

# The *Letort* Papers

## SOMALIA: LINE IN THE SAND — IDENTIFICATION OF MYM VULNERABILITIES

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## **The Letort Papers**

### **SOMALIA: LINE IN THE SAND— IDENTIFICATION OF MYM VULNERABILITIES**

**Eloy E. Cuevas**

**Madeleine Wells**

**September 2010**

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## FOREWORD

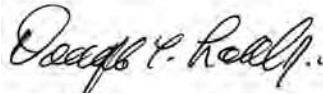
Continuing instability in Somalia has increased concern that terrorists who seek to establish a foothold in Africa may use such insecure places as a safe haven and launching pad. Several attempts have been made to establish lawful governments in Somalia; however, warlord and clan interests have managed to take center stage among the population. The Somali-based al-Shabaab (also known as the Mujahidin Youth Movement [MYM]) is a militant organization born out of both successive regional turmoil and international salafi-jihadi ideology, which continues to actively undermine the United Nations (UN)-supported African Union (AU) peacekeeping force, the fledgling Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and all UN efforts to support Somalis in creating a stable state. Al-Shabaab's ability to orchestrate a strategic communications campaign has resulted in support from both al-Qa'ida and Usama bin Laden, as well as funding and personnel recruitment from pockets of Somali diaspora throughout the world.

While U.S. administration officials deny direct U.S. support for AU forces, AU leadership claims the contrary, suggesting direct U.S. military support has been crucial to fighting al-Shabaab over the past few years.

Any direct effort the United States undertakes in favor of the TFG against al-Shabaab and its associated militias must involve a whole of government approach focused on the areas where al-Shabaab has demonstrated vulnerabilities. Such interagency action to leverage these vulnerabilities will certainly limit al-Shabaab's strategic, operational, and tactical (SOT)

prowess more than military campaigns and objectives alone.

The authors of this monograph identify al-Shabaab SOT vulnerabilities organized according to four sources of national power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME). After exploring the group's inherent and apparent weaknesses, the authors then provide some suggestions on what efforts or capabilities may be leveraged in defeating and deterring the group. Such instruments do not have to be kinetic or military in nature, but can be diplomatic, economic, or persuasive. The authors concentrate on those diplomatic and informational options and do not address the military or economic implications at this time.



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## SUMMARY

The influence of Islam on governance and clan politics has both negatively and positively affected the people of Somalia. It has facilitated justifying the removal of national, regional, and grassroots or clan leadership, especially if socioeconomic conditions and quality of life standards have been degraded or the leadership failed to ensure the safety of the people. Additionally, charismatic clan leaders have leveraged the low level of education among the Somali population to incite leadership changes. On a positive note, enforcement of Islamic law (Sharia) has been a major factor in helping to stabilize the lawlessness that has gone unchecked throughout the ungoverned parts of Somalia. By establishing courts and increasing the appointment of judges, Islamic leaders have attempted to bring normalcy to people's daily lives, amid all the street-level battles, clan intra and interconnected struggles for leadership and influence, and the presence of foreign fighters on both sides of the conflict.

The al-Shabaab Organization, also known as the Mujahidin Youth Movement (MYM), and its allies have been active opponents in undermining the United Nations (UN)-supported African Union (AU) peacekeeping forces, the fledgling Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG), and all the UN efforts to support the Somali people. Al-Shabaab's use of the internet and control of the local news media has resulted in its ability to disseminate its story to the Somali public, to sympathizers throughout the world, and to the greater Islamic community. It is able to accomplish its strategic communication campaign through the use of organic websites, publication of online magazines and

newsletters, and with international press conferences and interviews.

If the last 2 years is an indicator of what may happen in Somalia, the United States needs to consider undertaking a more direct role in limiting the demise of the TFG, and extending itself to counter any advances that al-Shabaab may gain. However, as military leaders and policymakers have suggested, this effort to limit the advances of al-Shabaab must be focused and involve a whole of government approach. This whole of government approach must be focused on the areas where al-Shabaab has been shown to have vulnerabilities.

The authors of this monograph identify al-Shabaab's strategic, operational, and tactical vulnerabilities organized according to four sources of national power: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME). After exploring the group's inherent and apparent weaknesses, the authors then provide some suggestions on what efforts or capabilities may be leveraged in defeating and deterring the group. Such instruments do not have to be kinetic or military in nature, but can be diplomatic, economic, or persuasive. The authors concentrate on diplomatic and informational options and do not address the military or economic implications at this time.

**SOMALIA:  
LINE IN THE SAND—  
IDENTIFICATION OF MYM VULNERABILITIES**

**INTRODUCTION**

The disintegrating state of Somalia is located at the strategic crossroads of Africa and the Middle East, with one foot mired in clan warfare and intra-Horn of Africa's politics, and another stretching across the Red Sea into an increasingly globalized salafi-jihadi and maritime struggle. The region is important to the United States for reasons of naval security and commerce, but also for the protection of troops stationed in Djibouti and continuing counterterror (CT) efforts in the Horn and Yemen. The U.S. Government, the Department of Defense (DoD), and the international community are devoting increasing resources to fighting extremism in the region, hoping to subdue a devastating trend of chaos caused by Islamic radicals. As our focus on the al-Qa'ida (AQ) affiliated al-Shabaab group continues, so must our focus on developing an increasingly wise toolbox with which to defeat its cause. Thus, policymakers must seriously assess al-Shabaab's strengths and weaknesses to allow CT efforts in the region the upper hand in fighting an international terrorist ideology.

The people of Somalia live in a state of decay from day to day, not knowing if their lives will end. For the last 2 years, southern and central Somalia has been embroiled in a conflict ostensibly based on religion. It is a conflict intimately tied to notions of national liberation, clan loyalties, and admittedly varying interpretations of Islam. The aggressive nature of the conflict has resulted in thousands of deaths, the destruction

of sacred monuments, and brother-on-brother, clan-on-clan battles. The battle lines have been drawn in the sand. On one side, there is the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and its African Union (AU) and international supporters. On the other side, there is the the Mujahidin Youth Movement (MYM), also known as al-Shabaab, and its affiliated fighters and militias.<sup>1</sup>

The battle between these two groups has been waged on the streets of Mogadishu, in the desolate towns and villages of central and southern Somalia, and through a sophisticated media and online front.<sup>2</sup> Al-Shabaab has gained increasing attention in the last year from friends and enemies within Somalia and the Horn of Africa, the Muslim world, and international counterterrorism experts. The group has been warmly praised by AQ and several of its regional affiliates in the past year, and rhetorical support from independent salafi-jihadis has demonstrated growing interest in the Somali theater. Indeed, the MYM's increased popularity and resonance as it engages in battles on the ground and in the virtual world of jihadi web forums has been astonishing, especially considering the group's relatively recent formation as an independent organization with minimal local guidance and financial support from al-Qa'ida Central (AQC).

However, careful analysis of the MYM's strategy reveals multiple vulnerabilities that analysts should be able to counter with a strategic campaign. A synchronized effort by the United States, the AU, and TFG agencies may result in limiting the success that the MYM has enjoyed over the last several years. This monograph provides an assessment of vulnerabilities which, if aggressively attacked, could result in the reduction of the MYM's manipulative ability.

## BACKGROUND

Continuing instability in Somalia today has increased concern that terrorists who seek to establish a foothold in Africa will use insecure places as safe havens and launching pads. Several attempts have been made to establish lawful governments; however, warlord and clan interests have managed to take center stage among the population. Local leaders have been unwilling to subordinate themselves to a national-level form of government. This unwillingness and grassroots focus has resulted in the establishment of local militias, formed to protect the interests of clans and their leaders.

These militias have maintained order within their jurisdictional boundaries when threatened by external forces, when clan leaders wanted to enforce their decisions, or when emergencies required an organized force to assist in the relief effort. Following years of this sort of military arrangement, a group of leaders believed clan militias could not defend the interests of the Somali people; therefore, they formed an organization called the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). The UIC is also referred to by others as the Islamic Courts Union (ICU).

The UIC/ICU's intent was to provide a national-level decisionmaking organization, form a military, and start consolidating grassroots leadership into a Somali government. Unfortunately, key leaders disagreed on whether to adopt a nationalistic versus a hard-line Islamic focus. Those propagating the Islamic focus attracted the attention of the United States and several neighboring countries, due to their ties to AQ and involvement in the recruitment and training of

jihadi fighters for the struggles in Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other locations where caliphates had been declared by Islamic fundamentalists. Subsequently, in 2006, Ethiopian armed forces crossed the border, dissolving the UIC and returning Somalia to the hands of local militias.

Ethiopian forces attempted to provide peace enforcement operations in Somalia; however, they faced opposition from groups which were now united in the determination to regain control of Somalia and establish an Islamic form of government. These groups would later form the basis for the establishment of the MYM and its allies, who will be described later in this paper. In 2007, the AU authorized the deployment of up to 8,500 troops to maintain order in Somalia and assist, guide, and provide security to the TFG for the establishment of its rule. Before we examine the vulnerabilities of the MYM, in order to provide a balanced assessment we will briefly examine the vulnerabilities of the TFG.

### **TFG Vulnerabilities.**

The government of Somalia has demonstrated a willingness to reach out to various competing groups. However, its new and immature leadership, in combination with competing hard-line Islamic groups, continues to push it to the edge of failure. Specifically, the TFG is vulnerable because it remains unable to provide the people of Somalia a secure environment in which to live and work, unable to win the strategic communications war, and unable to develop and negotiate a long-term strategic national plan which would result in a peaceful nation.

## ROLE OF ISLAM AND CLANS IN SOMALIA

Some of the parties who are trying to overthrow the government now are increasingly using Islam as a mechanism to increase popular support. To fully appreciate the Somali situation, it is important to understand the role Islam has taken in Somalia as both a populist response to perceived Western encroachment and as a type of political order to fill the governance gap that has persisted for nearly 2 decades.

First and foremost, it is important to note that Islam in Somalia was not always practiced with extremism. Mystical Sufi brotherhoods have long been prevalent in Somali Islam. Alongside a peaceful Islamic current, however, there has also been a more reactionary, extremist one. Socialism in the 1950s and 1960s diminished the role of Muslim leaders, and certain institutions traditionally controlled by religious scholars were transferred to secular authorities. Although the new government was professedly Islamic, its actions both disenfranchised and disenchanting some Somalis who followed the regional current of Islamic revivalism. The upswing in fundamentalism in the Middle East in the late 1970s and early 1980s also impacted Somalia, which was geographically close enough to the Arabian Peninsula to be influenced by certain Islamic fundamentalist teachings. Additionally, a xenophobic trend grew in tandem with an increasingly extremist religious trend. Distrust of outsiders and past persecution of Muslims by Westerners have long fueled anti-Western rhetoric in Somali mosques. Indeed, Western nations have intervened in Somalia since the British and Italians picked apart the country in the 19th century. Whereas mistrust of foreigners and their types of governance is commonplace, Islam offered and offers



an alternative framework for rule and law that is perceived by some to be more indigenous and authentic.

On a political level, it is important to note that Islam has filled a gap in Somalia for a very specific reason—the ICU and other Muslim social and political structures have offered services and structure where successive attempts at central governments have failed since the early 1990s. In the last 10 years *‘Ulema* (Islamic scholars or religious leaders) have gained popular support both within the clans and among average Somalis. More recently, the possibility of a strict implementation of sharia (the all-encompassing legal order given by God and based on the *Quran* and the subsequent body of Islamic law) has become a central contention of Islamists seeking to gain control.<sup>3</sup> Finally, it is also of note that some Islamic teachings encourage the removal of leaders if they fail to provide for the welfare of the community. This may explain both the confrontation between Islamic extremists and successive governments as well as the continuous infighting between the clans.

### **Clan Politics.**

Intra- and inter-clan fighting in Somalia can be explained partially in terms of clan organizational structure and the multiple barriers inherent in the system which impede unity and contribute to instability in society. First of all, clan culture allows for the questioning of leaders at the tribal, regional, or national level. When leaders gain authority, they often have not developed means for the lowest members of the group to feel like valued members of the organization. Furthermore, many leaders have not instituted symbols to bind members and create loyalty within

the clan. In addition to the absence of such symbols or slogans, many leaders have also not used Islamic teachings to create an underlying doctrine to nurture followers and create synergy.<sup>4</sup>

The lack of an educated and informed membership poses an impediment to clan unity while also facilitating the attractiveness of clan membership. Somali clans include a hodgepodge of youths and uneducated men and women from villages – often with no family or ethnic background in common. Whereas people who are tied ethnically tend to be more wary of fighting one another, the absence of blood ties means that intertribe conflict occurs more often. Additionally, lack of education plays a role in clan membership and instability. According to the UN Unite for Children website, only 22 percent of school-aged children attend school.<sup>5</sup> This has profoundly impacted the literacy of the total population, which is slightly less than 38 percent.<sup>6</sup> This lack of an educated public makes clan membership more desirable and attractive, since the only skills required are the ability to follow orders and carry a weapon.

The idea of sacrificing such uneducated, low-level clan members appears acceptable to many senior clan leaders. Some charismatic clan leaders may justify most intertribal fighting according to a need to gain power, while savvy Islamic clan leaders legitimize their fighting as a jihad, or holy war.<sup>7</sup> According to the latter, Muslims have a duty to fight nonbelievers. This means that many low-level clan members are essentially expendable to the upper-level leadership.

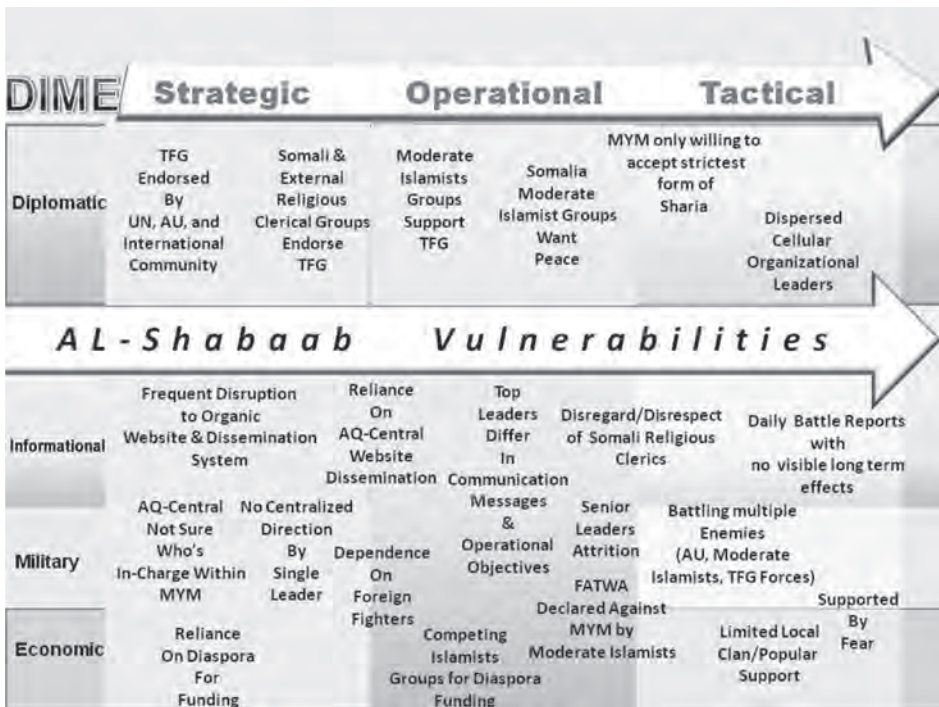
Finally, clan leadership turnover may be a result of a lack of anything akin to a military's "Non-Commissioned Officer" (NCO) Corps. An NCO Corps represents a form of middle-management which can provide

hands-on supervision to young low-level members who do not feel a symbiotic sense of allegiance to their leadership; this absence of an NCO corps allows for the possibility that another charismatic leader can garner support to help topple the leadership. Essentially, clan politics is a cycle of one leader following another promising to look after the members. When the leader fails to provide for the good of the clan, clan culture allows for the replacement of the leader. This cycle will continue to affect Somali society because leadership fragility and organizational flux is not conducive to attaining a long-term, negotiated peace.<sup>8</sup>

### **Methodology.**

Methodologies for organizing information on insurgent groups are often hyperanalytical or far too technical, forcing intelligence or operational planners to disregard them as merely analytical tools rather than useful frameworks to inform decisionmaking. We endeavored to find a more basic design to optimize user-friendliness and encourage applicability in multiple future scenarios. Figure 1 depicts the MYM's vulnerabilities, which were organized using the following four sources of national power for the purpose of this assessment: diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME).<sup>9</sup> Our next consideration was whether the vulnerability occurs at the strategic, operational, or tactical level (SOT) of war.<sup>10</sup> To clarify our SOT analysis, we are defining "strategic" as when the TFG, the international community, or the MYM and its allies seek to enforce or influence security objectives and guidance, and develop and use national or international resources to achieve these objectives. Furthermore, we define "operational" as when cam-

paigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to achieve strategic objectives within Somalia and the Horn of Africa. Finally, we define “tactical” as where battles and engagements are planned and executed to achieve objectives assigned to tactical units or task forces. This is where the local community is influenced to provide or deny support.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 1. Composite of al-Shabaab Vulnerabilities.**

While intended to provide a lens into the power of nation-states, the DIME framework can be applied cautiously in the case of al-Shabaab, for while it is technically a nonstate actor, as it evolves from an organism to a more regimented organization, it in-

creasingly utilizes tools similar to those used by state organs, particularly in the military and informational domains. This is even further true as the organization continues to operate in a state of war against elements of a national government and international troops—causing it to counter many of their national structures.

Several additional caveats are in order here. This methodology is not intended to suggest a typology applicable to all militant structures, either in the Horn of Africa or elsewhere. Indeed, it must be noted that not every organization operates in all four vectors. In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, several explanations of salafi-jihadi Islamist movements have been put forward. Arguments for organizations like AQ as hierarchical, networks of franchise or, conversely, pockets of leaderless resistance have caused significant debate.<sup>12</sup> In reality, salafi-jihadi actors exist in all three types of structures; none of these theories are mutually exclusive, although not all elements may be present in each one. For instance, in a self-starting group with no distinct leadership, the diplomatic and informational vectors may be virtually irrelevant in individual cells. Likewise, very little is known about the current organization of al-Shabaab, other than its relative decentralization, so the methodology applied here analyzes the main messages and actions coming from the official center, which does appear to operate within the DIME paradigm. This methodology is useful as a mechanism for visualizing certain vulnerabilities of radical groups, regardless of the groups' level of centralization and irrespective of whether their cell structures are top-down or bottom-up.

## **MYM Vulnerabilities.**

As previously mentioned, the current MYM organization and structure is difficult to know with any certainty. Estimates of local cell composition and strength, along with their concrete religious disposition, vary across scholars and analysts, with projections ranging from hundreds to thousands of members. Frequent MYM leadership changes, and challenges in pinning down the identity of personnel under pseudonyms, further complicates any detailed analysis.

The MYM's current leadership hails from different backgrounds and nationalities, complicating the task of ascribing a singular strategy to disparate, decentralized operating groups. Some leaders have combat experience in Afghanistan or other theaters, and their rhetoric suggests they see jihad in Somalia as part of a coordinated global effort. Other leaders and collaborators are more focused on providing order so that Somalia and its people can emerge from poverty, the misrule of clan warlords, and turnstile transitional governments. Likewise, their individual adherence to various hardcore salafi-jihadi ideology remains in question. Figure 1 is a composite of the vulnerabilities identified, given the limited open source information on the MYM. The remainder of this monograph will provide a description of the vulnerabilities and recommended capabilities that can be applied to limit the MYM .

## **Goals.**

For the purposes of this analysis, vulnerabilities are measured with respect to what we identify as the strategic goals of the MYM based on an extensive re-

view of their propaganda and literature. The objectives of the MYM's grand strategy include expelling Ethiopians and foreign peacekeeping forces, delegitimizing and expelling the TFG of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed,<sup>13</sup> implementing a puritan form of sharia, and eventually establishing one contiguous Islamic emirate in Somalia. Judging by its propaganda, the group is keen on accepting as many fighters – local and international – as necessary to reach this goal.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, estimates of foreign fighters operating in Somalia currently range from 280 to 450.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, it should be noted that high-level agreement about more transnational aims, which largely coincide with AQC strategy, depends on individual leaders, and is most closely associated with those MYM figures who have direct contact with AQ.<sup>16</sup> Given a basic understanding of the goals, we can now move on to the likely vulnerabilities.

### **Diplomatic-Strategic Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Gain national and international support, relevance and legitimacy.* Both the MYM and the government of President Sharif have sought the support of the Somali people and neighboring countries.<sup>17</sup> In their struggle to influence the public, the TFG has been endorsed and subsequently supported with financial aid and weapons by the UN, the AU, and the international community. This international legitimacy could limit the MYM's ability to gain international support, acceptance, and ultimately relevance beyond the Somali terrorist context. Indeed, unless the TFG does something viewed as unethical or irresponsible, it will continue to be supported by international and AU governments regardless of its battle losses to the

al-Shabaab, making the MYM's attainment of its strategic goals difficult.

Perhaps more important, Somali and external religious clerical groups have endorsed the TFG. The MYM has not been endorsed by recognized Somali Islamic leaders, in part because it has assassinated multiple leading clerics who disagree substantively with its use of violence. Even the leadership of the Hizbul-Islam (HI) alliance, with whom the MYM is loosely affiliated, only agrees on certain elements key to the MYM's strategy.<sup>18</sup>

The TFG and international community must continue to seek clerical legitimacy and endorsement in order to gain the support of the local population, since the people tend to believe their religious leaders and often seek their guidance.<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to determine how long the TFG will continue to receive aid and public support, especially if it shows limited results in its ability to provide basic services and protection to the public.

### **Diplomatic – Operational Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Gain local provincial and clan support, relevance and legitimacy, particularly with respect to Islam.* As stated before, multiple Somali and external religious clerical groups have endorsed the TFG. Such groups furnish an important form of legitimacy in a war increasingly waged utilizing Islamic rhetoric. Since January 2009, the MYM's alliance with the more politically pragmatic HI has not resulted in any endorsements by other moderate Islamic organizations within the country. While the MYM may not be actively seeking support from such organizations, this support would assist in gaining endorsement from



Somalis still unsure of whom to support. In addition, gaining popular support of moderates would increase MYM influence throughout Somalia and among the international community.

Somali moderate Islamic organizations and civic groups, such as the *Ahlu Sunna Wal Jama* (ASWJ), the Organization of Somali Religious Scholars, the Hawiye Cultural and Unity Council, the National Reconciliation Committee, and several civic and professional organizations, have actually endorsed the TFG and expressed their desire for peace.<sup>20</sup> The MYM has, in fact, alienated these organizations and their members because of its commitment to violence and unwillingness to negotiate. Moreover, these and several other organizations have influenced their members and international supporters to align themselves with the TFG, hoping that international pressure will force the MYM to the negotiating table with the TFG.

The aforementioned organizations have criticized the MYM for its aversion to compromise with the TFG and its determination to seek Taliban-style sharia. That such organizations seek both peace and stability is in direct contrast to the violent path the MYM has adopted in realization of its goals. As long as the MYM rejects peace and continues to attack AU and TFG forces, these moderate groups will continue to reject MYM claims for leadership of the country.<sup>21</sup>

### **Diplomatic-Tactical Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Promote the use of Islamic law, stability and security in order to garner further public support and emphasize ground campaign capability.* The MYM's rigorous enforcement in most areas of Taliban-style sharia has resulted in the loss of public support from

Somali and international groups and leaders.<sup>22</sup> While the MYM's enforcement of sharia has been recognized and supported by AQC leadership and their affiliates, it has also resulted in the TFG and neighboring countries using this against the MYM in the ongoing public information war.<sup>23</sup> In some cases the group's active propaganda message about this has backfired. For instance, when hardcore Islamic law was instituted and publicized in the southern border city of Kismayo, one of the first areas to come under official MYM control, the outcome resulted in considerable chafing on the part of the local population. The Islamic administrations set up from Baidoa have concentrated largely on service provision. Indeed, the propaganda from the summer suggests the MYM's pragmatism as it moved from exploiting harsh sharia punishments to enumerating its services in favor of Somali security.<sup>24</sup>

In one sense, the inconsistent application of sharia across MYM-controlled locales gives insight into the semi-fluidity of its strategy; it is proof that the group has proven itself flexible depending on the reaction of locals. At the same time, it brings up the more important issue that the MYM's dispersed cellular structure and organization has not resulted in a synchronized propaganda or kinetic campaign. Analysis of its attacks on TFG and AU forces has shown that attacks seem to be uncoordinated between MYM units in central and southern Somalia. In addition, MYM's military attacks look to be local, with no centralized command and control organization nor a continued reinforcement of forces after capture of key cities or resources. In fact, the holding of key terrain or parts of the country seems to be temporary, with no long-term strategy.<sup>25</sup>

## MEDIA STRATEGY AND OPERATIONS

Before discussing the MYM's informational vulnerabilities, it is important to gain an understanding of the media strategy that the MYM is employing. The MYM understands the criticality of spreading the word of its jihad in Somalia to the greater worldwide Islamic community. This attracts foreign fighters or refugees seeking to return to Somalia, gains financial support, and also obtains greater worldwide media exposure. Without it, the likelihood of victory, especially against a government supported by the AU, the international community, and Somali moderate groups, will be limited. Thus, the MYM has taken a three-pronged approach to its media campaign:

1. Partnering with the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF) and Establishment of MYM Websites: This medium serves as the base for dissemination of battle-front reports, recruitment videos, videos showcasing AU forces being attacked, pre-suicide bomber testimonies, and postings for both AQ and MYM senior leadership seeking public support and giving words of encouragement.

2. Development of an Online Magazine: In October 2008, MYM produced a new propaganda magazine, *Millat Ibrahim*, which was printed in Arabic, with articles focusing on a variety of topics, including battle-field tactics, influencing the people through media messages, religious justification to attack TFG and African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces, and forming relationships with other jihadist organizations. Contributors included Somali academics, religious leaders, or other well-known individuals from the online jihadi forum discussions.

3. News Conferences, Interviews, and Online Chat Sessions with Senior MYM Leadership: Sheikh Mukhtar Robow, who was the former official spokesman for the MYM, has given multiple interviews over Al-Jazeera and other Arab networks; however, other senior and mid-level MYM leaders have also taken advantage of the availability of news reporters in Somalia. Whether at press conferences or private interviews, since January 2009 MYM leaders have addressed the need for support in Somalia as well as the need to change TFG leadership by ousting President Shaykh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed. They have also praised AQC leadership and supporting media infrastructure for their role in publicizing the struggle in Somalia. Figure 2 depicts media strategy and propaganda of the MYM.



Figure 2. Media and Propaganda Strategies.

It is important to note here that the MYM's media campaign depends on the GIMF for its reach into the outside world because of its inability to sustain its websites. MYM leadership has indicated its appreciation to the GIMF for assisting its propaganda efforts, and has acknowledged its technological shortfalls against Western efforts to block MYM website information dissemination.<sup>26</sup> The MYM announced the creation of a new media arm on December 20, 2009, in order to confront "global challenges."<sup>27</sup> It may be expected that the MYM's media bent will become increasingly international in the coming months.

### **Information-Strategic Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Recruit and self-promote using information technology such as the internet and AQ-affiliated media conglomerates.* Despite its diplomatic shortcomings, the MYM has enjoyed the support of AQC-affiliated information websites and publicity affiliates in the last several years. Many of these are surprisingly high-tech and visually striking, perhaps making the TFG's public pronouncements look amateurish in comparison.<sup>28</sup> However, over the last year, MYM-hosted websites have been taken down or disrupted by allies of the TFG. When this occurs, the MYM has had to depend solely on AQC websites and their correspondents for dissemination of tactical victories, magazines, videos, and forum bulletin board announcements. Dependency on someone else's website leaves the MYM vulnerable. Indeed, the fact that its last three websites have been disrupted points to its lack of skills in the cyber-warfare arena.<sup>29</sup>

## **Information-Operational Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Indoctrinate followers with military and political objectives.* In addition to being dependent on AQC websites for disseminating their information, the top leadership of the MYM seems to have varying strategic communication messages. Current MYM Emir Abu Zubayr has long placed Somalia at the center of AQ's transnational project, imbuing it with both strategic and theological-historical importance.<sup>30</sup> Other leaders have been less sweeping and historical in their statements. Longtime spokesman, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow spoke several times about the MYM's independence from AQ and the need to consider national objectives first, before expanding beyond Somalia's border. HI Leader Hassan al-Turki has also advocated a "Somalia first" strategy.<sup>31</sup> Robow's messages may have led to his removal in May 2009; however, there have been other instances where MYM's top leaders have expressed differing military and political objectives.<sup>32</sup> Current MYM spokesperson Ali Raghe has said Somalia must be fully liberated before contemplating international expansion.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, given the inconsistency in statements, and the probable lack of consensus on what, if anything, to do beyond Somalia, MYM actions have taken an overwhelmingly domestic course thus far.

## **Information-Tactical Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Emphasize local victories to build morale and recruit further ideological adherents and/or foot soldiers.* In the information operations war being waged on the internet, the MYM has published daily accounts of its tactical victories over the TFG and

AU. These can serve as words of encouragement to affiliated fighters. At the same time, despite claiming victories and destruction of TFG and AU resources, there does not seem to be a long-term sustainment or capitulation of these areas.<sup>34</sup> For example, a 2009 UN/AMISOM and MYM web release suggests that the MYM and the ASWJ have battled over cities in western Somalia, and MYM/HI and TFG/AMISOM forces have fought over neighborhoods in Mogadishu only to hold them temporarily, until the other counteracted with a larger force, or MYM forces were withdrawn because they were needed elsewhere within Somalia.<sup>35</sup> These MYM daily battle accounts could have a negative impact on recruitment of locals, since they imply the group would rather be violent than go to the peace table. Therefore, the MYM may unintentionally be labeled as uncooperative and always seeking military conflict. In addition, moderate and even hard-line Islamists may tire of this publicity with no tangible results or strategic outcomes.<sup>36</sup>

### **Military-Strategic Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Aggregate and recruit followers around certain military personalities.* The MYM has showcased a number of leaders, each giving interviews, directing forces in the field, and developing their own followers. Yet, AQC propaganda and open source reporting suggests that these independent leaders may have their own agendas. The fact that AQC leadership has not formerly acknowledged anyone within the MYM as its military leader indicates that there is no single individual leading the MYM.<sup>37</sup> This, in turn, points to the lack of a grand strategy and operational concept.<sup>38</sup> While Sheikh Mukhtar Abu Zubayr is allegedly the

emir of the MYM, no public or published announcements indicate that he provides strategic guidance or political, military, or informational objectives to other MYM senior leaders. In fact, in a military perspective, he does not hold other MYM senior leaders accountable in the sense of a true chain of command.

### **Military-Operational Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Utilize fighters from anywhere as foot soldiers in the MYM cause.* The MYM dependency on foreign fighters may delegitimize its argument that Somalis support its struggle against the TFG. Reporting suggests that within the MYM military structure, both leaders and foot soldiers originate from Middle Eastern (i.e., Arabic-speaking countries,) as well as, from English-speaking nations. Recently, in a recruitment video, an American named Abu Mansur Al-Amriki was featured leading a MYM unit. In addition, anti-terrorist law enforcement officials have apprehended Somali diaspora attempting to migrate back to Somalia. When asked, they claimed that they were answering a call to join the jihad in Somalia.

Finally, AQC leadership, including senior military leader Abu Yahya Al-Libi, has called on Muslims worldwide to join the MYM in its struggle.<sup>39</sup> This dependency on foreign fighters may indicate local Somali youth are either rejecting or refusing to join the MYM's fight against the TFG.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, experts suggest the MYM is increasingly seen as a tool of foreign extremists wreaking havoc (for example, the non-Somali tactic of suicide bombing) locally at the expense of already downtrodden residents.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, the continuing struggle between the MYM and the TFG has resulted in the deaths of MYM key



leaders and catalyzed the creation of rifts among MYM and HI senior leaders. For example, the deaths of key leaders Saleh Ali Nabhan and Aden Hashi Ayro<sup>42</sup> and the removal or diminishing of authority of former al-Shabaab spokesperson Abu Mansur and HI figures Dr. Umar Iman Abubakar and Hassan Al-Turki may reveal disagreements on where both the MYM or the HI should be heading. While there is little insitutional centralization, dependency on a core of leaders with military operational experience has left the MYM vulnerable to losing momentum. Without an effective training and replacement system, this makes it vulnerable to losing military engagements, as well as the information war with the TFG. Over the last 2 years, the MYM has lost leadership at the regional and operational levels. Since the MYM does not have a formal military advancement system, in-fighting between field commanders may occur as key leaders are killed. Admittedly, the group's success often has more to do with the local milieu than with charismatic leadership. The movement is not personality-driven, and it is important to admit that leaders' deaths provide propaganda material to the more ideological members, as well as to al-Qa'ida and its affiliates.<sup>43</sup>

### **Military-Tactical Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Wage a multi-front war against Ethiopians, remaining present African forces, the TFG, and Westerners in general.* The MYM continues to fight a multifront, multienemy, and multilevel war. Sustaining it may be difficult, especially if the TFG receives additional resources from the United States, the UN, and the AU. The MYM has a host of enemies, includ-

ing the TFG, the AU, moderate Islamic organizations, and neighboring countries whose forces are growing rapidly. In addition, AU and UN policymakers will be providing the TFG with an information operations capability in addition to advisors on nation-building. With the increase in external resources and committed TFG leadership, the MYM's ability to recruit and resource its struggle will be limited. In the last few months, U.S. administration and AU leaders have committed themselves to helping the TFG defeat the MYM. The MYM's continued rejection of peace, coupled with an impatience by Somalia moderate and civic organizations, will undoubtedly result in the MYM's loss of influence to an ever-growing TFG and its allies.<sup>44</sup>

### **Economic-Strategic Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Gain funding from international and local allies.* While several high-profile members seem to be indoctrinated and have fought jihad in other theaters, economic incentives are rumored to be a major factor in MYM recruitment and sustainment of foot soldiers.<sup>45</sup> Money is also important for providing local stability and buying new weapons. Given a local economy in ruins, MYM's dependency on the overseas Somali diaspora makes it vulnerable to shortfalls in funding if this support were cut off at the source. Somali diaspora living in Western countries have provided funding to MYM, which, in turn, has been used to pay for weapons, salaries, and other resources.<sup>46</sup> Western intelligence agencies and anti-terrorist organizations' identification and neutralization of this support system could result in the MYM shifting dependency to the Somali population and political sup-

porters—such as Eritrea and other AQ affiliates.<sup>47</sup> As noted earlier, the Somali population’s inclination for peace has largely alienated the MYM from this source of income.

### **Economic-Operational Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Get funding for MYM operations.* One of the biggest vulnerabilities the MYM contends with is competition for resources with other Islamic organizations. The creation of the HI in January 2009 has had both positive and negative effects on the MYM. While elements of the HI can be counted on to provide manpower or reinforcements on a tactical level, the HI also competes with the MYM on a funding level. HI and MYM financial leaders both appeal to the local Somali public, but also to the Somali diaspora in Western countries. Perhaps even more difficult for the MYM, is the fact that the HI is composed of four organizations merged into one.<sup>48</sup> Combined, their resources are likely to be sent to a larger organization with proven and established leadership. Finally, HI and MYM leaders support one another only as long as it serves the interests of their organizations, which clearly differ on long-term strategies. In a land where brothers fight each other, alliances are temporary and turning to the other side is not uncommon. Both TFG incentives and offers for influential positions may tempt HI leadership to side with President Sharif and his government.<sup>49</sup>

### **Economic-Tactical Vulnerabilities.**

*MYM Strategy: Consolidate resources and support by clans affiliated with the MYM.* The MYM’s base of sup-

port permeates from clans that provide both leaders and foot soldiers. Clans in Somali have for the most part attempted to remain neutral in the struggle for Somalia, switching sides, as either the MYM or the TFG/AU/ASWJ capture or recapture villages and towns. Clan elders and civic organizations continue to be interested in which group will bring basic services and peace to their people, not one which will enforce a particular form of sharia.<sup>50</sup> The MYM's continued violent attacks and persistence on the Taliban-style of sharia has alienated clans, forcing others to join the TFG or ASWJ.<sup>51</sup> In the long run, MYM rule by fear has clan leaders willing to compromise and accept MYM regional civil administrations; however, acceptance of the MYM is balanced between surviving today and enduring for tomorrow.

## **DEFEAT MECHANISMS**

Now that we have explained the MYM vulnerabilities and media strategy, we will provide recommendations on what efforts or capabilities may be leveraged in defeating or deterring the MYM and its erstwhile allies. We emphasize here that the instruments for defeating the MYM or limiting its influence do not have to be kinetic or military in nature, but can be diplomatic, economic, or persuasive. The following paragraphs provide examples of what instruments of national power/capabilities or organizations can support, defeat, or deter the MYM's campaign. This manuscript will only provide examples of the diplomatic and informational aspects of the DIME vulnerabilities.

### **Diplomatic/Strategic.**

- International community supports the TFG:
  - Efforts should be made by U.S. and UN strategic communication planners to highlight in Somalia that the TFG has gained the support of Islamic scholars, UN organizations, and other pan-Islamic and African organizations. This can be done by media, radio broadcasts, the internet, and grass-roots-level newspapers and pamphlets throughout Somalia.

### **Diplomatic/Operational.**

- Moderate islamist groups support the TFG:
  - Efforts should be made to provide material support to moderate Islamist groups and local clan leaders to counter economic, military, and informational advantages the MYM has gained within its areas of influence. These moderate groups need to be vetted by UN or regional organizations to ensure there is no corruption and fair distribution of material or funds.

### **Diplomatic/Tactical.**

- Dispersed cellular organizational leaders:
  - Efforts should be made to negotiate with MYM leaders who seem to have disagreements with mainstream MYM leaders. Gestures of formal power, positions within the TFG parliament, humanitarian aid, or as-

sistance with the establishment of economic aid for their population may encourage these leaders to break away from hard-line MYM leaders.

### **Informational/Operational.**

- Rifts in MYM leadership:
  - Efforts should be made to publicize and highlight the rifts that are materializing in MYM leadership. Third parties should introduce peace options to senior leadership within the MYM who appear tired of conflict and may seek compromise.

### **Informational/Tactical.**

- Disregard/disrespect of Somali religious clerics/daily battle reports with no long-term effects:
  - Efforts should be made to consolidate and publicize the sermons, announcements, and public interviews of leading Somali *'ulema* who have supported the TFG. In addition, TFG and senior clerics need to denounce and issue fatwas against MYM leaders who assassinate clerical leaders. Holding meetings and conferences with religious leaders in Somalia or Yemen to develop peace strategies, and broadcasting outcomes and findings in support of peace, would limit or delegitimize the MYM's violent campaign.

## STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review* provides insight into what role the U.S. military will play in Africa.<sup>52</sup> Echoing similar strategic objectives, General William Ward's testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee on March 9, 2010, acknowledged AFRICOM's partnership with the AMISOM countries.<sup>53</sup> Recognizing the limited extent of U.S. support to Somalia – that of supporting AMISOM forces preparing for their deployment into Somalia – raises the question, “Is supporting AMISOM forces enough to prevent the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Africa?”

From a regional viewpoint, Somalia has been in the middle of U.S. efforts to counter the growing threat in Africa. AQ views Somalia as a stepping stone for submerging the rest of Africa into an Islamic caliphate. For nearly 20 years, Somalia's economically depressed population has been caught in the center of inter- and intraclan battles, rotating Somali governments, and the worst humanitarian disaster to hit an African country in years. These conditions have made the country attractive to Islamic fundamentalist determined on making Somalia a safe haven for AQ – a haven where jihadists can hone their tactical skills and return to other areas within the Middle East where they can engage against the United States and its allies. Some analysts have even suggested that Somalia is becoming an unofficial al-Qa'ida exchange program.

Contrary to U.S. official public statements, Somali military leaders have publicly stated that the U.S. military is providing support in identifying and neutralizing MYM and AQ leadership.<sup>54</sup> Regardless of the extent of U.S. military involvement there, what

the United States does in Somalia will have ramifications throughout the Horn of Africa, the greater African continent, and perhaps worldwide. Relying on AMISOM forces to assist the Somali government, while a positive gesture, has done little to degrade MYM capabilities and influence. Waiting too long and entrusting AMISOM forces to prevent expansion of the MYM and AQ will unnecessarily be putting neighboring countries and the world at risk.<sup>55</sup> Strategically gambling on AMISOM to improve Somali government capabilities has yet to pay off. In March 2010, the UN pointed to the lack of progress and increased influence of the jihadists. Maybe a more aggressive strategy is needed to safeguard the region and world against this growing threat.

## CONCLUSION

The existence of the MYM depends on many factors, including its ability to recruit soldiers, provide weapons of war to these soldiers, obtain support either abroad or at home, and continue to appeal to the Somali population. Its battles have been brilliantly executed, with hundreds of AU and TFG forces losing their lives or withdrawing from Somalia. That said, the MYM does have vulnerabilities, and this monograph provided an explanation of the SOT vulnerabilities, organized along the DIME model. In addition, this monograph provided examples of what actions the TFG or its allies could take in the diplomatic and informational areas, which are perhaps two of the easiest areas to implement immediately, given conditions on the ground. Not addressed in this monograph, due to time and length constraints, were the military and



economic aspects of the vulnerabilities. A coalition of UN, AU, TFG, and U.S. operational planners can further refine these vulnerabilities and apply operational capabilities, which could result in the limitation of MYM influence in Somalia and abroad.

## ENDNOTES

1. This is the shortened form for *Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin* or Mujahidin Youth Movement (MYM). "Somalia: No Peace without Islam Video," MYM Media Section, translation in Open Source Center (OSC) AFP2008123041008, December 28, 2008; "Situation Report: Somalia: Understanding Al-Shabaab," Pretoria, South Africa: Institute for Security Studies, June 3, 2009. The U.S. Government included the MYM in its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations in 2008.

2. "OSC Media Aid: Main Insurgent Groups Adeptly Use Media," OSC Media Aid in English, AFF20090818049001, August 18, 2009; "Islamists Pledge to Continue Fighting Foreign Troops in Somalia," translation in OSC AFP20090409950055, April 8, 2009; "Al-Shabab Calls For Renewed Fighting Against Somali Government, AU Troops," translation in OSC AFP20090412950031, *Universal TV*, in Somali, 1900 GMT, April 11, 2009.

3. David Zeidan, "The Islamic Fundamentalist View Of Life As a Perennial Battle," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, December 26, 2001.

4. Interview by the author with Thomas Dowling, former Department of State Middle East Foreign Service Officer, October 4, 2003.

5. United Nations Unite For The Children, *UNICEF-Somalia*, January 18, 2010, available from [www.unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia\\_statistics.html#56](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/somalia_statistics.html#56).

6. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), *The World Factbook – Somalia*, December 20, 2009, available from [www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html](http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html). This number is dis-

puted, with the Somali Information Resource giving a 24 percent literacy rate.

7. Abdulkadir M. Nur (Eno), Address to the meeting on Somalia's Finance and Economic Issue, March 28-29, 2008, available from [www.hiiraan.com/op2/2008/apr/the\\_somali\\_youth\\_%E2%80%93\\_somalia\\_s\\_lost\\_generation.asp](http://www.hiiraan.com/op2/2008/apr/the_somali_youth_%E2%80%93_somalia_s_lost_generation.asp); United Nation Security Council (UNSC), *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia*, July 20, 2009, p. 15.

8. Analysis by the author, result of a class lecture given by Thomas Dowling, October 4, 2003.

9. See *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, Joint Operation Planning*, Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 13, 1995; and *JP 2-0, Joint Intelligence*, Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, March 9, 2000, for further explanation of the DIME concept.

10. *DoD Dictionary of Military Terms*, October 27, 2009, available from [www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/).

11. *Ibid.*

12. See Olivier Roy, "Netzwerk des Terrors - Markenzeichen al-Qa'ida" (Terror Network—al Qa'ida Trademark), *Le Monde Diplomatique* (German edition), September 10, 2004; Peter Bergen, Chapter 10, *Holy War Inc.: Inside the Secret World of Osama bin Laden*, London, UK: Phoenix, 2001; and Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2003.

13. It is noteworthy that Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed was a moderate leader in the interface control unit (ICU), which furnished part of the opposition to the previous TFG.

14. See Associated Press/LA Times, "Foreign Fighters Aid Militants In Somalia," *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2009, available from [articles.latimes.com/2009/may/16/world/fg-somalia16](http://articles.latimes.com/2009/may/16/world/fg-somalia16); Matthew Clark, "Pakistani Muslim Missionaries Killed in Somalia Mosque: Why?" *Christian Science Monitor*, Global News Blog, August 12, 2009, available from [features.csmonitor.com/globalnews/2009/08/12/pakistani-muslim-missionaries-killed-in-somalia-mosque-why/](http://features.csmonitor.com/globalnews/2009/08/12/pakistani-muslim-missionaries-killed-in-somalia-mosque-why/).

15. In May, the UN Envoy to Somalia estimated 280-300 foreign fighters in Somalia. As of August, the *Agence France-Presse* estimates 450.

16. One former recruit noted that the MYM aimed to secure an ungoverned place for AQ to serve as an operating outpost and provide a safe haven to senior AQ operatives facing difficulties elsewhere. "Somalia: Former Al-Shabaab Recruit Says al-Qa'ida Wants Somalia as 'Safe Haven,'" *Shayciye.com*, OSC translation in AFP20090528327001.

17. "Somalia: Islamist Says They Will Support Government If Shari'ah Is Implemented," translation in OSC AFP20090404950006, *Universal TV*, in Somali, 1900 GMT, April 3, 2009; "UN Security Council's Monthly Report, on Somalia April 2009," AFP20090403577004, New York, *UN Security Council Report*, in English, April 3, 2009; "New Somali Leader Takes Oath, Vows To Form Broad-Based Government," translation in OSC AFP20090131507001, Doha, *Al Jazeera Net WWW-Text*, in English, January 23, 2009; "Al-Qaradawi Congratulates HAMAS on Gaza 'Victory,' Sharif on Somali Presidency," in translation OSC GMP20090201666005, Doha, *Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television*, in Arabic, 1905 GMT, February 01, 2009.

18. HI originally was called the Somali Mujahidin (SM) in a press release issued on January 3, 2009. This press release was issued by the *Somalimirrorm.com* website in a statement called "Somalia: Mujihidin Factions Issue Joint Statement." In the statement, the Somali Islamic Front (SIF), the Raskamboni Fighters, the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) – Asmara Faction, and the Al-Furgaan Fighters declare the creation of SM, later to be called HI. For more information on the original purpose of the HI, see Open Source Center Report, AFP20090105327001, *Somalimirrorm.com*, in Somali, January 3, 2009.

19. "Somalia: Moderate Islamic Group Welcomes Election of New President," translation in AFP20090131301001, Angered, *Somaliweyn WWW-Text*, in Somali, January 31, 2009; "Somalia: Islamic group urges rival sects to stop fighting," in translation OSC AFP20090122950097, Mogadishu, *On Sub-Saharan Africa*, in Somali, January 22, 2009; "Somalia Clan Elders Urge Fighting

Groups to Heed Religious Leaders' Calls," in translation OSC AFP20090226950028, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network (Internet Version-WWW)*, in Somali, February 26, 2009.

20. "Clan Elders in Somali Capital Denounce Attacks on African Union Mission," in translation OSC EUP20090122950002, Toronto, *Waagacusub.com*, in Somali, January 21, 2009; "Somali Opposition Official Calls for Cessation of Violence," in translation OSC AFP20090104950051, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network (Internet Version-WWW)*, in Somali, January 04, 2009; "Ethiopia: Communication minister pledges to support Somalia," in translation OSC AFP20090131950052, Addis Ababa, *Walta Information Centre (Internet Version-WWW)*, in English, January 31, 2009; "Somali Minister Says Those Behind Mogadishu Fighting to be Held Responsible," in translation OSC AFP20090226950046, Gaalkacyo, *Radio Gaalkacyo*, in Somali, 1015 GMT, February 26, 2009.

21. "Al-Shabab Calls for Renewed Fighting Against Somali Government, AU Troops," in translation OSC AFP20090412950031, Universal TV, in Somali, 1900 GMT, April 11, 2009; "Somali Clerics Council Chairman Denounces Attacks on Government, AMISOM," in translation AFP20090410327001, *Somalimirror*, Somali, April 10, 2009; "Forum Member Accuses Somali President of Combating Islam, Deceiving Muslims," in translation OSC GMP20090407241001, Jihadist Websites — OSC Summary in Arabic, April 03, 2009.

22. In an interview with the New York Times, Somali President Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed stated that elements of Hizbul Islam and Al-Shabaab had already joined the government; "A Talk with Somalia's President," *The New York Times*, September 17, 2009; In addition, early after the establishment of the Sharif administration, religious clerics declared support for the TFG. See Alishu Ryu, "Sufi Clerics in Somalia Support Unity Government," News VOA.Com, February 18, 2009; United Nations Security Council, "Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Somalia," July 20, 2009; "Somalia: Moderate Islamic Group Welcomes Election of New President," in OSC Translation AFP20090131301001, Angered, *Somaliweyn WWW-Text*, in Somali, January 31, 2009; "Somalia: Hawiye Clan Spokesman Says Public Won't Tolerate Islamist Attacks," in OSC Translation AFP20090119301002, Angered, *Somaliweyn WWW-Text*, in Somali, January 18, 2009; Soma-

lia: "Clan Elders Warn Al-Shabab against Fighting AU troops in Capital," in OSC Translation AFP20090117950071, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network (Internet Version-WWW)*, in Somali, January 17, 2009; "Somalia: Muslim Scholar Blames Insurgents for Mogadishu Fighting," in OSC Translation AFP20090226301003, *Goleey Online News*, in Somali, February 26, 2009; "Somalia Clan Elders Urge Fighting Groups to Heed Religious Leaders' Calls," in OSC Translation AFP20090226950028, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network (Internet Version-WWW)*, in Somali, February 26, 2009; "Somali President Seeks Tribal, Arab Support To Establish Security, End Chaos," in OSC Translation GMP20090224825002, London, *Al-Sharq al-Awsat Online*, in Arabic, February 24, 2009.

23. "Analysis: Terrorism — Al-Qa'ida's Online Supporters Regularly Use YouTube," in translation OSC FEA20090406842722, OSC Feature, *International OSC Analysis*, April 06, 2009.

24. For instance, the MYM confiscated expired flour and pasta from the al-Bakkara Market in Mogadishu in June and released a statement resolving to close all warehouses with damaged food. The statement says, "Just as shari'a, which we strive to apply, called for self-preservation, the movement's leadership has given great importance to the social order and taking care of public places, in addition to protecting the Muslim land and public buildings." See "Mujahidin Youth Movement Confiscates Expired Food From Al-Bakkarah Market June 29," *Jihadist Websites*, OSC Summary in AFP20090702302002, June 29, 2009.

25. Over the last 2 years, the MYM, TFG, and ASWJ have each captured cities in both southern and central Somalia only to abandon them when a counterattack would occur. For example, in Mogadishu neighborhoods have changed hands frequently over the last few months. This leads us to believe that the strategy is more opportunistic than long term or structured.

26. See "Media Aid: Somalia—Update to Profile of al-Shabaab's Official Website," OSC AFF2009022604800, February 26, 2009.

27. SITE Intelligence Group, "Shabaab Creates New Media Arm," December 21, 2009.

28. *Ibid.*, OSC Media Aid in English, AFF20090818049001, August 18, 2009; "Somalia: Website Posts 'Public Alert Notice' Warning Against Fake Jihadist Sites," in translation OSC AFP20090410302002, *Jihadist Websites – OSC Summary*, in Somali, April 09, 2009.

29. "Somalia: New Jihadist Website for Mujahidin Youth Movement Announced," in translation OSC AFP20090408327001, *Jihadist Websites – OSC Summary*, in Somali, April 07, 2009.

30. Abu Zubayr once described Somalia the Horn of Africa as "the land of the two emigrations and the country's southern belt of defense from the al-Mustafa Peninsula [The Arabian Peninsula] . . . seen as the battlefield of the current crusade." This lofty theological description of the Horn of Africa likely refers to the 614 AD migration (*hijra*) of Muslims from Mecca to Ethiopia to flee persecution. Notably, in the article in which Abu Zubayr is quoted, Assad al-Jihad agrees that Somalia is a strategic choke point by which to defend the Arabian Peninsula. He notes at the end that he does not believe that a merger between AQ and MYM is likely. Quoted in Assad al-Jihad2, "Istratijiya Tanzim al-Qa'ida f1 11/9/2008 wa-bida' Mukhatita al-Azim," "Al-Qa'ida's Strategy on 11/9/2008 and the Beginning of Its Great Plan," *Al-Jazira*, posted on September 12, 2009, available from [www.aljazeeraatalk.net/forum/archive/index.php/t-153528.html](http://www.aljazeeraatalk.net/forum/archive/index.php/t-153528.html).

31. In a February interview, Abu Mansur slightly clarified his position on maintaining links with al-Qa'ida central, comparing it to

that between a Muslim and his Muslim brethren. . . . Sometimes, it gives us useful pieces of advice through the Internet and sends us e-mail messages which please us a lot, the latest being the videotape our brother abu Yahya al-Libi has sent us. . . . We have no closer relationships with it because it is not from us and we are not from it, but it is from us and we are from it as Muslims and mujahidin having the same enemy. We both fight the Americans and other unbelievers, [and] want to apply the Islamic Law on the ground.

Abu Mansur has said that he would not move beyond Somalia before both expelling the TFG and implementing sharia. See, OSC, "Somali Mujahidin Youth Movement Spokesman on Government, AU Forces, Other Issues," *Al-Jazirah*, translation in OSC GMP20090224643001, February 24, 2009.

32. "Somali Mujahidin Youth Movement Spokesman on Government, AU Forces, Other Issues," in translation OSC GMP20090224643001, Doha, *Al-Jazirah Satellite Channel Television*, in Arabic, 1430 GMT, February 24, 2009; "Somalia: Hardline Islamist Group Official Accused of Being Clan Oriented," in translation OSC EUP20090408950001, Toronto, *Waagacusub.com*, in Somali, April 07, 2009; "Somalia: Dissenting Islamist Pledges To Defend Government if Shari'ah Applied," in translation OSC AFP20090406410002, *Somalia Today*, in Arabic, April 05, 2009; "'Bitter Rift' Emerges within Hardline Somali Islamist Group Al-Shabaab," in translation AFP20090129950046, Internet, *Midnimo (Internet Version-WWW)*, in Somali, January 29, 2009.

33. In a recent interview, MYM Spokesperson Ali Raghe concentrated on local objectives before international ones. At the same time, most of the Islamic administration in Kismayo (500 km south of Mogadishu) has expressed interest in attacking Ethiopia and Kenya. See "BBC Radio Interviews Al-Shabaab's Spokesman on Current Developments in Somalia," *BBC World Service*, translation from Somali in OSC AFP2009062532001, June 23, 2009; Author unknown, "Somalia: Islamic administration in Kismayu town says they will attack Ethiopia and Kenya," *Shabelle, worldanalysis.net*, June 30, 2009, available from [worldanalysis.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=830](http://worldanalysis.net/modules/news/article.php?storyid=830).

34. United Nations Security Council Report of the Secretary General on the Situation in Somalia, July 20, 2009, (hereafter UNSC Report, July 20, 2009).

35. See Professor Michael A. Weinstein, "The Status of Conflict in the Southern and Central Regions of Somalia"; and Anonymous, "A Diagnosis of Somalia's Failing Transitional Government," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 2, Iss. 7, July 2009.

36. "Somalia: Islamist Groups Hold Anti-Government Sermons in Mogadishu," in translation AFP20090403301002,

*Markacadey.net*, in Somali, April 03, 2009; *Ibid*, See UNSC Report on Somalia, April 2009, OSC AFP20090403577004.

37. The sum total of communiqués in the past year suggests that the group also has units for missiles, artillery, explosives, martyrs, and security, in addition to an intelligence body and media wing. However, the fact that they have not formally recognized one lead military commander can be contrasted with the way they organize in other sectors. For instance, the group does have an official emir, spokesperson, and local leaders of Islamic courts. Abu Mansur al-Amriki, an American showcased in three videos over the last 2 years appears to operate as one commander, particularly of foreign fighters, but has not been definitively introduced as the military commander at large.

38. This is based on an analysis of OSC products, FEA20090319833838, FMP 200902234416014, and GMP20090224643001. In addition, senior MYM leaders have indicated that the MYM is not subordinate to AQ, but rather is in ideological agreement with its jihad. New spokesman Ali Raghe has emphasized a common enemy in the West rather than an institutional kinship. Consistent with current MYM spokesman Ali Raghe's comments on the issue, AQ in Afghanistan leader Mustafa al-Yazid noted in a June interview that,

Al-Shabab al-Mujahidin Movement are our brothers and loved ones. We recognize one another, and we support one another. We proceed on one path and have one ideology, God be praised. You are aware that we have played a role in jihad in Somalia and some of our brothers participated in this jihad. . . . [O]ur relationship with them is a relationship of allegiance, support, and love. Even though there was no merger on the organizational level, the allegiance in faith and the ideological allegiance is superior to the organizational allegiance. We support and back them, and we back, support, and love all the sincere mujahidin in Somalia.

See OSC, "Al-Qa'ida Official Views Activity in Muslim World, Events in Pakistan, Others," *Al-Jazirah*, OSC translation in GMP20090621648003, June 21, 2009; "Somalia: Afghan Al-Qa'ida



Leader Speaks to Al-Jazirah About Links With Al-Shabaab," OSC translation in AFP20090622327002, *Shaaciye.net*, June 22, 2009.

39. Abu Yahya al-Libi has released three videos on Somalia in the past year. The most recent, "Somalia... The Cloud of Summer Dissipated," was released on July 30, 2009. The previous two Al-Libi productions on Somalia were: "Somalia...Victory Comes With Patience," Al-Sahab Media Production Organization, February 13, 2009; and "No Peace Without Islam," Al-Sahab Media Production Organization, December 28, 2008. Osama bin Laden also released "Fight On, Champions of Somalia," on March 19, 2009.

40. *Ibid*; OSC FEA20090319833838, FMP 200902234416014, and GMP20090224643001; Elliott, Andrea, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *New York Times*, July 12, 2009, National Section, pp. 1, 14-15.

41. Ken Menkhaus, "Violent Islamic Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America," Congressional Testimony, Hearing before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate, March 11, 2009; Andrea Elliot, "A Call to Jihad, Answered in America," *New York Times*, July 11, 2009, available from [www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/us/12somalis.html).

42. "Key events in recent history of Somalia," *Associated Press*, September 17, 2009.

43. Therefore, external kinetic operations against MYM leadership may further endear the public to their leaders and ideology of martyrdom, rather than effectively stymieing the strength of the movement. In this sense, targeting should prioritize operatives not of Somali origin who may be seen as more peripheral to the movement.

44. "Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia," United Nations Security Council, July 20, 2009; Janine Zacharia, "Clinton Urges Eritrea to Stop Backing Somali Militia," *Bloomberg.com*, August 6, 2009, available from [www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=2067001](http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=2067001).

45. "Somalia: Former Al-Shabaab Recruit Says al-Qa'ida Wants Somalia as 'Safe Haven,'" *Shayciye.com*, OSC translation in

AFP20090528327001. Other fighters may be expressing revenge on behalf of clan loyalties, or intend to fight against their age-old enemy, the Ethiopians, and those seen as their successors. However, we believe that the economic incentive should be studied further.

46. Paula Christina Roque, "Somalia: Understanding Al-Shabaab," Institute for Security Studies Situation Report, June 3, 2009; UNSC Report, July 20, 2009.

47. Roque.

48. Assistant Secretary of State, Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State, "Developing a Coordinated and Sustainable U.S. Strategy Toward Somalia," Statement Before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Washington DC, May 20, 2009.

49. "Somalia: Mujahidin Factions Issue Joint Statement," in translation OSC AFP20090105327001, *Somalimirror.com*, in Somali, January 03, 2009; "Insurgent group vows to continue fighting new Somali government," in translation OSC AFP20090207950062, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network*, in Somali, February 7, 2009; "Somalia: Newly Formed Islamic Party Vows To Fight on Until Sharia Rules," in translation OSC AFP20090207301001, *Kaambooni*, in Somali, February 07, 2009; "Somalia: President Shaykh Sharif Reportedly Meets With Militant Islamist Leaders," in translation OSC AFP20090209301003, *Angered, Somaliweyn WWW-Text*, in Somali, February 9, 2009.

50. "Religious Leaders Reiterate Call for Support of New Somali Leader," in translation OSC AFP20090209950044, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network*, in Somali, February 9, 2009; "Elders to Mediate between Islamist, Government Forces in Southwestern Somalia," in translation OSC AFP20090212950091, Mogadishu, *Shabeelle Media Network*, in Somali, February 12, 2009; "Somalia: Islamist Says They Will Support Government If Shari'ah Is Implemented," in translation AFP20090404950006, *Universal TV*, in Somali, 1900 GMT, April 3, 2009.

51. "Somalia: Clan Chiefs Seek To Mediate Between Al-Shabaab, Moderate Islamic Group," in translation OSC

AFP20090402301001, *Falaar.com*, in Somali, April 1, 2009; "Somalia: Secret Talks between Government, Opposition Groups," in translation AFP20090409950079, *Garoweonline*, in English, April 8, 2009.

52. *Quadrennial Defense Review*, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2010, available from [www.defense.gov/QDR/](http://www.defense.gov/QDR/).

53. U.S.-African Public Affairs News Release, "U.S. Diplomat: 'We Do Not Plan, Direct or Coordinate' Military Ops for Somalia Government," available from [www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=4155&lang=0](http://www.africom.mil/getArticle.asp?art=4155&lang=0).

54. Jeffrey Gettleman, "U.S. Aiding Somalia in Its Plan to Retake Its Capital," *New York Times*, March 5, 2010.

55. UNSC, *Letter dated 10 March 2010 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 751 (1992) and 1907 (2009) concerning Somalia and Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council*, March 10, 2010, pp. 6-7.

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