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AL-QAEDA LEADER ABU ABDALLAH AHMAD DESCRIBES STRUGGLE WITH THE CRUSADERS FOR NORTH AFRICA

Abu Abdallah Ahmad, head of the Political Committee of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), has discussed the progress and setbacks of AQIM's jihad in North Africa in a 38-minute audio interview (Al-Fajr Media Center, May 4).

In reviewing the two years since the Algerian GSPC transformed into the pan-Maghrebi AQIM, Abu Abdallah lists the group's most significant achievement as taking the battle out of a domestic context and placing it in a regional and international framework, the only suitable approach for confronting the "alliance of the War on Islam." The idea of separating an internal enemy from an external enemy is "unfounded in Islam."

Abu Abdallah also claims recruits from neighboring countries are now coming to Algeria, "the land of steadfastness and jihad." Even AQIM's Shura Council has been recomposed to accommodate the presence of "our immigrant brothers from the Islamic Maghreb."

According to Abu Abdallah, the Algerian government forces news agencies to continue referring to AQIM as the "GSPC" (Groupe Salafiste pour la Prédication et le Combat) in order to downplay the significance of the restructuring. The AQIM leader maintains that the group is in line with al-Qaeda's policies and refers to allegations that AQIM does not enjoy Osama Bin Laden's complete support as "mere falsehood and fabrication."



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In response to claims AQIM has no political, social or economic plan, Abu Abdallah replies that the suggestion Islam is insufficient as a means of governing a modern, scientific state dates back to the 1924 elimination of the Caliphate by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and can be dealt with in three ways:

- 1) All the Western and Eastern theories (i.e. capitalism and communism) have already been tried in Algeria and proved to be a complete failure.
- 2) If their opponents believe that AQIM cannot develop an Islamic state and society, why do they not step aside and allow the Islamists to take power and thus display their alleged incompetence. If the people then break away from the Islamist project, “we come to an end with fewer losses and shorter time.”
- 3) The examples of the Afghan Taliban, the Islamic Courts of Somalia and the Islamic State of Iraq demonstrate the mujahideen’s ability to implement Shari’a with limited resources.

When asked about the impact of former GSPC leader Hassan Hattab’s public recantation of jihadi ideology, Abu Abdallah says this was something the group expected. “Simply, Hattab does not have any influence or respect in the mujahideen circles. On the contrary, the mujahideen has considered him for years a traitor who sold his eternity for his life. Many of the mujahideen have not heard or followed his so-called revisions; thus, these revisions made no difference to them.” Abu Abdallah denies that the commander of AQIM’s Al-Ansar Brigade, Abu Tamim (a.k.a. Ali Ben Touati), surrendered voluntarily to authorities as a result of Hattab’s appeal, claiming he was instead arrested while driving.

Abu Abdallah describes the situation in Sudan as part of a plan of the Crusader alliance to divide Muslim countries by using religious, ethnic and cultural minorities. He points to the examples of East Timor, Iraqi Kurdistan and South Sudan as proof of this plan, adding that the Crusaders are now attempting to take possession of Darfur to “steal its resources.” The AQIM leader suggests that the Sudanese begin preparations to fight the Crusaders and not rely on their “apostate government,” which is “no better than the regime and army of Saddam [Hussein].” Abu Abdallah’s comments here are revealing – in extreme takfiri fashion, he casts

even the Islamist-military Sudanese government, which has imposed Shari’a at great political cost, into the role of “apostates to Islam.”

Abu Abdallah also refers to George Washington’s efforts to reach agreement with the Corsairs of the Barbary Coast (modern Maghreb) to prevent piracy against American ships in the Mediterranean and liberate nearly 120 American captives. At the time most European nations paid tribute to the pirates to allow commercial shipping to go on unhindered. The AQIM leader uses this historical reference to challenge the Muslims of the Maghreb to turn away from submission to the United States and the West:

Did not I tell you that George Washington requested your friendliness, sent gifts and asked for your permission for the movement of his commercial vessels in the Mediterranean Sea at the time that Europe was paying taxes to you under your military power in a humiliating way? O my nation, nowadays I see that you have become an easy prey to each treacherous infidel. In addition, your sea has become a harbor for their navies, your land has become bases for their armies, your capitals have become a fertile ground for their spies and a field for their experiments and your honor has become a cheap property for their homosexuals.

Elsewhere in North Africa, Abu Abdallah reminds the Muslims of the Maghreb of their failure to “liberate” Ceuta and Melilla, the Spanish-controlled Moroccan ports that are the last vestige of Spain’s African Empire. Abu Abdallah also applauds the expulsion of the Israeli Embassy from Nouackchott in Mauritania, but warns of “the powers of the Jewish community in Morocco” and their influence over the King and the royal family.

THE RETURN OF RICIN FEVER – DISCOVERY IN DURHAM RAISES NEW FEARS

Though it has never been used in a terrorist attack, the supposed usefulness of the deadly poison ricin in such operations continues to generate headlines and terrorism charges, the latest coming in Durham County, England.

Dubious reports of ricin experiments conducted by Ansar al-Islam in northern Iraq in 2002 were followed by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell’s assertions to the UN Security Council in February 2003 that an al-Qaeda laboratory in Georgia was creating ricin-based

weapons under the direction of the late leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The uneducated Zarqawi was given credit for doing in a rude shed what a number of well-funded and sophisticated Western weapons laboratories were unable to do in years of effort – weaponize ricin.

Since the poison cannot be absorbed by the skin, it is necessary to have victims either ingest or inhale the ricin. Since only the latter would be practical for a weapon, numerous attempts were made by weapons laboratories in the 20th century to aerosolize ricin, all meeting with disappointing results. Once Sarin gas and other nerve agents became available, further research into the use of ricin as a weapon was abandoned (apparently except for some KGB lab that developed a complex means of surreptitiously injecting ricin into a victim's bloodstream – used only once on Bulgarian dissident Georgi Markov in London in 1978).

A 41-year-old lorry driver and his 18-year-old milkman son were arrested under the UK's Terrorism Act 2000 after June 2 raids on their homes in the Durham County villages of Burnopfield and Annfield Plain (Independent, June 5). Tests in a government laboratory in Edinburgh revealed traces of ricin in a sealed, airtight jam jar kept in a kitchen cupboard. The material was sent for further tests at the Ministry of Defence establishment in Porton Down. Police assured the public that “no one is believed to have been exposed to the substance or be at risk of any potential ill-effects. We do not believe that there is any risk to public health” (Independent, June 5). According to Durham's assistant chief constable, “This shows that the terrorist threat in the UK is real” (*Times*, June 6).

The London tabloid Daily Express reported that the traces of ricin in the jam jar were “intended for use as part of a biological weapon against blacks and Asians” (Daily Express, June 6). The tabloid failed to mention that no such weapon yet exists, nor did it suggest how the suspects, of limited means and education, were to develop such a weapon. Nevertheless, the “biological weapon” was being reported the next day in India under the headline, “UK poison plot against Asians, blacks, busted” (*Times of India*, June 7).

Britain's Independent linked the poison to al-Qaeda without mentioning the fascination right-wing extremists have with ricin, surely more relevant in the case of two alleged white supremacists. To underscore the alleged threat, the newspaper stated ricin as the agent used in the March 1995 attack on the Tokyo subway by the

Aum cult that left 12 dead, when in fact the agent was Sarin gas (Independent, June 5).

The 18-year-old suspect, Nicky Davison, was charged with possessing information useful to committing a terrorist act on June 9 and released on bail (BBC, June 9). The manual police described as containing information and instructions on the use or production of firearms, explosives and chemicals was a volume of *The Poor Man's James Bond*, a four volume work by Kurt Saxon directed at American survivalists and militia members. First published in the 1970s, the volumes describe how to manufacture weapons, set booby traps, make explosives and develop poisons, including ricin. Davison has been charged with disseminating the work, though it is easily available from book-retailing websites and right-wing extremist sites alike (Northern Echo [Darlington], June 13).

Earlier this month a small pile of white powder found on a table near the ROTC office at Utah's Salt Lake University caused a small panic due to fears it may have been ricin. Over 200 people were ordered out of the building while National Guard units and Hazmat crews tested for ricin. The powder was also tested for anthrax, radioactivity and various biological viruses, all coming up negative. Early reports indicated the two teaspoons of powder looked similar to baby formula (KUTV.com [Salt Lake City], June 4; Salt Lake Tribune, June 4; Deseret News [Salt Lake City], June 13).

And in Washington State a man has been charged with trying to poison his wife with ricin after traces were found in her urine. The suspect explained to police he had bought the ricin to exterminate moles in the family yard (UPI, June 9). Though newspapers are often fond of noting ricin is 6,000 times more poisonous than cyanide, most internet recipes for homemade ricin from castor beans produce, at best, a highly diluted concentration of ricin that would need to be consumed in large amounts to create a fatal dose.

Reaction of the Afghan Taliban to the Pakistani Government's Offensive in Swat

By Wahidullah Mohammad

With Pakistan carrying out its most concerted offensive yet against an expanding Taliban insurgency, the situation of Pakistani Pashtuns

fighting for the Afghan Taliban appears uncertain, despite a clear statement issued by a Taliban spokesman on the responsibilities of these fighters: “The Pakistani Taliban are here in Afghanistan to fight Americans and do jihad. They are under our direct command and will never go back to Pakistan until they have been killed or the Americans pull out from Afghanistan,” says Taliban spokesman Qari Yusuf Ahmadi. [1]

The focus of the fighting in Pakistan has been the former tourist destination of Swat, a valley 120 km (80 miles) northwest of Islamabad. Tension has also been rising in South Waziristan, an al-Qaeda and Taliban stronghold where military officials say an offensive is likely after Swat is secured. Now the question is whether those Pakistani Taliban who are fighting the Kabul government and its international allies will go back to support their friends and comrades in Pakistan. According to Qari Yusuf Ahmadi, those Pakistani Taliban who have come to Afghanistan to fight Americans are under Afghan Taliban leadership and are not allowed to go back to Pakistan. Ahmadi claims, “the Number of Pakistani Taliban is very limited in Afghanistan; they are here to do jihad; they are not allowed to go back and they haven’t decided to do that.” [1]

Ahmadi says the conflicts in Pakistan and Afghanistan are different, explaining that the Pakistani Taliban are fighting the government to receive their rights, but in Afghanistan it is a holy war and the aim is to free Afghanistan from the Americans and other “heathens.” Ahmadi added that the Pakistan government’s offensive against the Taliban in Pakistan has no negative effect on Taliban activities in Afghanistan: “[the offensive] hasn’t affected our activities - we are continuing our operations and getting stronger day by day.” [1]

General Mohammad Zahiz Azimi, spokesman for the Afghanistan Ministry of Defense, says there has been no decrease in Taliban attacks since the government offensive started in Pakistan. [2] Azimi says security forces are not expecting any decrease in Taliban attacks this summer but hope the Pakistani government offensive against the Taliban of Pakistan’s northwest frontier will have a good effect on the security situation in Afghanistan. “In the summer we are expecting an increase in Taliban activities in Afghanistan because the weather is becoming warm and the insurgents can stay in the mountains. From the other side, Afghanistan will have presidential and provincial council election soon [August 20] - that is another reason for the increase

in Taliban activities as they are trying to sabotage the situation.” [2]

Azimi has elsewhere stated the Afghan National Army’s support for further operations in Pakistan’s frontier region:

“In particular, we were pleased with the news of the Pakistani army operations in the province of South Waziristan. We hope that such operations will be held in the province of Northern Waziristan. We also stated that we are ready to support Pakistan. We are willing to share information with Pakistan, provide information on security and will make every effort to strengthen control on the Afghan-Pakistani border. I would like to also add that we are ready to expand border military operations against the Taliban, together with the Pakistani army. But that does not mean that we intend to send military forces to Pakistan, support the army or take any other step that violates the sovereignty of the country” (Interview with Trend News Agency [Baku], May 29).

Azimi says that there is an increase in roadside mines and suicide attacks compared to previous years. According to the General, the Taliban have lost the capability of fighting face to face with Afghan security forces and their international allies, but Taliban spokesman Ahmadi says the increase in roadside bombs and suicide attacks does not mean that the Taliban are getting weaker. According to Ahmadi, the Taliban are getting stronger and are using new tactics to defeat its enemy.

General Azimi warns that if Islamabad succeeds in taking control of Malakand Division and Waziristan from the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the movement’s fighters will escape to Afghanistan, creating some short-term problems for the Afghan government and its international allies. “They will escape from Pakistan to Afghanistan and we will be facing problems for six months to a year, but we are fully ready to defeat them.” The General says terrorism is a regional problem and requires regional cooperation to be defeated.

There is, however, a chance that the upcoming American “surge” in Afghanistan will do what the Afghan Taliban leadership has so far prevented – an influx of Taliban fighters into Pakistan. The U.S. President’s Special Envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, expressed such concerns in a recent visit to Pakistan; “I don’t want to be alarmist here, but I’m predicting some

massive influx” (AFP, June 6; *The News* [Islamabad], June 6).

Notes:

[1] All remarks by Qari Yusuf Ahmadi are taken from a June 7 interview with the author.

[2] Unless otherwise specified, all remarks by General Mohammad Zahiz Azimi are taken from a June 9 interview with the author.

Wahidullah Mohammad is a freelance journalist in Afghanistan writing under a pseudonym.

Libyan Islamists Back Away from al-Qaeda Merger in Reconciliation with Qaddafi Regime

By Camille Tawil

It has been more than two years since talks started between the Libyan authorities and the imprisoned leaders of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (Al-Jama'a al-Islamiya al-Muqatilah bi Libya – LIFG). As both sides acknowledge past mistakes, there are finally signs that the longtime antagonists may be getting closer to reconciliation, a process that will rely in part on the LIFG's renunciation of its merger with al-Qaeda.

Dr. Ali Sallabi, a Qatar-based Libyan Islamist and the main mediator between the imprisoned LIFG leaders and the authorities, has been quoted as saying the talks “are very encouraging” after meeting the six Shura Council members of the LIFG in their Tripoli prison (*Dar al-Hayat*, June 15). The six leaders have for some time been allowed by the security services to meet freely with the rest of the Islamists in prison so they could consult with them regarding a review of LIFG policies and principles. The six are writing a religious study that is expected to be published in August. This study, similar to al-muraja'at (“revisions”) released by other jihadi groups in the Arab world, will refute from a religious point of view the ideology and methods of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda, according to Noman Bin Othman, a former leader of the LIFG (*Dar al-Hayat*, June 15).

This positive news coincided with the announcement by another former leader of the LIFG outside Libya that he now supports peace talks with the government.

Abdullah Mansour (a.k.a. Abdulbasit Abdulrahim), who was described in his 2008 terrorist designation by the U.S. Department of the Treasury as “one of the most important LIFG members working on LIFG finances in the UK, where the greatest amount of funding for the LIFG originated,” has written a letter published by al-Hayat in which he commented publicly for the first time on the reconciliation talks (*Dar al-Hayat*, June 11). [1] The importance of Mansour's position stems from his “religious credibility” - he was responsible for the LIFG's Islamic Jurisprudence Committee while based in Saudi Arabia in the 1990s.

Mansour considers a hand-written letter sent from prison in March by the Amir of the LIFG, Abu Abdullah al-Sadeq, as proof that the talks are serious (oalibya.com, March 12). According to Mansour, the letter makes clear that the leadership of the LIFG has pledged “to renounce the method of military confrontation with the regime and to do a revision of its literature and its past policies” (*al-Hayat*, June 11).

Mansour defends the methods of the LIFG in the 1990s, saying the group had no option but to use violence. He also states that, despite its pledge to support other Islamic groups, the LIFG refused to join with Bin Laden in his “Global Jihad” because the group always considered establishing an Islamic Libyan state as its aim (making it a local rather than global jihad).

The regime itself is changing in Libya, according to Mansour, with Colonel Qaddafi saying publicly that mistakes have been made, and the leader's son, Saif, also acknowledging the state manipulation of court decisions as well as the excessive role played by the revolutionary committees. So, if the regime is changing, why not the LIFG? Mansour says to the members and leaders of the LIFG, inside and outside Libya, that they should not shy away from correcting their mistakes too: “Revision is a religious need, whether the LIFG (leaders and members) stay in prison or are set free. Changing policies and aims does not mean a retreat from the religion itself.”

Furthermore, there is speculation that an important statement from the LIFG is forthcoming. This author is aware of messages that have been delivered from the leadership of the LIFG inside Tripoli's Abu Salim prison to group leaders who are “keeping a low profile” in the West. Those leaders outside Libya are expected to clarify the position of the LIFG on two main issues; the first decision is whether or not to endorse the LIFG leaders who are talking with the government as well as

their planned “revisions.” Secondly, the group leaders abroad must decide whether or not they endorse the merger between the LIFG and al-Qaeda, announced by Abu Laith al-Libi in November 2007.

- Regarding the first issue, the LIFG is likely to argue (as did Mansour in his letter to *al-Hayat*) that “revision” of the movement’s ideology is not something to be disliked, but rather encouraged. Therefore the leaders of the LIFG inside Libya’s prisons should rest assured that their planned revisions are not going to be rejected by the leaders of the group in exile. The leaders in exile are also likely to call on the government to give the revisions the response they deserve, leading to the liberation of the imprisoned Islamists and the opening of the political system inside Libya in order to allow Islamists to play a legitimate political role instead of being driven underground.

- It is expected that the debate over the al-Qaeda merger will be resolved by stating that Abu Laith did not have the authority to announce the amalgamation. Abu Laith should have gotten the support of a majority of the Shura council, something which he clearly did not have. Therefore, the LIFG is likely to say that there has been no proper merger with al-Qaeda and the Libyan group is in no way part of Bin Laden’s Global Jihad.

This distancing of the LIFG from al-Qaeda would benefit its supporters in the West in particular, who are being squeezed by security services that fear the LIFG leaders are part of an al-Qaeda “sleeper network.” The Libyan regime itself would also benefit from such a statement, which would send a clear warning to youth who may be thinking of joining al-Qaeda’s “jihad”; in plain words they should be careful of joining a cause which does not even have the support of the main Libyan jihadi group, the LIFG.

Camille Tawil is a journalist for al-Hayat newspaper in London where he has worked for the past seventeen years. Mr. Tawil joined al-Hayat newspaper in 1991 where he covers the Middle East and focuses on writing about the activities of militant Islamic groups.

Notes:

1. United States Department of the Treasury, “Three

LIFG Members Designation for Terrorism,” October 30, 2008; <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp1244.htm>

Weapons for Warlords: Arms Trafficking in the Gulf of Aden

By Andrew Black

In the Hobbesian anarchy that has been the norm in Somalia since the late 1980s, the proliferation of weapons has been associated not only with the pursuit of political power but also with international terrorism and the protection and furtherance of economic objectives in the region. Somalia lies at the heart of regional arms trafficking networks that include governments and private traders in East Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Developed over many years, this market relies on traditional trade routes, military supply lines and corruptible government actors to provide material support to clansmen, warlords, and militants who purchase or barter for small arms, such as Kalashnikov rifles, rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and larger weapons systems, such as anti-aircraft guns and “technicals” (armored pick-up trucks with weapons mounted in the back). Currently sustained and developed primarily by a mix of opportunistic businessmen and foreign governments who are strengthening local proxies, the arms trade in and around Somalia serves as a reliable, highly adaptable, and readily accessible wellspring of material that feeds regional conflicts.

Collapsing Regimes and the Rise of Private Traffickers

The arms markets around the Gulf of Aden were developed as a byproduct of the Cold War, as the great powers sought to further their strategic objectives in the region. During the latter years of the Cold War, East Africa played an important role in the great power dynamic, with the United States and the Soviet Union propping up regional proxies such as the governments of Somalia, Ethiopia, and the People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (i.e. South Yemen). However, with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the governments in Somalia and Ethiopia, official stocks of arms increasingly became available through regional markets. The fall of the communist Dergue regime in Ethiopia in 1987 and the Siad Barre dictatorship in Somalia in 1991 released a large amount of weapons, including tanks, into various East African markets. The

region witnessed another influx of weapons later in the 1990s as governments and private vendors supplied the Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries in their war against one another (Yemen Times, March 15, 1999; March 21, 1999).

In the 1980s and 1990s, arms markets and influential parties in the region, particularly in Somalia, received weapons through the activities of private arms dealers and corporations operating in Somalia. These private vendors came to public attention in March 1994 with the murder in Somalia of Italian journalist Ilaria Alpi and her cameraman, Miran Hrovatin. The two were in Somalia investigating rumors of embezzled humanitarian aid and illicit arms trafficking from Italy to Somalia (ANSA [Rome], January 20, 1998; September 30, 1998). Another case involved a Polish company, Cenrex, which exported arms to Latvia, which were then shipped to Croatia and Somalia, two countries that were under U.N. arms embargos at the time (Rzeczpospolita [Warsaw], October 1, 1998).

European businesses also supplied weapons to Somali clansmen and warlords as a means of obtaining permission for various activities such as illegal fishing or toxic waste disposal. One example involved an Italian firm that dumped toxic waste in Somalia after providing weapons and ammunition to powerful Somali clansmen (Famiglia Cristiana [Milan], October 1, 2000). Included in this network was Giancarlo Marocchino, a well-known Italian shipping businessman based in the port city of Karaan, who was arrested by U.N. troops in Mogadishu in 1993 for his suspected involvement in arms trafficking. Deals arranged by this Italian network and other brokers included arms shipments from Ravenna, La Spezia, and Leghorn in Italy, and the involvement of Italian Mafia, particularly the Calabrians (Corriere della Sera [Milan], December 29, 2006). Other publicized trafficking routes from this era include one running from Ireland to Somalia, via Cyprus and Lebanon (La Repubblica [Rome], June 3, 1996).

This history of arms traffic into and within the Horn of Africa not only provided the foundations for the regional arms trade - contributing a crucial influx of material and experienced traders - but it also exacerbated many of the drivers of the current conflict in Somalia. Moreover, the supply lines established in earlier decades, such as those outlined above, continue to feed the still vibrant Somali arms market.

The Somali Market Adapts to a New Era

In recent years, the development of a militant Islamist opposition to rival the U.N.-recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has rejuvenated the flow of arms into Somalia from foreign governments and suppliers. Regional governments, led by Ethiopia and Eritrea, provided arms and financial support to their proxies on either side of the Somali conflict.

The Ethiopian military has provided broad and vital support to the TFG and friendly Somali clans, including material, training and troops even before the Ethiopian military invaded Somalia in late 2006. While the amount of support that Ethiopia has provided to date is difficult to verify, successive U.N. reports have pointed to substantial support from Addis Ababa to the TFG and authorities in Puntland and Somaliland. [1] As noted below, Ethiopian troops and associates in the TFG are a common and prolific source of weapons for the Somali arms markets.

On the other side of this dynamic, the government of Eritrea has been singled out by the U.N. as having provided significant material and financial support to Islamist groups. In late July 2006, two cargo shipments that landed at Mogadishu airport were suspected of bringing arms to the Islamic Courts Union (ICU). Though bearing Kazakh markings and rumored to be owned by or affiliated with Russian arms dealer Viktor Bout, the shipment is widely suspected to have been provided by Eritrea but may have originated in Yemen or Libya, according to a Western diplomat stationed in the region at the time. More recently, Omar Hashi Aden, the Security Minister of the TFG, claimed that three aircraft landed at an airstrip outside Mogadishu loaded with arms from Eritrea for Islamist insurgents (VOA, May 4). Abdulkadir Haji Muhammad Dakane of the Asmara wing of the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS-Asmara) denied the allegation (Shabelle Media Network, May 5).

While governments like Ethiopia and Eritrea have facilitated the supply of arms to local proxies, elements within Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen have served as key sources of weapons and finances entering the Somali market (U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia, April 2008). Yemen in particular - where large arms markets have historically supported militants and intertribal conflict in the Arabian Peninsula and East Africa - is a well-documented source of weapons for vendors in Somalia selling to clansmen,

warlords, and Islamists alike. Prior to the government's efforts to curtail domestic markets, major arms markets existed in the Jahanah, Sa'dah, Al-Bayda, Al-Jawf, and Abyan provinces (Elaph [London], May 26, 2007, see also Terrorism Monitor, May 6, 2005). Despite Yemen's efforts to reduce the arms market, the U.N. noted that, "commercial imports, mainly from Yemen, remain the most consistent source of arms, ammunition and military material to Somalia."

Transport routes for arms entering Somalia are fluid and varied, following traditional trade routes across the Gulf of Aden and responding rapidly to new markets and government countermeasures. For example, an investigation by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) reported that aircraft used to transport humanitarian aid and peacekeeping support had also been used in transporting arms. [2] Alternatively, weapons from the Arabian Peninsula often enter Somali ports on dhows or are offloaded onto Somali vessels at sea. Indeed the U.N. has claimed that "maritime traffic from Yemen, across the Gulf of Aden, remains [Somalia's] largest single source of arms." Weapons trading from Yemeni dhows through remote natural ports are a part of the wider general trade (fuel, plastic-ware, cement, food, etc.) aimed at avoiding customs duties. Usually, several weapons traders arrange for their respective consignments to be transported on the same dhow to share transport costs. Popular ports include Heis, Maidh and Laasqoray in northern Somalia, Haradheere and Hobyso in the Mudug region, and Ceel Dheer in the Galgaduud region. Kismayo has also been a common port for arms from the Arabian Peninsula and East African sources, and other southern locations appear to be popular trans-shipment points for arms heading for the ethnic-Somali Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) in eastern Ethiopia.

The Domestic Market in Somalia

Within Somalia, supply and trans-shipment points can be found from Somaliland to Kismayo, providing a complex milieu through which vendors can access the broad array of customers active in Somali markets. In the north, locations like Burao and Hargeisa in Somaliland are popular destinations for arms entering from the Arabian Peninsula. This region is dominated by traders in the Warsangeli sub-clan, who offer fishing rights to traffickers who supply the region with arms and more traditional commodities like cement and plastics. Notably, the Warsangeli clan controls Gaan in northern Somalia, close to the town of Laasqoray where

Italian sailors were held by Somali pirates (Il Giornale, April 16). Warsangeli clansmen provide arms to vendors throughout Somalia as well as sell directly to Somali clansmen, warlords, and the ONLF in Ethiopia.

As already indicated, arms markets in Somalia are sustained by an assortment of sources including elements within the Transitional Federal Government, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the Ethiopian military and militant Islamist groups such as al-Shabaab. The U.N. estimates that up to eighty percent of the weapons circulating in the domestic arms market come from the TFG and Ethiopian forces alone. In its April 2008 report, the U.N. arms embargo monitoring group reported a process whereby the government and Ugandan peacekeeping forces, who entered the market through their Somali translators, resell seized arms caches through Somali middlemen into the domestic market and even directly to al-Shabaab (U.N. Monitoring Group on Somalia, April 2008).

Indeed, furthering the argument that government and peacekeeping personnel are engaged in arms trading, several militant leaders have noted the corruptible role of government forces in the Somali arms markets. For example, Sheikh Mukhtar Robow Abu Mansur, the former spokesman for al-Shabaab, addressed the issue of TFG troops returning to southern Somalia after training in Ethiopia by declaring "We say to these troops: do not imperil your lives, desert your duties. If you come to us, we will buy your arms and save your lives" (Hiiraan, July 31, 2008). A year earlier, the ONLF chairman denied that his organization was receiving support from Eritrea, but instead admitted they were acquiring weapons in Somalia from sources that included the Ethiopian military (VOA News, April 25, 2007).

Traditionally, the principal access point to the Somali arms market was through the Bakaara Market in Mogadishu. However, since 2006, the market has devolved into a network of smaller markets due in part to pressure from the ICU and increasing insecurity in the Bakaara Market area of Mogadishu. The U.N. reports that a somewhat coordinated network of markets has emerged in and immediately surrounding Mogadishu, centered around sub-clan areas and buyers and located at Suuq Ba'ad, Karaan, Huriwa, Elasha, Medina, and Arjantin. Using revenues from smuggling, remittances from the diaspora, piracy revenues, and even funding from the Eritrean government, al-Shabaab and similar groups are able to readily obtain a broad array of weaponry, according to the U.N. The typical weapons

available through these markets are small arms and crew-served infantry weapons, including Kalashnikov assault rifles, RPGs, mortars, anti-tank weapons, and surface to air missiles like the SA-7.

Efforts to Contain the Market

Governments around the Gulf of Aden have instituted a number of policies and accords to limit the regional flow of arms, in part as a means of containing the potential security implications of bleed-out from Somalia. Examples of these policies include the 1992 U.N. Arms Embargo, the 2004 Nairobi Protocol, and the ongoing development of Yemen's coast guard, supported by the U.S. While existing government efforts have had periodic successes - Yemen in particular has been lauded by the U.N. as having "reduced the volume of exports to Somalia and driven up arms prices in Somali markets" - these efforts have largely been uncoordinated, inconsistent, and ineffectual at reducing the flow of arms. Consequently, the impact on the Somali arms market has been marginal.

However, promising signs for the future may be seen in the potential for a new U.N. Arms Trade Treaty that is meant to standardize arms trade regulations and help coordinate government efforts. The recent growth of piracy and consequently the presence of multi-national naval forces patrolling the Gulf of Aden may contribute to reducing the flow of traffic between Yemen and Somalia. The potential for linkages between piracy and arms trafficking should encourage the international community to proactively reduce the flow of arms around the Horn of Africa as a means of stabilizing the region and safeguarding commercial maritime routes (VOA News, May 23, 2008).

The Path Forward

Nevertheless, the potential is remote for a coordinated and sustained international effort to control the flow of arms into Somalia and other regional markets. Built on the influx of material from the collapsed Barre and Dergue regimes in the late 1980s and sustained through the 1990s on arms imported by private European firms and Arab arms traders, the legacy of the Somali arms market is strong and durable. Over this period, regional supply networks and local markets have proven highly adaptable to fluid market dynamics, counter-proliferation efforts, and violent conflict. This capacity to adapt to changing circumstances will help to ensure the survival of these networks.

In the current era, the ability for local brokers to tap traditional sources and access official stocks and seized caches from government and peacekeeping forces ensures the continued availability of arms for militants in Somalia and surrounding conflict areas. This combination of factors means that in the near to medium term, the prospects for containment or elimination of this market are unlikely owing to the lack of regional capacity combined with the arms market's maturity, adaptability, and continued strong demand.

Notes:

1. For a complete list of the reports of the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia, please refer to: <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/751/mongroup.shtml> .
2. Griffiths, Hugh and Bromley, Mark, "Air Transport and Destabilizing Commodity Flows," SIPRI Policy Paper no. 24, May 2009.

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Pakistani Government Offensive in Swat Heading for the Taliban of Waziristan

By Mukhtar A. Khan

After the Swat military offensive, Pakistan's military has completed preparations for marching into Waziristan to fight a tough but decisive battle against the hardcore Taliban militia in the rugged mountains. The military offensive on this new front, dubbed "Operation Rah-e-Nijat" (Path of Salvation), is the extension and next phase of "Operation Rah-e-Rast" (Straight Path), regarded as Pakistan's first major military operation since the War on Terrorism began. Huge losses were inflicted on Taliban militants during this operation. The Taliban are under immense pressure and their top leadership is on the run towards safer places. Some of them are believed to have moved into the bigger cities of Pakistan while the majority of them are penetrating deep into the South Waziristan tribal agency bordering Afghanistan. The government of Pakistan has vowed to chase the militants inside

Waziristan, where Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) chief Baitullah Mahsud has strong bases. Already the militants have reacted to the Swat offensive by bombing luxury hotels and targeting police and military convoys. Recently, Peshawar and other nearby cities have been their main target for terrorist attacks, but they are also active in far away cities like Lahore, where they killed senior cleric Mufti Sarfaraz Naeemi in a suicide blast for his anti-Taliban ideology. The Taliban are making last ditch efforts to unnerve the government through their attacks, but the Governor of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Owais Ahmad Ghani has vowed to track the militants until their terrorist network is dismantled (*Dawn* [Karachi], June 15).

Battle for Waziristan

Pakistan's army has formally announced the launching of its military operation into South Waziristan – the stronghold of Baitullah Mahsud and the TTP network. This is considered to be potentially the toughest battle Pakistan's military has fought against the Taliban. All the pro-Taliban, banned jihadi outfits like Sipah-e-Sahaba, Jaish-e-Muhammad, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and other militant organizations from South Punjab are expected to join this battle in the interests of their own survival. There are reports that Taliban militants from Swat, Bajaur, Mohmand, Kurram and Darra Adam Khel have entered into South Waziristan. Pakistan's military spokesman Major General Athar Abbas has said they have carried out all the preparations and groundwork to challenge Baitullah's 10,000-strong militia. The government has already moved heavy weaponry into areas adjoining Waziristan. Fearing a bloody battle between the military and Taliban in the area, families have started vacating the Mahsud region of the South Waziristan (*Daily Times* [Lahore], June 17; *The News* [Islamabad], June 11).

The targeted killings of religious clerics and suicide bombings in mosques and marketplaces have turned the popular tide against Baitullah Mahsud. There has been a significant shift in public opinion against him and his TTP network. Now even his one-time sympathizers want the elimination of his terror network.

Recently, there emerged a strong alliance against Baitullah, formed by Turkistan Bhattani and Qari Zainuddin Mahsud. The group has the tacit support of the government. Turkistan Bhattani and Qari Zainuddin have openly challenged Baitullah Mahsud, calling him an enemy of Islam and Pakistan. Speaking to local jirgas,

they have vowed to take revenge against Baitullah for the killing of innocent Pakistani civilians and security forces (*Khabrain* [Lahore], June 14).

Turkistan Bhattani, 40, once a friend of Baitullah Mahsud who fought alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan, is now his biggest enemy. Turkistan also served in the Frontier Corps (FC) until his retirement in 1998. He developed differences with Baitullah and parted ways with him when Baitullah slaughtered some FC officials and began using suicide bombing as a tool to terrorize his opponents inside Pakistan.

Qari Zainuddin Mahsud, in his mid 20's, leads the group formerly belonging to Abdullah Mahsud, a former detainee of Guantanamo who was killed by Pakistani military action in Baluchistan in July 2006. Belonging to the same tribe as Baitullah Mahsud, Qari Zainuddin poses a tough challenge for the TTP commander. The alliance of Turkistan and Qari Zainuddin has made it difficult for Baitullah to move around in the strategically important areas of Tank and Dera Ismail Khan (*Dawn*, June 16).

Even within the TTP, some rifts are expected to become more visible in the coming days. Mullah Nazir in South Waziristan and Haji Gul Bahadur in North Waziristan have shown some preference towards the government in the event of military operations in the area, declaring they do not wish to fight against Pakistani security forces.

All these developments indicate the isolation of Baitullah Mahsud. But he still enjoys the undisputed leadership of the TTP, which has a presence in all seven tribal agencies, along with some districts of the NWFP. He has a trained militia of over 10,000 men, including several hundred suicide bombers who have demonstrated their ability to strike anywhere in Pakistan.

Fallout of Military Operations

The apparent success of Operation Rah-i-Raast has come at a great cost. It has displaced over 2.5 million people from the war zones of the greater Swat Valley. Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's Special Envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, admitted during his recent trip to Pakistani refugee camps that the issue of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) is a major crisis, describing it as the biggest mass exodus in Pakistan since its creation in 1947 (*Daily Times* [Lahore], June 11; Radio Buraq, June 4). The government was clearly not prepared to place and feed the IDP influx into Mardan, Swabi and

other parts of the country.

The use of heavy artillery and aircraft against the militants in Swat was another factor that contributed to the misery of the people trapped in the valley, resulting in civilian casualties. Unable to counter the Army's operations against the militants, the majority of the top TTP leadership escaped to the adjoining tribal areas and other safe hideouts in Malakand Division. Successful operations against the insurgents have been conducted through surgical strikes involving Special Commando Forces and local police (*The News*, May 28). It is believed that the majority of militants from the Swat Valley have left for South Waziristan, where they are planning to strike back against the government and other anti-Taliban elements. The recent suicide bombing at Peshawar's only five-star hotel, the Pearl Continental, was a message from the Taliban to the opposition in response to ongoing military operations. The hotel is significant for its use by foreign dignitaries, including the officials of relief agencies dealing with the IDPs, and is located close to the provincial parliament, the High Court and residences of the Governor, Chief Minister and Corps Commander (provincial military chief). This attack was soon followed by other suicide attacks on police officials and mosques in various parts of the NWFP, including those in Nowshera and Dera Ismail Khan. However, it was the June 12 killing of Mufti Sarfaraz Naeemi in Lahore by the Taliban that provoked countrywide condemnation and violent protests against the TTP. Mufti Naeemi, 61, was a respected Sunni-Barelvi cleric who had spoken out against the Taliban and declared suicide bombing un-Islamic (*Dawn*, June 14). Despite this, the Taliban have issued warnings they will kill more high profile clerics in Pakistan (*Daily Times*, June 17).

The IDP Crisis

The lack of sufficient funds, infrastructure, and services has disappointed the majority of the IDPs in tented camps. About 90 percent of these IDPs prefer to live in school buildings, mosques and with host-families where the relief agencies find it difficult to track them down for the proper distribution of aid and services. The government has not yet chalked out any short or long-term policies for the placement and rehabilitation of the massive influx of refugees from Malakand Division and those now arriving from South Waziristan as well. The majority of the IDPs from Waziristan prefer to go to Karachi instead of Peshawar. The reason is that Mahsud and Wazir have businesses and family

relations in Karachi. However, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) has already protested against the settlement of these IDPs in Karachi, saying this will spread Talibanization in Karachi (*The News*, May 28).

In the face of these crises, the IDPs have suffered most from the ongoing military operation. However, so far they have supported the government in its offensive. The lack of assistance from the government and aid agencies and the spoiling of ready-to-harvest crops back home have created an urgency in the IDPs to return home as soon as possible. In Dhog Darra of Dir district in Malakand, some 2,500 villagers who do not want to become IDPs have raised armed lashkars (ad-hoc militias) against the Taliban and have successfully flushed the TTP from some villages with initial support from the military. Now the lashkars need more military support to completely eliminate the militants' network from the area, but they complain of not getting backup from the military (*Dawn*, June 17).

Conclusion

In the Swat military offensive, the government claimed to have killed more than 1,400 militants, among them the Taliban's second and third-tier leadership. However the fact is that the top Taliban leadership is still at large, which is worrisome for the IDPs who fled the region. They fear the Taliban's comeback if they are not brought to justice.

The extensive and ongoing military operation against the Taliban cannot be fully successful unless there are proper arrangements for the IDPs. If the IDPs lose hope in the government, their makeshift camps can turn into breeding grounds for Talibanization. At the same time, these IDPs are a great opportunity for both Pakistan and the United States. In this hour of misery and need, their hearts and minds can be won by only a small effort to feed, place and rehabilitate them. They need to be visited and be listened to in their camps by dignitaries, as in the example set by former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Obama's Special Envoy to Pakistan-Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke. This is the first time during the last eight years that a significant majority of Pakistanis are standing together against the militants. If this opportunity is lost, another one may not be available in the near future.

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