



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on September 1, 2009

## The Soviet Roots of Terrorism

Americans have been conditioned to fear Islamic terrorism, but most Americans have been told little about how much of the international terror web was created by the former Soviet Union. The roots of Soviet sponsorship of international Islamic terrorist organizations go all the way back to the beginning. And the beginning of “Islamic” terrorism can be laid at the feet of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).



### PLO/Fatah

Former Romanian intelligence officer Ion Pacepa claimed outright that in 1964:

The PLO was dreamt up by the KGB, which had a penchant for “liberation” organizations. There was the National *Liberation* Army of Bolivia, created by the KGB in 1964 with help from Ernesto “Che” Guevara. Then there was the National *Liberation* Army of Colombia, created by the KGB in 1965 with help from Fidel Castro, which was soon deeply involved in kidnappings, hijackings, bombings and guerrilla warfare. In later years the KGB also created the Democratic Front for the *Liberation* of Palestine, which carried out numerous bombing attacks on the “Palestinian territories” occupied by Israel, and the “Secret Army for *Liberation* of Armenia,” created by the KGB in 1975, which organized numerous bombing attacks against US airline offices in Western Europe.

Pacepa was in a position to know. He was a two-star general and the highest ranking Soviet-bloc official ever to defect to the West. As a personal adviser to Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and interior minister, Pacepa headed up the Romanian intelligence services (DIE). Under what Pacepa describes as a Soviet “division of labor” under the Eastern bloc, Pacepa was charged with running KGB-allied operations in Israel/Palestine and Libya. When he defected to the United States in 1978, both the PLO and Libya offered a \$1 million bounty for his assassination.

If Americans fear Islam, they should know that the PLO charter had nothing to do with Islam. Its 1968 Cairo charter doesn’t even mention Islam. But it does employ plenty of Marxist-Leninist slogans, such as its claim that “it is a national duty to bring up individual Palestinians in an Arab revolutionary manner.” Much of the revolutionary rhetoric of the PLO had simply replaced the word “capitalism” in stale Marxist slogans with “Zionism”: “Zionism is a political movement organically associated with international imperialism and antagonistic to all action for liberation and to progressive movements in the world.” In the PLO lexicon, Zionism replaces capitalism as a “fascist” force that’s part of “world imperialism.”

The PLO’s political arm, Fatah, had done precisely the same thing four years earlier in 1964. The Fatah constitution also omitted mention of Islam in favor of Marxist-Leninist doctrines such as the “principle” of “democratic centrality.” In an interview with FrontPageMagazine.com in 2004, Pacepa explained how the Eastern bloc had organized its new so-called “Islamic” front against the West:

In 1964 the first PLO Council, consisting of 422 Palestinian representatives handpicked by the KGB,



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approved the Palestinian National Charter — a document that had been drafted in Moscow. The Palestinian National Covenant and the Palestinian Constitution were also born in Moscow, with the help of Ahmed Shuqairy, a KGB influence agent who became the first PLO chairman.

Pacepa notes that once the PLO had been established by Moscow, the Romanian DIE was tasked with guiding it. “Except for the arms, which were supplied by the KGB and the East German Stasi, everything else came from Bucharest. Even the PLO uniforms and the PLO stationery were manufactured in Romania free of charge, as a ‘comradely help.’” Among the KGB/DIE assets in the PLO was longtime PLO leader Yasser Arafat, whom Pacepa described as a dedicated communist revolutionary who bristled at the idea of publicly taking a moderate turn. But Arafat consented to a disinformation campaign about phony splits in the PLO in order to win more Western support to his cause. Pacepa relates one example of how this disinformation campaign was waged:

In January 1978, the PLO representative in London was assassinated at his office. Soon after that, convincing pieces of evidence started to come to light showing that the crime was committed by the infamous terrorist Abu Nidal, who had recently broken with Arafat and built his own organization. “That wasn’t a Nidal operation. It was ours,” Ali Hassan Salameh, Arafat’s liaison officer for Romania, told me. Even Ceausescu’s adviser to Arafat, who was well familiar with his craftiness, was taken by surprise. “Why kill your own people?” Col. Constantin Olcescu asked.

“We want to mount some spectacular operations against the PLO, making it look as if they had been organized by Palestinian extremist groups that accuse the chairman of becoming too conciliatory and moderate,” Salameh explained.

The PLO/Fatah movement remains true to its communist roots today, with Moscow-trained Mahmoud Abbas serving as chairman of the PLO. Abbas studied for a doctorate from Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, finishing in 1982. KGB defector Yuri Bezmenov explained back in 1984 that Patrice Lumumba University was “under the direct control of the KGB and [the] Central Committee, where future leaders of the so-called ‘National Liberation Movements’ are being educated and selected carefully.... They were dispatched back to their countries to be leaders of the so-called ‘National Liberation Movements,’ or, to be translated into normal human language, leaders of international terrorist groups.” Abbas then defended his thesis at the Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, which was then headed by former KGB General Yevgeny Primakov.

Abbas has been president of the Palestinian Authority since 2005, and even though his term was supposed to end on January 1, 2009, he unilaterally extended his term for another year. The PLO umbrella organization that Abbas heads includes several parties, among which Fatah is the largest. Fatah has a socialist worldview and “observer” party status with the Socialist International, but is not explicitly communist. Other than Fatah, the three other major parties under the PLO umbrella are either communist or “ex”-communist.

### **Al-Qaeda/Taliban**

While the PLO is entirely a KGB creation, the Russo-Soviet role in the formation of al-Qaeda is more complicated. Al-Qaeda’s roots can be found in the Soviet-Afghan war in the 1980s and in two personalities that were key in al-Qaeda getting off the ground: al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the Afghan warlord who made the growth of al-Qaeda possible.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had been a student communist in the 1970s, a member of the Soviet-backed People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and jailed for two years for his role in killing a



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member of a Maoist factional split in the party. Hekmatyar was pardoned by Daoud Khan after Daoud staged a 1973 coup d'état while his cousin King Zahir was in Italy receiving medical treatment. Daoud proclaimed himself "president" of a republic, but the coup had been backed by the Soviet-sponsored PDPA. Hekmatyar's loyalty to the PDPA got the young communist out of prison, but he soon professed a conversion to Islam and, after joining up with radical Muslim youth organizations, fled to exile in Pakistan. Daoud later tried to turn on his Soviet patrons and was rewarded with assassination in 1978, followed by a Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the next year. The Soviet invasion sparked both Osama bin Laden and Hekmatyar into action against the Soviets. Hekmatyar's alleged new-found Islamic fundamentalism quickly won over the Pakistani Intelligence Service, the ISI; and his Mujahedeen faction won a majority of Pakistani aid. Because U.S. aid from the CIA was also funneled through the ISI, Hekmatyar also received most of the CIA aid. However, he expended most of his effort fighting other Mujahedeen warlords, not the Soviets. According to ABC News journalist Peter Bergen. "Hekmatyar's party had the dubious distinction of never winning a significant battle during the war, training a variety of militant Islamists from around the world, killing significant numbers of mujahideen from other parties, and taking a virulently anti-Western line. In addition to hundreds of millions of dollars of American aid, Hekmatyar also received the lion's share of aid from the Saudis." Hekmatyar's crucial role in assassinating fellow Mujahedeen leaders caused many Afghans, as well as Western analysts, to wonder which side he was actually on. As Finnish terrorism expert Ansii Kullberg has noted, as early as 1985 many mujahids had concluded Hekmatyar "was a KGB-trained provocateur." Kullberg observed that Hekmatyar had suddenly become an Islamist "about the same time when the KGB was shifting its emphasis from Marxist extremists to radical Islamism."

Much of the informal Saudi aid, also distributed to Hekmatyar, went through Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), the Afghan Services Bureau co-founded in 1984 by Abdullah Yusuf Azzam and Osama bin Laden. Osama provided the initial funds from his family's fortune and expanded it to include donations from other wealthy Arabic individuals over time. MAK became the forerunner of al-Qaeda. With branches around the world (and several in the United States), the MAK maintained close ties with the Pakistani ISI. It was a minor player compared to the \$6 billion-plus government aid from the CIA and unknown amounts from the Pakistani Defense establishment. But like the funds channeled through the ISI, most of the fighters recruited by MAK were funneled through Hekmatyar instead of the relatively pro-Western head of the Northern Alliance, Ahmad Massoud.

After the Soviets abandoned Afghanistan and the government collapsed in 1992, the ISI-backed Hekmatyar took the Afghan capital Kabul in a bloody battle. But Hekmatyar's brutal tactics had made him too many enemies, even among his fellow ethnic Pashtuns. The ISI eventually realized that they were never going to be able to prop Hekmatyar up as a stable governing force, and with Sunni mullahs in Pakistan, created the Taliban to replace Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar fled to Iran in 1997, and over time has become an active al-Qaeda supporter.

Meanwhile, Osama bin Laden briefly returned home to Saudi Arabia in 1992 as a jihad hero, but left the country for Sudan so that he was free to criticize Saudi acceptance of U.S. bases on its soil after the first Gulf War. Osama's radicalism reaped its first effects in 1994, when the Saudis revoked his passport and his wealthy family withdrew his \$7 million annual stipend. Asked to leave Sudan in 1996, Osama returned to Afghanistan. He had already befriended the Taliban by sending foreign fighters to take on the Kabul government and the Northern Alliance.

From the Taliban's Afghanistan, Osama had state sponsorship for worldwide terrorist financing. But



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some of his associates had other state support. His second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, trained in Russia in 1996, according to Russian defector Alexander Litvinenko, who said “Ayman al-Zawahiri trained at a Federal Security Service (FSB, former KGB) base in Dagestan in 1998.” “He was then transferred to Afghanistan,” the defector said, “where he became Osama bin Laden’s deputy.” Litvinenko was killed in November 2006 after being poisoned in London with radioactive polonium 210, presumably by the Russian FSB (the KGB successor). According to Axis Global Challenges Research, Zawahiri had made two trips to the Russian province of Dagestan and got himself arrested on his first visit. “Suspected of links with the Chechen separatists, [al-Zawahiri and two companions] found themselves in jail.” Al-Zawahiri was released after six months, disappeared for two weeks inside the Soviet “republic” of Dagestan, and then left the country. But al-Zawahiri traveled back to Dagestan in Russia in 1998 for more training. Al-Qaeda also hosted a June 24, 1998 international congress of terrorists in Kandahar, Afghanistan, at which several Russian intelligence agents were present, according to Axis Global Challenges Research.

### **Hamas**

Hamas is the ostensibly Islamic variant of the PLO and Fatah within Israel/Palestine. Hamas means “zeal” in Arabic, but is also an acronym for “Islamic Resistance Movement.” This explicitly Islamic organization is also anti-capitalist and won the January 2006 parliamentary elections within the Palestinian Authority, winning 74 of the 132 parliamentary seats. The previously dominant Fatah won only 45 seats, and the remaining 13 seats went to other minor parties.

Hamas openly endorses the violent Muslim Brotherhood, a terrorist organization founded in 1929 in Egypt that engaged in assassinations. The 1988 Hamas Charter boasts that “the Islamic Resistance Movement is one of the wings of Moslem Brotherhood in Palestine.”

That Hamas is an offshoot of the PLO is explicitly acknowledged by the organization’s 1988 charter: “The Palestinian Liberation Organization is the closest to the heart of the Islamic Resistance Movement. It contains the father and the brother, the next of kin and the friend. The Moslem does not estrange himself from his father, brother, next of kin or friend. Our homeland is one, our situation is one, our fate is one and the enemy is a joint enemy to all of us.” The only objection Hamas has to the PLO is that it is not explicitly Islamic, and the charter adds that “when the PLO adopts Islam as its way of life, then we shall be its troops and the fuel for its fire that will burn the enemies. But until this time comes — and we pray to Allah that it be soon — the position of the Islamic Resistance Movement vis a vis the PLO is that of a son toward his father, a brother towards his brother or a relative towards his relative. He shares the other’s pain when he is pricked by a thorn, and supports him in facing the enemy, and he wishes for him to find divine guidance and [follow] the right path.”

Of course, the professed adherence to Islam by Hamas and other terrorist organizations does not preclude Soviet-Russian influence in their decisions, as the quick “conversion” of most of the Soviet-era Central Asian commissars to Islam powerfully attests. Although Hamas’ ties to Moscow are not as transparent as those of the PLO, they are considerable nonetheless, for a supposedly fundamentalist Islamic organization. Hamas chief Khaled Meshaal, as well as other top Hamas leaders, lives in the terror-sponsoring state of Syria, which has long been one of the most important surrogates in the global (Soviet) Russian terror war. Meshaal and his lieutenants have made repeated visits to Moscow, where they are regularly accorded high honors by Putin and the Kremlin hierarchy. Russian Internet providers host Hamas’ Internet sites, and Putin’s intelligence operatives have helped make Hamas websites effective recruiting and propaganda outlets. Hamas’ role should be viewed as a current adaptation of



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the earlier example we cited of Abu Nidal. It serves as a more militant variant of Fatah, which makes the PLO/Fatah look moderate, while at the same time also appealing to religious Muslims who would avoid a secular party like Fatah.

Outwardly communistic and secular movements are not viable political movements in Islamic countries today, not even as factional terrorist organizations. That's why so many of the Soviet-era Central Asian "republics" are increasingly using Islamic language in their public pronouncements.

Russia achieved a major coup in 2003 by joining the global Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). This is a key addition to the covert representation Russia already enjoyed on the OIC from the six Central Asian "republics" they still influence: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

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