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# CTC SENTINEL

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## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

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# Hizb Allah Resurrected: The Party of God's Return to Tradecraft

By Matthew Levitt



Lebanese Hizb Allah militants visit the grave of former military chief Imad Mughniyyeh. - Anwar Amro/AFP/Getty Images

**D**URING THE PAST few years, Lebanese Hizb Allah's global operations increased markedly, but until recently its efforts yielded few successes. In July 2012, however, Hizb Allah operatives bombed a busload of Israeli tourists in Burgas, Bulgaria, killing five Israelis and a Bulgarian bus driver.<sup>1</sup> Yet what may prove no less significant than this operational success was another plot foiled in Cyprus just two weeks earlier. The Cyprus plot provided the clearest window yet on the rejuvenation of Hizb Allah's tradecraft and the capabilities of the group's international terrorist wing, the Islamic Jihad Organization (IJO).

This article traces Hizb Allah's recent spike in operational activity since 2008, highlighting the group's efforts to rejuvenate the capabilities of its IJO. Many of these details derive from the author's extensive conversations with Israeli security officials in Tel Aviv, which were then vetted and confirmed in conversations with American and European security, intelligence and military officials.

The article also provides a detailed case study of Hossam Yaacoub—the convicted Hizb Allah operative now serving time in a Cypriot prison for his role in a plot targeting Israeli tourists—to show how Hizb Allah has resurrected its terrorist capabilities. Drawn from the police depositions of interviews with Yaacoub after his arrest, the case provides unique insights into how Hizb Allah recruits and trains new operatives.

<sup>1</sup> "Israelis Killed in Bulgaria Bus Terror Attack, Minister Says," CNN, July 18, 2012; John Kerry, "Bulgarian Announcement on Hizbullah's Role in Burgas Attack," U.S. Department of State, February 5, 2013.

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The article finds that while Hizb Allah's decision to stay out of the crosshairs of the war on terrorism after 9/11 caused its global terrorist capabilities to decline, the group has since rebuilt its IJO networks.

#### Operation Radwan Reveals Degraded Skills

In February 2008, a Damascus car bomb killed Hizb Allah's military chief, Imad Mughniyyeh. At his funeral, Hizb Allah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah promised to retaliate with an "open war" against Israel. The Israelis took the warning seriously, but Nasrallah may not have realized how ill-prepared Hizb Allah was to follow through on the threat.

Israeli officials quickly took preventive action—from issuing specific travel warnings to covert disruptive measures—against what they deemed the most likely scenarios. Israeli officials did not have to wait long for Hizb Allah to act. Yet when the IJO—then under the command of Mughniyyeh's brother-in-law, Mustafa Badreddine, and Talal Hamiyeh—first set out to avenge Mughniyyeh's death, Operation Radwan (named for Mughniyyeh, who was also known as Hajj Radwan) experienced a series of setbacks.<sup>2</sup>

Even as it decided to operate in countries with comparatively lax security rather than vigilant Western states, Hizb Allah's efforts to exact revenge for Mughniyyeh's death failed repeatedly. In places such as Azerbaijan, Egypt, and Turkey—and even with significant support from Qods Force<sup>3</sup> agents—Hizb Allah suffered a series of failures, starting with the May 2008 fiasco in Baku, when a number of actions, including the planned bombing of the U.S. and Israeli embassies, were disrupted.<sup>4</sup> The event led to the quiet release of Qods Force personnel, but the public prosecution of two Hizb Allah operatives.<sup>5</sup> Operations were soon

foiled in Egypt and Turkey too, as well as attempts to kidnap Israelis in Europe and Africa.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, however committed Hizb Allah was to carrying out such attacks, the IJO was not up to the task. Hizb Allah's leaders had actively pared down the IJO's global network of operatives following the 9/11 attacks in an effort to stay out of the crosshairs of the war on terrorism. Moreover, the "strategic partnership" it had shared with Iran for the past decade appears to have focused on funding, training, and arming Hizb Allah's increasingly effective standing militia, not on its cadre of international terrorists. Therefore, Hizb Allah not only lacked the resources and capabilities to execute a successful operation abroad, but it could also not rely on Mughniyyeh to plan and direct operations.<sup>7</sup>

#### New Tasking from Tehran: Target Israeli Tourists

A foiled attack in Turkey in September 2009 was a watershed event for Hizb Allah's operational planners and their Iranian sponsors.<sup>8</sup> Despite the increased logistical support Qods Force operatives provided for that plot, Hizb Allah operatives still failed to execute the attack successfully.<sup>9</sup> Israeli officials claimed that Hizb Allah and the Qods Force blamed each other for the two years of failed operations, culminating in the botched attack in Turkey and then another failed plot in Jordan in January 2010.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, by late 2009 Israeli officials contended that Iran's interest in Hizb Allah's operational prowess focused less on local issues like avenging Mughniyyeh's death and

more on the much larger concern of combating threats to its nascent nuclear program.<sup>11</sup> Malfunctioning components ruined Iranian centrifuges,<sup>12</sup> Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) officers defected,<sup>13</sup> and then a bomb killed Iranian physics professor Masoud Ali Mohammadi outside his Tehran home in January 2010.<sup>14</sup>

According to Israeli intelligence officials, Iranian leaders reached two conclusions after Mohammadi's death: 1) Hizb Allah's IJO had to revitalize its operational capabilities, not only to avenge Mughniyyeh's death, but also to play a role in Iran's "shadow war" with the West; and 2) the IRGC would no longer rely solely on Hizb Allah to carry out terrorist attacks abroad.<sup>15</sup> These officials claimed it would now deploy Qods Force operatives to do so on their own, not just as logisticians supporting Hizb Allah hit men.<sup>16</sup> Even more than the loss of its scientists, Tehran sought to address its damaged prestige—the image of an Iran so weak that it could not even protect its own scientists at home.<sup>17</sup> For its part, Israeli officials contended that the Qods Force instructed Hizb Allah to prepare a campaign of terrorist attacks targeting Israeli tourists worldwide.<sup>18</sup>

Under Nasrallah's instructions, Badreddine and Hamiyeh "undertook a massive operational reevaluation in January 2010, which led to big changes within the IJO over a period of a little over six months," in the words of one Israeli official.<sup>19</sup> During this period, IJO operations were put on hold and major personnel changes made.<sup>20</sup> New operatives were recruited

Tracks of a Resurgent Iran-Hezbollah Threat," *Foreign Policy*, July 30, 2012.

6 Personal interview, Israeli counterterrorism official, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 13, 2012; Daniel Edelson, "Hezbollah Plans Attacks on Israeli Targets in Turkey," *ynetnews.com*, October 20, 2009; Rotella, "Before Deadly Bulgaria Bombing, Tracks of a Resurgent Iran-Hezbollah Threat"; "Hezbollah Denies Egypt Accusations," *al-Jazeera*, April 11, 2009; Amos Harel, "Hezbollah Planning Attack on Israelis in West Africa," *Haaretz*, August 4, 2008.

7 Ibid.

8 Edelson.

9 Ibid.

10 Personal interview, Israeli counterterrorism official, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 13, 2012; Barak Ravid, "IDF Chief Reported: Hezbollah was Involved in Attack on Israeli Convoy in Jordan," *Haaretz*, December 8, 2010.

11 Personal interview, Israeli counterterrorism official, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 13, 2012.

12 "Stuxnet: Targeting Iran's Nuclear Programme," International Institute for Strategic Studies, February 2012.

13 Laura Rozen, "Where is Ali-Reza Asgari?" *Politico*, December 31, 2010.

14 Alan Cowell, "Blast Kills Physics Professor in Tehran," *New York Times*, January 12, 2010.

15 Personal interviews, Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 13, 2012.

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.; Rotella, "Before Deadly Bulgaria Bombing, Tracks of a Resurgent Iran-Hezbollah Threat."

19 Personal interviews, Israeli intelligence officials, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 13, 2012.

20 Ibid.

2 Personal interview, Israeli counterterrorism official, Tel Aviv, Israel, March 17, 2008.

3 The Qods Force is the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' (IRGC) special unit responsible for extraterritorial operations. Like the IRGC, the Qods Force is under the direct control of the Iranian government.

4 Sebastian Rotella, "Azerbaijan Seen as New Front in Mideast Conflict," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 2009; Lada Yevgrashina, "Lebanese Militants Jailed in Baku Over Israel Plot," *Reuters*, October 5, 2009.

5 Sebastian Rotella, "Before Deadly Bulgaria Bombing,

from the elite of Hizb Allah's military wing for intelligence and operational training, while existing IJO operatives were moved into new positions.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the IJO invested in the development of capabilities and tradecraft that had withered since the 2001 decision to rein in operations.<sup>22</sup>

#### Fits and Starts

Meanwhile, Hizb Allah operatives were busy planning operations to fulfill their end of Iran's "shadow war" with the West: targeting Israeli tourists abroad.<sup>23</sup> Although it was still struggling to rebuild its foreign operations capabilities, Hizb Allah continued to dispatch insufficiently prepared operatives abroad in the hopes that one might succeed. Yet the increase in plots did not yield results. According to a U.S. law enforcement official, in one plot Hizb Allah paid criminal gang members \$150,000 each to target a Jewish school in Baku.<sup>24</sup> Then, around the same time that authorities foiled a January 2012 plot targeting Israeli vacationers in Bulgaria—just weeks ahead of the anniversary of Mughniyyeh's assassination—authorities disrupted another Hizb Allah plot in Greece.<sup>25</sup> Yet it was halfway across the world, in Bangkok, where Israeli and local authorities broke up a far more ambitious—but no less desperate—Hizb Allah bid to target Israeli tourists.

On January 12, 2012, acting on a tip from Israeli intelligence, Thai police arrested Hussein Atris—a Lebanese national who also carried a Swedish passport—at Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Airport as he attempted to flee the country.<sup>26</sup> Another suspect, whose police composite portrait strongly resembled Naim Haris, a Hizb Allah recruiting agent whose photo Israeli officials had publicized a year

earlier, escaped.<sup>27</sup> Within days, police issued an arrest warrant for Atris' roommate, a Lebanese man who went by the name James Sammy Paolo.<sup>28</sup>

Questioned over the weekend of January 12, Atris led police to a three-story building on the outskirts of Bangkok where he and his housemate had stockpiled approximately 8,800 pounds of chemicals used to make explosives.<sup>29</sup> The materials were already distilled into

### **“The Bulgarian and Cypriot cases present compelling evidence of Hizb Allah's return to traditional tradecraft.”**

crystal form, a step in building bombs.<sup>30</sup> Information on international shipping forms found at the scene indicated that at least some of the explosives—which were stored in bags marked as cat litter—were intended to be shipped abroad. Israeli intelligence officials surmised that Hizb Allah had been using Thailand as an explosives hub—Atris had rented the space a year earlier—and decided to task its on-hand logistical operatives, who were apparently not trained in the art of surveillance, to target Israeli tourists. The conclusion should not have been a surprise: U.S. officials had already determined that Hizb Allah was known to use Bangkok as a logistics and transportation hub, describing the city as “a center for a [Hizb Allah] cocaine and money-laundering network.”<sup>31</sup>

Six months after its failed attempt to target Israeli skiers in Bulgaria,<sup>32</sup> Hizb Allah bombed the Israeli tour bus in Burgas. While successful, some elements of the Burgas plot highlighted operational shortcomings, such as

the fake Michigan driver's license used by the bomber that featured a Baton Rouge, Louisiana, address.<sup>33</sup> Other aspects of the plot, however, demonstrated improved tradecraft. Hizb Allah dispatched two operatives to see the bomber through his mission, both of whom traveled on legitimate foreign passports (one Canadian, the other Australian).<sup>34</sup> They traveled to Bulgaria through Poland, then returned through Romania and Turkey.<sup>35</sup> Yet little more has been made public by Bulgarian authorities, and despite their conclusion that Hizb Allah executed the attack, the investigation remains open with investigators pursuing leads on at least three continents.

#### **The Cyprus Case Study: A Window into Hizb Allah Recruitment and Training**

In contrast to the aforementioned plots, a treasure trove of information has poured out of the trial in Cyprus of Hossam Yaacoub, the Lebanese-Swedish dual citizen and self-confessed Hizb Allah operative arrested just days before the Burgas bombing.<sup>36</sup> All of the subsequent details on this case are derived from Yaacoub's police interviews and depositions from the official English translation, which are in the author's possession.

Arrested in his Limassol hotel room on the morning of July 7, 2012, just a few hours after returning from a surveillance operation at Larnaca airport, Yaacoub was first interviewed by Cypriot police over a five hour period starting within an hour of his arrest. At first, Yaacoub provided only basic background information about himself and insisted

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.; Rotella, “Before Deadly Bulgaria Bombing, Tracks of a Resurgent Iran-Hezbollah Threat.”

24 Judith Miller, “Bagels and Plots: Notes on the NYPD's High Holy Days Threat Briefing,” *City Journal*, September 7, 2012.

25 Personal interview, Israeli official, Tel Aviv, Israel, September 13, 2012.

26 Dudi Cohen, “Bangkok Threat: Terrorist's Swedish Connection,” *Ynetnews.com*, January 15, 2012; “Second Terror Suspect Sought, Court Issues Warrant for Atris's Housemate,” *Bangkok Post*, January 20, 2012.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 James Hookway, “Thai Police Seize Materials, Charge Terror-Plot Suspect,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 2012; Rotella, “Before Deadly Bulgaria Bombing, Tracks of a Resurgent Iran-Hezbollah Threat.”

30 Ibid.

31 Thomas Fuller, “In Twisting Terror Case, Thai Police Seize Chemicals,” *New York Times*, January 16, 2012.

32 Yaakov Katz, “Bulgaria Foils Terror Attack Against Israelis,” *Jerusalem Post*, January 8, 2012.

33 See cover photo at Matthew Levitt, “Hizballah and the Qods Force in Iran's Shadow War with the West,” *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, January 2013.

34 Matthew Brunwasser and Nicholas Kulish, “Multinational Search in Bulgaria Blast,” *New York Times*, February 6, 2013.

35 Ibid.

36 All references to Hossam Yaacoub's interviews and depositions came from the official English translation of his police depositions. These were taken in Arabic, translated into Greek, and then into English by a certified translator. For details, see *Depositions of Hossam Taleb Yaacoub* (some spelled Yaakoub), Criminal Number 7/860/12, File Page 35, 79, 85, 110, 134, 187, by interviewing police officer Sergeant Michael Costas. Depositions taken on July 7, 2012, July 11, 2012, July 11-12, 2012, July 14, 2012, July 16, 2012, and July 22, 2012.

he was nothing more than a Lebanese businessman looking to import Cypriot goods into Lebanon. He had been to Cyprus three times, he explained, first as a tourist about three years earlier, then for business in December 2011 and now again in July 2012. Yaacoub stuck to his cover story throughout his first two police interviews on July 7 and July 11, 2012.

Several hours passed after the second interview, and as soon as Cypriot police began their third interview of Yaacoub later that same night the story began to change. "With regard to the previous deposition I gave to the police," Yaacoub said. "I did not tell the whole truth." Four deposition pages later, Yaacoub had changed his story, claiming to have been approached in Lebanon by a man named Rami in June 2012. He described clandestine meetings with Rami, always conducted during outdoor walks on which he was not allowed to bring his cell phone. Rami tasked Yaacoub with checking on the arrival of Israeli flights at Larnaca airport. Whatever favors he asked, Yaacoub recalled Rami saying, would "be done for the sake of the religion and the 'end.'" Yaacoub detailed Rami's instructions to set up e-mail accounts through which he could contact Rami, to change his appearance and avoid cameras at the airport, and to collect leaflets from specific Cypriot hotels. Yaacoub said he took the \$500 that Rami offered, traveled to Cyprus, wore a hat and glasses and avoided security cameras when he went to the airport to observe the arriving Israeli flights, and went to an internet cafe to create the new e-mail accounts per Rami's instructions.

Yaacoub described Rami as a 38-year-old Lebanese man, muscular and 5'11" tall, with a fair complexion, green eyes and blond hair. "I could recognize him from a picture," Yaacoub noted, adding, "I don't know if Rami belongs to Hizb Allah, he never mentioned such a word, but I suspected that he belongs to this organization." Yaacoub concluded by saying "everything I said in my deposition is the truth." It was not the truth, however. "Rami" never existed. Only later would Yaacoub admit that "the story I told you in a previous deposition about a guy called Rami, as you can guess, did not happen."

The next interview took place a couple of days later and ran for two and a half hours in the middle of the night. By the time the interview ended at 3:15 AM, police had a much fuller picture of Yaacoub's recruitment by Hizb Allah and the nature of his mission in Cyprus and his previous operations elsewhere in Europe. Again, Yaacoub opened the interview with a bombshell: "I am an active member of Hizb Allah organization [sic] for approximately four years now. I was recruited by a Lebanese called Reda in 2007."

For a full week after his arrest, Yaacoub kept Cypriot police at bay first by sticking to his well-established cover story as a Lebanese merchant and then by conceding that he was asked to collect information on Israeli flights but making up a fake story about his recruitment. In fact, Hizb Allah has a long history of teaching its operatives basic but effective resistance-to-interrogation techniques. In March 2007, the same year Hizb Allah recruited Yaacoub, a seasoned Hizb Allah operative was captured by British forces in Iraq. In that case, Ali Musa Daquq al-Musawi pretended to be deaf and mute for several weeks before speaking and admitting to being a senior Hizb Allah operative.<sup>37</sup> From a counterintelligence perspective, misleading one's interrogators for a period of time enables other operatives to escape. The reason Yaacoub ultimately revealed the truth after a week of deceptive statements likely parallels al-Musawi's experience in Iraq: presented with hard evidence undermining his cover stories, and having bought time for accomplices to cover their tracks, there was no longer a need to mislead.

How Hizb Allah spotted Yaacoub is unknown, although their interest in his European citizenship and import business was clear. Reda apparently called Yaacoub on the telephone suddenly, inviting Yaacoub for a meeting in his office at a Hizb Allah bureau responsible for "student issues." It was

<sup>37</sup> "Press Briefing with Brig. Gen. Kevin Bergner, Spokesman, Multi-National Force-Iraq," Multinational Force-Iraq, July 2, 2007; U.S. Military Commission Charge Sheet for Ali Musa Daduq al Musawi, ISN #311933, January 3, 2012; Mark Urban, *Task Force Black: The Explosive True Story of the Secret Special Forces War in Iraq* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2010), pp. 224-225.

there, not at a Hizb Allah military or terrorist facility, that Yaacoub was told he was needed "for the secret mission of Hizb Allah." Yaacoub was flattered: "I accepted because I considered that he needed me for something great and I was for them the chosen one."

Reda immediately arranged for Yaacoub to meet his first Hizb Allah trainer, Wahid, later that same day outside a Beirut storefront. Yaacoub worked with Wahid for two to three months before going to Sweden to visit his father.

**"For all of his European travels on behalf of Hizb Allah, Yaacoub used his Swedish passport, which he had renewed for this purpose. Once his basic training was complete, Yaacoub became a salaried Hizb Allah operative, earning \$600 a month since 2010."**

Yaacoub explained that "when I say 'work' I mean that Wahid explained to me roughly the secret operation, in which I would participate. He always pointed out that nobody should know anything, neither my family nor my friends." Wahid trained Yaacoub for another couple of months after he returned from Sweden, all of which was theoretical discussion focused on "explaining to me that my secret mission would be surveillance and undercover activities on behalf of Hizb Allah." Then Wahid handed Yaacoub off to his next trainer.

A man named Yousef trained Yaacoub for another five to seven months, focusing on operational security concepts. Yousef taught Yaacoub "how to handle my personal life and my activities, so that people won't get information about me and so that I can work undercover and persuasively without giving rise to suspicions... he taught me how to create stories undercover."

Later, Mahdi took over the training regimen which included Yaacoub's first test-run. In 2008, Yaacoub was given a large, thin envelope to deliver to someone in Antalya, Turkey, with specific instructions about the day, time and place where the delivery was to be made. The meeting point was outside a Turkish department store, and the recipient recognized Yaacoub based on the specific hat and clothes Yaacoub wore, per his instructions. Once they exchanged the pre-arranged code words, the handoff was made. Yaacoub stayed in Turkey a couple of more days, at Hizb Allah's expense, before returning to Lebanon. "I don't know what its contents was [sic] and I had not entitlement to ask, because everything is done in complete secrecy within the organization," he explained.

Having passed this test, Yaacoub was finally ready for military training and was assigned yet another instructor named Abu Ali who he first met at a secret meeting arranged by Mahdi. Abu Ali organized Yaacoub's military training over the next few years, which involved six to seven different training sessions each lasting for three to five days at a Hizb Allah military camp. Yaacoub would get picked up at different spots in Beirut each time, and was driven in closed vans so he and fellow trainees could not see where they were going. Once there, Yaacoub added, it was clear from the topography that they were in southern Lebanon.

Each military training group consisted of 10-13 trainees, all of whom wore hoods—as did the instructors—to hide their identities from one another. They each slept in their own tent and trained at another site. Yaacoub described being trained in the use of multiple firearms, from handguns to shoulder-fired missiles, including the FN Browning, Glock, AK-47, M-16, MP-5, PK-5, and RPG-7. He also trained in the use of C4 explosives. Over the same period of time while under the overall responsibility of Abu Ali, Yaacoub attended training sessions in Beirut basements focused on teaching surveillance techniques, how to work safely undercover, how to create a cover story, and resistance-to-interrogation techniques such as how to defeat a polygraph test.

In 2009, Yaacoub explained, Abu Ali sent him on a mission to Cyprus "to create a cover story for people to get to know me, to keep coming with a justifiable purpose and without giving rise to suspicions." He traveled to Cyprus via Dubai to strengthen his cover, and spent a week vacationing in Ayia Napa at Hizb Allah's expense. When he returned to Cyprus two years later, he would be able to say that the idea for importing merchandise from Cyprus came to him while on vacation there in 2009.

Each time he returned from a mission, including this one, Yaacoub was debriefed by a Hizb Allah security official who wanted to know where Yaacoub went, who he met, what the climate was like, how people live in the given location, and the state of the economy. On his return from his 2009 Cyprus vacation, Yaacoub was assigned to a new instructor, Aiman, who sent him on his next mission to Lyon, France, at Hizb Allah's expense. His assignment: to receive a bag from one person and deliver it to someone else, all using the same tradecraft (identification signs and codewords) he employed on his last courier mission in Turkey. Shortly thereafter, Aiman sent Yaacoub to Amsterdam, where he retrieved a cell phone, two SIM cards, and an unknown object wrapped in newspapers, and he brought them back to Aiman in Lebanon.

Then, in December 2011 and again in January 2012, Aiman sent Yaacoub back to Cyprus "to create a cover story" as a merchant interested in importing to Lebanon juices from a specific local company in Cyprus. He was also tasked with collecting information about renting a warehouse in Cyprus. "I did all these things after receiving clear instructions from Hizb Allah, so to have Cyprus as a basis [sic] and be able to serve the organization," he said. Yaacoub maintained he did not know why Hizb Allah wanted this base of operations, but speculated "perhaps they would commit a criminal act or store firearms and explosives."

For all of his European travels on behalf of Hizb Allah, Yaacoub used his Swedish passport, which he had renewed for this purpose. Once his basic training was complete, Yaacoub became a salaried

Hizb Allah operative, earning \$600 a month since 2010.

Yaacoub's next interview with Cypriot police occurred on July 16, 2012, in the late evening. His first words were: "My operational name, that is my nickname within Hizb Allah, is Wael." Yaacoub offered more details about Hizb Allah's operational security protocols, such as the need to answer a coded question each time he was picked up in Beirut for military training out of town. Aiman provided the updated passwords each time, and then different passwords would be provided by each instructor.

Yaacoub now admitted that his December 2011 visit to Cyprus actually involved several separate missions. First, Aiman tasked Yaacoub with gathering details on a parking lot behind the Limassol Old Hospital and near the police and traffic departments. Aiman wanted Yaacoub to take pictures and be able to draw a schematic of the area on his return. Yaacoub was to specifically look for security cameras, if payment was required on entry, if car keys were left with a parking attendant, if there was a security guard, among other observations. Yaacoub was also told to find internet cafes in Limassol and Nicosia, which he marked on a map for Aiman, and to purchase three SIM cards for mobile phones from different vendors on different days, which he did. He also found good meeting places, such as at a zoo in Limassol and outside a castle in Larnaca. In the event a meeting was necessary, Yaacoub would receive a text message. A text about the weather meant to go to the Finikoudes promenade in Larnaca that day at 6 PM. If no one showed up, Yaacoub was to return the following day at 2:00 PM, and then again the next day at 10:30 AM. Aiman also wanted Yaacoub "to spot Israeli restaurants in Limassol, where Jews eat 'kosher,'" but an internet search indicated there were none. Later, in January 2012, Yaacoub was instructed to check out the Golden Arches hotel in Limassol, collect brochures and reconnoiter the area (he did survey the area, but the hotel was being renovated).

"Hizb Allah knows Cyprus very well," Yaacoub told police, adding he thought his taskings were intended to update the group's files "and create a database."

He insisted that he was not part of any plot “to hit any target in Cyprus with firearms or explosives,” adding that he would have had the right to refuse the mission if asked to execute such an act.

Five days passed before Yaacoub’s final police interview, which took place midday on July 22, 2012. Yaacoub conceded he was “aware of the ideology and the objectives of [the] Hizb Allah organization,” adding this was limited to protecting Lebanese territory “with all legal means,” which he noted included “armed struggle, military operations, and the political way.” He opposed terrorism, he stressed, saying it was different from war. Yaacoub expressed support for “the armed struggle for the liberation of Lebanon from Israel,” but was “not in favor of the terrorist attacks against innocent people.”

Then, he added: “I don’t believe that the missions I executed in Cyprus were connected with the preparation of a terrorist attack in Cyprus. It was just collecting information about the Jews, and this is what my organization is doing everywhere in the world.”

On March 21, 2013, a Cypriot criminal court convicted Yaacoub of helping to plan attacks against Israeli tourists on the island last July. In their 80-page decision, the judges rejected Yaacoub’s defense that he collected information for Hizb Allah but did not know for what it would be used. There could be no “innocent explanation” of Yaacoub’s actions, the court determined, adding that he “should have logically known” his surveillance was linked to a criminal act.<sup>38</sup>

#### Reason for Concern

Taken together, the Bulgarian and Cypriot cases present compelling evidence of Hizb Allah’s return to traditional tradecraft. As the Yaacoub case makes clear, several years before the Qods Force instructed Hizb Allah to rejuvenate its IJO terrorist wing in January 2010, the group had already been recruiting operatives with foreign passports, and providing new recruits with military training and surveillance skills. Yaacoub was recruited in 2007, while Mughniyyeh was still

alive. Indeed, while Mughniyyeh’s assassination prompted the group to resume international operations in a way they had not since before 9/11, Hizb Allah never stopped identifying and recruiting new operatives for a variety of different types of missions at home and around the world.

There is no question, however, that the operational failures that followed Mughniyyeh’s assassination demonstrated that the group’s foreign operational capabilities had weakened over time. When Mughniyyeh was killed, and later when Iran wanted Hizb Allah to play a role in its “shadow war” with the West, Hizb Allah was not yet fully prepared to do so. Yet the Bulgaria and Cyprus cases suggest that this may no longer be the case. Yaacoub was no anomaly, as the Burgas attacks made clear. Like Yaacoub and the Burgas operatives, some of those new recruits are Western citizens. During one of his training sessions, Yaacoub heard another trainee speaking fluent Arabic with some English words mixed in. According to Yaacoub, the trainee spoke with a distinctly American accent.<sup>39</sup>

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39 Depositions of Hossam Taleb Yaacoub (some spelled Yaakoub), Criminal Number 7/860/12, File Page 187, by interviewing police officer Sergeant Michael Costas. Depositions taken on July 22, 2012.

## The Sinaloa Federation’s International Presence

By Samuel Logan

DURING FORMER MEXICAN President Felipe Calderon’s six-year term that ended in 2012, the Mexican government took an aggressive stance against the many drug cartels operating in the country. “Calderon’s War,” as some in Mexico have come to call it, continues to simmer as the remaining transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) seek accommodation with rival groups.<sup>1</sup> Smaller “tier-two”<sup>2</sup> groups grow in strength, while mostly rural vigilante gangs that form to protect communities from drug traffickers and corrupt police alike reflect society’s lack of patience with a slowly evolving government solution.<sup>3</sup> Yet of all the criminal organizations in Mexico, one group remained largely unscathed during Calderon’s six-year war: the Sinaloa Federation.

The Sinaloa Federation, led by Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, has suffered its share of setbacks, including a recent multi-ton drug bust in Baja California.<sup>4</sup> Yet compared to Los Zetas, La Familia, and the Gulf Cartel, Guzman has not suffered the dissolution of critical elements within his organization.<sup>5</sup> His strategic position promotes deal-making over bloodshed and business

1 The idea of accommodation stems from an analysis that rival TCOs almost always reach a business savvy agreement rather than an alliance when they decide to stop fighting.

2 A “tier-two” group is one that has demonstrated strength and capability at the city or state level, but has not yet reached beyond those limitations. La Linea in Juarez or the New Generation Jalisco Cartel are two examples of tier-two groups.

3 “Criminal Technology Transfer,” Southern Pulse, March 2013, available at [www.vimeo.com/57382082](http://www.vimeo.com/57382082).

4 “Mexican Army Seizes 5 Tons from Chapo in BCS,” Borderland Beat, April 5, 2013.

5 Three men run the Sinaloa Federation: El Chapo, El Mayo, and El Azul. Compared to Los Zetas, which lost Heriberto Lazcano, or the Gulf Cartel, which lost Osiel Cárdenas Guillen, his brother Antonio, and most recently El Coss, the Sinaloa Federation has not suffered the loss of high-level leaders, whose removal would certainly produce disruption through the entirety of the organizational system, from supply to transport, protection to intelligence, and offensive to weapons and communications procurement.

38 Menelaos Hadjicostis, “Cyprus Court Convicts Hezbollah Member,” Associated Press, March 21, 2013.

over violence.<sup>6</sup> From an absolutist perspective, his organization is one of the bloodiest in operation today, but compared to his enemies the Sinaloa Federation has perhaps been the least violent relative to its large size. Guzman's current expansion strategy rests on the same pragmatic decision-making that led to his resilience during the Calderon administration. He sees Mexico as a sturdy foundation, and the rest of the world—Africa, Asia, Australia, Central and South America, the European Union, and the United States—as pieces in a strategy of “deviant globalization.”<sup>7</sup>

This article explains the sources of the Sinaloa Federation's drug production, its international expansion, and the role Chicago plays in the cartel's operations.

#### International Expansion: Supply

Central America was the first stop along Guzman's business plan for international expansion. It was a logical move to control relationships and territory in Guatemala and later Honduras that secured upstream access to one of his primary products: cocaine. From the coca bush plantations in the Andes in South America, cocaine travels from the leaf to the nostril, passing through Central America, often through Honduras or Guatemala, before landing in Mexico, where it may be warehoused for a period of time before a final leg of shipment to the United States, or to Europe through Africa.

When the Mexican government complicated Guzman's plans in 2006 and 2008 for acquiring precursor chemicals<sup>8</sup> for another principal

product, methamphetamines, Central America served as a temporary source as he searched for options in Argentina, before settling on sources in Asia, where he worked with three criminal organizations based in China.<sup>9</sup>

Pushing south from Central America, Guzman focused on Colombia, the “farm gate” source for cocaine. In a twist of fortuitous consequence, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) have again entered into peace negotiations with the Colombian government.<sup>10</sup> A key point for the government in the talks, which have been ongoing since November 2012, will be the FARC's de facto removal from the regional drug trade.<sup>11</sup> As the insurgents pull out of the drug trafficking business, local groups in Colombia are likely to benefit from the windfall in captured market share, but the Sinaloa Federation is arguably the only Mexican group that will capture a similar benefit. Further consolidation of Guzman's network in Colombia facilitates supply logistics and transport, reducing transaction costs as he moves the product north from Colombia to Mexico. A strong presence in Colombia allows him to capture more value as he consolidates purchase power at the highest end of the upstream supply chain of cocaine, maximizing profit for every kilo purchased in Colombia and delivered inside the United States.

Yet as the Colombian government moves beyond the FARC to focus on other trafficking networks, the Sinaloa Federation may find itself in need of other options. As Colombia becomes a more difficult “market” to source cocaine, Guzman will likely respond by

increasing his presence in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, where he has already made significant inroads, possibly as a contingency plan to his focus in Colombia.<sup>12</sup> In total, Guzman's Sinaloa Federation subsidiaries have a presence across 16 countries in the Americas, according to the Mexican Department of Justice.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, the Sinaloa Federation has been actively pursuing supply control strategies across the Pacific Ocean. Since the 2007 discovery of some \$205 million in cash in the house of Mexican-Chinese businessman Zhenli Ye Gon, law enforcement has explored the Sinaloa Federation's sourcing of precursor chemicals in China.<sup>14</sup>

More recently, however, various news reports offer anecdotal evidence of the Sinaloa Federation's continued interest in Asia-based supply control. Malaysian officials charged three Mexican brothers from Sinaloa for operating a meth lab there in June 2011.<sup>15</sup> The bricklayers from Culiacan, Sinaloa, were thought to have been members of the Sinaloa Federation, and were found with \$15 million in methamphetamines at the time of their arrests in 2008.<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, in January 2011, Mexican media reported that Sinaloa Federation operatives were purchasing heroin in Afghanistan to supply cities in the United States, including New York and Chicago. According to Edgardo Buscaglia, the Sinaloa Federation used front companies in partnership with Turkish or Indian criminal organizations to purchase and ship the heroin.<sup>17</sup>

6 As explained by Malcolm Beith, “There is a level-headedness about the [Sinaloa] leadership that the other groups lack. To the authorities, first priority always has to be quelling violence. When other groups throw grenades into a crowd of innocents or ahead[s] people, it's obvious what needs to be done. Sinaloa has perpetrated its share of violence, but by and large it did not cause disruption to the general well-being of the population.” See Jan Albert-Hootsen, “How the Sinaloa Cartel Won Mexico's Drug War,” *Global Post*, February 28, 2013.

7 Bruce Sterling, “Deviant Globalization,” *Wired*, May 5, 2010.

8 The production of methamphetamines requires the pharmaceutical product pseudoephedrine or its derivatives. Also known as “precursor chemicals,” this white powder forms the base of the product that through a

chemical process becomes methamphetamine. Countries such as India and China are well known for loose export controls for these chemicals while being two of the world's most active producers of pseudoephedrine. Mexico complicated methamphetamine production in 2006 by implementing tight controls over precursor chemicals and again in 2008 by banning the sale of pseudoephedrine altogether.

9 Rafael Croda, “El de El Chapo, un ‘narcoholding,’” *Proceso*, January 5, 2013; “3 Asian Organized Criminal Groups Supply Chapo with Precursor,” *Borderland Beat*, January 12, 2013.

10 “Colombia, FARC Rebels Say Peace Talks Making Progress on Land Reform,” *Reuters*, March 21, 2013.

11 Iván Ventura, “Tentáculos del Chapo alcanzan a las FARC,” *Excelsior*, March 28, 2013.

12 Croda; “Chapo's Multinational Mafia,” *Borderland Beat*, January 6, 2012.

13 Elyssa Pachico, “Mexico Cartels Operate in 16 Countries: Report,” *Insight Crime*, September 19, 2013.

14 “Chinese-Mexican Businessman Found with \$205M Cash Says he Sold Black Market Meth Chemicals,” *Associated Press*, October 23, 2009.

15 “Investigan las operaciones de El Chapo Guzmán en Asia,” *Associated Press*, April 25, 2011; Patrick Corcoran, “‘Sinaloa Cartel’ Operatives Face Death Penalty in Malaysia,” *Insight Crime*, June 3, 2011.

16 *Ibid.*

17 Doris Gómora, “Cárteles mexicanos compran droga en Afganistán, alertan,” *El Universal*, January 4, 2011.



### International Expansion: Demand

The United States remains the most important demand market for Sinaloa Federation products—marijuana, cocaine, and methamphetamines. The European Union and Australia, however, have proven attractive due to the economics of price elasticity and their distance from the supply source. Drugs are a lucrative product because addicts are highly “elastic” when it comes to high prices. The farther a kilo of cocaine travels from Colombia, the more profit it produces for the merchant.

Prices from Colombia to Texas, for example, could jump from some \$5,000 a kilo to \$16,000 a kilo; to Paris, \$25,000 a kilo, and further abroad to Australia could be as high as \$250,000 a kilo.<sup>18</sup> Economics demand that distance from the supply source in the Andean mountains results in a higher price at the local level. The nature of cocaine as a product adds a significant amount of risk during transport, and the price of this risk is then passed along to the final consumer.

For example, a route from Colombia to France increases the price for a pure kilo of cocaine significantly. There is a risk to move the cocaine out of Colombia and into Central America, likely Honduras, where it is stored until Guzman’s men are ready to move it to Mexico. Once the cocaine enters Mexico, it takes another jump in value due to the “market pressures” of government and rival action. The kilo then makes a significant jump in price when it moves from Mexico into the European Union through West Africa, or perhaps Spain, and finally again when the sales price is placed in euros, not dollars.<sup>19</sup> In some cases, the exchange rate increases the value; in others, such as in Australia, the street price of a kilo of pure cocaine is so high that exchange rates have little impact on the business decision to transport cocaine across the Pacific.

As an entry point to the European Union, West Africa remains a key strategic goal<sup>20</sup> for the Sinaloa Federation, where

recent reports suggest that Mexican criminal organizations continue to expand—although with little to no violence compared to other routes.<sup>21</sup> In Guinea-Bissau, reporting indicates that the Sinaloa Federation and possibly other Latin American criminal organizations work directly with the military in that country.<sup>22</sup> The business model that Guzman most often employs, however, is one where he partners with local criminal groups and empowers them. He rarely uses force to push them out of the way.<sup>23</sup> Due to this model, the Mexican media has begun to refer to the Sinaloa Federation as a “narco-holding,” or a holding company for several smaller subsidiaries located worldwide.<sup>24</sup>

Australia, by comparison, offers the fantastic opportunity of a mark-up that at first glance seems unbelievable. Anything purchased at \$5,000 and marked up to \$250,000 is a good investment.<sup>25</sup> According to one press report, the investment was so lucrative that “the drug ring also allegedly discussed in an unrecorded conversation using a plane to move millions of dollars a month in cash from Australia to the U.S. to buy cocaine to sell back in Australia, court records show.”<sup>26</sup>

“Though there is no evidence that points directly to the Sinaloa Federation shipping cocaine from Chicago to Australia, I wouldn’t be surprised if

entry points to be exploited in the south. The two most common are between Tangiers and Italy, and Morocco and Spain. Apart from simply “muling” the product into the European Union, which remains an option, larger quantities may be introduced into Africa, where local groups are paid to transport the product north. Guinea-Bissau in West Africa is the most strategic point due to the tacit acceptance of local authorities, including the military, as well as its geographical proximity to South America. For details on Guinea-Bissau, see “Guinea Bissau Armed Forces Chief Charged with Narcoterrorism,” U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, April 18, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Alexander Smoltczyk, “Africa’s Cocaine Hub: Guinea-Bissau a ‘Drug Trafficker’s Dream,’” *Der Spiegel*, March 8, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*; “Guinea Bissau Armed Forces Chief Charged with Narcoterrorism.”

<sup>23</sup> Croda.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Adam Shand, “Dollar Draws in Mexican Cartels,” *Australian*, February 12, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Steve Schmadeke, “High-Flying Cartel Planned to Smuggle Drugs Through Small Suburban Airport, DEA Says,” *Chicago Tribune*, February 13, 2013.

it happened,” explained John Riley, special agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s (DEA) Chicago Division.<sup>27</sup>

U.S. cities, such as New York, Dallas, Atlanta, Chicago, San Diego, and Los Angeles, are integral parts of any drug trafficker’s downstream or distribution strategy. Since the 1990s, however, the number of major Colombian groups inside the United States has slowly diminished while the number of cities

**“As a major Midwest city, Chicago presents distribution advantages as well as a strong local demand market.”**

where drug trafficking “wholesale networks” operate has increased.<sup>28</sup> Generally speaking, the downstream market for multinational groups such as the Sinaloa Federation stops at the wholesale level, where nodes of connected buyers in the United States create a wholesale network. The number of cities within these wholesale networks has grown steadily over the years due to the profuse demand for methamphetamines—a product that many observers believe has taken over cocaine as the number one demand product inside the United States, behind prescription pills. The increased demand for methamphetamines in the eastern states is largely responsible for this ranking.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Personal interview, John Riley, special agent, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, April 26, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Colombian groups are seen as having pulled out of downstream markets due to pressure at home. Once Plan Colombia—the U.S.-Colombia regime to fight cocaine production and criminality in Colombia—took shape, the government was able to hit the Colombian criminal syndicates harder and faster than they could reconstitute themselves. They left downstream markets to the Mexicans as a calculated retreat, focused on survival not profits.

<sup>29</sup> For a visual of the methamphetamine demand expansion, see the maps in this report: Michael Kelly, “16 Maps of Drug Flow into the United States,” *Business Insider*, July 8, 2012, available at [www.businessinsider.com/16-maps-of-drug-flow-into-the-united-states-2012-7?op=1](http://www.businessinsider.com/16-maps-of-drug-flow-into-the-united-states-2012-7?op=1).

<sup>18</sup> John Burnett, “Mexican Drug Cartel Targets Australia,” *National Public Radio*, March 2, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> “Spain Fights to Lose Status as Drug Gateway to Europe,” *Agence France-Presse*, April 22, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Because European Union ports—sea and air—are so well protected in northern Europe, there are only a few

As Colombian networks dried up, Mexican cartels replaced them. Through the early 2000s, as Mexico's criminal organizations fought for control of border crossings, they naturally established routes inside the United States contiguous to the areas where they could cross product. The Arellano-Felix organization, based in Tijuana, developed a strong distribution network through California.<sup>30</sup> The Gulf Cartel developed distribution networks east of Texas, along the I-10 corridor, and north through Oklahoma into Georgia and beyond.<sup>31</sup>

### The Role of Chicago in Sinaloa's Operations

The Sinaloa Federation developed distribution networks into the United States initially through Nogales and into Phoenix, but as the criminal organization developed relationships with former rivals, it spread its influence into those areas of the United States where its rivals had operated.<sup>32</sup> No other city was perhaps more fundamental to this strategy than Chicago.

As a major Midwest city, Chicago presents distribution advantages as well as a strong local demand market. It connects several major interstate systems that offer distribution across the United States, and it is the final point along a hardened logistics route that passes from Juarez to Chicago through Oklahoma City and St. Louis. Arguably, Juarez is the Sinaloa Federation's strongest border crossing point given the amount of daily vehicle traffic that crosses the border there compared to other border crossings used by the group.

The focal point for the Sinaloa Federation in Chicago is the city's "Little Village" neighborhood, which is part of the South Lawndale Community Area. From this strategic point, Guzman's men distribute their product at the wholesale level to literally dozens of street gangs—as much as two metric tons a month.<sup>33</sup> Chicago

ranks with Los Angeles as a street gang mecca, with over 100,000 street gang members.<sup>34</sup> According to Special Agent Riley from the DEA, "There are some 120,000 documented street gang members in Chicago. El Chapo's people have ventured into obvious business relationships with surrogates for street gangs; it allows Sinaloa to stay on the sidelines where they can be much more fluid with their movement."<sup>35</sup> He signaled that the Gangster Disciples are one of the local gangs most actively working with the Sinaloa Federation.<sup>36</sup>

From this centralized distribution point, Guzman's distribution channels may spread to points east and west. The presence is so strong that local DEA agents based in Chicago remarked in

**"No amount of DEA, FBI, local or state police investigations in the United States or abroad will systemically disrupt the Sinaloa Federation as long as it remains untouchable inside Mexico."**

late 2012 that law enforcement operates as if they were on the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>37</sup> Less than three months later, the city declared Guzman as public enemy number one, the first individual to receive the infamous title since Al Capone.<sup>38</sup>

Underscoring the organization's position of strength inside the United States, the Sinaloa Federation has made some inroads into the East Coast, previously considered dominion of the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, and Colombian criminal organizations.<sup>39</sup> On the back of

an increase in demand for heroin, the Sinaloa Federation has captured market share due to their strong smuggling and distribution networks and long-time control of the black tar heroin trade.<sup>40</sup>

Even as Mexican TCOs expand their presence inside the United States, the amount of reliable information available to the public is relatively limited, presenting an unclear picture at times illuminated by a high-profile arrest or flutter of media coverage based on interviews given by high-level law enforcement operatives.

One salient point remains clear: operatives of the Sinaloa Federation communicate better than the disparate state, local and federal organizations and agencies tasked with stopping their growth. The criminal operator's ability to hide in plain sight and keep a low profile exacerbates complications formed by the necessary limitations of sharing actionable intelligence across state lines or between agencies in the same city.

### Can the Sinaloa Federation Be Stopped?

Osorio Chong, Mexico's new interior minister who oversees the country's current public security challenges, remarked in late February 2013 that capturing Guzman is his most important objective.<sup>41</sup> Yet Guzman's location has remained a mystery—several Mexican analysts and reporters have argued that the Mexican government has purposefully avoided his capture in favor of other targets, possibly because of Guzman's ability to provide actionable intelligence on other, high value targets from rival cartels.<sup>42</sup> Whether true or not, Guzman remains free—largely because of his constant adherence to a principal of pragmatism over violence.

Throughout Guzman's history, well covered in *The Last Narco* by British-American reporter Malcolm Beith, examples abound of Guzman's penchant for using intelligence and his networked connections to facilitate his preferred outcomes. He may have shared information with Mexican authorities

30 Nathan Jones, "Captured Tijuana Cartel Boss Confirms Sinaloa Truce," *Insight Crime*, December 12, 2011.

31 Ricardo Ravelo, *Osiel: Vida y Tragedia de un Capo* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2009).

32 Marc Lacey, "76 Arrested as Officials Break Up Mexico-to-Arizona Drug-Smuggling Ring," *New York Times*, October 31, 2011.

33 "Mexico's 'Chapo' is Chicago's New Public Enemy No. 1," *Agence France-Presse*, February 15, 2013.

34 Sari Horwitz, "U.S. Cities Become Hubs for Mexican Drug Cartels' Distribution Networks," *Washington Post*, November 3, 2012.

35 Personal interview, John Riley, special agent, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, April 26, 2013.

36 *Ibid.*

37 Horwitz.

38 *Ibid.*

39 James Bargent, "Drug Investigation Links Sinaloa Cartel to Canadian, US Mafias," *Insight Crime*, January 16, 2013.

40 Doris Gámora, "Cártel de Sinaloa se expande en la Costa Este de EU: DEA," *El Universal*, April 1, 2013.

41 "Mexico's 'Chapo' is Chicago's New Public Enemy No. 1."

42 "Outsmarted by Sinaloa," *Economist*, January 7, 2010.

to facilitate the arrest of his former ally, Alfredo Beltran-Leyva, who he thought had become too brazen. Rather than prolonging battles for Tijuana and Juarez, which were prosecuted by his proxies, Guzman decided to reach a business agreement with the leaders of the Arellano-Felix Organization in Tijuana and the Carrillo-Fuentes Organization in Juarez—agreements that may help explain the precipitous drop in violence among cartels in both cities.<sup>43</sup> These agreements were based on two basic premises: each side would order their respective groups to stop fighting, and the formerly rival groups would establish a system of rents or “usage fees” that would allow for the free passage of product as long as the rents were paid. Guzman’s decision to enter Guatemala by solidifying relationships with local criminal organizations, such as the Chamale gang, to support methamphetamine production, rather than forge a bloody path of dominance like Los Zetas, is a clear sign of this strategy.<sup>44</sup>

As careful as Guzman is in Mexico, where he has the most latitude to kill with impunity, he has demonstrated only increased levels of caution as his organization distances itself from its base of operations in western Mexico. This is the primary reason why observers will likely not identify violence attributed to the Sinaloa Federation outside of Mexico, especially inside demand markets in Australia, the European Union, and the United States. In these destination markets, layer upon layer of proxy organizations, such as street gangs, provide insulation from his immediate employees when corrupt law firms, front businesses, and politicians cannot.

43 For a more detailed discussion of the Sinaloa Federation, the Arellano-Felix organization, and the Carrillo-Fuentes organization, see Samuel Logan, “Tijuana Criminal Environment,” *Southern Pulse*, December 2012; Samuel Logan, “Juarez Criminal Environment,” *Southern Pulse*, October 2012.

44 For a review of the Sinaloa Federation’s methamphetamine production and partnering strategy for Guatemala, see E. Eduardo Castillo and Sonia Perez, “Mexican Gang Seen Ramping up Meth in Guatemala,” *Associated Press*, December 13, 2011. For a review of Los Zetas’ strategy for Guatemala, see Jason Beaubien, “Mexican Cartels Spread Violence to Central America,” *National Public Radio*, May 30, 2011.

As the Sinaloa Federation deepens its roots in countries outside of Mexico, it will rely ever more on the strength of its foundation inside that country. No amount of DEA, FBI, local or state police investigations in the United States or abroad will systemically disrupt the Sinaloa Federation as long as it remains untouchable inside Mexico. Although U.S. authorities at the federal, state and city levels are making headway in Chicago, Special Agent Riley commented that he is focused on “getting people on a regional basis to understand what we’re up against.”<sup>45</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the current Mexican administration is focused on Guzman, as Minister Osorio Chong purports, Mexico’s public security policies are still taking shape, and may not reach required levels of efficacy until 2015 when the proposed Gendarmerie is expected to be operational.<sup>46</sup> Mexican President Pena Nieto is ripping out the old public security apparatus before the new one is entirely formed, a decision that may be politically motivated.

Meanwhile, Guzman continues with his structure intact, expanding through mergers and partnerships, and improving the quality of his product. After six years of “Calderon’s War,” the Sinaloa Federation remains secure in its home base, and Guzman confident in his ability to alter the political landscape as necessary, so much so that he has embraced a global strategy for expansion and domination.

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45 Personal interview, John Riley, special agent, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, April 26, 2013.

46 Simon Gardner, “Mexico’s New President to Reset Drug War, Push Reforms,” *Reuters*, November 29, 2012.

## Boko Haram: Reversals and Retrenchment

By David Cook

DURING THE PERIOD of June 2012 to April 2013, Nigeria’s Boko Haram militant group has suffered some significant reversals and setbacks. It has changed its tactics in accord with the rise and collapse of Ansar Eddine in neighboring Mali and the decrease in its own ability to project force inside Nigeria. After much indecisiveness during 2010-2012, the Nigerian government and armed forces have to some extent developed a policy of containment with regard to Boko Haram by employing a classic stick and carrot approach. Nigerian security forces employed blunt force attacks on the group’s bases and safe houses throughout the north—resulting in the killings of substantial numbers of militants, as well as causing high civilian casualties—while also offering an amnesty, which was rejected.<sup>1</sup>

During this period, Boko Haram has for the first time demonstrated verifiable connections with radical groups in northern Mali—al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Eddine—and has spawned what appears to be a break-off Salafi-jihadi organization of more globalist tendencies, Jama`at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan (known as Ansaru).<sup>2</sup> Unlike Boko Haram, which is based in northeastern Nigeria, Ansaru has operated in and around Kano, the heartland of the Hausa-Fulani, in north-central Nigeria. The genesis of Ansaru is likely connected with the paradigmatic suicide attacks Boko Haram employed throughout the north and central regions, which killed many Muslims during the fall of 2011 and spring of 2012.<sup>3</sup> In June 2012, for example, Ansaru leader Abu Usmatul

1 “Nigeria’s Boko Haram Rejects Jonathan’s Amnesty Idea,” *BBC*, April 11, 2013; Tim Cocks and Isaac Abrak, “Heavy Fighting in Northeast Nigeria, Death Toll Unclear,” *Reuters*, April 22, 2013.

2 Eric Schmitt, “American Commander Details Al Qaeda’s Strength in Mali,” *New York Times*, December 3, 2012; Mark Doyle, “Africa’s Islamist Militants ‘Co-ordinate Efforts,’” *BBC*, June 26, 2012.

3 “Multiple Bomb Blasts Hit Northern Nigerian City of Kano,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 2012.

al-Ansari stated: “Islam forbids [the] killing of innocent people including non-Muslims. This is our belief and we stand for it.”<sup>4</sup>

This article analyzes Boko Haram’s patterns of operation, and the likelihood of whether the group collapses, accepts an amnesty or assimilates into mainstream society.

### Patterns of Operation

Boko Haram’s opponents are three-fold: the Nigerian government, army and police; the Muslim political and religious elites in northern Nigeria; and the Christian (largely Igbo) minorities in the north and central regions of the country. During the period June 2012-April 2013, Boko Haram has struck repeatedly at all three targets; however, it has not claimed responsibility for a suicide attack since December 22, 2012.

Since the beginning of June 2012, Boko Haram’s geographic pattern of operations has shifted. Of the group’s 29 claimed<sup>5</sup> operations since June

2012, 15 of these operations were in its home region of Borno and Yobe states (northeastern Nigeria), while five were in Kano, and four in Kaduna and Zaria. All of the Kaduna and Zaria operations (all attacks against churches), however, occurred prior to November 25, 2012. Of these 29 operations, 19 were directed against Christians—including massacres of Christian villagers throughout northern Nigeria, suicide attacks and other gun and machete attacks against churches, Christian gatherings, or Christian neighborhoods. Boko Haram’s leader Abubakar Shekau stated: “We are also at war with Christians because the whole world knows what they did to us,” adding that “the group’s successes in killing innocent civilians indicates they [i.e., Boko Haram] are on the right path.”<sup>6</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that a number of the targets chosen by Boko Haram have been secular in nature and relate to the group’s adherence to “enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong” (*al-amr bi-l-ma`ruf wa-l-nahy `an al-munkar*). These operations include: attacks against polio inoculation workers on February 8, 2013; the murders and beheadings of three South Korean doctors on February 10, 2013; attacks against park rangers in Sambisa Park (possibly because they threatened Boko Haram’s base in the area); a campaign against sellers of bush meat in Maiduguri in January 2013, in which 23 people were killed;<sup>7</sup> and a suicide campaign against the telephone companies of Kano (Airtel and MTN) on December 22, 2012. True to the group’s primary opposition to secular non-Islamic education, some of its operations against Christians have been directed against schools or universities, in which the Christian students have been singled out for execution.<sup>8</sup>

The types of weapons used by Boko Haram are also revealing: the spring, summer and fall of 2012 were all

only those operations for which it has taken credit will be discussed.

6 “Malam Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram Leader-Proclaim War With Christians,” Nigerian Civil Right Movement, March 20, 2013.

7 Bush meat is from animals caught in the wild, which is popular throughout Africa. These animals are not slaughtered according to the Islamic laws of *halal*.

8 “Boko Haram Massacres Christian Students in Nigeria,” CBN News, October 7, 2012.

characterized by heavy use of suicide attacks (a total of seven recorded suicide attacks during this period, in addition to those utilized previously), but there have been no suicide attacks since the attack on the phone system in Kano on December 22, 2012. Perhaps this change in tactics has resulted from the discovery of a bomb-making factory by the Nigerian authorities in early December 2012.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, the appearance of Ansaru could have made the use of suicide attacks doctrinally problematic (because of their indiscriminate nature). Ansaru, for example, claims that it is against the killing of civilians, as opposed to Boko Haram’s more indiscriminate targeting selection.

One should also note the parallels to Ansaru in the use of kidnappings. Ansaru kidnapped seven foreigners on February 16, 2013, and executed them on March 9,<sup>10</sup> while Boko Haram then kidnapped a French family of seven (including four children) in Cameroon on February 19, 2013, and then transported them to Nigeria, where they were freed on April 18.<sup>11</sup> In both cases, the kidnappings were directed at the outer world and not at Nigerian targets. Ansaru stated that the executions were revenge for “atrocities done to the religion of Allah by the European countries in many places such as Afghanistan and Mali.”<sup>12</sup> Boko Haram said that the kidnapping of the French family was in revenge for the French invasion of northern Mali.<sup>13</sup>

The most striking conclusions from Boko Haram’s operations during the period June 2012-April 2013 is the inability (or unwillingness) of the group to carry out the paradigmatic suicide operations that characterized its rise during the period 2010-2012. To a large extent, Boko Haram has been

9 “Gunmen Kill Five in Borno as Sect Leader Speaks on Global Jihad,” *Osun Defender*, December 1, 2012.

10 Tim Cocks, “Nigerian Islamist Group Posts Video of Hostages’ Bodies,” Reuters, March 11, 2013. One should note that Ansaru has kidnapped other Westerners in the past.

11 “Kidnappers Free French Family Abducted in Cameroon, Officials Say,” CNN, April 19, 2013.

12 Ibid.

13 John Irish and Bate Felix, “Islamists Threaten to Kill French Kidnapped in Cameroon,” Reuters, February 25, 2013; “Video Claims French Family Kidnapped by Boko Haram,” France24, February 26, 2013.

4 “New Islamist Group Emerges in Nigeria, Claims ‘Different’ Understanding of Jihad,” *al-Arabiya*, June 3, 2012. Although one can note that Ansaru’s methodology does not preclude the slaughter of Westerners—such as the seven British, Lebanese, Italian and Filipino hostages it killed on March 9, 2013—there are close parallels in the splintering between Boko Haram and Ansaru and the Algerian paradigm of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) in 1997. In this latter case, the GIA’s indiscriminate killings of civilians led to the breakup of the parent group and the establishment of a new strategy that was to avoid indiscriminate killings, at least initially. Ansaru has stated that it will not target Muslims or Nigerian governmental bodies (which is not entirely consistent with their record), or even Christian churches, but said that the “rampant massacre of Muslims in Nigeria will no longer be tolerated and that they will never attack any religion or government institution that did not attack them and their religion.” These comments should be seen as an implicit critique on the part of mainstream Hausa-Fulani radicals located in and around Kano against Boko Haram. For the ethnic angle, see Freedom C. Onuoha, “Jama’atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan: Nigeria’s Evolving Militant Group,” *Al Jazeera Center for Studies*, April 7, 2013. Most Boko Haram members are believed to be of Kanuri ethnicity (spread in the region of Borno, and into Cameroon and Chad).

5 There are a large number of violent operations that take place in northern and central Nigeria which may or may not be the work of Boko Haram (because local rivalries between Muslims and Christians and/or tribes versus settled are also a factor). Therefore, to assess its method-

confined to the region of Borno and Yobe states (northeastern Nigeria), with occasional operations in Kano (north central Nigeria). There have been none of the major operations that regularly occurred in Abuja or Jos (which is largely Christian, and is a flashpoint for Muslim-Christian tension). While Boko Haram retains the ability to carry out deadly operations in its home base region, it appears to have been cut off from the rest of the country.<sup>14</sup>

Also indicative of the transition in Boko Haram is that approximately a third of its major operations are now utilizing machetes and knives (six out of 29 incidents) rather than gun attacks (11 out of 29 incidents), explosives or suicide attacks (seven out of 29 incidents). Increasingly, Boko Haram appears to be utilizing more low-tech methods of killing rather than continuing on a trajectory of ever more complex operations.

#### **Collapse, Amnesty or Assimilation?**

The prognosis for Boko Haram within Nigeria remains difficult to determine. For Boko Haram, the evidence suggests that the group's appeal has dwindled, and it cannot carry out major operations outside of its home base. Nigeria's increased policing of money transfers has taken its toll on Boko Haram's financial support,<sup>15</sup> compounded by the fall in popular support (most likely due to the suicide attacks it executed in 2012 against Muslim targets).<sup>16</sup>

14 The recent revelation of a plot to blow up the Third Bridge in Lagos in April 2013, however, would be, if true, a major move toward operations in the south. See "Boko Haram Planned To Bomb Third Mainland Bridge," Nigeria News, April 9, 2013.

15 "Nigeria to Pursue Boko Haram Financiers," United Press International, August 22, 2012; "Boko Haram's Funding Sources Uncovered," AllAfrica.com, February 14, 2012.

16 "Northern Leaders not Supporting Boko Haram Killings -ACF," *Punch*, April 5, 2013. As far as gauging Boko Haram's actual support, this is problematic. One only has the Gallup poll of February 2012, which revealed that approximately 34% of the interviewees in northeastern Nigeria held views identified as anti-Western. See "Northern Nigerians Differ With Boko Haram," NOI Polls, February 13, 2012. This, however, does not reveal Boko Haram's actual support, but it is interesting that this number is higher than the other northern regions (but only half of the 68% negativity in the south-east, the region of the Delta).

Looking at the larger strategic picture, the future for Boko Haram is not bright. For most of 2012 until the French invasion of Mali in January 2013, Boko Haram's publicity was negated by the successes of Ansar Eddine in Mali (with effects also in Algeria, Niger and Mauritania). While Boko Haram has only been able to execute guerrilla attacks, Ansar Eddine was able to hold a significant piece of northern Mali, including important local cities such as Timbuktu and Gao, for a period of almost a year. While Ansar Eddine benefits from close connections with the larger world of radical Islam (including at least a nominal tie to al-Qa`ida), Boko Haram was likely bereft of such connections at least until 2012.<sup>17</sup>

Nevertheless, signs that Boko Haram is developing close connections with the larger field of radical Islam have grown during this recent period. For the first time, on November 29, 2012, Abubakar Shekau issued a video in Arabic; all of his previous videos had been in Hausa.<sup>18</sup> When Boko Haram was temporarily squeezed in February 2013, Shekau is believed to have briefly sought refuge with Ansar Eddine in northern Mali;<sup>19</sup> it is possible that with his return to Nigeria, he brought more of a mainstreaming of Boko Haram within worldwide Salafi-jihadism. Additionally, the kidnapping of the French family from Cameroon signals the willingness of Boko Haram to operate outside of Nigeria's boundaries for the first time, and to execute attacks for the cause of Ansar Eddine or AQIM.<sup>20</sup>

#### **Conclusion**

Boko Haram has been contained to a large extent within northeastern Nigeria. Although it remains extremely deadly in that region—especially to

17 Schmitt; Doyle. Some believe that there has been a connection with al-Shabab in Somalia, leading to the use of suicide attacks during the period of 2010-present, and the unique martyrdom video of September 18, 2011. There is no significant evidence, however, that this was the case.

18 M.J. Smith, "Boko Haram Leader Salutes Global Jihadists in Video: SITE," Agence France-Presse, November 29, 2012.

19 "Boko Haram Leader Wounded in Gun Duel, Flees to Mali," Nigerian Bulletin, January 19, 2013.

20 Boko Haram said that the kidnapping of the French family was in response to France's intervention in Mali in January 2013.

the Christian population—it does not seem to have broadened its appeal during the past year. Indeed, northern Muslim politicians who were suspected of supporting Boko Haram during 2011-2012 have carefully distanced themselves from the group, especially as Boko Haram's message has become more toxic within the context of Nigerian politics.<sup>21</sup> The closest parallel to Boko Haram's trajectory is that of the Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines—originally also a jihadist organization which has now developed into more of a criminal element (with Islamic rationales for operations).<sup>22</sup>

Such a trajectory raises the question of whether the amnesty offered by the Nigerian government—effective with regard to the Niger Delta militants in southern Nigeria—will have any effect on Boko Haram. Most likely it will not because Boko Haram has developed a sufficiently hardened group of supporters who are willing to continue their operations even if (hypothetically) the leadership were to accept an amnesty. In developing ties to Ansar Eddine and other West and North African radicals, Boko Haram sees the future—after the French withdrawal from Mali—as being favorable for the continued success of Salafi-jihadism. As a result, Boko Haram likely sees no reason to surrender at this time.

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21 "Nigeria Senator Ali Ndume 'Linked to Boko Haram,'" BBC, November 22, 2011; "Boko Haram: Ndume Asks Court to Quash Evidence," *Vanguard*, February 8, 2013; "We Must End Boko Haram, Says Sultan of Sokoto," Sahara Reporters, February 6, 2012.

22 "Are Abu Sayyaf Rebels Linked to Bin Laden?" Voice of America, October 29, 2009.

## The Salafist Temptation: The Radicalization of Tunisia's Post-Revolution Youth

By Anne Wolf

ON FEBRUARY 6, 2013, Tunisian opposition leader Chokri Belaid was assassinated outside his home. A critic of Tunisia's current Islamist-led government, Belaid was shot four times by one to two assailants.<sup>1</sup> In the wake of his death, opposition parties and some civil society activists accused the ruling moderate Islamist Ennahda Party of organizing Belaid's assassination.<sup>2</sup> Accusations against Ennahda continued even when four young Salafists—all between 26- and 34-years-old—were arrested shortly after the incident for their alleged involvement.<sup>3</sup> The suspected assassin, Kamel El Gathgathi, a 35-year-old violent Salafist, is still at large.<sup>4</sup>

Chokri Belaid was among those politicians who suspected Ennahda of supporting Tunisia's controversial Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution.<sup>5</sup> Some young Islamist members of the Leagues have been

accused of sabotaging meetings of left-wing politicians, committing violence against civil society activists, and being involved in the death of Lotfi Naguedh, a local coordinator of the opposition Nidaa Tounes Party.<sup>6</sup> In a country long hailed for its peculiarly moderate interpretation of Islam,<sup>7</sup> most observers have been surprised by the increase in religiously-motivated violence perpetrated by Tunisian youth.<sup>8</sup> Although the causes of radicalization in Tunisia are complex,<sup>9</sup> this article focuses on the under-researched Islamist youth movements to better understand the dynamics attracting some young Tunisians to violent jihad.

This article first provides a brief historical account of Tunisia's Islamist youth and its links to violence. It then

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6 Angelique Chrisafis, "Tunisia Gripped by General Strike as Assassinated Chokri Belaid is Buried," *Guardian*, February 8, 2013; "Tunisie: Maya Jribi réitère son appel à la dissolution des Ligues de protection de la révolution," *Kapitalis*, March 31, 2013; "Tunisia Clash Leaves Opposition Official Dead," *al-Jazeera*, October 19, 2012.

7 This perspective has long been fueled by past regimes' policies of Westernization that opened Tunisia up, economically and politically, and brought secularism, education and women's rights to the country. The apparent legacy of early-20th century modernist thinkers, such as Tahar Haddad, as well as accounts according to which polygamy was practically absent in Tunisia long before its official prohibition under Habib Bourguiba in 1956, seemed to confirm the argument that there is indeed something specifically modern about Muslims in Tunisia. See, for example, Dalenda Larguèche, *Monogamie en Islam: L'Exception Kairouanaise* (Manouba, Tunisia: Centre de Publication Universitaire, Laboratoire Régions et Ressources Patrimoniales de Tunisie, 2011).

8 In addition to these incidents, an estimated 11 out of the 32 hostage takers at the In Amenas gas facility in Algeria were of Tunisian nationality. Additionally, young Tunisians are actively participating in the Syrian war. See Thomas Joscelyn, "Tunisian Government Arrests al Qaeda Cell Tied to Ansar al Sharia," *The Long War Journal*, December 22, 2012; "The Algerian-Tunisian Border: Tales of a Taxi Driver," *Economist*, April 4, 2013; Mischa Benoit-Lavelle, "Tunisian Salafis on the Rise," *al-Monitor*, January 30, 2013.

9 Many reports cite socioeconomic background and education as primary factors of radicalization. The release of radical Salafists from prison and the return of exiled ultraconservatives to Tunisia following the revolution are also important factors explaining their increased visibility in society. For details, see, for example, "Tunisie: violences et défi salafiste," International Crisis Group, February 13, 2013; Anne Wolf, "Tunisia: Signs of Domestic Radicalization Post-Revolution," *CTC Sentinel* 6:1 (2013).

details the main post-revolutionary religious youth movements and outlines the factors that are encouraging some young Tunisians to join ultraconservative groups.

It finds that the ruling Islamist Ennahda Party risks losing its appeal among Islamist youth, who may move increasingly toward Salafist, and in some cases jihadist, groups.

### Background

Tunisia's current Islamist youth movements can only be understood in the context of their predecessors. In the 1970s, Rashid al-Ghannouchi, the current head of the Ennahda Party, was a popular teacher, preacher and youth leader, attracting students and young people to his weekly discussions and events. Initially concerned with sociocultural change, in the late-1970s al-Ghannouchi's movement, then known as Jama`a Islamiyya (The Islamic Group), became more political in its goals.<sup>10</sup> The student wing of Jama`a Islamiyya—which was renamed the Islamic Tendency Movement (MTI) in 1981 and then Ennahda in 1989—was particularly revolutionary and confrontational toward the regime. The student wing openly supported the 1980 Gafsa attack<sup>11</sup>—during which Tunisian dissenters bombed several strategic government locations—while Jama`a Islamiyya released a statement condemning the incident.

In 1985, Islamist students officially created the General Tunisian Union of Students (UGTE), whose confrontational attitude led to several clashes with the regime.<sup>12</sup> Although a predominantly peaceful movement comprising mostly young Ennahda members, the UGTE was dissolved in 1991 when the Bab Souika affair<sup>13</sup> led

1 Eileen Byrne, "Tunisian Opposition Leader Shot Dead," *Guardian*, February 7, 2013.

2 "Ennahdha et un pays du Golfe derrière l'assassinat de Chokri Belaid?" Webmanagercenter.com, April 2, 2013. For details, see "Tunisie: l'assassinat de Chokri Belaid provoque une vague de manifestations anti-Ennahda," *Jeune Afrique*, February 6, 2013.

3 Former Tunisian Interior Minister Ali Larayedh stated in February that the principal suspects belong to an "extremist Salafi movement." For details, see "Meurtre de Chokri Belaid: la mouvance salafiste pointée du doigt par Tunis," *France24*, February 26, 2013; Bouazza Ben Bouazza, "Chokri Belaid Murder: 4 Arrested For Involvement In Death of Tunisian Politician," *Huffington Post*, February 26, 2013.

4 "Assassinat de Chokri Belaid: Genèse d'un crime et velléités d'épilogue!" *AfricanManager.com*, March 1, 2013.

5 The Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution were initially established under Tunisia's transitional government to safeguard the objectives of the revolution. Although originally comprising various political and ideological streams, the Leagues are said to be increasingly dominated by Islamists, some of whom are accused of having attacked political opponents, journalists and civil society organizations. For details, see Roua Seghaier, "What are the Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution?" *Tunisia Live*, January 23, 2013.

10 For details, see John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

11 Alaya Allani, "The Islamists in Tunisia between Confrontation and Participation: 1980-2008," *The Journal of North African Studies* 14:2 (2009): p. 261.

12 For details, see Francois Burgat and William Dowell, *The Islamic Movement in North Africa* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993).

13 On February 17, 1991, three young members of the Ennahda movement attacked the office of the government Constitutional Democratic Rally (RCD) party in Bab Souika. The incident led to the death of one security

the regime to a nationwide crackdown on Islamists.<sup>14</sup>

The repression of the Ennahda movement resulted in an “Islamic vacuum” that was partially filled by more religiously conservative movements that emerged in the mid-1990s and 2000s, including the violent Salafi-jihadi trend, which particularly attracted young Tunisians. The religiously conservative movements were composed of generally small informal groups without any central leadership, but they often entertained regional links to more religiously radical movements.<sup>15</sup> The 2001 Djerba

**“The trend toward ultraconservatism and the increasing polarization between secular and Islamist forces will likely continue to attract some young Tunisian Muslims to jihadism.”**

attack, for example, was conducted by a young Tunisian with links to al-Qa`ida.<sup>16</sup> The so-called “Suleiman group,” established in 2006 to confront the Zine El Abidine Ben Ali regime by force, consisted mostly of Tunisians in their 20s and early 30s, many of whom were still university students.<sup>17</sup> The increasing allure of ultraconservatism for young Tunisians, including its jihadist dynamic, at that time represented a reaction to the fierce regime repression of Islamists. Yet it was also the result of a wider regional tendency toward Islamic conservatism, and reflected the lack of any religious

guard. See Wolf, “Tunisia: Signs of Domestic Radicalization Post-Revolution.”

14 Michael Willis, *Politics and Power in the Maghreb: Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco from Independence to the Arab Spring* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2012), p. 168.

15 For details, see Alison Pargeter, “Radicalisation in Tunisia,” in George Joffe ed., *Islamist Radicalisation in North Africa: Politics and Process* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

16 “France Tries Trio over Djerba Synagogue Bombing,” Agence France-Presse, January 4, 2009.

17 Pargeter; Wolf, “Tunisia: Signs of Domestic Radicalization Post-Revolution.”

leadership inside Tunisia capable of countering this trend, given that the more moderate Ennahda activists were either imprisoned or exiled. It is by the light of this Salafist trend, as well as the early Ennahda youth movements, that Tunisia’s Islamist youth must today be understood.

**Mapping Tunisia’s Post-Revolution Islamist Youth**

Tunisia’s current Islamist youth, a highly heterogeneous movement, is in many ways a hybrid of two distinct Islamist dynamics—the Ennahda and Salafist movements—that have shaped Tunisia over the recent decades. This hybrid can be seen in the membership of the current UGTE, the student union that was banned in 1991 but was legalized following the recent revolution. Before its dissolution in 1991 being a member of the UGTE was almost synonymous with being an Ennahda member,<sup>18</sup> but this is no longer the case post-revolution.

Today, the Islamist student union brings together members of Ennahda’s youth wing as well as young Salafists, alongside some independents, and can therefore be classified as much more religiously conservative than its predecessor during the 1980s and early-1990s. The visibility of Salafist youth on university campuses has particularly increased, as have their demands, such as wearing the *niqab* (a veil that covers the entire face, except for the eyes) during classes and examinations, as well as establishing special prayer rooms.<sup>19</sup> This has contributed to a strained atmosphere and sometimes violent conflict between the UGTE and its competitor, the General Union of Tunisian Students (UGET), a secular-leftist body.<sup>20</sup> The resulting polarization on university campuses, reflecting the wider political climate in Tunisia, is only likely to contribute to increased

18 The UGTE at that time also comprised some independent Islamist members, such as Souad Abderrahim. See personal interviews, former UGTE activists, Tunis, Tunisia, August 2012 and March 2013.

19 For details, see, for example, “Tunisie. Six étudiantes en niqab en grève de la faim à Manouba,” *Kapitalis*, January 17, 2012; Bouazza Ben Bouazza, “Tunisia Manouba University Students Face Off Over Islamic Veil On Campus,” Huffington Post, April 1, 2012.

20 For details, see, for example, “Tunisie – Violences au campus entre UGTE et UGET, Ennahda prend parti,” *Business News* [Tunis], April 6, 2012.

religious conservatism among some UGTE activists.

While united on campus, Tunisia’s Islamist youth take distinct forms outside the universities. Shortly after the revolution, the Ennahda Party launched its own youth wing, whose members meet regularly for various social and educational activities. The priority of the Ennahda youth movement lies in Islamic education, and weekly lessons are given in local party offices across the country.<sup>21</sup> Senior Ennahda members argue that many of their young members lack an in-depth understanding of Islam and blame the culture of authoritarianism under Ben Ali, which made it difficult to receive a quality Islamic education.<sup>22</sup>

On Ennahda’s right, Tunisia’s Salafist movements are increasingly recruiting young Tunisians.<sup>23</sup> Although minority movements, many divergent Salafist streams exist in Tunisia,<sup>24</sup> with Ansar al-Shari`a, led by Seifallah ben Hassine (also known as Abu Iyadh), who is wanted by the police for his involvement in the U.S. Embassy attack in Tunis, probably the most prominent.<sup>25</sup> Most of Tunisia’s Salafist movements concentrate their activities entirely on preaching and in the sociocultural sphere, although with the creation of Jabhat al-Islah (Reform Front Party)<sup>26</sup> in mid-2012, they have

21 Personal interviews, Ennahda youth activists, Tunis, Tunisia, March 2013.

22 Ibid.

23 For details, see John Thorne, “Islamist Militancy Quietly Makes Inroads in Post-Revolution Tunisia,” *Christian Science Monitor*, March 28, 2013.

24 Broadly speaking, the Salafist movement can be classified into two streams: the “Scientific Salafists,” who reject the use of violence, and the Salafi-jihadis, who are prepared to use violence to reach their goal of implementing Shari`a in Tunisia. For details, see Wolf, “Tunisia: Signs of Domestic Radicalization Post-Revolution.”

25 Founded by Abu Iyadh upon his release from prison shortly after the Tunisian revolution, Ansar al-Shari`a organized a mass rally in May 2012 in Kairouan that was attended by up to 5,000 Salafist activists. Ansar al-Shari`a has also organized Salafist lectures and campaigns against blasphemy. For details, see Aaron Zelin, “Maqdisi’s Disciples in Libya and Tunisia,” *Foreign Policy*, November 14, 2012; Louisa Loveluck, “Planting the Seeds of Tunisia’s Ansar al Sharia,” *Foreign Policy*, September 27, 2012.

26 For details, see Anne Wolf, “New Salafist Party: A Threat to Tunisia’s Democratic Transition?” Middle East Online, August 3, 2012.

also entered the political arena, even though their membership base is small.<sup>27</sup> The heterogeneous Salafist landscape and its various movements, most of which are informal, seem to play into the strength and visibility of the movement.

### The Salafists Threaten Ennahda's Support Base

With both Ennahda and the Salafists actively recruiting Tunisian youth, some former members of Ennahda's youth branch have decided to join the ultraconservatives, citing three main reasons for their resolve.<sup>28</sup>

First, they were disappointed that Ennahda did not support including a reference to Shari`a in the new Tunisian constitution.<sup>29</sup> This decision led many conservative Muslims to reproach the Islamist party for betraying the very spirit of Islam.<sup>30</sup> Many Salafists subsequently labeled Ennahda as "un-Islamic" and an ally of the West.<sup>31</sup>

Second, many young conservative Muslims feel that Ennahda is not doing enough to "clean" the country of people who had worked for the autocratic and secular Ben Ali regime.<sup>32</sup> Some cite this as one of the main reasons behind the controversial behavior of the Leagues for the Protection of the Revolution, stating that if the government does not do enough to protect the country and its revolutionary objectives, this task must be taken up by the people.

Third, some blame the government for continuing economic hardship,<sup>33</sup> and claim that the current regime has failed to launch substantial socioeconomic reforms.<sup>34</sup>

To the unease of Ennahda's leadership, this threefold criticism is actually shared by many current members of its youth branch as well. Indeed, it seems that the split between moderates and more radical activists, predominant among Ennahda's senior members, is even more pronounced within its youth, pitting those who grew up as sons and daughters of exiled activists in the liberal atmosphere of the West against those of political prisoners who had remained in Tunisia, often under harsh conditions. As a young Ennahda member explained,

when I grew up, my father, an Ennahda activist, was in prison. I was lucky because my mother worked and taught me a modern interpretation of Islam. But I am more of an exception. Many other young Islamists grew up in deep poverty and did not receive this kind of education but instead watched Saudi TV. This led some members of Ennahda's youth branch to become actually very close to the current Salafi trend.<sup>35</sup>

Therefore, when Ennahda decided against including a reference to Shari`a in the constitution, many young members were disappointed. They also reproached their leaders for not being consulted about the decision in advance.<sup>36</sup> Integrating its youth, many of whom appear to be ideologically detached from the leadership, seems to be a difficult task for Ennahda.

### Conclusion

The challenge to Tunisia's security clearly lies in the potential radicalization of the country's youth. With many young Islamists still striving to find their identity, a competition for the religiously conservative youth has emerged in Tunisia between Ennahda and the Salafists, with both offering youth-targeted religious lectures, and cultural and social activities. Ennahda's solid institutional structures and historical legitimacy—derived from its fierce opposition to Tunisia's past autocratic regimes and subsequent persecution—will continue to attract some young people. Yet Ennahda's important role in the political sphere, and the blame it must take for economic stagnation and political compromise, which some conservative Muslims perceive as contrary to the Islamic way of life, will continue to play into the hands of the Salafist movement. Also, the fact that some young Ennahda members do not feel sufficiently included in the decisions taken by their leaders does not play in favor of the ruling party.

In the midst of this religious turmoil, the trend toward ultraconservatism and the increasing polarization between secular and Islamist forces will continue to attract some young Tunisian Muslims to jihadism. Although Ennahda initially featured a "soft" approach to small-scale religiously-motivated violence, it has become increasingly uncompromising toward jihadism.<sup>37</sup> It is also attempting, mostly through education, to prevent many of its young members from defecting to ultraconservative religious movements. This may eventually signal to society, including those who were active in accusing Ennahda of being responsible for the death of Chokri Belaid, that the true division in Tunisia is not between Islamists and secularists, but between moderate and radical Islam.

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<sup>27</sup> Personal interview, Mohammed Khouja, head of Reform Front Party, Tunis, Tunisia, August 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Personal interviews, Salafists, former and current members of Ennahda's youth branch, Tunis, Tunisia, March 2013.

<sup>29</sup> For details, see "Tunisia's Ennahda to Oppose Sharia in Constitution," Reuters, March 26, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> When Ennahda dropped a reference to Shari`a in the constitution, even some senior Ennahda members protested in front of the Constituent Assembly. See Wafa Sdiri, "Tunisie: Habib Ellouz au Bardo assure qu'Ennahda va oeuvrer pour l'inclusion de la chariaa dans la Constitution," Tunisie Numerique, March 16, 2012.

<sup>31</sup> "Tunisia Jails Salafist Leader in U.S. Embassy Attack for One Year," Reuters, October 24, 2012.

<sup>32</sup> Personal interviews, Salafists, former and current members of Ennahda youth branch, Tunis, Tunisia, March 2013.

<sup>33</sup> In some regions, youth unemployment is more than 30%. See "Tunisia Raises Economic, Social Challenges Amid Historic Transformation," International Monetary Fund, September 5, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> Personal interviews, Salafists, former and current members of Ennahda youth branch, Tunis, Tunisia, March 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Personal interview, member of Ennahda's youth branch, Tunis, Tunisia, March 2013.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> For example, following the U.S. Embassy attack in September 2011, Tunisian authorities arrested more than 100 Salafists. While in prison, several Salafists engaged in a hunger strike resulting in the deaths of two activists. See "Tunisia Govt Faces Dilemma over Islamist Hunger Strikes," al-Arabiya, November 20, 2012.



## Rethinking Counterinsurgency in Somalia

By William Reno

IN AUGUST 2011, soldiers from the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somali militias forced the militant group al-Shabab out of Mogadishu. By mid-2012, al-Shabab had lost control of much of Mogadishu's hinterland. On March 6, 2013, the UN Security Council partially lifted an arms embargo, allowing Somalia's government to legally import light weapons to arm its own forces.<sup>1</sup> Somalia's political situation has improved considerably as well.<sup>2</sup>

Although this progress is real, Somalia's political logic of kinship ("clan") based social structures poses serious challenges to a sustainable counterinsurgency strategy. These difficulties appear in other collapsed states with relatively egalitarian, small-scale societies where political decisions involve constant wrangling and discussion. Historically, this behavior has frustrated external efforts to reliably identify and work with permanent leaders.<sup>3</sup> Yet these are not static societies. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their leaders aspired to construct effective institutions, manage local disputes through policing and state-administered justice, and politically incorporate their communities—an earlier version of the state-building thrust of contemporary counterinsurgency.

1 Rick Gladstone, "Security Council Loosens Somalian Arms Embargo," *New York Times*, March 6, 2013.

2 The February 2012 London Conference brought together representatives of dozens of governments and most major Somali groups to create a new national government, reconstruct Somalia's justice and security sectors, and sustain funding for AMISOM. International backers denounced "spoilers" and pressed Somali leaders to appoint a legislature and write a new constitution. On August 20, 2012, a parliament was sworn in, and on September 10 it elected a president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. On January 17, 2013, the United States officially recognized Somalia's government. See "London Conference on Somalia: Communiqué," UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, February 23, 2012; "UN and Partners Issue Warning Against Somali Peace Process Spoilers," United Nations News Center, May 1, 2012.

3 Meyer Fortes, *The Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi* (London: Oxford University Press, 1945).

The fundamental difficulty for counterinsurgency in such societies lies in the mismatch of the concept and reality of the state. Counterinsurgency rests upon two fundamental principles: 1) there must be a government with the political will and capacity to reform and effectively engage citizens; 2) there must be a cohesive indigenous armed force with the ability to protect the government and provide security to civilians.<sup>4</sup> Both tenets presuppose that local political actors accept the existence of a state, that state collapse is temporary and state restoration is possible and desirable.<sup>5</sup> State-building tasks require clear distinctions between insurgent and government, subversion and support, and legal and illicit, even if it is acknowledged that individuals often act on divided loyalties and multiple motives.<sup>6</sup>

Key elements of politics in Somalia (as in many collapsed states) violate this logic. Local authorities collaborate with the insurgents that they fight. Armed groups unify and then suddenly split. Political authority, personal honor, and social practices of vendetta and protection become wrapped up in what others see as subversion, infiltration and corruption, further blurring externally defined distinctions between licit or illicit activities. Scholars of Somalia heatedly debate the importance of these characteristics.<sup>7</sup> These debates

4 A classic formulation of combined political-military strategy appeared in Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1966). These principles also appeared in David Kilcullen, "The Three Pillars of Counterinsurgency," U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Conference, Washington, D.C., September 28, 2006, available at [www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/uscoin/3pillars\\_of\\_counterinsurgency.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/uscoin/3pillars_of_counterinsurgency.pdf). The U.S. Army's Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24) devoted considerable attention to "public diplomacy," which presupposes a political strategy that includes an incumbent government acceptable to civilians. David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), noted the centrality of institutionally cohesive and coordinated "political action" to counter insurgents.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 Catherine Besteman, "Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia," *Cultural Anthropology* 11:1 (1996): pp. 120-133; I.M. Lewis, "Doing Violence to Ethnography: A Response to Catherine Besteman's 'Representing Violence and 'Othering' Somalia,'" *American Ethnologist* 13:1

are relevant to counterinsurgency, as reluctance to accept conventional state institutions and policies undermines the viability of the two core tenets: a reformist government, and a cohesive indigenous armed force.

This article examines how the shifting loyalties of clan politics challenge the centrality of the institutions of the state as the drivers of actors' interests and the real alignments in politics. It finds that in the case of Somalia, there is an enduring resistance to the idea of the state—a fundamental tenet upon which counterinsurgency rests.<sup>8</sup>

### Shifting Loyalties

The January 2013 French operation to rescue a security consultant that al-Shabab kidnapped in 2009 illustrates some difficulties facing counterinsurgency in Somalia. The kidnapping of two French security consultants sent to train Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) soldiers was allegedly masterminded by a relative of a former minister in the TFG and a deputy leader of the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), a predecessor of al-Shabab.<sup>9</sup> The kidnapers had joined the Islamist faction Hisbul Islamiyya and almost all were part of government security forces; when former ICU leaders joined the government, they took many powerful rank-and-file positions in the security and intelligence services.<sup>10</sup> This provided groups within the ICU and others associated with it access points through which to infiltrate their agents, collect intelligence, and operate in government territory.<sup>11</sup> The patterns of

(1998): pp. 100-108.

8 Much of the data for this article is based on the author's visits to Somalia since 2006.

9 This is a perspective expressed in the author's discussions with a Somali government official on July 4, 2012, and in "Somalia: the Abduction of French Agents Well Planned, Sources," Mareeg, April 15, 2013.

10 ICU forces suffered defeat at the hands of the Ethiopian-backed TFG after December 2006. In December 2008, ICU head Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad signed a power-sharing agreement with the TFG and became TFG president in January 2009, a position that he held until August 2012. This agreement signaled the split of the ICU and TFG into several new factions, with the ICU rejectionists continuing their armed opposition.

11 Several TFG officials and militia leaders revealed in discussions with the author, which took place in Mogadishu in June and July 2012, that they had personal concerns about security due to perceived al-Shabab infil-

alliance and opposition would appear to facilitate this sharing of information and collaborative operations. For example, Hisbul Islamiyya emerged among the factions of the ICU that rejected a December 2008 power sharing deal with the TFG. Hisbul Islamiyya then merged with al-Shabab in December 2010.<sup>12</sup> In 2009, these groups fought together against the TFG in Mogadishu at the same time that they fought against each other in Kismayo.<sup>13</sup> This situation underlines the difficulty of applying rigid political labels to many of these factions as they are prone to collaborate in some areas and on particular issues while fighting one another in other instances, often in the service of clan or other kinship obligations.

The escape of one hostage a few weeks after the kidnapping of the security consultants sheds some light on intricate family and clan networks.<sup>14</sup> Initially, the two hostages in Hisbul Islamiyya's hands drew al-Shabab onto the scene. A combination of threats and negotiations left one hostage for Hisbul Islamiyya to sell for a ransom and another with al-Shabab.<sup>15</sup> The ransom activated other cleavages, as the original kidnapers and the ultimate recipients of the ransom quarreled over how this act and the distribution of the money it generated would affect the relative power of each faction within the larger collection of armed Islamist groups.<sup>16</sup> The story became more complex after that, but it underscored the difficulties of viewing Somalia's political scene in terms of rigid labels.<sup>17</sup>

tration into the security services. Infiltration is also discussed in Mohamed Mubarak, "Spying Game: Shabab's Double Agents in Somali Intelligence," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, March 2012.

12 "Somali Islamists al-Shabab and Hizbul Islam 'to Merge,'" BBC, December 20, 2010.

13 Jean-Pierre Filiu, "Lesson from Kismayo," *Jihadica.com*, October 6, 2009.

14 "Somalia Hostage Tells of Escape," BBC, August 26, 2009.

15 "Gunmen Snatch French Agents from Mogadishu Hotel," Agence France-Presse, July 14, 2009; "Somalia Moves to Free French Agents," al-Jazeera, July 15, 2009.

16 Jean-Philippe Rémy, "Denis Allex, l'agent français otage en Somalie," *Le Monde*, May 10, 2012.

17 Allegedly, an Islamist faction with members in the TFG president's security force took the hostages and gave them to Shaykh Hassan Dahir Aweys' faction of Hisbul Islamiyya which was not part of the power sharing agreement with the TFG. Yet even though al-Shabab also opposed the TFG, the al-Shabab confrontation with their

These episodes show how family and clan issues shape and influence conflict in Somalia, regardless of the wider political shift to "reconstruction."

These shifting loyalties continued as internationally-sponsored reforms gathered steam, as seen in the January 2013 French attempt to rescue the remaining hostage. Those rescuers needed intelligence to locate their target. The Somali government's National Security Agency (NSA),<sup>18</sup> built with U.S. help, was supposed to assist, but given the infiltration of Islamist group agents into the government's intelligence apparatus,<sup>19</sup> they appeared to lead the French into a trap instead.<sup>20</sup> The rescue attempt encountered heavily armed al-Shabab fighters who battled the French for several hours. An al-Shabab statement claimed that they had captured one of the French soldiers and killed another,<sup>21</sup> while French officials announced that two soldiers were killed in the operation.<sup>22</sup>

The timing of a suicide bomb attack on Somali intelligence chief Khalif Ahmed Ilig's vehicle on March 18, 2013, also pointed to inside help. A week earlier, a government-allied militia warned Somali security services of a

supposed allies possibly indicated that local al-Shabab commanders were concerned that their Hisbul Islamiyya "allies" would use the kidnapping to their political and financial benefit. An al-Shabab spokesman told a reporter that "we shared the two men to avoid clashes between Islamists," which is also a plausible assertion in line with local custom to manage conflicts. See "Qaeda Linked Somali Group Takes One of French Hostages," Reuters, July 16, 2009. This episode shows the ease with which groups can intermingle and collaborate at the same time that they are in conflict over other issues.

18 Some Somalis alternately refer to this as NSSA and others as NSS.

19 "French Somalia Raid 'Was a Trap,'" *Africa Confidential* 54:2 (2013).

20 This report cited the French defense minister's allegation that al-Shabab fighters were forewarned of the French attack in the moments before the incident as local residents detected the approaching French force. See "France Defends Failed Somali Raid as Toll Mounts," Agence France-Presse, January 13, 2013.

21 "Second French Soldier Dies after Somalia Raid - Rebels," BBC, January 14, 2013; "Soldat français tué en Somalie; les islamistes publient des photos," *Le Monde*, January 14, 2013.

22 Peter Beaumont, "French Secret Service Hostage and Soldiers Killed in Somali Rescue Mission," *Guardian*, January 12, 2013.

possible attack,<sup>23</sup> but the government did not respond accordingly. This begs the question whether al-Shabab sympathizers in the security services were to blame for the lack of action. A January 29, 2013, suicide bomb attack at the prime minister's home in the presidential compound by a former intelligence service employee—a compound that required clearance at several checkpoints—also raised the possibility of inside assistance.<sup>24</sup>

### Clan Politics

Infiltration points less to ideological commitment than to clan politics. A large element of Somali politics involves heads of clans and sub-clans playing a pragmatic balancing game, seeking protection from stronger groups and then shifting to balance them when one side becomes strong enough to threaten its partner's autonomy. Leaders in al-Shabab and other groups have used clan politics to their advantage, offering protection to smaller clans that have been targets of other clans that appropriate their lands and marginalize them in continuous and often violent political negotiations. For example, some members of the Warsangali sub-clan, squeezed between Puntland and Somaliland forces in disputes over control of territory and business networks, accepted protection from the al-Shabab-aligned militia commander Mohamed Said Atom.<sup>25</sup> Yet even as al-Shabab (or the government) establishes an alliance, they have to contend with supporters whose loyalties are divided between their partners and the complex obligations of kinship. This was illustrated in Atom's case, as an offensive on the part of the Puntland Authority resulted in the defection of several hundred of the al-Shabab-aligned fighters to the ranks of the Somali intelligence agency.<sup>26</sup>

23 Glen Johnson, "Mogadishu Calms, but the Line in the Sand Blurs," *The Courier*, April 6, 2013.

24 These details are based on the author's personal observation of the compound several months earlier. The author counted five checkpoints, including ones that appeared to search Somali government officials. See "Suicide Blast by Offices of Somalia President and PM," BBC, January 19, 2013.

25 "Security Council Committee on Somalia and Eritrea Issues List of Individuals Identified Pursuant to Paragraph 8 of Resolution 1844 (2008)," United Nations Security Council, April 12, 2010.

26 "Galaga Militia Prepares to Fight Puntland," Somalia

A good illustration of the fragmented nature of identity and mobilization appeared in late 2009 as Islamist groups around the port of Kismayo fought foreign-backed TFG and AMISOM forces. Earlier, al-Shabab produced a video professing support for al-Qa`ida in 2008, with declarations of a common cause.<sup>27</sup> Upon closer examination, declaring allegiance to al-Qa`ida could have been a power play of the Ras Kamboni Brigade, which was then still part of al-Shabab, to counter rival commander Hassan Dahir Aweys' effort to assert personal control over al-Shabab fighters.<sup>28</sup> In any event, Aweys split from al-Shabab in February 2009 and created Hisbul Islamiyya to bring together dissident factions, including parts of the Ras Kamboni Brigade. Then in February 2010, the Ras Kamboni Brigade joined TFG forces in attacks on al-Shabab, while other elements of the brigade rejoined al-Shabab.<sup>29</sup>

This episode provides lessons to counterinsurgents who propose to bring different groups under a single authority. The dispute was due in part to brigade members' attachments to the town of Ras Kamboni and its local notables who had personal agendas. Disputes over port revenues among clan lineages in the town of Ras Kamboni also influenced how these Islamist groups fractured, recombined and shifted alliances.<sup>30</sup> To others, this seems like a barely organized chaos, the unpredictability of Somali political behavior. Somalis may seem like they have very limited or tentative buy-in to agreements, and are unreliable and selfish. In fact, leaders, particularly local

leaders who are directly responsible to kin and communities, tend to be pragmatic to the extreme.

Activities commonly labeled as corruption also reflect shifting clan politics and obligations to clan or family lineage. A World Bank report in 2012 found that 68% of government revenues went missing.<sup>31</sup> An unpublished UN report told of government ministers transferring government assets, often cash, to associates.<sup>32</sup> This activity, however, is integral to building and sustaining political alliances. Officials are under great pressure to protect kin and allies. If they chose to follow proper administrative practice, they would lose authority among people that they supposedly serve and powerful notables would shift support to other groups, much as infiltrating the security services can be a way to hedge bets.

Life is difficult for state-builders and violent Islamists alike since both can be deeply threatening to the social networks around them. The insistence on a distinct sphere of political life separate or superior to personal and family agendas forces individuals to decide whether to risk violating social obligations to pursue an abstract political vision. This makes it difficult for foreigners to find reliable local partners. Ultimately, foreigners in Somalia's conflict who are connected to big political projects almost always subordinate themselves to shifting interests of Somali leaders to survive for any length of time.

Foreign guests, whether military trainers, administrative experts or radical Islamists, are tolerated in Somalia when they spend money and are useful in local power struggles. Yet those who try to spread radical visions too vigorously (whether jihad or upholding UN Security Council resolutions) encounter what many of them regard as grasping and conniving local behavior. Local notables complain that the state-

builders mimic the radical Islamists, provoking rounds of assassinations and factional violence among those who fear that new arrangements will be less flexible and will need to be counter-balanced.<sup>33</sup> Pragmatic local leaders constantly play multiple sides, creating an exceptionally difficult social terrain for insurgents and counterinsurgent state-builders. Many locals focus their ire on "Americans and other devils," blaming all of their problems on foreign influence.<sup>34</sup>

### Alternatives

Alex de Waal argues that trying to change systems of conflict and social relations in states such as Somalia is futile. He suggests playing to existing patronage networks embedded in local clan relations. The shifting constellation of alliances and factional splits can be harnessed for limited goals, much as NATO forces in Afghanistan assembled an alliance to topple the Taliban in October 2001.<sup>35</sup> Playing clan politics is a well-known technique in the region, and Ethiopian officials practice it to prevent the consolidation of Somali groups that might pursue irredentist agendas among Ethiopia's ethnic Somali population. Through this strategy, Ethiopian forces supported Hawiye sub-clan Islamist militias that splintered from al-Shabab and other groups to ally with the TFG.<sup>36</sup>

This approach argues for an extremely light footprint, focusing on local islands of stability maintained with indigenous forces. Empowering a particular faction with a foreign-supported intelligence service like the NSA and a national army will generate subversion and infiltration as other clan groups hedge their bets and assemble new alliances, possibly in coordination with more violent Islamists, to oppose the new concentration of power. Private security contractors may be especially destabilizing in local politics, as strongmen appear adept at

Report, April 2, 2012; personal interview, Puntland ministry of security official, July 8, 2012. Those conversations indicated that Puntland security forces are abundantly aware of the importance of kinship relations in shifting political allegiances.

27 Nick Grace, "Shabaab Leader Sanctioned as Zawahiri Responds to Group's Oath of Loyalty," *The Long War Journal*, November 21, 2008. Usama bin Ladin also called for Somali cooperation. See Usama bin Ladin, "Fight On, Champions of Somalia," March 2009.

28 "Islamist Ally Turns on Somalia's al-Shabaab," *Voice of America*, December 2, 2009; personal interviews, political actors, Mogadishu, Somalia, July 2012.

29 "The Smiling Warlord Who Controls Ras Kamboni," *Daily Nation*, June 12, 2012.

30 "Somalia's Divided Islamists," *International Crisis Group*, May 18, 2010.

31 "Somalia Government Money Goes 'Missing,'" BBC, June 1, 2012; "Summary of Financial Diagnostic Assessment of 'Audit Investigative Financial Report 2009-10,'" World Bank, May 30, 2012.

32 "Advanced Copy - Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea pursuant to Security Council resolution 2002 (2011)," *United Nations Security Council*, June 2012.

33 Personal interview, minor warlord, Mogadishu, Somalia, July 1, 2012.

34 Personal interview, major warlord, Mogadishu, Somalia, July 4, 2012, who otherwise helps Americans.

35 Alex de Waal, "Dollarised," *London Review of Books* 32:12 (2010): pp. 38-41.

36 "Somalia's Divided Islamists"; personal interview, former Ethiopian official who was stationed in Mogadishu in conjunction with the Ethiopian intervention, April 14, 2013.

incorporating them into local power struggles between political rivals and family disputes.<sup>37</sup>

In collapsed states, a counterterrorism component that includes alliances of convenience to target dangerous individuals is about “as good as it gets.” As a former Ethiopian official noted, pragmatism may include supporting “the good al-Qa`ida against the bad al-Qa`ida.”<sup>38</sup> Drones are not especially welcome in Somalia, but their effects are registered much like other foreign action, evaluated in terms of impact on local politics and the risks they pose in supporting a concentration of power. In this and other ways, the United States is very influential in Somalia. Its influence is contingent on this capacity to affect short-term outcomes without becoming influential enough to cause commanders and politicians to collaborate to oppose U.S. power. This requires working within this system of politics that produces groups that ally one day and then oppose each other the next, and that will work with the United States and within the Somali government at the same time that they subvert the institutions of that state. This will disappoint committed state-builders who envision a government that provides for and protects all civilians with the help of a cohesive national army and police.

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<sup>37</sup> This information is based on the author’s personal observations in Bossasso and Garowe, as well as personal interviews, TFG officials, Mogadishu, Somalia, 2012; “Somalia: New Guns on the Block,” *Africa Confidential* 51:25 (2010); Mark Mazzetti, “Private Army Formed to Fight Somali Pirates Leaves Troubled Legacy,” *New York Times*, October 4, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Personal interview, former Ethiopian official, Garowe, Somalia, 2012.

## France: A New Hard Line on Kidnappings?

By Anne Giudicelli

SINCE 2003, MILITANTS in North Africa have regularly kidnapped Westerners, including French nationals. The militant group most responsible was the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which merged with al-Qa`ida in 2006 and was renamed al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in 2007.<sup>1</sup> In most of these cases, France appeared to negotiate with the hostage-takers.<sup>2</sup> Despite French denials, Paris has been accused of paying ransoms to free French hostages in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and North Africa. According to former U.S. Ambassador to Mali Vicki Huddleston, for example, France paid a ransom of \$17 million in 2010 in an attempt to free four French hostages kidnapped by AQIM.<sup>3</sup>

Yet toward the end of President Nicolas Sarkozy’s term in office, France’s policy on kidnappings began to harden. Under French President Francois Hollande, who assumed office in May 2012, France made clear that it would no longer negotiate with kidnappers, and force would be used to rescue hostages when possible.

This article examines the origins of this evolution. It then questions the political capacity of assuming a new hard line against kidnappers. It finds that France’s new aggressive policy against kidnapping incidents will be challenging to maintain, as the recent kidnapping of a French family in Cameroon demonstrates.

### The Germaneau Precedent

France’s policy on kidnappings abroad changed after AQIM kidnapped humanitarian aid worker Pierre Camatte in November 2009. In

February 2010, Sarkozy’s determined activism to secure his release led to a diplomatic crisis in the region. Sarkozy placed diplomatic pressure on Amadou Toumani Touré, the president of Mali,<sup>4</sup> to agree to the kidnappers’ demands, an act that both undermined Bamako and exposed France to severe criticism from its partners and allies in the region, especially from Algeria.<sup>5</sup> Algeria’s claim to regional counterterrorism leadership rests officially on the rejection of any kind of negotiation with kidnappers and on the fight against ransom payments.<sup>6</sup>

After this incident, France launched a military raid in July 2010 to try to free another hostage, Michel Germaneau, a 78-year-old humanitarian worker kidnapped by AQIM in northern Niger.<sup>7</sup> In a break with tradition,<sup>8</sup> the raid was authorized after negotiations

<sup>4</sup> In February 2010, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner fled twice to Bamako, along with the Elysee’s general secretary, Claude Guéant, on the second trip. French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited the Malian capital himself to bring Pierre Camatte back home on February 25.

<sup>5</sup> According to several testimonies, four Islamists were released from prison in Mali, as demanded by Camatte’s kidnappers. France also reportedly compensated the Malian government financially in gratitude for its assistance in resolving the Camatte case. Both Mauritania and Algeria criticized the Malian authorities for having consented to free four alleged terrorists—two Algerians, one Burkinabe and one Mauritanian. In protest of Bamako’s attitude, Nouakchott and Algiers recalled their ambassadors in Bamako. President Sarkozy denied any diplomatic crisis while President Touré emphasized in return the persistent lack of a common action plan among regional partners in the fight against terrorism.

<sup>6</sup> Algiers has obtained approval from the Security Council to add a clause to Resolution 1906 adopted in December 2009 criminalizing the payment of ransoms to terrorists groups.

<sup>7</sup> “Al-Qa`ida Kills French Hostage,” al-Jazeera, July 26, 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Before the Germaneau case, the only similar incident occurred in April 2008 when French troops launched a successful assault on Somali pirates, who had seized the French yacht *Le Ponan* and its 30 crewmembers in the Gulf of Aden, while they were attempting to flee in the desert. The ship’s owner had previously paid a 1.7 million euro ransom to free the crew, and the French operation occurred after the pirates freed the hostages. In the Germaneau case, however, the raid occurred while the hostage was still in the hands of the kidnappers, which differed from the April 2008 incident in Somalia. For details, see Angela Doland, “French Troops Attack Somali Pirates After 30 Hostages Freed,” *Washington Post*, April 12, 2008.

<sup>1</sup> In February 2003, the GSPC kidnapped 32 European tourists in the south of Algeria. Some were freed in May 2003 in Algeria, and the rest in August 2003 in Mali.

<sup>2</sup> Due to a lack of formal evidence confirming such practices, the only common European doctrine boiled down to never officially mentioning the existence of counterparties granted to the kidnappers, *a fortiori* when it comes to ransom.

<sup>3</sup> “France ‘Paid \$17 Million’ Ransom for Mali Hostages,” France24, February 8, 2013.

failed,<sup>9</sup> giving legitimacy to a joint Franco-Malian military operation around Kidal in northern Mali, where the hostage had been spotted. The kidnapers murdered Germaneau in response to the raid.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Sarkozy announced the action as a “major turning point” with the intent of breaking from French and European “traditions” in the way such incidents

**“In official discourse, France now refuses to concede that foreign policy choices impact the motives of militants or kidnapers.”**

were handled previously.<sup>11</sup> Sarkozy also said that from that point forward, “paying ransoms and freeing prisoners in exchange for innocent victims cannot be the (appropriate) strategy,”<sup>12</sup> thus turning this precedent into the guiding principle of French policy.

In January 2011, France again intervened militarily to try to free hostages. A joint French-Nigerien operation intercepted a convoy of militants—who had just recently abducted two Frenchmen in Niamey—

9 Critics denounced a policy of double standards regarding the state’s mobilization to negotiate with hostage-takers, arguing that the state only attempted to free hostages based on political interests or the personal profile of the specific hostage. According to these critics, Michel Germaneau was “less valuable” than Pierre Camatte, as the latter was an ex-Legion member and close to the French foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner.

10 “French Hostage ‘Executed’ After Raid on al-Qaeda Base,” France24, July 26, 2010.

11 In May 2006, the *Times of London* stated that France, Italy and Germany agreed to pay \$45 million in a deal to free nine of its hostages kidnapped in Iraq. France allegedly paid \$25 million between December 2004 and June 2005 for the release of three journalists. As for the Sahel zone, according to the assertions of Algerian authorities in September 2010, Madrid allegedly paid a total of \$10.3 million for the release of three Spanish hostages in March and August 2010, Italy \$4.7 million for the release of two hostages in the hands of AQIM in May of the same year, and Austria \$3.2 million for two hostages in April 2009.

12 Nicolas Sarkozy, “Opening Speech of the 18th Conference of French Ambassadors,” Elysée Palace, August 25, 2010.

before they could reach northern Mali.<sup>13</sup> Although both hostages died during the assault, the operation confirmed the “turning point” in France’s management of hostage crises. France’s goal was to rely on the local armed forces and intervene before the militants reached the relative safety of northern Mali, and thus avoid being drawn into negotiations. Alain Juppe, the French minister of defense at the time, justified France’s actions, stating that

doing nothing meant running a double risk: the risk of seeing our hostages taken by their abductors to one of their refuges in the Sahel—and we know how they treat them—and a more global risk in that doing nothing would send the signal that France is no longer fighting terrorism.<sup>14</sup>

France’s new hard line policy did not, however, occur abruptly. In September 2010, AQIM kidnapped seven expatriate workers abducted from the Arlit uranium mine in Niger. Five months later, three of the workers were released, allegedly after a ransom was paid.<sup>15</sup> Despite official denials, a number of testimonies have confirmed the initial allegations of negotiations by France, with the two companies as intermediaries, leading to the exchange of money.<sup>16</sup> Two French ministers of parliament expressed their concerns in a report on security in the Sahel published in March 2012.<sup>17</sup> They called for a “clarification” of the French policy on ransoms “so as to break the

13 The two Frenchmen were Antoine de Léocour and Vincent Delory, both 25-years-old. De Léocour was working for an NGO in Niger.

14 Alain Juppe, interview for the French TV channel TF1, January 9, 2011.

15 “France ‘Paid \$17 Million’ Ransom for Mali Hostages.”

16 According to Vicki Huddleston, the former U.S. ambassador to Mali, France paid \$17 million to free French hostages seized in Niger in 2010. In an interview aired on February 8, 2013, she said that “the ransoms, like other ransoms, were paid indirectly, ended in the hands of the Malian government and were turned over, at least part of it, to the Salafis.” Other sources had earlier mentioned an amount of \$13 million. See Angus MacKinnon, “France Funded Mali Foes with Ransom Payments: US Envoy,” Agence France-Presse, February 8, 2013.

17 “The Security Situation in the Countries of the Sahel Zone,” information report addressed March 2012 to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly by Francois Loncle (PS) and Henri Plagnol (UMP).

spiral that leads to ever-increasing amounts being paid to hostage takers.”<sup>18</sup> They considered that “the French position, or rather the lack thereof, blurs the message of resolve she wishes to send.”<sup>19</sup>

**Mali Crisis: The Point of No Return**

In early 2013, France took a major shift when it intervened in northern Mali to unseat AQIM-affiliated militants who had taken control of the region. As Laurent Fabius, the French foreign minister, explained, France could not allow northern Mali to become a “Sahelistan,” where militants could

**“An exception to this new policy on kidnappings would discredit France’s engagement in Mali, its commitment to fighting terrorism, and encourage more kidnap-for-ransom incidents in Africa.”**

kidnap Westerners, move them to the relative safe haven of northern Mali, and then make ransom or other demands.<sup>20</sup> France pushed the UN Security Council to pass a resolution authorizing the use of force in Mali, and Paris called for the restoration of the country’s territorial integrity and constitutional order.

As the first French troops were deployed to start Operation Serval in Mali, French special forces attempted to rescue a French intelligence operative held by al-Shabab in Somalia since 2009. Despite the raid’s failure, the rescue mission demonstrated France’s new hard line policy against all terrorist groups, including those in Somalia.<sup>21</sup>

18 Ibid.

19 Ibid.

20 Laurent Fabius started to use the word “Sahelistan” in July 2012 to describe the situation in Mali as the next terrorist sanctuary if no military action was conducted.

21 According to French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, the failed rescue mission in January 12, 2013, cost the life of the hostage, who was killed by his captors during the assault. A French soldier was killed and another went missing and may have been killed. An estimated 17

The attack on the In Amenas gas site by Mokhtar Belmokhtar's group<sup>22</sup> on January 16, 2013, five days after the launch of Operation Serval, gave the French government another opportunity to reaffirm its unfaltering resolve in such circumstances. As Hollande expressed his support for the somewhat controversial decision by the Algerian armed forces to intervene, he reiterated that "there could be no negotiation" with hostage-takers.<sup>23</sup>

Such statements are also meant for the kidnappers; counterpropaganda is part of France's new weaponry of war. "Protecting our nationals, fighting against terrorism, securing our hostages' release, there is no contradiction in all that," Hollande told the press in December 2012. "But I say to the [AQIM-affiliated] hostage takers [who are holding a number of French nationals]: it is time you released them!"<sup>24</sup>

In official discourse, France now refuses to concede that foreign policy choices impact the motives of militants or kidnappers. According to France, the latest abduction of French nationals in Cameroon was unrelated to the French intervention in Mali despite the kidnappers' claims.<sup>25</sup>

In two successive statements sent to the media at the end of March 2013, AQIM said it executed Daniel Verdon, a French hostage captured in northern Mali two years ago, in retaliation for France's intervention in Mali.<sup>26</sup> AQIM warned that its other French captives were at risk. The information has not yet been officially confirmed, but the

members of the Somali al-Shabab militant group were also killed. See Jamey Keaten and Abdi Guled, "French Commando Killed in Somalia Hostage Raid," Associated Press, January 12, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a former member of AQIM, broke from the group in December 2012 and created his own militant unit, Those Who Sign in Blood.

<sup>23</sup> "Hollande: Talks were Not an Option in Algeria Hostage Crisis," Reuters, January 19, 2013.

<sup>24</sup> "Otages : «la parole crédible» n'est pas celle des ravisseurs, dit Hollande," *Liberation*, December 27, 2012.

<sup>25</sup> "Rapt de 7 Français: Boko Haram responsable, pas de lien avec le Mali, selon Paris," *Mali Actualités*, April 29, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> "Qaeda Says French Hostage Executed in Mali," *Agence France-Presse*, March 20, 2013.

French government suggested that the hostage could have died as a result of disease—and not killed at the hands of AQIM—in perhaps another attempt to dissociate the military intervention from the hostages' fate, further establishing France's new hard line policy on kidnappings.<sup>27</sup>

### Conclusion

The majority of citizens and the political class support "Hollande's method," but this backing remains fragile. Nothing proves that it will survive the death of other hostages, new kidnappings or terrorist attacks targeting France's interests and nationals. To secure its success, France's new policy on kidnappings also includes pressure on hostages' families to keep both confidentiality and confidence in the state's efforts to free their relatives despite the temptation of publicizing their cases.<sup>28</sup> It is, however, not clear whether private companies will in all cases "play by the rules" and refrain from paying ransoms. Such an injunction might be perceived as state interference in their business activities and internal management.

For now, the real challenge for Hollande's presidency is to maintain its hard line policy on kidnappings despite obvious pressures. An exception to this new policy on kidnappings would discredit France's engagement in Mali, its commitment to fighting terrorism, and encourage more kidnap-for-ransom incidents in Africa.

The recent hostage release of an executive from the French power company GDF Suez and his family,

<sup>27</sup> The French government said that intercepted phone conversations between the kidnappers suggested that Verdon may have died of natural causes before his supposed execution. Verdon suffered from a number of health complications. See "L'otage Philippe Verdon se-rail mort de maladie," *Le Parisien*, April 6, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Such an approach has been used in the case of two recent kidnappings in Afghanistan (a freelance photographer in November 2012 and a humanitarian worker in January 2013) for whom French officials had made no previous public statement regarding their capture. According to the French daily newspaper *Le Monde*, both families were warned that the policy of paying ransoms was over and that they were not allowed to act on their own. The photographer said he escaped on April 8. As for the French humanitarian, who was freed the same day, conditions of his release remain unclear.

who had been abducted in northern Cameroon on February 19, 2013, already raises questions, as it appears that France may have made an exception to the doctrine. Hollande said in a press conference that secret talks had been taking place for the past few weeks to help secure their release, but that neither France nor GDF Suez paid a ransom to free them.<sup>29</sup>

Cameroonian media sources, however, revealed on April 25, 2013, that approximately 16 Boko Haram members were freed in exchange for the family's release, and a ransom of \$5-7 million was allegedly paid.<sup>30</sup> The origin of the payment is still unclear, but according to Cameroonian sources, it may include both Cameroonian President Paul Biya's funds as well as indirect funding from GDF Suez.<sup>31</sup> Should that information be confirmed, it may jeopardize the objectives of France's new hard line policy against kidnappings and may only encourage such acts in the future.

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<sup>29</sup> In a presidential communique released on April 19, Hollande thanked "the Cameroonian and Nigerian authorities, which worked to achieve this outcome, and particularly [Cameroonian] President Biya in close cooperation with France."

<sup>30</sup> "Libération des otages français: que s'est-il vraiment passé?" *Journal du Cameroun*, April 25, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

March 1, 2013 (SOMALIA): Suicide bombers detonated explosives at a beachfront restaurant in Mogadishu, killing one civilian. – *Reuters, March 1*

March 2, 2013 (MALI): The Chadian military claimed to have killed Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a former top operative in al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) who now leads a group of militants in the Sahel, in northern Mali. Belmokhtar claimed responsibility for the deadly hostage-taking incident at the In Amenas gas plant in Algeria in January. His death has not yet been confirmed. Another top AQIM operative, Abdelhamid Abu Zeid, was confirmed killed in northern Mali in late February 2013. – *Reuters, March 2*

March 2, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan threatened to bomb a mobile phone market in Peshawar, saying that the market is responsible for the “shameless” selling of video clips, ring tones and accessories. Taliban militants frequently claim that such businesses are “un-Islamic.” – *Dawn, March 2*

March 3, 2013 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber detonated explosives between major shrines in the Shi`a city of Karbala, causing a number of casualties. – *al-Arabiya, March 3*

March 3, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): Militants ambushed a supply convoy of Afghan National Army soldiers in Warduj district in northern Badakhshan Province, killing one soldier and kidnapping 22 others. Despite negotiation attempts, 16 of the soldiers were later executed, while six were freed. According to the *New York Times*, “If the death toll was accurate, it was one of the single deadliest attacks on government soldiers by the insurgents in recent memory.” – *New York Times, March 6*

March 4, 2013 (UNITED STATES): A U.S. court found Hafiz Khan, 77-years-old, guilty of two counts of conspiracy and two counts of providing material support to terrorists. Khan, the imam of a small mosque in Miami, provided thousands of dollars of support to the

Pakistani Taliban. Khan is a U.S. citizen who came to the United States in 1994. – *New York Times, March 4*

March 4, 2013 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in a vehicle killed five police officers in Mosul, Ninawa Province. – *BBC, March 4*

March 4, 2013 (YEMEN): A suicide bomber in a vehicle killed 12 members of a pro-government militia in Lawdar, Abyan Province. – *BBC, March 4*

March 5, 2013 (UNITED STATES): The Federal Bureau of Investigation arrested Reaz Qadir Khan, 48-years-old, on charges of aiding a suicide bomber who conducted an attack near the headquarters of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in Lahore in 2009. Khan, a naturalized U.S. citizen living in southeast Portland, allegedly provided money and advice to one of the suicide bombers involved in the Lahore attack. Khan was a wastewater employee with Portland’s environmental services bureau since 2007. He is originally from Pakistan. – *Los Angeles Times, March 5*

March 5, 2013 (IRAQ): Militants shot to death a leader of an anti-al-Qa`ida militia in western Baghdad. – *AP, March 5*

March 6, 2013 (SOMALIA): The UN Security Council voted to temporarily lift part of the 21-year-old arms embargo on Somalia, as part of an effort to allow the Somali government to purchase light weapons. – *New York Times, March 6*

March 7, 2013 (UNITED STATES): U.S. authorities announced that they had captured Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, Usama bin Ladin’s son-in-law and allegedly a core official in al-Qa`ida. Jordanian security officials reportedly handed Abu Ghaith over to U.S. custody, and he is expected to appear in federal court in New York on March 8. – *AP, March 7*

March 9, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked the gate to the Defense Ministry in Kabul, killing nine civilians. The incident occurred during a visit to Afghanistan by U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel. – *Reuters, March 9*

March 9, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a joint Afghan and foreign patrol in Khost Province, killing seven civilians and a policeman. – *Reuters, March 9*

March 9, 2013 (NIGERIA): Nigerian security forces said that they killed 52 Boko Haram group militants during 10 days of fighting in Borno State. – *Reuters, March 9*

March 11, 2013 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber killed three people at a police station in Dibis, northwest of Kirkuk. Many of the wounded were students at an adjacent Kurdish secondary school for girls. – *AFP, March 11*

March 11, 2013 (IRAQ/SYRIA): The Islamic State of Iraq, which is linked to al-Qa`ida, claimed responsibility for killing 48 Syrian soldiers and state employees who were in Iraq last week after fleeing across the border from a Syrian rebel advance. The convoy of Syrians was ambushed as it was escorted back home through Anbar Province. – *Reuters, March 11*

March 13, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated explosives amid crowds at a horseback game of buzkashi in northern Kunduz Province, killing at least eight people. Buzkashi is Afghanistan’s national sport. – *AFP, March 13*

March 14, 2013 (IRAQ): Militants executed a large and complex assault on the Iraqi Justice Ministry in downtown Baghdad. The attack began with at least two explosions—one from a car bomb and the other believed to be from a suicide bomber—near the Justice Ministry. An estimated six gunmen wearing police uniforms and suicide vests then entered the ministry, where they engaged in gunfire with security forces. After approximately one hour, security forces stormed the building and some of the militants detonated their explosive vests. An estimated 24 people were killed in addition to the militants. The al-Qa`ida-linked Islamic State of Iraq later claimed responsibility. – *AP, March 14; Deutsche Welle, March 17*

March 14, 2013 (NIGERIA): Suspected Boko Haram group militants attacked a prison in Borno town, reportedly freeing a number of prisoners. – *ThisDayLive, March 16*

March 16, 2013 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) appealed for new recruits to

fight against France's "crusader" war in Mali. "The front of the Islamic Maghreb today is in dire need of the support of the sons of Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania, to thwart the attack of Crusader France and defeat its agents in the region, and empower the Islamic project," the statement read. - *Reuters, March 17*

March 17, 2013 (IRAQ): A car bomb exploded near an outdoor market in Basra, killing at least nine people. - *Deutsche Welle, March 17*

March 18, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Gunmen and at least one suicide bomber attacked a court complex in Peshawar, killing at least three people. - *AP, March 18*

March 18, 2013 (SOMALIA): A suicide bomber in a car targeted a vehicle carrying Somali intelligence chief Khalif Ahmed Ilig and other officials in Mogadishu. Before the bomber could reach his target, however, a commuter minibus passed in front of the government vehicle just as the bomb exploded. Approximately 10 people died in the blast, although the intelligence chief survived with only minor injuries. - *Los Angeles Times, March 18*

March 18, 2013 (NIGERIA/CAMEROON): Nigeria's Boko Haram militant group released a new hostage tape, with audio of the French family it recently kidnapped from Cameroon. On the tape, the militants also threatened to execute more attacks in Cameroon if that country did not stop detaining the group's followers. - *RFI, March 18*

March 19, 2013 (IRAQ): A dozen car bombs and suicide blasts went off in Shi'a districts in Baghdad and south of the capital, killing more than 50 people. The incidents occurred on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq that removed Saddam Hussein from power. The Islamic State of Iraq claimed responsibility. - *Dawn, March 19*

March 19, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Hundreds of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants flooded into the last bastion of their rival group, Ansar-ul-Islam, in the Tirah Valley of Khyber Agency in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Ansar-ul-Islam's remaining fighters, including its leader, fled their headquarters and took refuge near the

border with Orakzai Agency. - *Dawn, March 19*

March 19, 2013 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) reportedly announced that they beheaded French hostage Philippe Verdon. According to the statement, AQIM killed Verdon on March 10 in revenge for France's intervention in northern Mali. - *AP, March 20; Los Angeles Times, March 21*

March 20, 2013 (UNITED STATES): U.S. prosecutors charged Ibrahim Suleiman Adnan Adam Harun (known as "Spin Ghul") with plotting to kill U.S. diplomats in Nigeria and conspiracy to murder U.S. military personnel in Afghanistan. Harun was captured in 2005 and extradited to New York City last year. He was born in Saudi Arabia. According to Fox News and the Associated Press, "Authorities said they believe Harun killed American soldiers during his time on the battlefield [in Afghanistan], where he was known as the 'White Rose.' They also said the bomb conspiracy had targeted the U.S. Embassy in Abuja and a consulate in another Nigerian city, but they provided no further details about the failed plot." - *Fox News, March 20*

March 20, 2013 (MALI): A suicide bomber detonated explosives at a checkpoint in Timbuktu, killing one Malian soldier. It marked the first suicide bombing in Timbuktu since the French-led offensive in January 2013. - *Voice of America, March 21*

March 21, 2013 (GLOBAL): The U.S. State Department offered \$5 million rewards for information about two U.S. citizens who have fought with the militant group al-Shabab in Somalia. The two Americans have been identified as Omar Hammami (also known as Abu Mansur al-Amriki) and Jihad Mostafa, a former California resident. - *Voice of America, March 21*

March 21, 2013 (SYRIA): A suicide bomber detonated explosives inside a mosque in Damascus, killing at least 42 people. The blast reportedly killed top Sunni Muslim preacher Shaykh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti, who was a long-time supporter of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. - *Fox News, March 21*

March 23, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) threatened to assassinate former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf if he returns to the country as planned. The TTP said that they would send a death squad to kill Musharraf, who is supposed to arrive in Pakistan on March 24. - *CNN, March 25*

March 23, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber drove an explosives-laden water tanker into a checkpoint in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, killing 17 soldiers. - *The News International, March 24; Geo TV, March 24*

March 23, 2013 (PHILIPPINES): The Abu Sayyaf Group released Warren Rodwell, an Australian man held captive by the group for 15 months. - *BBC, March 22*

March 23, 2013 (SOMALIA): A female human rights worker was shot to death in Mogadishu. Two men with pistols killed the worker, who was identified only as "Zaynab." - *Garowe Online, March 23*

March 24, 2013 (NORTH AFRICA): Al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) named Djamel Okacha as the successor to Abdelhamid Abu Zeid, who was killed in late February. Okacha, an Algerian, is reportedly close to AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel. Media reports said that Okacha is 34-years-old. - *Reuters, March 24*

March 24, 2013 (SOMALIA): Gunmen shot to death Rahmo Abdukadir, a female journalist, in Mogadishu. - *Capital FM, March 25*

March 25, 2013 (DENMARK): A Danish court found two Danish brothers guilty of planning a terrorist attack with Somalia's al-Shabab militants. The two brothers, of Somali origin, were sentenced to three and a half years in prison. - *AFP, March 25*

March 25, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): Insurgents detonated a minivan filled with explosives outside a patrol base in Helmand Province, and then opened fire with small-arms. One British soldier was killed. - *Telegraph, March 26*



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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

March 26, 2013 (TUNISIA): U.S. General Carter Ham, the head of Africa Command, warned that “al-Qa`ida intends to establish a presence in Tunisia.” – *AP, March 27*

March 26, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): An estimated eight suicide bombers attacked a police headquarters in Nangarhar Province, killing five officers. – *Tolo News, March 26*

March 27, 2013 (UNITED STATES): U.S. authorities arrested Eric Harroun, a former U.S. Army soldier, at Dulles International Airport outside Washington, D.C. On March 28, the United States charged Harroun with “conspiring to use a destructive device outside the United States.” Harroun, 30-years-old, is accused of entering Syria in January 2013 and fighting with the al-Nusra Front, a designated terrorist organization fighting to overthrow the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The al-Nusra front is considered a Salafijihadi rebel group, with links to al-Qa`ida in Iraq. Harroun, a Phoenix native, served in the U.S. Army from 2000 until 2003. – *New York Times, March 29*

March 28, 2013 (GLOBAL): Al-Andalus, the media arm for al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), launched an official Twitter account. The account name is @Andalus\_Media. – *AFP, March 28*

March 28, 2013 (THAILAND): The Thai government and representatives for the insurgents in southern Thailand met to discuss peace terms. Paradorn Pattanatabut, the chief of Thailand's National Security Council, said that the Thai government will give the representatives one month to demonstrate that they can control the insurgents in the southern provinces. The representatives reportedly requested amnesty for insurgents, “including the lifting of arrest warrants against suspected insurgents, the release of prisoners convicted in southern violence cases, pending cases against suspected insurgents being dropped, and a rebel suspects blacklist being lifted,” according to one press report. The next round of talks is scheduled for April 29, 2013. – *UPI, March 29*

March 28, 2013 (THAILAND): Militants detonated a roadside bomb and then shot at Thai troops in Narathiwat Province, killing three soldiers. – *AP, March 28*

March 29, 2013 (IRAQ): Car bombs exploded outside five Shi`a mosques in Baghdad and Kirkuk, killing 19 worshippers. – *Reuters, March 29*

March 29, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber tried to assassinate a senior Pakistani police commander near the U.S. Consulate in Peshawar. The commander, Abdul Majeed Marwat, was only slightly injured in the attack, but 12 people, including two women, were killed. – *AFP, March 29*

March 30, 2013 (MALI): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives after failing to force his way through the barricade at the western entrance to Timbuktu, wounding one Malian soldier. As part of the attack, other militants managed to enter the city, yet Malian soldiers—backed by French troops—killed two of them. – *BBC, March 31; AFP, March 31*

March 30, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a police patrol in Katalang, 30 miles northeast of Peshawar. One policeman was killed. – *AFP, March 30*

March 31, 2013 (NIGERIA): Nigerian troops reportedly killed 14 alleged members of Boko Haram in Kano. One soldier died in the raid. The military said that the militants were planning an Easter Sunday attack in the city. – *BBC, March 31*