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IN THIS ISSUE:

BRIEFS.....	1
KURDISH PKK USING PJAK TO ISOLATE TURKEY By Wladimir van Wilgenburg.....	3
AL-SHABAAB'S UNAVOIDABLE CLASH WITH SOMALILAND DEMOCRACY By Jacob Zenn.....	5
ROUND SEVEN? THE HOUTHİ REBELLION IN NORTHERN YEMEN By Michael Horton.....	6



PJAK Coordinator
Rezan Javid

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HAS AL-QAEDA STARTED A FEUD WITH THE TUAREG?

Fallout continues in North Africa from the July 22 raid on elements of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. The joint operation by French and Mauritanian security forces on Malian territory was intended to free 78-year-old hostage Michel Germaneau. The raid failed and Germaneau was killed in retaliation, but six AQIM operatives were killed by security forces, infuriating AQIM leaders, who continue to hold two Spanish hostages in northern Mali. An AQIM statement described the six dead al-Qaeda members as being three Tuareg, an Algerian, a Mauritanian and a Moroccan (Reuters, August 16).

Abdelhamid (Hamidu) Abu Zaid, an AQIM commander responsible for a number of kidnappings and for the execution of British tourist Edwin Dyer, is reported to be suspicious that the Tuareg provided the precise information that enabled the joint commando force to locate and kill the six AQIM operatives. Abu Zaid took his revenge by abducting and murdering a Tuareg customs officer named Mirzag Ag El Housseini, the brother of a senior Malian Army commander, Brahim Ag El Housseini (*El Khabar* [Algiers], August 12). No ransom was sought for the captive, who was executed on August 12 (Radio France Internationale, August 13). A soldier abducted at the same time as Mirzag and another abducted civilian were released by AQIM on August 16 (AFP, August 16).

The leader of AQIM in Mauritania, Abu Anas al-Shanqiti, warned that AQIM would carry out reprisals against the “traitorous apostates, children and agents

of Christian France” as a result of the raid (Agence Nouakchott d’Information, August 16; AFP, July 24). The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to these “threats uttered by assassins” by announcing that France’s security apparatus was “fully mobilized” (*Le Monde*, August 17; AFP, August 17).

Reports from Mali claim President Amadou Toumani Touré “is seething” over the Franco-Mauritanian commando operation in northern Mali. The President was apparently not informed of the operation in advance, nor were Malian forces called on to participate (*Jeune Afrique*, August 16).

Mali is still struggling with a simmering Tuareg insurgency in its vast and poorly controlled northern region. Colonel Hassan Ag Fagaga, a noted Tuareg rebel, has threatened to resume the insurgency if the government does not implement the terms of the 2008 Algiers Accord (*El Khabar*, July 15). Colonel Ag Fagaga brought 400 Tuareg fighters in for integration with Mali’s armed forces in 2009. He has already deserted twice to join the Tuareg rebels in the north. Al-Qaeda has tried to ingratiate itself with the disaffected Tuareg of northern Mali but has had only marginal success. Some former rebels have even offered to form Tuareg counterterrorist units to expel the mostly Arab al-Qaeda group from the region.

NEW BOOK BY FORMER JIHAD IDEOLOGUE DR. FADL CLAIMS TALIBAN VICTORY IN AFGHANISTAN IS INEVITABLE

A former leading jihadi ideologue and long-time colleague of al-Qaeda’s Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri has published a new book that examines the future of the conflict in Afghanistan. Egyptian native Dr. Fadl (a.k.a. Sayyid Imam Abdulaziz al-Sharif) was a founder of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad organization (*aljarida.com*, November 27, 2007; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, December 10, 2007). After a falling out with al-Zawahiri in Pakistan, Dr. Fadl moved to Yemen, where he remained until he was deported to Egypt after 9/11 to begin a lifetime prison sentence. While in prison, Dr. Fadl published a seminal document on the re-examination of al-Qaeda’s global jihad, entitled *Tarshid al-amal al-jihadi fi misr wa al-alam* (*Rationalizing the Jihadi Action in Egypt and the World*). Known popularly as the “Revisions,” Dr. Fadl’s work became the first in a series of similar “revisions” to emerge from imprisoned militants in the Muslim world. Previously, Dr. Fadl had been best known as the

author of an important jihadi manual, 1988’s *Al-omda fi i’dad al-udda* (*The Master in Making Preparation [for Jihad]*), which he initially published under the name Abdul Qadir bin Abdulaziz.

Dr. Fadl’s new book is entitled *Future of the War between America and Taliban in Afghanistan* and has been carried in excerpts by the pan-Arab daily al-Sharq al-Awsat. The new work is highly critical of Osama bin Laden, whom Dr. Fadl accuses of manipulating the Taliban in his own interest before 9/11, eventually causing their downfall through his treachery.

Nevertheless, Dr. Fadl predicts a Taliban victory in the present struggle to retake Afghanistan from Coalition forces and the corrupt government of President Hamid Karzai. The author offers 12 reasons why a Taliban victory is inevitable:

1. A successful jihad must be accompanied by a religious reform movement. The religious motivation of the Taliban (as opposed to tribal loyalties or the pursuit of wealth) meets this criterion.
2. The Taliban cause is just, as it seeks to repel foreign occupation. Dr. Fadl points to the examples of the American Revolution, French resistance to Vichy and Nazi rule and the anti-Japanese resistance movements in Asia during World War Two.
3. Cross-border tribal bonds with Pakistani Pashtun tribesmen are vital to the jihad’s success; “Loyalty of the Pashtu in Pakistan to the Pashtu in Afghanistan is stronger than their loyalty to their government in Islamabad.”
4. Jihad has popular support from the people of Afghanistan, who provide fighters with support, shelter and intelligence.
5. The nature of the terrain in Afghanistan and the inaccessibility of Taliban refugees make it eminently suitable for guerrilla warfare; “He who fights geography is a loser.”
6. The backwardness of Afghanistan favors the success of jihad. The Russian experience proved that even a scorched-earth policy has little effect on people who are tolerant, patient and have little to lose in the first place. There is little in the

way of cultural establishments to be destroyed – Afghanistan’s monuments are its mountains and “even atomic bombs do not affect them.”

7. As the battlefield widens beyond the Taliban strongholds in the south, occupation forces must face increasing financial and personnel losses.

8. Both time and the capacity to endure losses are on the side of the Taliban, who “do not have a ceiling to their losses, especially with regard to lives...”

9. Suicide operations make up for the shortage of modern weapons.

10. After three decades of nearly continuous warfare, Taliban fighters and leaders have the necessary experience to prevail against the occupation.

11. History is also on the Taliban’s side. Despite being world powers, both the British Empire and the Soviet Union failed to conquer Afghanistan.

12. Pakistan’s support of the Taliban provides the necessary third-party refuge and supplies to any successful guerrilla struggle.

community in northwestern Iran. The movement has been engaged in a low-level insurgency in the border region since 2006. Recently, there have been signs that the larger Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK – Kurdistan Workers’ Party) is using its junior partner PJAK to isolate Turkey by pushing Ankara into an alliance with Iran, which would strengthen the PKK’s position vis-à-vis both Turkey and Iran and would result in weakened relations between Turkey and its Western allies.

PJAK is part of the Koma Civaken Kurdistan (KCK - Kurdistan Democratic Confederation) headed by PKK General Murat Karayilan and is generally considered to be an integral part of its umbrella organization. The movement admits it has relations with the PKK and recognizes imprisoned PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan as its own supreme leader (Rudaw.net, July 19). [1] According to the U.S. Treasury Department, PJAK is controlled by the PKK and has Turkish Kurds in its ranks. [2]

Currently, Iranian artillery shells the border regions of northern Iraq’s Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to pressure the KRG to take action against the PKK/PJAK and to convince them to support Iranian-supported Shi’a parties in Iraq, according to local journalist Kamal Chomani. [3] Another source suggests that Iran is using PJAK and PKK to militarize the border regions in case of an American attack. Iran fears the United States could use the Iraqi Kurdistan region as a launching pad against Iran. [4] Despite this, the KRG does not carry out operations against PJAK and tries to limit media access and attention to PJAK by sealing off PJAK-controlled regions.

The KRG sees PJAK as an internal Iranian problem and considers the Iranian bombardments interference in Iraqi affairs. Iran and the KRG prefer to maintain economic relations, but the KRG also wants to maintain a strategic relationship with the United States to give it leverage with Turkey and its Arab partners in Iraq. Officially, the KRG is against the presence of PJAK in its administrative territory and favors a diplomatic solution. According to KRG Foreign Minister Fallah Mustafa Bakir, “We don’t believe violence can solve this problem. We do not allow any groups to launch attacks.” [5]

PJAK’s armed activities against Iran have made it the main Kurdish opposition party among Iranian Kurds. Other Kurdish Iranian parties are allegedly financed by the KRG and their camps are tolerated in the Kurdistan

Kurdish PKK Using PJAK to Isolate Turkey

By *Wladimir van Wilgenburg*

The rising tension and provocative rhetoric surrounding Iran’s alleged pursuit of nuclear weapons are a matter of public record. Yet, are there other agendas being played out amidst the larger confrontation between Iran and the West? One such agenda may be found in the mountainous border region between Iran and the Kurdish region of northern Iraq, home to camps of the Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê (PJAK - Party of Free Life of Iranian Kurdistan), a Kurdish militant nationalist group that claims to be fighting for the “democratic autonomy” of the Kurdish

region. In exchange for this, these actors do not carry out attacks against Iran in order to prevent any damage to the KRG's relations with that country. Furthermore, the main Iranian Kurdish parties and rivals to PJAK, the left-wing Komala Party and the Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan (PDK – Kurdistan Democratic Party), are both weakened and splintered after being defeated militarily by Iran.

PJAK is attracting international attention and support from Kurdish youth through its armed actions and assassinations in Iran. A Kurdish political rival of PJAK confirmed that the armed struggle is making PJAK more popular among the young Kurdish population. Other sources indicate PJAK is making some inroads among Kurdish students in Tehran. [6] PJAK leader Hadji Amedi is a former member of the Partiya Demokrata Kurdistan - Iran (PDK-I) and according to journalist Hawar Bayzan, 40% of the Kurds executed in Iran were PJAK-members. [7] This shows the growing influence of PJAK among Iran's Kurdish community.

Iran perceives PJAK as a minor threat and has tried to increase cooperation with Turkey against the PKK and its partners since 2004 (southasiaanalysis.org, August 3, 2004). Despite this, the Iranian consul in Erbil claims that the presence of PJAK is a “small issue.” While PJAK can kill a few soldiers, it cannot destabilize Iran or hurt relations between Iran and the Kurdistan region, according to the consul. [8] It indeed appears that Iran is robust enough to deal with internal enemies like PJAK, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MeK) and the opposition Green movement, while increasing trade with the KRG. Apart from Iranian pressure, PJAK's activities have been hurt by the U.S. designation of the movement as a terrorist organization. PJAK's leader claimed negotiations to form a united Iranian opposition failed after the United States took measures against PJAK (Newsmax.com, November 24, 2009). According to PJAK Coordinator Rezan Javid, the movement is very positive about Iran's new Green opposition movement. [9]

Therefore, PJAK is trying to gain American support or induce America to stop cooperating with Turkey against PJAK/PKK. “My party hopes that in the future the United States changes its policies towards PJAK and Iran. We are not against the United States,” the PJAK-coordinator said, citing similar democratic goals in the Middle East. [10]

A former PJAK commander, Mamand Rozhe, told an American daily in 2008 that the PKK wanted to have a relationship with the United States and formed PJAK as a means of attracting American support (*Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2008). Now there are indications that PJAK/PKK is trying to lure Turkey into cooperating with Iran against a common cause (PJAK/PKK) to create tension between Turkey and the Western powers and Israel. For instance, both PJAK and the PKK welcomed recent tensions between Turkey and Israel. According to Javid, this stopped intelligence sharing between Israel and Turkey against the PKK. “Israel gave intelligence to Turkey, but after the flotilla crisis Israel stopped giving intelligence to the Turkish regime,” he stated. [11]

The pro-PKK news agency Firatnews.com concluded after the fifth PJAK Congress that Turkey has to make a choice between Iran or the United States and that this would ultimately benefit the PKK (ANF, May 11). If Turkey chooses the United States, Iran could again resort to covertly supporting the PKK against Turkey. However, if Turkey chooses Iran, this opens the door for the PKK and PJAK to receive indirect Western backing and the removal of its terrorist designation. It seems that the PKK is using PJAK against Turkey, while Iran is using the PJAK threat to both pressure the KRG and build up a military presence in the border regions of Iran.

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Notes

1. Author's interview with PJAK Coordinator Rezan Javid in Qandil, August 12, 2010.
2. Ustreas.gov, February 4, 2009. The author has also spoken with PJAK members from Turkey.
3. Author's interview with journalist Komal Chomani, August 12, 2010.
4. Author's interview with Kurdish journalist Rebwar Karim, August 13, 2010.
5. Author's interview with the KRG Head of Foreign Relations, August 12, 2010.
6. Author's interview with the PDK-I's UK representative, Loghman H. Ahmedi, August 4, 2010.
7. Author's interview with Hawar Bazyan, August 3, 2010.

8. Author's interview with Iranian Consul Seyid Azin Hosseini in the Kurdish capital of Erbil, August 13, 2010.

9. Author's interview with PJA Coordinator Rezan Javid in Qandil, August 12, 2010.

10. Ibid

11. Author's interview with PJAK Coordinator Rezan Javid in Qandil, August 12, 2010.

Al-Shabaab's Unavoidable Clash with Somaliland Democracy

By Jacob A. Zenn

If the suicide bombings in Kampala during the World Cup finals were a sign of al-Shabaab's plans to fight outside of southern Somalia, then Somaliland's new ruling party must prepare for more attacks. Al-Shabaab leader Shaykh Ahmad Abdi Godane "Abu Zubayr" has made clear his intention to expand al-Shabaab's jihad to his native Somaliland.

Somaliland's democratic political system and desire for independence are to Shaykh Abdi Godane what Egypt's secular state is to Ayman al-Zawahiri and Saudi Arabia's friendship with the United States is to Osama bin Laden – blasphemy. Abdi Godane is a Salafist who fought with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan until the end of 2001 and calls for jihad "until Islamic law is implemented on all continents of the world" (AFP, May 13, 2009).

Shaykh Abdi Godane began his rise to leadership in al-Shabaab after he was released from prison in Somaliland in 2006 and then fled to southern Somalia to join the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) in its fight against Ethiopia. He became the leader of al-Shabaab in 2007 and has since courted Osama bin Laden by modeling al-Shabaab after al-Qaeda. He declared himself "in service to bin Laden" in 2009 and instituted a chain of command patterned after al-Qaeda, including individuals assigned to financing operations, people charged with recruiting, training and preparing suicide bombers, and an intelligence gathering arm. [1]

Abdi Godane's political beliefs hold no sympathy for democratic institutions, which he sees as imitations of Christian and Jews. He instructs Muslims to refrain from these "Western ways" and accuses the "un-Islamic" government of Somaliland of achieving only low income, unemployment, poor infrastructure and economic collapse (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], June 24, 2010; September 3, 2009). The way forward that he offers Somalia is to create an Islamic Emirate, incorporating southern Somalia, Puntland, Somaliland, the Ogaden region in Ethiopia, and ethnic Somali areas in northern Kenya (Al-Arabiya.net, June 26).

Ayman al-Zawahiri acknowledged al-Shabaab's membership in the international jihadist brotherhood when he responded to Shaykh Abdi Godane's pledge to bin Laden and called al-Shabaab the "lions of Islam in Somalia" (As-Sahab Media Foundation, November 10, 2008).

Al-Shabaab has not carried out a major attack in Somaliland since October 2008, when Abdi Godane organized three suicide bombings in Hargeisa on the United Nations Development Program office, the Ethiopian consular mission and the Presidential Palace. However, this does not mean Abdi Godane has not been involved in plotting attacks in the region since then. Somaliland's security forces foiled at least three al-Shabaab plots in the country in 2010, twice in the month before the June 26 presidential election:

- On January 9, Somaliland security forces in Hargeisa uncovered six rockets and two mortars at a mosque where the imam had spoken out against militant suicide bombings (Reuters, January 9).
- On June 10, Somaliland police in Burao arrested a sleeper cell of seven male and four female al-Shabaab militants with small arms, hand grenades and explosives in their possession (Somaliland Press, June 10).
- On June 14, Somaliland police in Gabiley arrested suspected al-Shabaab militants, including two men and two women, one of whom was carrying explosives in her luggage bag (Somaliland Press, June 14).

The arrests of the al-Shabaab militants and prevention of any disruption at the June 26 general elections was an important victory for Somaliland's security forces

because they came amidst well-publicized threats from Abdi Godane to make Somalilanders “face the consequences” of casting their ballots (Kulmiye.org, June 28). Three days before the election, he released an audio recording on the internet encouraging Muslims “to fight... till everyone is killed; that is much easier than legalizing the devil’s principles such as constitutions or making a ruler who governs against Allah’s laws” (Reuters, June 25). These threats never materialized thanks to the work of Somaliland’s security forces, but al-Shabaab will try to strike again. After claiming credit for the July 11 World Cup bombings, Abdi Godane announced that “what happened in Kampala is just the beginning” (AFP, July 15).

If the leaders of Kulmiye, the winning party in the election, are as serious as their actions indicate, al-Shabaab will face increasing difficulty in carrying out attacks in Somaliland. Last January, Kulmiye’s top diplomat visited Washington D.C. to discuss Somaliland’s need for economic and political support, and to find a viable solution to the security issues in the Horn of Africa (Somaliland Press, January 22). After winning the election, Kulmiye has taken steps to strengthen its security, deepening alliances with Ethiopia and Britain. In July, British intelligence officers met with Somaliland’s new president in Hargeisa to inspect an office designed to monitor al-Shabaab and Ethiopian security operations. British intelligence has also provided special counterterrorism training to the head of Somaliland’s Criminal Investigation Department in Addis Ababa (Somaliland Press, July 17).

Kulmiye’s international relations strategy is also set at countering Abdi Godane’s anti-democracy, anti-Somaliland independence, anti-Western message. Somaliland’s new foreign affairs secretary articulated the government’s goals to include: 1) consolidating Somaliland’s democratic system to deny extremist groups the opportunity to find a safe haven, 2) preserving Somaliland’s national sovereignty and achieving political recognition, and 3) improving Somaliland’s international relations by deepening the country’s engagement with the African states, America and Europe (Kulmiye.org, May 21).

In 2010 al-Shabaab has captured areas in Central Somalia as far north as the Galgaduud region, while the suicide bombings in Kampala show the group is presenting its credentials as a bona fide international jihad group – not merely a local militia (Garowe Online, April 29). Al-Shabaab’s now undisputed capacity to

strike outside southern Somalia will force Kulmiye to be vigilant and coordinate its security with its allies in the West and Ethiopia.

Somaliland’s democratic system provides optimism to Somalis in an otherwise war torn country, but Somaliland’s democracy is also the reason why al-Shabaab will never reconcile with the country. Shaykh Abdi Godane’s Islamist vision for Somalia loses credibility when democratic Somaliland has peace and stability. Therefore, Somaliland must not only fight to keep al-Shabaab militants out, but also to preserve its institutions, which may be the strongest counterterrorism weapon.

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Notes

1. Godane’s pledge to Bin Laden was part of a 48 minute video released to jihadi websites on September 22, 2009. See AFP, September 22, 2009.

Round Seven? The Houthi Rebellion in Northern Yemen

By Michael Horton

Houthi rebels operating in northern Yemen accepted the six conditions that were set by the government of Yemen for a cessation of hostilities on February 12. [1] In response to their acceptance of the six conditions, Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh declared a ceasefire and ordered an end to the heavy aerial bombardment of Houthi positions by the Yemeni Air Force. In return, the Houthis released 178 civilian and military prisoners including a still-disputed number of Saudi soldiers (hoodonline.org,

July 10). Though not formally one of the six conditions, an exchange of prisoners was part of the ceasefire and formed part of an expanded agreement between the government of Yemen and the Houthis. However, the Yemeni government has not yet released any of the estimated 1,000 Houthi prisoners. Yemen's Supreme Security Committee has repeatedly cited the Houthis' failure to comply with all of the six conditions as one of the reasons for the delay (Saba News Agency, July 31).

Since the ceasefire was announced, sporadic fighting between Houthi forces and government troops and aligned tribes has occurred throughout the governorate of Sadah and in the northern part of the governorate of Amran. The most intense fighting has been along the Sana'a to Sadah road near Harf Sufyan in the governorate of Amran and in the Majz district of the governorate of Sadah. On July 26, Houthi forces overran a Yemeni Army outpost at al-Zaala in the Harf Sufyan district of Amran governorate and captured 200 soldiers (*Yemen Post*, July 27; Xinhua, July 31). On August 1, a spokesman for Houthi leader Abdul Malik al-Houthi announced that the movement was releasing the soldiers as a sign of good will before the upcoming Ramadan festival (*The National*, August 1; Sadah Online, August 3). The spokesman also called on the Yemeni government to fulfill its commitment and release the Houthi prisoners.

Renewed Fighting

The July 26 attack on the army outpost is evidence of a significant escalation of hostilities between the government and Houthi forces. More importantly, it demonstrates that the Houthis' ability to organize and launch operations has not been significantly diminished. The army outpost at al-Zaala that was overrun lies on the strategically vital Sana'a to Sadah road, a mere 130 km north of the Yemeni capital of Sana'a. The outpost was staffed by a combination of elite Republican Guard troops and a contingent of the Military Police. Both forces are considerably better trained and equipped than the conscripts and tribal levies that make up the bulk of the Yemeni Army. The fact that the Houthis were able to launch an effective operation against elite troops well outside their home governorate of Sadah must serve as a "shot across the bow" for the Saleh regime.

The area around al-Zaala in the Harf Sufyan district of Amran governorate has seen the most significant fighting over the last two months. Much of the fighting has taken place between the Houthis and the Bin Aziz tribe,

which is largely aligned with the Yemeni government. The tribe is headed by Shaykh Sagheer bin Aziz who is also a member of Parliament and a member of the ruling General People's Congress (GPC). Fighting between the Bin Aziz tribe and the Houthis broke out in mid-July, when Houthi fighters, under the command of Abdu Haidar, besieged Shaykh Sagheer's family compound. The battle led to an estimated 40 casualties, with Abdu Haidar and Shaykh Sagheer's nephew among the dead.

Apart from the fact that the Bin Aziz fought alongside government troops in the most recent campaign against the Houthis, the Bin Aziz have also been instrumental in cutting the road from Sana'a to Sadah which passes through part of their tribal lands. In an attempt to put pressure on the Houthis, the Saleh government has imposed a periodic blockade of traffic to Sadah, including a blockade on food. A number of smugglers' routes to the Houthi stronghold in the Marran Mountains also pass through the district of Harf Sufyan. These routes are essential for moving men and materiel. Contacts within Yemen have suggested that the Bin Aziz may have been attempting to secure some of these routes with the help of elite Yemeni troops in addition to blockading the main road. The sporadic fighting came to a head when the Houthis launched their largely successful offensive on the army outpost at al-Zaala. The Houthis' release of the captured soldiers was likely tied to an agreement by the government to reopen the Sana'a – Sadah road. Before the offensive on the post at al-Zaala, the government was careful to point out that the latest round of fighting did not involve government troops but was instead limited to tribal elements. The government's expanded use of tribal levies in the last campaign against the Houthis has further blurred the line between government troops and tribal fighters.

Shifting Loyalties

The extensive use of tribal levies in the 2009-2010 campaign against the Houthis has upset the fragile tapestry of tribal alliances in northern Yemen. The numerous tribes and clans that were encouraged to fight against the Houthis are now demanding payment for their services. While much of this payment will be in the traditional form of weapons, ammunition and cash, favors such as jobs in ministries and local government will also be expected. In the past, President Saleh and his close advisers have been able to balance the payments in accordance with the prestige and perceived power of the various tribes, clans and sub-clans. With the expense of a multi-front insurgency and declining oil exports, the

Saleh regime is increasingly unable to dole out the gifts and favors that it has long used to control the tribes. Over the month of June in the al-Ashah district of Amran, tribesmen launched attacks on military convoys and confiscated military hardware because they have not yet been paid for their service in the last campaign against the Houthis (*Yemen Post*, June 24). [2]

Houthi leaders have seized on the December 17, 2009 American missile strike on suspected al-Qaeda camps in Arhab and Abyan that killed 14 women and 21 children and the May 24 U.S. missile attack in Ma'rib that killed Deputy Governor Jabir al-Shabwani as ammunition in their criticism of the regime (*al-Quds al-Arabi*, June 27; *Yemen Observer*, June 1, *Telegraph*, June 7, 2009; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, July 16). In a wide ranging interview with a writer from the Houthi bimonthly publication *Truth*, Houthi leader Abdul Malik argued that the recent attack in Ma'rib and the December cruise missile strike are further proof of his long held view that President Saleh is an American puppet (Sadah Online, August 4). The view that the Saleh regime is manipulated by American and 'Zionist' interests is one of the important themes that runs through the Houthi narrative and is one of the minor justifications they give for the rebellion. While it is unlikely that tribes already allied with the Saleh regime would switch sides due to the UAV and cruise missile attacks, the attacks have added to the legitimacy of parts of the Houthi narrative. It is important to note that the powerful northern tribes whose support is crucial for the continuance of the Saleh regime are predominately Zaidi. While the tribes are certainly not as stridently "Zaidi" as the Houthis, there are some extant sympathies. [3]

National Reconciliation?

On July 17, the ruling General People's Congress (GPC) and the Joint Meeting Parties (JMP) opposition coalition signed a framework that is intended to lead to the creation of a national unity government (*Yemen Observer*, July 19). The more immediate goal is to create a 100 member committee that would engage in a national dialogue tasked with debating proposed governmental reforms and constitutional amendments. President Saleh has, via advisers, indicated that the Houthis would be allowed to participate in this national dialogue. The JMP has sent a committee to Sadah to discuss the framework with Houthi representatives. In his interview with *Truth*, Abdul Malik indicated that the Houthis would consider joining in this national dialogue (Sadah Online, August 4). However, in the

aftermath of the attack on GPC MP Sagheer Bin Aziz, a 60-member bloc of GPC MP's has threatened to boycott the dialogue if it includes the Houthis.

Preparations for another War

Despite tentative steps towards reconciliation, there are signs that the Saleh regime and the Houthis are preparing for another war. Contacts within Yemen have stated that a number of new Yemeni Army training facilities and arms depots have been created in the governorate of al-Jawf southeast of Sadah. The Houthis, in violation of the conditions of the ceasefire, have not surrendered any of their weapons. On the contrary, there is ample evidence that the Houthis are adding to their stockpiles. The recent attack on the army outpost at al-Zaala likely resulted in a considerable haul of weapons. The price of ammunition, though also affected by the growing insurgency in the south, continues to increase. In particular the price of 7.62 x 51mm ammunition for the Houthis' much favored G3 rifle has increased five-fold in the last two months. Additionally the cost of basic foodstuffs such as flour and rice has soared even when priced in U.S. dollars and Saudi Riyals. [4]. This increase in the price of foodstuffs extends to the neighboring governorate of Hajjah, where the Houthi rebels have traditionally engaged in procurement activities. Contacts in the area suggest that this is evidence that both concerned locals and Houthi rebels are stockpiling food.

Conclusion

Despite the formal ceasefire and tentative steps toward establishing some kind of national dialogue regarding reconciliation, it is probable that another war between the Houthis and Yemeni government forces will break out. It is unlikely the Houthis will fully comply with the six conditions set by the government in February. Renewed peace efforts by the government of Qatar are underway and it has been reported that officials within the Qatari government are in direct contact with Houthi representatives (*Yemen Observer*, August 3). The Houthis have stated that they welcome Qatari efforts (Sadah Online, July 20). However, the framework of the 2007/08 Doha Agreement is not particularly realistic. The agreement stipulates that the Houthis give up all their medium size weapons and that the Houthi leadership should travel to Qatar where they must remain until the government gives them permission to return.

The expanding insurgency in southern Yemen and the country's continuing economic decline are both putting pressure on the already severely strained Saleh regime. It is likely that the Houthis will take advantage of this weakness and persist in their sporadic but often well-coordinated attacks on government troops and government allied tribes. In order to maintain the legitimacy of his regime, President Saleh will be forced to respond.

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Notes

1. Feb. 12 GoY/ Houthi six point agreement: 1. Adhere to ceasefire, open the roads, remove land mines, descend from mountainous heights, and end digging of trenches near military points and along roads; 2. Withdraw from districts and not interfere with the business of local government officials; 3. Return captured Saudi and Yemeni weapons, ammunition, and equipment; 4. Release all Yemeni and Saudi military and civilian detainees; 5. Adhere to law and constitution; 6. Cease all aggressive activities within and against Saudi territory.
2. Author's interviews with a resident of Amran, February and April 2010.
3. Zaidism has traditionally held that while any learned and physically fit man can assume the Imamate, the aspirant imam must be a descendent of the Prophet, a *sayyid*. This emphasis on descent and the long assumed privilege of the *sayyid* class was one of the defining issues during the 1962-70 Republican vs. Royalist civil war and remains a contentious issue with many members of the *ghabail* or tribal class. The GoY often claims that the Houthis, a *sayyid* family, want to bring back the Imamate. The Houthis have disputed this claim and in some political speeches available on cassette tape, prominent Houthis and Houthi followers have disputed the traditional belief that an imam must be a *sayyid*. Recent generations of Houthis have been careful to intermarry with prominent families of the *ghabail*.
4. In late July/ early August the Yemeni Riyal suffered another round of rapid depreciation against the U.S. dollar despite intervention efforts on the part of the Yemeni Central Bank.