Dec. 12, 2006 - An extraordinary little document is making the rounds among the Taliban of Afghanistan. As first reported in NEWSWEEK by Ron Moreau and Sami Yousafzai on Dec. 3, the stapled pamphlet called simply “Layeha,” or “Rule Book,” is only nine pages long. But it speaks volumes about the Taliban: their strategy, their following, their potential virtues and their persistent vices, and the full text is well worth reading.

At a moment when the Kabul government of Hamid Karzai is under increasing threat and NATO troops are engaged in ever fiercer combat, the rule book suggests what an elusive and mercenary concept loyalty is on the Afghan battlefield. Just as American power and money helped pull warlords and fighters away from the Taliban in 2001 to bring down their regime, the surviving followers of Mullah Omar are now hoping they have the momentum to win back defectors to their side. But the leadership clearly worries that Taliban recruits will start freelancing: the rule book cautions against ransoming captives without approval, forbids selling equipment, discourages changing units without permission.

Terror and intimidation is part of the strategy, with foreign aid organizations, modern schools and teachers a special target. They are supposed to be warned, and if they don’t listen, eliminated. (In Kunar province, a village elder and four women—two of them teachers—were murdered on Friday night.)

But there is more to it than that. Many rules explicitly forbid killing those who work with the “infidel” Americans and Europeans if they’re willing to change sides, and one rule even prohibits killing infidels themselves if they come over to the ranks of the mujahideen or holy warriors.
The pamphlet is very clear about the need to preserve popular support in a lawless land. Not only is a mujahid, a soldier in the jihad, not supposed to steal from the people, he’s meant to set a positive example. Thus, no cigarettes. Also, no boys. In a society where pederasty is commonplace, the rule book tells the Taliban fighters they “are not allowed to take young boys without beards to the battlefield or to their homes.”

In addition to the translation below, the photographs show the original Pashto text of the document.

From the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan [Mullah Omar] Layeha (rulebook) to the Mujahideen.

Rules for mujahideen. Each mujahid is obliged to obey the following rules:
1. A person with responsibility (only commanders) is allowed to give an invitation to those Afghans who are supporting infidels to join the way of the true Islam.
2. To those who leave the infidels we will grant security for him and his property. But if he has some personal dispute, or somebody has some claim against him, he has to face our judiciary system.
3. Each mujahideen who is in contact with supporters of the current regime and who invites them to join the true Islam has to inform his commander.
4. Those who accept the invitation to join the true Islam but aren’t loyal and become traitors will lose their contract with us and will not be protected by us. There is no way to give them another chance.
5. A mujahid who kills an infidel who has joined the mujahideen's side will lose our support. Islamic law should punish him.
6. If a group leader (or any ordinary Talib) wants to leave his district to join a unit in another district he is allowed, but he should get permission from his senior leader.
7. If a mujahid captures any foreign invader without the permission of the movement leader he mustn't exchange the prisoner with another prisoner or for money.
8. The provincial, district or regional commander in charge is not allowed to sign an
individual contract with an NGO [non-governmental organization] or make a deal for money with the NGO. This matter has to be decided by the shura.

9. No person in a position of responsibility is allowed to use jihadi equipment and property for his personal interest.

10. Each mujahid is responsible to his commander for the money he spends and the equipment he uses.

11. Mujahideen are not allowed to sell any kind of equipment without the permission of the provincial leader in charge.

12. One group of mujahideen is not allowed to invite mujahideen of another group to join it in order to increase the group's membership. But if there is good reason (lack of personnel) this might be allowed. But a written permission is necessary and the mujahideen who join a new group should leave their weapons with their old group.

13. Weapons or equipment confiscated from the infidels, or allies of the infidels, should be evenly distributed among the mujahideen.

14. If someone who is working with the infidels wants to cooperate with the mujahideen, nobody is allowed to kill him. If somebody kills him he will face the Islamic sharia court.

15. If any mujahideen or commander is disturbing innocent people he should be warned by his leader. If he doesn't change his behavior he should be expelled from movement.

16. It is strictly forbidden for mujahideen to raid houses and take weapons by force from civilians without the permission of the district or provincial commander.

17. Mujahideen have no rights to take the money or personal belongings of the people.

18. As under the earlier [Mullah Omar] regime, mujahideen should avoid smoking cigarettes.

19. Mujahideen are not allowed to take young boys without beards to the battlefield or to their homes.

20. If a member of the opposition, or the government, wants to surrender to the Taliban we can consider their conditions but the final decision has to be made by the military council.

21. People with a bad reputation or who have killed civilians during the Jihad must not be permitted to join the Taliban movement. But if the Supreme Leader [Mullah Omar] forgives such a person he should stay at home.

22. If a mujahid is found guilty of a crime and his group leader discharges him, then other Taliban groups are not allowed to accept that person. If he wants to join the Taliban again
he should come back to his own group and ask for forgiveness first.

23. If a Mujahid faces an issue not described in this book, the regional commander should find a solution in consultation with the group.
24. Working for the current puppet regime is not permitted, either in a madrassa [religious school] or as a schoolteacher, because that provides strength to the infidel system. In order to strengthen the new Islamic regime, Muslims should hire a religious teacher and study in mosque or another suitable place and the textbooks used should be from the mujahid [anti-Soviet war] time or the Taliban time.

25. Those who are working in the current puppet regime as a madrassa teacher or schoolteacher should be warned. If he doesn't stop he should be beaten. But if a teacher is teaching against the true Islam he should be killed by the district commander or a group leader.
26. The NGOs that came in the country under the infidel's government are just like of the government. They came here under the slogan of helping the people but in fact they are part of this regime. That's why their every activity will be banned, whether it is building a road, bridge, clinic, school or madrassa or anything else. If a school matches these conditions it should be burned. If it is told to close but doesn't it should be burned. But before burning it all religious books should be taken out.
27. Before someone is found guilty of being a spy, and can be punished, no commander or person of responsibility is allowed to interfere. Only the district general commander is allowed to do so. In court evidence has to be brought forward that might prove the accused person to be a spy. The persons who bring forward the evidence should be a mentally well and have a good religious reputation. They must not have committed a big crime. The accused should be punished only after the whole case is closed and he is found guilty.
28. No lower commander is allowed to interfere in the civil, common disputes of the people. If people insist [on intervention] the case should be brought in front of a district or regional commander. But he should present the case to the religious scholars or the jirga [council]. If they can't find a solution the case should be taken to very well known scholars.
29. Every mujahid group is committed to keep watchful guards on duty day and night.
30. The above 29 rules are compulsory. Whoever violates any of them should be treated according the Islamic prince’s rules.

This layeha is for the mujahideen who are sacrificing their lives for Islam and Almighty Allah. These are complete guidelines for the progress of the Jihad, and mujahideen should follow these rules. This is the responsibility of Jihadis and the faithful.

From the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan [Mullah Omar]

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