Terrorism: Al-Zawahiri Pays Tribute to Abu-al-Layth Al-Libi, Criticizes Sayyid Imam's Retractions

On 27 February, a forum participant posted to a jihadist website a message issued by the Al-Sahab Media Production Organization, the media arm of Al-Qa'ida Organization, announcing the release of a new video statement from Ayman al-Zawahiri, Al-Qa'ida's second in command, entitled "Elegy to the Martyred Commander Abu al-Layth al-Libi" In the 9-minute and 59-second video, Al-Zawahiri paid tribute to Abu-al-Layth al-Libi who was killed in Afghanistan at the end of January. Several times in the statement, Al-Zawahiri made indirect references to Sayyid Imam's "Rationalization of Jihad" saying, "I consider this document to be an insult to the patient, reward-seeking, mujahid Muslim Ummah." At the end of his message, Al-Zawahiri announced that he had written a letter to the Muslims in response to the said document, which he named, "The Exoneration: A Letter Exonerating the Ummah of the Pen and Sword from the Unjust Allegation of Feebleness and Weakness." Al-Sahab called upon the Muslims to make sure to get a copy of the letter, which they referred to as a book. The video was produced in Arabic with English subtitles. The English subtitles were found to be an accurate translation of the Arabic.

A transcription of the English subtitles follows:

"An Elegy to the Martyred Commander Abu al-Layth al-Libi

"Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri - Muharram 1429

"In the name of Allah, and all praise is due to Allah, and peace and prayers be upon the Messenger of Allah and his family, companions and allies.

"Muslim brothers everywhere, peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah and His blessings. As for what comes after: I approach you today with congratulations on the martyrdom of our brother, the lion and commander Abu al-Layth al-Libi, may Allah have mercy on him; that knight who only dismounted from his steed's back and relinquished his reins in order to join the blessed caravan, the caravan of the martyrs, Prophets and righteous ones, and what fine companions they are with Allah's permission, generosity and mercy.

"Abu al-Layth al-Libi -- may Allah have mercy on him -- is one of the mountains of Jihad in this era, but in the end, he is a created being whose destiny is that of every created thing. Allah Says, 'All that is on earth will perish, and there will remain (forever) the face of your Lord, full of majesty and honor' (55:26-27). (Koranic verse; Al-Rahman 55:26-27)

"And Allah says, 'You will die, and they too will die.' (39:30) (Koranic verse; Al-Zumur 39:30)

"Yes, for him was decreed what is decreed for every created being, but Allah honored him with the noblest of ends and most dignified of finales, and highest of ranks: martyrdom in Allah's path. Abu al-Layth al-Libi, the emigrant, the Murabit, the captive, the Mujahid and the patient reward-seeker, a man who was not shaken by the earthquakes nor unsettled by events, and who remained loyal to his religion, creed, principles and values. He divorced the world and flung it
behind his back, and set out in search of his Lord’s pleasure and his Ummah’s (Muslim nation) glory, among the pools of death, places of bombing and fields of battles. Who among us can forget this smiling face, that humble character, and those high-class manners which were contained by a heart which wouldn't break even if the world were to break? It is as I am with Abu al-Tayyib al-Mutannabi describing him as he elegized Abu Shujaa the killer, saying, 'It is as if your soul is not happy with you as its companion, unless you are more generous than the generous, and does not consider you protective of it, until you sacrifice for it in fright. Were it not for the difficulty, all people would have been chiefs. But generosity impoverishes and bravery kills.' Truly, were it not for the difficulty, all people would have been chiefs, but generosity impoverishes and bravery kills. Abu al-Layth departed after he made the Americans drink draughts of death and after he tore Musharraf’s hunting dogs apart limb by limb in his ambushes and raids. And it is as if I am with him as he repeated the saying, 'If I am killed, they will have known my valor, and if I escape, I will make them drink death. That lion has made his departure. That lion who emigrated from the West of the homeland of Islam to the East, carrying in him the concern of his Ummah and taking lightly in Allah’s path everything he met and suffered. And it is as if I am with him as he repeated the statement of Allah's Prophet Moses (on whom be peace), 'And I have hastened to you, my Lord, that you might be pleased.' (20:84). (Koranic verse; Taha 20:84)

"He departed an emigrant, a Murabit and a Mujahid, and it is as if I am with Ahmad Shawqi as he elegizes him while elegizing Umar al-Mukhtar (may Allah have mercy on him), saying, 'They have planted your remains in the sands like a flag, to motivate the people morning and night. Oh, woe unto them, they have raised a beacon of blood, to inspire tomorrow's generation with hate and dislike. A wound which screams to the horizon, and a victim searching for the red freedom; oh you unsheathed sword in the desert whose sharpness covers the swords of the ages. You were given the choice, so you chose to sleep in hunger. You neither sought power nor gathered a fortune. Like the carcass of an eagle or the remains of a lion left behind and scattered by a dusty gale. The battles spared not even an old bone of his, and the spears didn't spare any blood.'"

"So oh Ummah of Islam, these are your devoted sons and honest men, about whom we hope that in them is fulfilled the statement of the Truth (Exalted and Blessed is He), 'Among the believers are men who have been true to their covenant with Allah; of them some have died and some (still) wait; but they have never changed in the least.' (33:23) (Koranic verse; Al-Ahzab 33:23)

"They didn't change, by the Grace of Allah, and they fulfilled their covenant and didn't bootlick falsehood with 'reassessments' nor bootlick the idol-king with 'guides.' These - oh Americans and oh agents of the Americans - are the pioneers of the coming advance and good omens of the newborn dawn. Every time a martyr falls, another martyr grabs the banner from him, and every time a chief goes down in blood, another chief completes the march after him. And we are a people who do not see death (killing) as disgrace even if the stragglers of the Cross see it so. The love of death brings our time closer to us, while they hate death and so their time is late in coming. No chief of ours had died a natural death, nor has our blood been spilled without a response. Our souls run on the edge of the swords, and only on the edge of the swords do they run. If one of our chiefs passes, another arises in his stead. He says and does what the honorable said and did. Our days with our enemies are famous, and their features and players are well-known to all. Our swords, in the east and the west, are dented from battling the armored ones. So seek help - oh Americans, and oh agents of the Americans - with those under duress and those looking for a way out among the writers of documents of 'guidance' and concoctors of recantations, for they will be of not help to you. And try as much as you like to weaken the resolve of the Muslims and brand them with helplessness and weakness, for the biographies of
our champions torpedo everything you are trying to do. I recently finished a letter of mine in response to what they called the 'Document for the Guidance of Jihad.' In this letter, I sought to exonerate the Muslim Ummah of the helplessness, feebleness, and weakness which some of those eager for a way out attributed to it, and for this reason, I called it, 'The Exoneration: A Letter Exonerating the Ummah of the Pen and the Sword from the Unjust Allegation of Feebleness and Weakness.' However, I wrote it in ink on paper or as a pattern on the computer, whereas the valiant champions like Abu al-Layth wrote it with their blood and scattered limbs on the occupied soil of the homelands of Islam. That's the difference between my 'Exoneration' and the 'Exoneration' of Abu al-Layth (may Allah have mercy on him). And so I recalled the statement of al-Mutannabi: 'Until I returned and my pens said to me, Glory is for the sword, not the pen. So always write with us after writing with it, for we are like servants to the swords.' I ask Allah to compensate us and the Ummah of Islam in the best way over the loss of our champion, and to house him in His spacious Gardens, and to make his innocent and fragrant blood a light and illuminator on the path of giving and sacrifice, and a stimulus and motivator for even more giving and sacrificing in Allah's path. And our final prayer is that all praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds, and may peace and prayers be upon our master Muhammad and his family and companions. And may peace be upon you and the mercy of Allah and His blessings."

Al-Zawahiri's statement ends at the 7th minute and 47th second of the video.

This was followed by showing the cover of the book written by Al-Zawahiri, which he had referred to in his statement above as "The Exoneration," and a message from Al-Sahab which appeared on the screen in Arabic, with English subtitles beneath, calling on the Muslims to get a copy of Al-Zawahiri's book and sharing with them the closing statement written by Al-Zawahiri.

A transcription of Al-Sahab's message follows:

"Dear Muslim brother jealous for your Islam and eager to repel the aggression against your Ummah: make sure you get your copy of the book: 'The Exoneration: A Letter Exonerating the Ummah of the Pen and Sword from the Unjust Allegation of Feebleness and Weakness' by Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri, who writes at its close: At the end of this letter, I send four messages: The first is to all the Muslims: I tell them that what the 'Document of Guidance' (referring to the Rationalization of Jihad document by Sayyid Imam) presents is the Islam which America and the West wants and is pleased with: an Islam without jihad, without ordering of good or forbidding of evil, without preparation, without declaration of the truth in the face of the wrongdoers, and without and for the Mujahideen. The Muslim Ummah depicted by that document is the Ummah which America and the West want and is pleased with: a helpless, submissive, fearful, fugitive, remote, withdrawn Ummah preoccupied with acquiring provision and taking care of the family. This is why I consider this document to be an insult to the patient, reward-seeking Mujahid Muslim Ummah, which has presented - and continues to present - thousands of martyrs and many times more wounded, captives, orphans, and widows, without withdrawing, slowing down, or turning back and which continues to rain down on its enemies the severest of blows.

"And because I consider this document to be an insult to the Muslim Ummah, I chose for the rebuttal the name 'The Exoneration' in order to express the Ummah's innocence of this insult which has been directed at it. The Ummah which rains down sever punishment on the Crusader alliance in Iraq, Afghanistan, Algeria and Somalia isn't a weak Ummah; the Ummah which has remained resolute against barbarian Russia for four and a half centuries in the Caucasus isn't a helpless Ummah; the Ummah which chased the Jews out of Gaza isn't a paralyzed Ummah; the Ummah which conceived Imam Shamil, Umar al-Mukhtar, Hasan al-Bana, Iz al-Deen al-
Qassam, Sayyid Qutb, Khalid al-Islambouli, Isam al-Qamari, Abdullah Azzam, Abu Ubaidah al-Panjsheri, Abu Hafs the Commander, Muhammad Atta, Khattab, Shamil Basayev, Aslan Maskhadov, Zemilkhan Yanderbayev, Ahmad Yasin, Abd al-Aziz al-Rantisi, Abu al-Walid al-Ghamdi, Abu-Umar al-Sayf, Abdullah al-Rashood, Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi and Mullah Dadollah isn't a barren Ummah; and the Ummah whose sons, the emigrants and Mujahideen, stand their ground against the fiercest Crusade in the history of Islam isn't a submissive Ummah."