] Affiliated With a Political, Religious, and Ideological Organization [i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood]"

"I am convinced that the special status attained by the Qatari Al-Jazeera channel in the Arab and international media is based on the fact that in its early years, it dealt persistently with issues of democracy and human rights in the Arab world, dared to discuss things not spoken of in Arab politics, and exposed the disgrace of the violations and misconduct of the Arab regimes. I am also convinced that Al-Jazeera has in recent years abandoned this direction, for many reasons, and that its current administration is trying to preserve the channel's popularity by distorting Arab public opinion, [which it achieves] by stirring up emotion on sensitive regional issues, such as Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan..."

"My renewed interest in Al-Jazeera stems from the fact that, in my view, Al-Jazeera was an historic opportunity for advancing democracy in the Arab world... and that this opportunity is being lost, if it is not lost already, just as many other opportunities have been missed by the Arabs..."

"Al-Jazeera's current media direction is no longer to aspire to compete with the BBC or CNN in professionalism, independence, and courage; rather, it has become [a channel] affiliated with a political, religious, and ideological organization that strives to spread its views amongst the Arab public..."

At Al-Jazeera, "Loyalty has Come to Supersede Qualifications"

"Al-Jazeera has been hijacked by the Muslim Brotherhood organization - either at the wish of the channel's owners as part of a certain political game [played] by the Qatari rulers, or out of the lack of awareness of the Qatari rulers, who think that the situation is under control and that even though they have given the Muslim Brotherhood a chance to control Al-Jazeera, for local, regional, and international considerations, they can get rid of them or restrain them any time they want..."

"Anyone with professional qualifications is entitled to work, to gain prominence, to create, and to become famous, regardless of his personal beliefs. Therefore, I have never had any problem with the fact that media personnel known for their Islamic tendencies work for Al-Jazeera or for any other channel. The problem emerges when the criterion of qualifications becomes less important than the criterion of loyalty [to a particular group], and when the [channel's] editorial and media line... become hostage to an agenda that is not a media [agenda], but rather the party [line] or political [line] of a small group..."

"Prior to writing this article, I spoke with a number of journalists at Al-Jazeera, [both] known and unknown, some of whom still worked there and some of whom had been forced, or decided, to quit. Most of them agreed that 'loyalty' [to a group] had come to supersede 'qualifications,' and that journalists with no Muslim Brotherhood background had to choose one of two options: [either] adapt to the new work conditions and swear loyalty to the representative of the supreme guide [of the Muslim Brotherhood] at Al-Jazeera, or leave...

"Many chose to adapt to the Muslim Brotherhood's administrative conditions, and each found his own way to satisfy the imam. There were those whom Allah finally guided to prayer; there's the woman whom Allah guided to don the hijab... and there are those whose [TV] programs became more enthusiastic about the Muslim Brotherhood's slogans... than the organization leaders themselves...

"Those who have followed Al-Jazeera's programming in recent months have undoubtedly noticed that guests from the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood have taken over [the scene], [blocking] guests from the leadership of [other] political movements [from speaking] - to the extent that three or four Muslim Brotherhood members sometimes appear on a single news program, as if it were impossible to properly analyze and assess political events in the Arab world except via the outlook of the leaders of the group that takes the righteous way and is guided [by Allah, i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood]..."

The Producer Did Not Let Me Speak "Because He Felt That I had Criticized Al-Jazeera"

"A few weeks ago, I was a guest on Al-Jazeera's Behind the News program, to respond to the affair of Dutch MP 'Ayaan Hirsi Ali. I was the main guest on the program, because I was the only commentator [speaking] from the scene. But I was surprised that I was the only one stopped from making concluding statements, and also that my name was omitted from the list of the program's guests in the version posted on the Al-Jazeera website. A friend who had been in the program's control room told me that the producer had instructed the host not to let me speak again, because he felt that I had criticized Al-Jazeera in my opening statements...

"At [Al-Jazeera, employees are] no longer appointed based on qualifications, but [based on] agreed-upon selections, or [are selected by] one of the [Muslim Brotherhood] leaders. Based on what I was told by a friend inside the station, nearly 80% of the station's recent appointees - particularly in the production and the editing [departments] - are Muslim Brotherhood members or are close to movements [affiliated with] the Muslim Brotherhood. Appointments based on considerations of loyalty [to the Muslim Brotherhood] are even made in the management bodies of new professional departments which Al-Jazeera has decided to launch in the near future. The appointees have no professional expertise in the [relevant] fields [but are chosen for their affiliation with the Muslim Brotherhood].

"Recently, a joke [has been going around] that explains the delay in launching the English Al-Jazeera International channel: The British director is refusing to swear loyalty to the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood...

"I hope that Al-Jazeera will return to its origins [encouraging democracy and human rights], and that the era of being hijacked [by the Muslim Brotherhood] will not last much longer..."

Neither the Arab Regimes nor the Arab Opposition Have Internalized the Essence of Democracy

In an article published several days later, Dr. Khaled Shawkat discussed the enraged responses he had received regarding his article about Al-Jazeera, particularly the responses from Islamist activists. He wrote that the Islamist activists had cursed him roundly and accused him of treason and of collaborating with the Zionist-American attack on the Muslim nation. From the reactions he received, Dr. Shawkat drew several conclusions:

"First... The democratic culture in the Arab and Islamic world is still extremely fragile and superficial, since the accusations of treason and of intelligence collaboration with foreign elements are rooted not only in the existing Arab regimes, but also among the opposition. I do not know how people who have been expelled from their land, or arrested and tortured because of similar accusations against them, can agree so easily, with the stroke of a pen, to direct [such accusations] against anyone

who disagrees with their views...

"Second... [Attempts at] self-purification by supporting Iraq, Palestine, and other miserable countries is characteristic not only of the ruling regimes or of the intellectuals connected to them, but is also customary among those who want to lay claim to false acts of heroism. Al-Jazeera, which is no longer capable of courage in the face of many Arab governments, can emerge from its embarrassment only by showing heroism in other arenas that allow free [action]...

"Third... [From the Muslim point of view], when there is a regional or international crisis, life must stop, and the critics and commentators must refrain from engaging in [all other] matters. Anyone who dares to raise an issue not on the agenda... becomes part of the American-Zionist conspiracy... Since Al-Jazeera covers crisis after crisis [in the Arab world]... it is obligatory always to be silent, and never to criticize..."(2)

Endnotes:

(1) Elaph.com, July 29, 2006.

(2) Elaph.com, August 4, 2006.

The Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) is an independent, non-profit organization that translates and analyzes the media of the Middle East. Copies of articles and documents cited, as well as background information, are available on request.

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