

| |
|-----------------|
| RELEASE IN FULL |
|-----------------|

From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
Sent: Friday, August 26, 2011 9:48 AM
To: H
Subject: Bel Hajj

He's a native of Tripoli with pretty strong ties there. He was the Amir of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, which evolved into the Libyan Islamic Movement for Change (which he also heads). LIFG was listed as a terrorist organization after 9/11 because many of the group's founders were veterans of the Jihad against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. At this time, there were clearly ties of a personal and ideological nature to Al Qaeda, but no formal relationship existed to our knowledge. LIFG was the vanguard of Islamist groups fighting Q in the mid-90s.

Under the tutelage of Saif al-Islam and Ali Salabi (Libyan MB leader in Doha), LIFG explicitly renounced Al Qaeda's agenda and the regime subsequently released 350 imprisoned members. There are no indications that this decision was insincere, but the group remains a very conservative Islamist group (far to the right of Egypt's MB) whose attitudes towards democracy and elections are very much in question.

Bel Hajj, himself, is ambitious and clearly seeks a major role in a post-Q order. He has the patronage of both Salabi and the Qataris. He personally commands 1 of the 5 battalions that comprises the Tripoli Coalition (between 300 and 600 armed militants). We don't know the total number of armed men under his authority throughout Libya but some estimates place it close to 1000. The Qataris were directly shipping weapons to him, bypassing the TNC. Many of these weapons "disappeared," never reaching the frontlines. It's suspected that he may be stockpiling weapons, but we can't confirm this.