

WHERE IS ABDUL RAUF KHADIM AND WHOSE SIDE IS HE ON?

All of the ladies attending the ball
Are requested to gaze in the faces
Found on the dance cards

Please then remember
And don't get too close to one special one
He will take your defenses and run

So we change partners
Time to change partners
You must change partners
Again

Lyrics by Stephen Stills

When last we left Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadim, only two short weeks ago, he had suddenly appeared on the scene in Afghanistan as a recruiter for ISIS. That was after he had spent time on the Taliban's Quetta Shura as one of Mullah Omar's top advisors. That was after he escaped from Afghanistan's Pul-e-Charkhi prison. That was after he had been transferred to Pul-e-Charkhi from Guantanamo, where he was "substantially exploited".

Today, Pakistan's Express Tribune is reporting that the Mullah Omar of ISIS, none other than Abu Bakr Baghdadi himself, has named Rauf the head of the Islamic State in Afghanistan, which, in ISIS-speak, is now known as the Khorasan Province of the Islamic State. Khorasan also includes Pakistan and selected other surroundings according to ISIS.

That is a very interesting development, especially since earlier this week, there was a report that Rauf had been arrested by the Taliban. Here is Adam Weinstein, writing at Gawker:

The Taliban, bane of America's post-9/11
Afghanistan operations, said Wednesday

that they captured Mullah Abdul Rauf Khadim, a renegade insurgent and ex-Guantanamo detainee who was in Afghanistan recruiting for the Islamic State, the latest parry in a messy internecine conflict between violent Islamist regimes.

The independent Pajhwok news agency of Afghanistan reports that Khadim—who had previously been identified in the media as an ex-Taliban footsoldier who sought revenge against the U.S. after his detention in Gitmo—was arrested, along with 45 armed followers, after attempting to turn local militants against the Taliban and win their allegiance for ISIS's attempts to build a global caliphate.

However, not everyone was convinced of that report. From Thomas Joscelyn, writing at Long War Journal, also on Wednesday, we have this:

Still, Khadim has been an effective commander and the Khorasan province is already active in southern Afghanistan. There have been skirmishes between Baghdadi's followers and their rivals in the Taliban, which is clearly gunning for Khadim. One report says that the Taliban has captured Khadim and dozens of his followers, but that has not been confirmed.

Today's announcement of Rauf as governor of Khorasan marked a rather rapid promotion for him, as a report by Joscelyn on Monday noted that Rauf had been named deputy governor.

Oh, and while you're trying to sort out just whose side Rauf is on, or whose prison he is in this week, you can get even more confused about funding for ISIS and where it is coming from. Iran seems to be enjoying that particular tidbit.