



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

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Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline

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ALGERIA TURNS TO SUFISM TO FIGHT SALAFI EXTREMISM

After decades of discouraging the practice of Sufi Islam, Algerian authorities are now turning to Sufism as an ideological weapon in their struggle against Salafi-style Islamist militancy. Roughly 1.5 million of Algeria's 34 million citizens are active adherents of Sufism.

This turnaround in the official approach to Islam in Algeria was highly visible in a week-long Alawi Sufi festival held in Mostaganem in July (Mostaganem is 250 km west of Algiers, well distant from the strongholds of the Salafist militants in eastern Algeria). Organizers said the event was dedicated to "encouraging people to return to traditional Islam, the Islam of tolerance and open-mindedness" (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, July 28). One speaker noted that there are more than 170 verses in the Quran that describe the strategic value of tolerance and reconciliation for Muslims. Some 5,000 Alawi adherents from Europe, North Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Middle East assembled at the gathering, which enjoyed the personal sponsorship of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.

Shaykh al-Alawi (1869-1934), a native of Mostaganem, established his own order in 1914 as a branch of the Shadhiliyya tariqa (spiritual path). The Shaykh addressed the problem of reconciling modernity and Islam and was well known for his tolerant approach to Christianity. The Alawiyya order spread to France, the Levant and other parts of North Africa. The current leader of the Alawis is Shaykh Adlan Khalid Ben Tounis, a writer and lecturer on Islamic topics.

The Alawis are one of a number of Sufi orders in Algeria, all of which suffered official disapproval after independence as the government advocated a type of reform Islam closer to Salafism. The radicalization of Algerian Islam in the 1980s led to physical attacks on Sufi shrines and their guardians.

The official view of Sufism has undergone a radical change, however. The government has created a radio and television station to propagate Sufism in Algeria and Sufi leaders are also encouraged to play a greater role in social affairs. The once powerful Tijaniyya order was rehabilitated after the post-independence government tried to eliminate it for its “pro-colonial” position during French rule.

The schism between Salafists and Sufis is longstanding and is based on Salafist objections to pilgrimage to the tombs of saints and requests for their intercession with God. Salafis call such practices “innovation,” “polytheism” and “worship of the dead.” Sufis and Salafists are engaged in active fighting in Somalia following a number of incidents in which the Salafist al-Shabaab movement destroyed important Sufi shrines and tombs (see *Terrorism Monitor*, February 6; March 19)

INDIA CLAIMS FAKE CURRENCY FLOW FROM PAKISTAN IS “ECONOMIC TERRORISM”

In an official acknowledgement of a growing problem, the Indian government told both houses of parliament that a network involving Pakistani intelligence, Kashmiri terrorist groups and Indian organized crime boss Dawood Ibrahim was flooding India with counterfeit banknotes. The purpose is alleged to be twofold: to destabilize India’s economy and provide financing for anti-Indian terrorist groups. The problem of counterfeiting has become so pervasive in India it has even developed its own jargon: Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN).

Police seizures of counterfeit currency increased after last November’s terrorist attack in Mumbai. The states of Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra appear to have been the most affected (Associated Press of Pakistan, August 4).

The problem with the counterfeit cash is that it is almost indistinguishable from legitimate Indian currency. There have been several cases of trained agents unable to separate real from fake banknotes after major seizures

of counterfeit currency. It is not surprising, therefore, that the fake currency is being redistributed by banks via ATMs (*India Daily*, July 30). It appears that low-denomination fakes are actually more common than higher-denomination fakes, so that merchants and banks spend their time examining high denomination notes while the others receive far less scrutiny as they pass into circulation.

Measures to reduce the circulation of fake banknotes include increased vigilance by customs officials and the Border Security Force, increasing the security features on the most commonly forged notes, switching to polymer banknotes (as in Australia) and snap inspections of ATMs by security teams from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Security features on Indian banknotes were last improved in 2005.

A high-level committee has been formed to create a strategy to deal with the problem. In the meantime the investigation has been turned over to the newly formed National Investigation Agency (*Economic Times*, August 5). The government has also promised to bring up the problem with international institutions such as Interpol. Some observers have pointed out that counterfeiting U.S. dollars or Euros would be understandable, but manufacturing fake Indian rupees can only be done with a specific purpose in mind – the destabilization of the Indian economy (*Daily News and Analysis India*, August 11).

There are only a handful of companies worldwide involved in the tightly-controlled manufacture and distribution of currency-quality papers and inks. Indian intelligence agencies claim their investigations show Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) prevailed upon the government in Islamabad to order printing paper and inks in excess of its needs from suppliers in the UK, Sweden and Switzerland (*Times of India*, August 4). According to an Indian government official, “After using the country’s normal requirement for printing its own currency, Pakistan diverts the rest to its ISI with the intention of destabilizing the Indian economy by pumping in as many FICNs as possible into India and also to fund terrorist organizations. It has been involved in printing and circulation of the fake currency notes with the help of the organized crime network of Dawood Ibrahim and others” (*Times of India*, August 4). Police say interrogations in an earlier case revealed the existence of a clandestine printing plant run by the ISI in Quetta, Pakistan (*Times of India*, August 1). The intelligence agencies say the counterfeit currency is

transported by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to Nepal, Bangladesh, Thailand, Sri Lanka and the UAE to be smuggled into India. Printing inks have also gone missing in transit within India (Daily News and Analysis India, August 11).

The distribution network inside India appears to be highly sophisticated—so far it has resisted all attempts to trace the network back from the many street-level distributors who have been apprehended. According to a police investigator in Maharashtra: “The carriers are briefed on a need-to-know basis and are not aware of the entire network” (*India Daily*, July 30).

Jihadis Search for Security Presence on Jihadi Website Forums

By Abdul Hameed Bakier

Periodically jihadi internet gatherings raise concerns about scrutiny of their forums by security services. Investigations into the identity of forum members and their promotion and initiation of sensitive jihadi issues trigger these concerns. A recent posting entitled “The top seven Arab countries that intrude on or penetrate the Forums” accused some Western security services of monitoring jihadi forums and suggested ways to identify security agents who may be active in the forums (muslm.net, July 29-August 3).

A forum participant, nicknamed al-Taer al-Maymoon, warns that the secret services of seven Arab countries have a permanent presence in jihadi forums in general and in muslm.net in particular. Some of these intelligence agents are prominent members of the forums and specialists in Shari’a. The countries intruding on jihadi forums, alleges al-Maymoon, are Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and the Palestinian National Authority – where the latter is accused of selling the information obtained from the forums to the Zionists. Further, al-Maymoon said various Arab nations monitor jihadi forums either to collect intelligence for preventive purposes or to exchange intelligence with Western countries “waging war on Islam.” Forum members categorize the non-Arab nations that monitor jihadi forums as follows:

- The Zionist State (i.e. Israel): Deemed the biggest tracker of jihadi forums; forum members believe the Israeli Intelligence service—Mossad Mossad—has many Arab-speaking agents in the forums.

- The United States: Almost all U.S. intelligence agencies, the Pentagon and the National Security Agency monitor the forums with a large number of Arabic-speaking agents.

- Great Britain: An old empire that has mastered intelligence operations and uses the information to extort the United States.

- China: Preparing an infrastructure to understand the Islamic mindset. This is needed for its future plans in the Islamic world.

- Germany: Its activities are preventive measures against jihadis. Germany is willing to offer a safe haven for jihadis in return for a truce, according to the jihadis.

- Japan: Attempting to collect information vital for economic gains.

- France and Russia: Need intelligence on jihadis for strategic planning.

The discussion became heated between al-Maymoon and a member nicknamed Ibn Khaldoun al-Jaza’iri, who al-Maymoon charges is an Algerian intelligence agent collecting information on al-Qaeda recruitment and propaganda activities in muslm.net. When asked for the basis of his accusation, al-Maymoon said that any intelligence agent’s postings would include the following signs:

- An intelligence agent exaggerates his praise of al-Qaeda, rejects all other jihadi factions and curses, for no obvious reason, the heads of Islamic countries. The purpose is to identify the pro-al-Qaeda forum members who respond to the provocations. The intelligence agencies arrested many jihadis through this method by identifying their IP and email addresses.

- Intelligence agents in the forums praise al-Qaeda shaykhs as sacred individuals. Al-Maymoon alleges he has had personal experience with deep cover agents who frequent mosques and wear beards and traditional Islamic dress.

- Agents often pose diverse questions on jihadi topics in the forums.

Finally, al-Maymoon says infidels are all the same regardless of their objectives in tracking jihadis. He warns jihadi forum members not to respond to anyone unless he is well-known by other accredited members.

In the same context, a forum member nicknamed Qotoz explained the three basic elements of managing any forum, such as a host server, forum owner and forum participant, before discussing the security aspects of jihadi forums. He urges the members to read carefully between the lines of his posting (hanein.info, July 7).

According to Qotoz, there are two techniques used by security agencies to hunt down jihadis. First is the technical method. This includes stealing an email address and monitoring all incoming and outgoing emails; planting Trojans in the target's computer; using the target's nickname in the forums by posting subjects under his name and hacking into the target's computer.

The second technique for hunting jihadis on the internet is comprised of "human methods":

- Posting subjects designed to attract the targeted jihadi. Consequently, relations will be established with the subject before luring him into a face to face meeting.
- Expressing opinions diametrically opposed to those found acceptable by Salafi-Jihadis, thus drawing them out as they rebuke or criticize the posting.
- Security agents, having established a connection with the target, will enhance the relationship in the forums by supporting the target's postings and by sending him private emails.
- Through such relationships, the agents will obtain the names of other jihadis from the target.
- Building trust with the target by pretending to help the cause.

All these methods and more, says Qotoz, are part of a bigger security plan to hunt down jihadi forum members and create dissension among supporters of jihad. Jihadis must be aware of intelligence officers in the forums tasked with distorting the jihadi image. The electronic plan of the intelligence services includes setting up dummy cells in the jihadi forums to disseminate misleading jihadi statements. Qotoz ends his posting by alleging that

there is other information he can't discuss in the forum, an insinuation of the presence of security agents in the forum.

Jihadi forum chatters continuously discuss and educate each other on the basics of internet technology, such as the ability of security agencies to reveal many details of forum members by tracing their IP addresses. Security agencies also use programs to scan the internet for the use of certain terminology, phone numbers and email addresses. The agencies use professionals to hack into jihadi forums and obtain their organizational structures, through which they can extract information on any member of the forum. The internet traffic goes through security filtration and if there is any match with the dictionary of suspicious words, a copy of the email is saved for further scrutiny. Airport screening methods and details of the security cooperation and exchange of intelligence between Western countries are also exchanged between forum members offering ways to evade these measures.

Although the internet knowledge discussed by forum members is factual and commonly available, other intelligence methods mentioned by jihadi forum participants are not fully accurate. The assertions that intelligence services use various methods to brainwash forum participants is a paranoid exaggeration revealing an ignorance of basic counterterrorism techniques practiced by intelligence services.

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Counterterrorism Operations Continue in Tajikistan

By Andrew McGregor

Having recently abandoned the pretense that they were running anti-narcotics sweeps rather than counterterrorist operations in eastern Tajikistan, the Interior Ministry and the State Committee for National Security (GKNB) announced on July 8 that counterterrorist operations in Tavil-Dara district were completed (Interfax, August 5; see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 12 for the origin of the operations). Most operations have focused on the Rasht Valley Region, particularly the Tavil-Dara District. Tavil-Dara is part of the Region

of Republican Subordination (RRS- formerly Karategin Province), one of the four administrative divisions of Tajikistan. Interior Ministry and GKNB troops returned to their bases in Dushanbe after “totally destroying” Shaykh Nemat’s group of Islamist militants. Thirty members were arrested and 11 killed, including Shaykh Nemat and Lieutenant General Mirzo Ziyoev. The detainees included six Russian citizens. According to Tajik Interior Minister Abdurahim Qahhorov, military operations in Tavail-Dara have restored stability to the district (RFE/RL, July 23). Tavail-Dara was an Islamist stronghold during the 1992-1997 civil war in Tajikistan.

On July 8, a group of vehicles tried to force their way through a Tavail-Dara checkpoint but were repulsed by security forces in a prolonged exchange of gunfire (Asia-Plus, July 9). A group of “foreign militants” attacked a National Guard post at Havz-i Kabud in Tavail-Dara on July 16, but were driven back with losses. The Tajik Interior Ministry and the GKNB issued a joint statement on July 18 identifying the five Russian militants killed at Havz-i Kabud. They included two Dagestanis, an ethnic Tatar, an ethnic Kazakh from St. Petersburg and a native of the Siberian region of Tyumen. The militants were reported to have been armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles and grenades (Asia-Plus [Dushanbe], July 17; July 20).

Dushanbe blames much of the increased violence on a resurgence of activity by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Three men arrested at a checkpoint in eastern Tajikistan on July 22 were reported by police to have been members of the IMU who fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Firearms, grenades, communications equipment and homemade bombs were seized in the investigation (AFP, July 23). Six Tajiks were sentenced on July 31 to eight years in prison for their membership in the IMU. The suspects were reported to have received training at a school in Afghanistan belonging to the IMU (Khovar [Dushanbe], August 3; Interfax, July 31; August 3). Another alleged IMU operative was arrested in Khujand on August 4 in connection with the murder of two police officers in 2005 (Asia-Plus, August 4). Two IMU militants were reportedly shot by security forces in separate incidents on August 9 (RFE/RL, August 10; Reuters, August 10).

A police car was destroyed by a bomb in Dushanbe on July 30 during a summit meeting of the leaders of Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia (Reuters, July 31). Two other bombs exploded several days earlier

when the summit began. The bombings followed the arrest of three local men in early July on charges that they planned to commit terrorist acts in Dushanbe. All three suspects were reported to be members of the IMU and veterans of the fighting in Afghanistan (*Sobytiya* [Dushanbe], July 30; *Dawn* [Karachi], July 27). The Tajik press suggested that the bombings were connected to threats made by the Taliban regarding Tajikistan’s cooperation in establishing new supply routes to NATO forces in Afghanistan (*Varorud* [Khujand], July 29).

Recent operations have focused on a number of different individuals and groups:

- Mirzo Ziyoev was the military commander of the Tajik Islamists during the civil war. Until recently he and his men were based in the Rasht Valley. In the reconciliation that followed the civil war, Ziyoev was made a Lieutenant General and Minister of Emergencies, a post that came with its own paramilitary. He was dismissed from the cabinet in 2006.

According to the Interior Ministry, Lieutenant General Ziyoev joined an IMU unit led by Shaykh Nemat Azizov in June and was planning a series of attacks against state targets. An audiotape released by IMU leader Tahir Yuldash denied that Mirzo Ziyoev had ever been a member of the movement, suggesting instead that he had “fallen victim to intrigues of the government” (RFE/RL Uzbek Service, July 16; Ferghana.ru, July 16).

He was captured by state security forces on July 11 in connection with the attack on a National Guard post. According to the Interior Ministry, Ziyoev was killed later that day when he led a security unit to convince an armed militant group to surrender. He was reported to have been killed in the resulting crossfire (*Millat* [Dushanbe], July 23; al-Jazeera, July 16; IWPR, July 23). Security officials reported that five Chechens were among the captured members of the militant gang (Reuters, July 17). The five are alleged to have arrived in Tajikistan to transfer “a huge amount of money accumulated from the drug trade in order to fund terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and Pakistan” (Asia-Plus, July 28).

- Colonel Mahmud Khudoyberdiyev came to prominence in 1997, when he led an unsuccessful mutiny as commander of a Defense Ministry brigade. He escaped the rebellion's suppression only to return in 1998, briefly capturing the northern city of Khujand before fleeing for Uzbekistan. Tashkent has denied numerous requests for his extradition. Since the beginning of the year, Tajik security services have arrested seven former members of Khudoyberdiyev's group on charges of murder, kidnapping and terrorism, most dating back to the 1990s (Asia-Plus, August 5).

- Militant leader Shaykh Nemat Azizov was killed by members of the Tajik Interior Ministry's Special Forces in late July when he and a group of fighters were tracked down in a remote mountainous area in Tavail-Dara (RFE/RL Tajik Service, July 29). Formerly a well-known guerrilla leader in the Tajik civil war, Azizov was made leader of the Tavail-Dara division of the Emergency Situations Ministry as part of the post-war reconciliation before he allegedly returned to armed opposition to the Tajik state. A Daghestani man alleged to be part of Shaykh Nemat's group was displayed on Tajik television in late July. Magomed Rukhullaevich Sabiullaev (also given as Satsiyullayev) claimed he flew from St. Petersburg to Dushanbe before participating in attacks on security forces in Nurabad and Tavail-Dara under Shaykh Nemat's command (RFE/RL, July 28). The Daghestani's confession stated that he and two other Daghestanis met veteran Islamist commander Mullo Abdullo in Tavail-Dara. Mullo Abdullo blessed their jihad before Shaykh Nemat armed them (Asia-Plus, July 28).

Shaykh Nemat was killed on July 29 when security forces tracked his group to a remote mountain village. Azizov refused to surrender and was killed in a firefight. The Interior Ministry claimed Shaykh Nemat had entered Tajikistan to sell narcotics from Afghanistan in order to fund militant operations in Pakistan and Afghanistan (AFP, July 29). Security services also claimed Shaykh Nemat was a commander in the IMU (Interfax, August 5; Asia Plus, July 29).

- Forty-six members of the Tablighi Jamaat, an international Islamic revival group, were arrested in the Khatlon region in mid-July (*Tojikston* [Dushanbe], July 16). The Tablighis insist they are strictly apolitical, though there are suspicions that Islamist militants elsewhere may have used the cover of the Tablighi movement to facilitate an international movement (see *Terrorism Focus*, February 13, 2008). The Tablighi Jamaat was banned in March 2006 in the belief that the movement aims to subvert constitutional order in Tajikistan and establish an Islamic Caliphate (Central Asia Online, July 21). The 46 Jamaat members will be tried for incitement to extremism and the creation of an extremist community. In a separate case, five Jamaat members of Tajik and Russian origin were sentenced to terms of three to six years each for calling for "forcible change" to the country's constitution (Interfax, August 11).

It is still difficult to say with any accuracy exactly what groups Tajikistan's security forces have been battling in the mountains since May. While a mixture of native Tajiks and foreign militants appear ready to take up arms against the state, it remains to be seen if there is a taste in the Tajikistan public for a resumption of the disastrous and brutal civil war of the 1990s. Some of the violence appears to be generated by militants escaping the Pakistani military offensive on Pakistan's northwest frontier. But other incidents appear to be based in the personal grievances of Islamists who accepted lofty government posts as part of the national reconciliation after the civil war, and who are now being dropped from government. Many of the arrests for crimes committed in the 1990s indicate that the Islamists have lost the "immunity" they once enjoyed as part of the government's desire to restore stability to Tajikistan. As an Interior Ministry spokesman told a correspondent, "The overwhelming majority of people who remember the bitter lessons of the recent civil war well did not respond to [the militants'] provocative calls" (Itar-Tass, August 9).

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PKK Forces Await Orders from Imprisoned Leader Abdullah Ocalan

By Wladimir van Wilgenburg

Reports indicate that Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers Party (Parti Karkerani Kurdistan - PKK), will release a “roadmap” for resolving Turkey’s decades-old Kurdish insurgency on August 15 (see *Terrorism Monitor*, August 6). Branches of the PKK continue to operate in northern Iraq’s Kurdistan region both on the political and the military levels, despite Turkish military and diplomatic pressure. It seems that the political branch of the PKK is heavily restrained inside Iraq’s Kurdistan region, but military operations against the PKK are unlikely to resume in the near future.

The PKK Waits for Ocalan’s Roadmap

The Kurdistan Democratic Confederation (Koma Civaken Kurdistan - KCK), the umbrella organization bringing together Kurdish militant groups and political branches in Iran (Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistan - PJAK), Iraq (Partiya Careseri u Demokrasiya Kurdistan - PCDK), Syria (Partiya Yekiti ya Demokratîk - PYD), and Turkey (PKK), is waiting for new orders from Abdullah Ocalan. The KCK’s Executive Council operates in the Haftanin, Metina, Zap, Gara, Avasin, Hakurk, and Qandil camps. The PKK also maintains a strong presence in the Mahkmur camp, which is controlled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR).

According to PKK member Roj Welat, the PKK’s series of unilateral ceasefires is not a new strategy born out of weakness. [1] During this period the guerrillas have refrained from carrying out offensive operations. Welat says it is a strategy to solve the Kurdish issue peacefully, although the Turkish state believes the PKK’s five unilateral ceasefires are a sign of weakness.

KCK vice-president and PKK general Bozan Tekin says they will support the roadmap to the end; “In fact we don’t know what this roadmap is, but Ocalan said he is working on preparing it.” Tekin says it might look like the Basque or Scottish democratic model. [2]

Tekin said the PKK wants its own protection force, the release of the PKK leader and freedom of politics and identity. The PKK is ready to form a Kurdish PKK unit within the Turkish military if a solution is reached. But if Turkey doesn’t accept Ocalan’s roadmap, “we are ready to defend our country till our last drop of blood.” Although Ocalan says he will remain silent if the state doesn’t listen to his “last roadmap for peace,” PKK members emphasize that Ocalan will remain the leader of the PKK and that it’s not a dead-end for the PKK-leader if his proposals are not accepted.

The PCDK Has More Problems with Iraq than the Kurdistan Regional Government

Besides the KCK leadership and military forces that operate in the near-inaccessible mountains, there is also a political branch of the PKK that operates in Iraq and the Kurdistan region. This organization is called the Kurdistan Democratic Solution Party (PCDK), which tried to participate in the Kurdistan regional elections of July 25 with its political slate “Hiwa” (Hope). The logo of the list was a combination of the flag of the PKK and the logo of the legal Kurdish opposition party in Turkey, the DTP (Demokratik Toplum Partisi - Democratic Society Party).

The PCDK was banned by Iraq’s Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) in June and is considered an illegal party in the Kurdistan Region. Najiba Omar, the female president of the Hiwa list, said they were informed by the IHEC that the list could not operate because the PCDK is not considered a legal party. [3] The Hiwa list believes that the KRG pressured IHEC to ban them.

The PCDK’s offices were also closed down in the provinces of Erbil and Sulaimaniya. According to Najiba Omar, “We cannot have offices in regions controlled by the KRG. We don’t have a problem with the Iraqi government, but with the Kurdish government.” While the PCDK is seeking support among Kurds, it cannot operate in KRG-administered regions; therefore the main headquarters of the PCDK is in Kirkuk.

The PCDK has other offices in Baghdad and Mosul while members operate from their own homes in the Kurdistan region. The PCDK also has party meetings and offices in villages near the border regions controlled by the PKK. Members of the party are not usually arrested, but after protests against the Hiwa list ban in June, some members were arrested for a short time.

The main aim of the PCDK is to change Kurdish society according to the principles of Abdullah Ocalan. The PCDK is suspicious of northern Iraq's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which have dominated the region since 1991. The PCDK is also wary of the new Kurdish "Change list," a reform party that separated from the PUK and received a number of seats in the new parliament. The Change list will also participate in the Iraqi elections and Kurdistan local elections and could become stronger within the Kurdistan region. However, the PCDK suspects them of being supported by outside forces and thinks they won't change the policies of the KRG.

The Kurdistan Regional Government's PKK Policy

Minister Falah Mustafa Bakir, Head of the KRG's Department of Foreign Relations, says that the KRG will make sure that their territories are not used as a launching pad by the PKK. "For us it's important to have good relations with our neighbours. We don't want our people to pay the price, we want a peaceful solution." [4]

The KRG says it has taken the following measures:

- Cordoning off the mountain areas on the border with Turkey to cut PKK supply routes.
- Stopping foreign and Kurdish journalists from visiting PKK camps near the border regions.
- Closing down offices of the PKK's political fronts in Erbil and Sulaymaniya.
- Monitoring airports to ensure that no PKK personnel enter or leave the region.
- Preventing PKK demonstrations in KRG territory and curtailing their activities.
- Banning PKK-affiliated political parties.
- Sharing intelligence with Turkey and the United States.

In February a tripartite U.S.-Turkish-KRG intelligence center was established in Erbil, Kurdistan's political capital, to coordinate efforts and share intelligence in the fight against the PKK (*Taraf*, July 24). The KRG Foreign Minister says this does not mean that the KRG

supports military action against the PKK but that the center only collects information on the PKK.

The Kurdistan government also supports the PKK's ceasefire; Bakir says the government hopes the ceasefire "will help the peace process and [ensure] stability and we hope this will be maintained." The KRG is against solving the PKK issue with military actions. "We don't believe there is a military solution towards the PKK issue; there is no more need for violence or weapons."

The PKK confirms that it is unlikely that the KRG will send forces to attack the PKK. "There is a red line among Kurds, that there won't be another brother war [civil war] again. We don't think this will happen. Kurds have learned from the past," says KCK member Bozan Tekin. Tekin also denies claims that the PKK gets support from the KRG. "These are lies by Turkey to put pressure on the KRG."

Independent Kurdish journalist Kamal Chomani says that the Kurdish government fears the PKK as a strong alternative and therefore tries to stop them from operating. [5] However, despite KRG measures, foreign and Kurdish journalists can still visit the PKK through "secret" roads and bypass KRG checkpoints.

The PKK also still manages to organize its own logistics, media campaigns, and support from surrounding villages, because the mountains are impossible to control without a massive deployment of Iraqi or Kurdish military forces. The PKK has checkpoints with PKK flags near the Qandil mountains.

Kamal Chomani says that even during the time of Saddam a complete mountain cordon was impossible. Chomani emphasizes that the triangular area with four borders was never controlled by any force. "This is a haven for rebel forces."

Members of Peshmerga forces that fought against the PKK in the past confirmed that it would be very difficult to remove PKK forces from the mountains without many casualties. For the moment, the KRG seems more interested in controlling the regions it disputes with Baghdad than in the PKK camps in the border regions with Turkey and Iran.

The Central Government's PKK Policy

Baghdad's policy does not differ much from that of the KRG. Iraqi government spokesman Ali al-Dabbagh

told a Kurdish newspaper that Iraq is not in favor of military operations against the PKK, nor does it want to close down the Makhmur refugee camp (*Rudaw*, August 6). “Iraq is against the PKK using its territory, but we don’t support Turkey in performing military operations against this party. We help the KRG to limit and decrease their presence inside Iraq and end their problem with Turkey.”

Although no PKK military forces are located in the territory controlled by the Iraqi central government, the political branch of the movement, the PCDK, has more freedom there than in the region controlled by the KRG. The PCDK headquarters was moved from Erbil to Kirkuk after the closure of PCDK offices in northern Iraq. PCDK official Najiba Omar says this is because, legally speaking, the Iraqi government cannot ban PCDK offices or activities in Iraq.

Assessing the PKK’s Future

The PKK indicates that they will renew their insurgency if the Turkish government does not listen to Abdullah Ocalan. The PKK wants the government to accept a Kurdish identity and release the PKK leader, which is unlikely.

The KRG has successfully curtailed PKK political activities in the Kurdistan region, but cannot eliminate the PKK’s border camps without starting military operations against the PKK, which does not serve their own interests. The KRG maintains the belief that the PKK is not a KRG problem, but an internal Turkish problem. It is unlikely, therefore, that the KRG will attack the PKK.

The Iraqi government might close down PCDK offices in its territory if pressured by the United States and Turkey, which would effectively leave the PCDK dysfunctional and cripple their level of support. The Kurdish and Iraqi governments will continue to share intelligence with Turkey, but will not support military operations against the PKK. The Iraqi army is not trained for counterinsurgency campaigns in the mountains nor does it have a sufficient amount of troops near PKK camps.

Therefore it is unlikely that the PKK will leave Qandil in the near future and will keep pressuring Turkey with attacks to solve the Kurdish issue. The PKK’s military forces and commanders will only leave the mountains if the PKK and Turkey reach a solution. Even the launch of Turkish military operations against the PKK inside

Iraqi territory is unlikely to dislodge the PKK and will only result in more media attention for the PKK.

Wladimir van Wilgenburg studies Journalism and New Media at Leiden University and Political History and International Relations at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands and is currently traveling in Northern Iraq.

Notes:

1. Author’s interview with PKK official Roj Welat in the Qandil mountains, August 5.
2. Author’s interview with PKK vice-president Bozan Tekin in the Qandil mountains, August 5.
3. Author’s interview with head of the Hiwa list, Najiba Omar, in Erbil province, Iraq, August 7.
4. Author’s interview with Falah Mustafa Bakir in Erbil, August 6.
5. Author’s correspondence with Kamal Chomani, a freelance journalist who writes for *Livin* magazine and the Kurdish newspaper *Awena* in northern Iraq, August 5.

Is the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline a Viable Project? The Impact of Terrorism Risk

By Riccardo Fabiani

The projected construction of the 4,000 km Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline (TSGP) will be one of Africa’s most ambitious infrastructure projects. However, the risk of terrorism could seriously undermine the profitability of this enterprise, raising costs beyond current expectations.

The Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline: What is at Stake?

On July 3, Algeria, Nigeria and Niger signed an intergovernmental agreement for the development of a 4,128 km gas pipeline that will send gas from the Niger Delta through Niger to Algeria’s export terminals. The project is estimated to cost around \$12 billion and will supply up to 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year to Europe; in addition, it will enable Nigeria to increase its share of natural gas exports, while helping make Algeria one of the major energy hubs in the region, catering mainly to the European market.

The European Union supports the program and considers the building of the TSGP crucial to the diversification of its energy resources. The pipeline would enable European countries to tap directly into Nigeria's 5 trillion cubic meters of natural gas and reduce Europe's energy reliance on Russia and Algeria (although Algeria's Sonatrach and, potentially, Russia's Gazprom will also be involved in the TSGP project). Unsurprisingly, various European energy companies have already expressed an interest in the project; France's Total, Russia's Gazprom, Anglo-Dutch Shell and Italy's ENI have indicated that they are ready to take part (*El Watan*, July 29).

However, several doubts weigh on the building of the TSGP, despite a study carried out by Penspen and IPA Energy Consulting in 2006 that found the pipeline technically and economically feasible. First, the TSGP will be the world's longest pipeline; much of the construction will take place in one of world's most difficult environments, the Sahara desert, significantly raising costs. Second, developing Nigeria's liquefied natural gas (LNG) industry would probably be a less expensive and more efficient way to export the country's natural gas resources. Third, the TSGP is a highly speculative project and it will not be easy to find private partners willing to commit to such an unpredictable enterprise. It would take just one major incident to halt construction work and increase costs beyond profitability.

The Terrorism Threat to the TSGP: Nigeria

However, the most significant obstacle to this massive project is the issue of security in the countries through which the pipeline will run. Nigeria, Niger and Algeria are among the least secure areas of the world because of the various guerrilla and terrorist movements that destabilize them; security risk, along with the speculative nature of this project, means that even a small-scale attack could seriously impair or delay the completion of the pipeline, dramatically raising costs for the companies involved.

The most serious threat so far has emerged in Nigeria, the originating point of the resources that will be transported through the pipeline to Europe. Soon after the signing of the agreement, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) threatened to thwart the project by sabotaging the construction works (AFP, July 4). MEND has already successfully attacked Nigeria's oil and gas infrastructure and has been active in kidnapping foreign oil workers. The latest episode

occurred on July 13, when militants in speedboats assaulted an oil distribution point in Lagos, killing several sailors on guard and using dynamite charges to destroy ten pipelines at the terminal. Security forces did not intervene to prevent MEND from striking at one of Nigeria's main oil terminals (see *Terrorism Monitor*, July 27).

MEND's terrorist attacks are the main cause of Nigeria's falling levels of oil production. According to government officials, Nigeria's oil production has declined by 1 million barrels per day (b/d) and is now close to 1.4 million b/d, well below its potential of 2.3 million. Royal Dutch Shell declared that its output was down 35% in July (UPI, July 22). In this context, it is hard not to take MEND's threats to the TSGP pipeline seriously, as 1,037 km of its track will run through Nigeria from the coast to the border with Niger. If government and private security forces are unable to protect the country's oil infrastructure in Lagos, the protection of a 1,037km-long pipeline will be even harder, again affecting the costs and economic viability of the plan.

The Terrorism Threat to the TSGP: the Sahel region

However, MEND does not represent the only security risk to the TSGP project. 3,151 km of the pipeline (around 76% of the total distance covered) will be laid down in Niger and Algeria, where two more major threats are likely to complicate further the realization of the project. This area is known as the Sahel, a semi-arid strip of land between the Sahara desert and Sub-Saharan Africa where various insurgencies and terrorism groups have been active in recent years, raising fears in the West of a new "safe haven" for Islamist militants.

Niger has been the scene of major uprisings by Tuareg guerrilla movements in the 1990s and more recently between 2007 and 2009. The latest conflict was only halted by a ceasefire in May that followed a split within the major rebel organization, Le Mouvement des Nigériens pour la Justice (MNJ). The MNJ includes disgruntled members of various semi-nomadic tribes in northern Niger, although it is mostly identified with the local Tuareg population (see *Terrorism Focus*, July 31, 2007).

In past years the MNJ has been able to attack some of the country's infrastructure and kidnap a Chinese nuclear engineer and four French employees from the nuclear energy company Areva. The movement concentrated on hitting the uranium industry, disrupting its production

and targeting its officials, engineers and employees, with the movement demanding a fairer share of the profits generated by this sector and more environmental protection. Although the insurgency has wound down and talks between government and rebels are gradually leading to the end of the insurrection, security risks cannot be discounted yet; in the event of renewed hostilities, not only the uranium industry, but the new TSGP pipeline could become a target for Tuareg rebels as well.

Another major source of concern has been the alleged collaboration between the MNJ and the southern branch of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). This threat is likely overstated and recently cooperation between local Tuareg tribes and the government against AQIM was reported in Mali (Aurore [Bamako], July 20). More interesting, however, is the increasing number of incidents in this area in which AQIM has been involved lately.

In recent months AQIM's Southern Zone command has been very active in the Sahel region, striking at Algeria, Niger, Mali and Mauritania. AQIM has focused mainly on hostage-taking to obtain ransoms to fund its activities, kidnapping two Canadian diplomats (captured in December 2009 and released in April 2009), and a group of European tourists near the border between Mali and Niger in January (*L'Expression*, February 19). In addition, executions of hostages and assassination of AQIM's opponents have been alarmingly frequent; one of the kidnapped European tourists, a British national, was shot dead in May and a Malian intelligence officer was murdered in his home by AQIM militants in June (*Le Republicain* [Bamako], June 4; Radio France Internationale, June 11; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, June 25). As Algeria's security apparatus concentrated on wiping out al-Qaeda's presence in the northeast of the country and Mali and Niger were intent on solving their Tuareg insurgencies, AQIM's Southern Zone command was able to exploit the void left by the three countries, making a profit through ransoms and drug and arms smuggling in the region.

In recent weeks local governments seem to have realized the seriousness of the threat posed by AQIM to security. Rumors about an impending offensive against the group spread quickly in June, although negotiations for the release of the European hostages (one of them is still in the hands of the militants) apparently postponed the

beginning of the operation. Despite this setback, several bilateral meetings between Algeria's defense officials and their counterparts from Algeria's two southern neighbors have already taken place (*Le Quotidien d'Oran*, July 30). In the meantime, Mali's President Amadou Toumani Toure has reiterated his call for a regional conference on security (*Jeune Afrique*, July 13). Moreover, the Algerian army has been supplying Mali with military equipment (*El Watan*, June 18).

Clashes between local armies and AQIM have led so far to the killing of dozens of militants and government troops, demonstrating that it will take much more than limited regional cooperation to root out the group. To date, AQIM's Southern Zone has not struck at Algeria's oil and gas infrastructure; this shows the limited resources and organization of a small group operating in a hostile environment. However, in the past, AQIM's northern cells have attacked foreign oil workers. In July, the Chinese embassy in Algiers issued a warning to Chinese citizens in Algeria after a London-based risk analysis firm claimed to have seen an AQIM document threatening Chinese workers, who are mainly active in the construction and hydrocarbon sectors (AFP, July 15). Against this background, it is hard to discount the security threat posed by AQIM to the construction of the TSGP, as an attack on foreign workers could be the kind of realistically achievable operation that AQIM's Southern Zone could carry out.

Conclusion: Is the Trans-Sahara Gas Pipeline a viable project?

Despite the high costs and risks related to the TSGP project, the governments of Algeria, Niger and Nigeria are committed to its realization and have not expressed any doubts so far. The pipeline is considered strategic to the development of these countries' resources, as it would enable Nigeria's energy sources and Algeria's southern gas fields to be duly exploited, reaching the European market. However, security threats are too significant to be ignored, undermining the economic viability of the project. Security costs are likely to be very high, as foreign and local workers will need to be protected from potential attacks. Insurance premiums are also likely to be considerable while a single successful terrorist attack could easily halt and delay construction for months, further raising costs for the companies involved. Once completed, the pipeline will need constant patrolling and expensive surveillance systems to protect this

infrastructure from potential security threats. All these factors are liable to raise costs beyond profitability for this extremely ambitious project.

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