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## The Road Through Syria to Jihad in Iraq



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***“The New Road to Mesopotamia, by Al-Muhajir Al-Islami.”***

***“I feel obligated—based upon my previous knowledge of the Syrian-Iraqi border after living there for a while, familiarizing myself with it, and establishing a close relationship with many people living in that area—to post this topic so that our brothers will benefit from it, if Allah wills it. The Syrian-Iraqi border stretches over 500 kilometers and is divided into three areas:”***

***“- The Northern Zone: it stretches for more than 230 kilometers and is divided into two areas. [The first area is] the far north of Syria where Kurds live on both sides of the border, which is demarcated by the Tigris River. This area is difficult to cross through and I advise you not to go through there. [This particular area] stretches for around 100 kilometers. South of this region is the second area, which stretches for around 130 kilometers. Here, you will find scattered border checkpoints every 10 kilometers. On the Syrian side live several ancient Arab tribes, grouped in small populated areas, who live a traditional Bedouin lifestyle. This region is part of the Syrian Al-Hasakah province. On the Iraqi side [of the border], you will find the Mosul province and the city of Mosul. This area is easy to pass through—however, you need proof that you are not connected to the Iraqi resistance.”***

***“- The Central Zone: part of the Dayr az-Zawr province on the Syrian side [of the border] and the Al-Anbar province on the Iraqi side. This is the most frequently area used by the mujahideen to cross into Iraq. The reasons for this are:***

- 1.) The close ties between the people of that area with the people on the Iraqi side. The tribes of that area are scattered across both sides of the border.***
- 2.) The compassion of the people in that area for the mujahideen. Their children are involved in the jihad—physically, financially, and throughout the various jihadi factions in Iraq. There are those who travel to Iraq to participate in the jihad for a month and then return to their family and so on.***
- 3.) The close ties of these people to Islam and their Arab traditions.***
- 4.) Their enormous hatred towards the Syrian regime, and especially towards the ruling elite...***



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- 5.) *Their ties to the leaders of other tribes in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Kuwait, such as Ash-Shameer, Al-Bakarah, Al-Aqeedat and Al-Bukhrees. Some of them even have citizenship in these countries...*
- 6.) *They feel neglected by the Syrian regime, especially since 60% of Syrian oil, cotton, wheat, and barley exports come from that area. They do not receive any benefits from the Syrian government and they live in a state of poverty.*
- 7.) *The province of Dayr az-Zawr has a population of 1,200,000 individuals, among them 350,000 who work in the Persian Gulf region, and thus it is easy to get to know them and ask them about the various routes one can take [to Iraq]. They can be a good reference in order to meet their well-connected people in the Persian Gulf region.*
- 8.) *There are densely populated areas on both sides of the border. The city of Abu Kamal on the Syrian side has a population of 125,000 and is situated only 3 kilometers from the Iraqi border (you can walk that distance in 30 minutes). On the Iraqi side, you will find the courageous city of Al-Qaim with a population of 5,000 that is completely controlled by the Iraqi resistance.*
- 9.) *The frequent battles with American forces that serve as a cover for the mujahideen to cross over from both sides of the border.*
- 10.) *The large number of scattered villages on both sides of the border.*
- 11.) *The resemblance of the Iraqi accent spoken there to the accent of those from the Persian Gulf region."*

***"- The Southern Zone: this is part of the Hims province on the Syrian side [of the border] and the Al-Anbar province on the Iraqi side. It is a desert area, no people live there, and it is filled with military equipment, Syrian arsenals, and several secret Syrian political prisons. Passing through this area is an international highway that connects Damascus and Baghdad starting in the Syrian Abu al-Shamat region—densely filled by the Syrian military and intelligence apparatus. Brothers, take care not to enter this area which is impossible to pass through."***

***"Tips for brothers who desire to cross over the border:"***

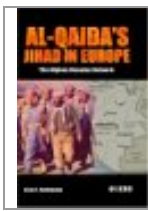
- 1.) *Do not trust any Imam in Syrian mosques because they are all employees of the Syrian government, which openly fights against the religion of Allah. It is impossible for people living there to attend prayers at the mosques without having the Syrian intelligence sweeping through the place. These Imams are either Sufis or fighting against Allah and his prophet. They write their daily reports and submit them to the oppressive Syrian [security] forces. The majority of the people who are arrested while trying to cross the border are those who were betrayed and turned in to the Syrian intelligence apparatus—such as the story of the Mufti of Halab Ahmad Hassoun, who was among the fiercest fighters for the salafist jihadi ideological movement—which, by the will of Allah, is spreading quickly in Syria.*
- 2.) *Abandon the appearance of a Salafist—such as growing your beard or shortening your pants—before leaving your home country.*
- 3.) *Carry with you various objects to camouflage your intentions, such as music tapes, cigarettes, etc.*
- 4.) *Arrange your trip to take place over two stages. The first stage is to learn the area, the people, and the roads, and then head toward the city of Dayr Al-Zawr near the Iraqi border. It is recommended to enter the city using a car and do not carry large sums of money. If anyone asks, say you are here on a vacation and have come to go fishing in the Euphrates—therefore, bring some fishing equipment and another person with you so you won't look suspicious. It is an inexpensive region and usually you will end up paying \$300 for 15 days in a four-star hotel. A tank of gas will cost you around \$10 and also the food is cheap.*
- 5.) *Do not mingle too much with the people from the cities (Dayr Al-Zawr, Al-Mayadin, Al-Asharah, Abu Kamal).*
- 6.) *Do not approach the Salafist youths inside the mosques because they are always watched in there. Try to meet up with them outside the mosques while maintaining a sufficient distance.*



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- 7.) *When you enter Syria, do not hesitate to offer bribes to the police because they are used to it. However, recently, the government ordered the police not to stop any vehicle coming from the Persian Gulf region.*
- 8.) *Conduct yourself based on common-sense security measures.”*

*“Finally, dear Muslim brother, do not forget to bring some money with you for your mujahideen brothers in Iraq, especially on your second visit... I have heard that one of our mujahideen brothers in Iraq was forced to sell his weapon in order to raise some money, so please do not forget that. In addition, do not forget, O’ brother, that seeking the paradise of Allah is the ultimate goal; remember Allah and he shall remember you.”*



## Al-Qaida’s Jihad in Europe: the Afghan-Bosnian Network

*“For Bin Laden’s involvement in the Bosnian conflicts, see Evan F. Kohlmann, Al-Qaida’s Jihad in Europe.” - U.S. 9/11 Commission Final Report (July 2004)*

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