



Terrorism Monitor

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Cameroon Pirates in 2008

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FORMER AQAP INTELLIGENCE CHIEF DESCRIBES EGYPTIAN ROLE IN AL-QAEDA

A Kuwaiti daily recently published a transcript of the interrogation of Shaykh Ibrahim Muhammad Salih al-Banna (a.k.a. Abu Ayman al-Masri), the Egyptian former intelligence chief of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) who was arrested in early August (*al-Jarida*, November 4; almethaq.net, August 16). The interrogation, conducted by Yemeni authorities and copied to Egyptian security services, contained many details about the role of Egyptian militants in creating both core al-Qaeda and AQAP.

As a member of the militant Tala'al al-Fateh (Vanguards of Conquest, a branch of Egyptian Islamic Jihad - EIJ), al-Banna found himself pursued by police in 1993 after the group attempted to assassinate Egyptian Prime Minister Atif Sidqi. Al-Banna and a number of other militants forged travel documents and escaped to Yemen, where they found refuge with a community of EIJ members in Abyan led by Muhammad al-Zarqawi, brother of Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri. The Egyptians began organizing and moved to Amran governorate in northern Yemen, where Ayman al-Zawahiri arrived in 1994 to take over command of the group.

Using funds supplied by Ayman al-Zawahiri and later Osama bin Laden, the group began making large purchases of arms from Yemeni suppliers and a "chieftain of a large tribe in Darfur" who al-Banna identified as "Chief Dardiri," but failed to identify the tribe. According to al-Banna, these arms were shipped by fishing boat to Yemen before being delivered to the group's farm in Amran.

Al-Banna selected one of his Egyptian students, Abd al-Mun'im bin Izz al-Din al-Badawi (a.k.a. Abu Ayub al-Masri; a.k.a. Abu Hamza al-Muhajir) to take over training recruits in intelligence work. As al-Badawi's patron in al-Qaeda, al-Banna was able to recommend the young Egyptian intelligence expert as the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq: "Abd-al-Mun'im had reached a stage when he knew what was happening inside the palaces of the Arab amirs, kings, and presidents. He was a powerful leader of the intelligence faction and Bin Laden used to call him 'the legend' due to his superior ability to find out news and gather information with utmost precision." Al-Banna's sponsorship and training of al-Badawi has been confirmed in the interrogation of other AQAP suspects (*al-Watan* [Kuwait], August 16).

Al-Badawi left for Afghanistan with documents forged by al-Banna in 2000. He would later succeed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi as leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq on the basis of al-Banna's recommendation to Ayman al-Zawahiri. Al-Badawi was killed during a joint Iraqi/American raid last April.

Al-Banna claims al-Qaeda established ties with Huthist rebel leaders in northern Yemen and "all the chieftains of the southern tribes," as well as enlisting in its ranks "a very large number of Yemeni tribesmen, mujahideen and fugitives from Yemeni security." According to al-Banna, the Huthists made "hundreds" of purchases of all types of arms from al-Qaeda.

Al-Banna says the number of Egyptians in AQAP decreased after Nasir al-Wuhayshi took command in 2006 following his escape from a prison in Sana'a. Al-Wuhayshi was al-Zawahiri's choice as leader, due to his knowledge of the Yemeni tribes and his close ties to youth groups and adolescent mujahideen.

The fall issue of AQAP's English language e-magazine, *Inspire*, contained an article by al-Banna entitled "Obama's Ploy and the Peak of Islam." After describing the 9/11 attack as "a virtuous act," al-Banna went on to say President Obama is deceiving the American people and warned the latter, "We will not stop targeting you on your soil and elsewhere as long as you are occupying our land and bombing our homes and killing our children, women and elderly, and as long as you are supporting the Jews in their occupation of Jerusalem." If al-Banna is the true author, the article must have been written before his arrest in early August.

Al-Banna's apparent arrest and confession came despite the Yemen Interior Ministry's earlier claim that he was killed in a missile strike on his vehicle in January, a claim quickly denied by AQAP (AFP January 16; al-Jazeera, January 18; Saidaonline.com, January 16).

There appears to be much in al-Banna's interrogation report that is questionable. While providing an insider's detailed information on many issues, al-Banna appears to know nothing of matters that might implicate him in any actual al-Qaeda operations subject to severe punishment. Though he asserts he and al-Badawi played major roles in recruiting, arming and training al-Qaeda personnel, al-Banna professes no knowledge of the 9/11 operation, saying, "I do not have any information about it and I do not know who executed it." The Darfur arms connection sounds improbable, at best. Darfur tends to import rather than export arms, and it seem unlikely that a Darfuri tribal chief could contribute much to the "thousands of shipments" of "all types of light weapons, rocket launchers, hand grenades and land mines" that al-Banna says were forwarded to al-Qaeda command in Pakistan and Afghanistan. The well-stocked arms market of Yemen would seem a much more likely source for such arms.

Much of al-Banna's confession seems to implicate the southern secessionists and the Zaydi Shiite Huthist rebels of north Yemen as willing associates of al-Qaeda, a claim long advanced by the Yemen government with varying degrees of acceptance. Al-Banna's claim to have never actively participated in any operations or to have any knowledge of who was involved is likewise suspect.

IS LEBANON'S HEZBOLLAH EQUIPPED WITH NEW IRANIAN DRONES?

As Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah movement and the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) continue on what seems an inevitable path to a new round of open conflict, a report has emerged claiming Hezbollah's armed wing has recently received a number of Iran's most advanced unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), courtesy of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) (*al-Siyasah* [Kuwait], November 6).

The report claims that sources close to high-ranking members of Hezbollah's military force have revealed the movement has taken possession of three types of Iranian-supplied UAVs. These include Chinese-made drones, Iranian-made Ra'd ("Thunder") drones and, most importantly, the Iranian-made long-range Karrar

drones, introduced on August 22. According to the sources, these weapons are being kept in the Bekaa Valley of east Lebanon.

The Karrar (“Striker”) is a turbojet-powered drone capable of long-range reconnaissance and attack missions with a flight range of 1,000 km at low or high altitudes and a flight speed of 900 to 1,000 k/p/h, according to Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Ahmad Vahidi (Defense Update, August 24). The four meter-long drone can carry two 115 kilogram bombs or a guided missile of 227 kilograms and can be deployed on the back of a truck to a ground-launch position where it can be fired with the aid of a jet-fuelled take-off system. Mobility is an important consideration for Hezbollah, all of whose territory is within easy range of Israeli aerial counterstrikes. The response time of Israeli warplanes to mobile missile launches during the 2006 conflict was typically less than ten minutes, leaving little time for launch crews and equipment to clear the area. The Karrar can be retrieved by its operators through the deployment of a rear-mounted parachute.

Iran opened two new production lines in February for the manufacture of Ra’d and Nazir (“Herald”) short-range, low-altitude UAVs with reduced radar-detection signatures. The Iranian Air Force also reports the development of its first stealth drone, the Sofreh Mahi (“Manta Ray”) (Press TV, February 8; Fars News Agency, February 8).

Israel is preparing a multi-level missile defense system, with the new Iron Dome system expected to provide a defense against short-range rocket attacks. The Iron Dome system, however, is very complex and training its military operators has proven a larger challenge than anticipated, causing a delay in deployment. Its manufacturer, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, has developed a cheaper and simpler version of the system called “Iron Flame.” This stripped-down surface-to-surface missile system can carry a variety of different warheads for various missions (Defense Update, November 10). The Israeli press quoted senior Israeli military sources as saying Iron Dome will now be deployed only in the case of massive rocket attacks from Gaza or south Lebanon (*Jerusalem Post*, November 8). The disparate cost between the complex Tamir interceptor missile used in the Iron Dome system and the cheap Qassam or Katyusha rockets it is meant to destroy is a major concern in deciding when and where to deploy Iron Dome.

Should reports of Hezbollah’s new drone be accurate, the question is whether these weapons have been supplied for Hezbollah’s use in retaliation against a new Israeli offensive or whether their deployment is intended to make them available in response to an Israeli or American strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities. It is important to note that this latest report suggests that, as in the case of earlier Iranian supplies of advanced weaponry to Hezbollah, the new UAVs remain under the control of the IRGC trainers assigned to their management and cannot be used without the direct authorization of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Hoseyni Khamene’i.

Al-Siyasah is a firm opponent of Iran and Lebanon’s Hezbollah. It has reported in the past that the core al-Qaeda leadership is based in Iran and that Hezbollah is stockpiling Iranian-built chemical weapons (*al-Siyasah*, June 7, 2010; September 3, 2009). Neither allegation has been confirmed.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq Hopes Baghdad Church Attack Will Involve Egypt's Traditional Salafists in Jihad

By Murad Batal al-Shishani

Gunmen from the al-Qaeda-affiliated Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) took hostages in a Syrian Catholic church in central Baghdad on October 31. About 52 people were killed and 67 injured after Iraqi security forces stormed the church. The ISI claimed responsibility for the hostage-taking and also threatened to attack the Coptic Church in Egypt if it did not release two Coptic women the group claimed were being held and tortured in a Christian monastery after allegedly converting to Islam (for the full controversy, see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 4).

The self-styled Ministry of War of the ISI released a claim of responsibility that included an account of the terrorist attack describing a five hour battle in which sixty Iraqi Special Forces soldiers were killed despite the intervention of American warplanes (though there is no evidence for either of these claims):

The security apparatus responded with their usual foolishness, jumping to confrontation and giving no regards to the lives of the captives, after of course a media blackout about the demands of the mujahideen. [1] However, the sons of the *Sahabah* [Companions of the Prophet] were lying in wait for them. The massacre started by annihilating the first wave of apostates which tried to enter the building through the detonation of a VBIED [vehicle-borne improvised explosive device] and a number of IEDs planted around the building, which led to the death and injury of tens of those called the "Gold Team" [Iraqi Special Forces], their body parts flinging far all over the area (Al-Fajr Media Center, November 2).

Leaders of Iraq's Shi'a community were united in their condemnation of the attack on the church. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani demanded Iraqi security forces take stronger measures to protect Iraqi citizens and Sayyid Ammar al-Hakim, chairman of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), called for compensation for the families of the victims (Fars News Agency, November 3; *al-Sabah al-Jadid*, November 6). In an Arabic-language

discussion on a Tehran television station, leading Sadrist Abd al-Hadi al-Muhammadawi and representatives from Iraq's State of Law Coalition and the Fadhilah Islamic Party insisted the attack bore all the hallmarks of al-Qaeda and declined repeated invitations from the program's presenter to implicate the United States in the attack. There were, however, suggestions that the assailants may have been supported by a country that shared their takfiri, Salafist and Wahhabi ideologies, a veiled reference to Saudi Arabia (al-Alam Television, November 3).

In Iran, a statement released by the Foreign Ministry made no mention of the controversy over the two Coptic women, focusing instead on suggestions that the attack was intended to derail efforts to form a new government in Baghdad: "Experience has shown that whenever Iraqi politicians come close to practical and logical mechanisms for the formation of a national unity government, the terrorist groups as a tool in the hand of the internal and regional streams have made attempts to foil those measures" (Fars News Agency, November 3).

In Egypt, the reaction of Islamists expectedly was against al-Qaeda's attack and threats of further sectarian violence, but the position of Egypt's Salafist groups remained unclear.

The Shaykh of Cairo's al-Azhar University, Ahmad al-Tayib, issued a statement condemning the attack from France, where he is undergoing surgery. He stated, "Muslims are innocent of these crimes which tarnish the image of Islam and are against Shari'a" (al-Quds al-Arabi, February 2).

Islamists in the Egyptian opposition also denounced the attack. The Muslim Brotherhood stated that it "rejects any ridiculous accusations made against the Christian sanctuaries in Egypt from anybody and under any pretext." Unlike the Iraqi Shiite politicians, however, the Brotherhood held "the U.S. occupation responsible for the victims of this horrendous attack" (ikhwanonline.com, November 2).

Egypt's Islamic Group (al-Jama'a al-Islamiya) issued a statement saying that "the group rejects categorically any attempt to involve Egypt's Copts in the sectarian fights going on in Iraq. The solution to the sectarian tension will only be achieved through the framework of the Egyptian state and via its official institutions" (egyig.com, November 4).

Egypt is currently experiencing an increase in the public activities of traditional Salafists who represent an apolitical movement and oppose al-Qaeda and affiliated Salafi-Jihadi militant groups. The activities of the traditional Salafist groups typically involve social efforts such as charity and service to local communities, but sectarian tension has recently made these groups more politically active.

These groups have arranged weekly demonstrations demanding the “release” of Camilia Shihata and following the attack in Baghdad they were preparing for even further demonstrations (*Al-Shuruq*, November 4). However, it seems that al-Qaeda’s attack and the further threats to Egypt’s Copts led to the postponement of new demonstrations for fear of reaction by Egypt’s security forces (*Al-Yawm al-Sabi*, November 4).

The sectarian tensions in Egypt are among a number of socio-economic factors which the Salafi-Jihadists of Iraq are attempting to exploit. To do so effectively they are trying to mobilize their less political rivals, the traditional Salafists. The latter have recently been empowered by the Egyptian regime to weaken the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood, but it is expected that the government will nonetheless take strong measures against the Salafists for their involvement in promoting sectarian tensions. This may in fact play into the hands of the Salafist extremists, as a conflict between Egypt’s traditional Salafists and state security services may provide an opening for the Salafi-Jihadis to return to Egypt.

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Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Africa-to-Europe Narco-Trafficking Connection

By Dario Cristiani

Of the various Salafi-Jihadi militant groups currently operating, few have been as aggressive in their pursuit of financing as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), which has added narcotics trafficking to its staples of kidnapping for ransom as well as the smuggling of cigarettes and fuel in the wild and poorly patrolled border regions of the Sahel/Sahara region.

During a recent visit to Spain, Moroccan Foreign Minister Taieb Fassi Fihri expressed his alarm over the rise in cocaine shipments smuggled through Morocco to Europe (*Jeune Afrique*, November 3). Morocco’s Minister of Interior Taieb Cherkaoui announced the arrest of 34 people in October, all members of an AQIM-affiliated cell with connections in South America, Africa and Spain (*Le Matin*, Oct 17). In late 2009, a Boeing 727 full of drugs and other illegal products landed in a remote northeastern area of Mali. It was a clear signal of the increasing importance of this region for global narco-trafficking (AFP, December 11, 2009; *Le Figaro*, March 19; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, January 7). Then in December 2009, three citizens of Mali alleged to be AQIM associates were arrested in Ghana after they told undercover agents of the American Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) they had agreed to transport cocaine through Africa to Europe for AQIM and the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC - Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), demonstrating an emerging reality which links terrorist groups and narco-traffickers in a new, heterodox and business-oriented alliance (VOA News, December 29, 2009; *Le Parisien*, December 22, 2009).

The Routes: Africa as a Safe-Haven for Narcotics Traffickers

Drugs are smuggled from Latin America to the rich European market through the countries of West Africa and the Maghreb region (*Le Figaro*, November 20, 2009). The Sahel region has emerged as the main hub for this trafficking. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that between 50 and 60 tons of cocaine from Latin America goes to Europe

through the Sahel area every year (*El Pais*, March 15). Drugs arrive from Colombia, by far the most important among Latin American state in this sector, but also from other countries such as Peru, Bolivia, Venezuela and Brazil. These loads are dispatched to western Africa, which provides a perfect landing place due to the low capacity of many countries in the region in controlling their borders and national territories. Moreover, the endemic corruption among officials makes it even easier for narco-traffickers to operate in these spaces. The most important geographical targets are:

- Guinea Bissau, a very small and poor state but a sort of global hub for drug smuggling (UOL Noticias, December 12, 2007).
- Gambia (*Jeune Afrique*, June 15).
- Mauritania, which is trying to increase its effectiveness in reducing such trafficking (AFP/Rim24, November 3).
- Mali (*Le Pays*, November 17, 2009).

AQIM's Role: Geographical Know How, Security and Stable Income

Drug smuggling activities have often been an important tool for terrorist groups to finance themselves. Islamist militants, however, are faced with Islamic injunctions against the use of narcotics. Although considered *haram* (illicit), according to Islamic beliefs and sensibility, the need to find remunerative ways to fund operations allows these groups to have a sort of “ideological flexibility” in which the importance of the aim can reduce the impact of the impurity of the means, a typical *takfiri* practice. More traditional Islamist groups have been reluctant to get involved in the narcotics trade, while some others have strayed far from traditional Islamic mindsets. Islamist groups in the Maghreb have already played a role in the drug trade – in particular the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), predecessor of AQIM, was already involved in these activities; AQIM could, therefore, count on a certain experience in the trade. AQIM has strongly increased its involvement in illegal trafficking since 2008. There has been a change in the intensity and in the relative importance of these activities for this group. Weakened by Algerian counterterrorism activities and a decline in popular support, the group found itself with few

members and poor financial resources. At that point, parasitic economic practices became key activities of the group (see *Terrorism Monitor*, January 28).

AQIM also offers security for traffickers operating in the region. AQIM taxes the shipments and provides geographical guidance and transport protection. Its members and the galaxy of local, small affiliated groups – not necessarily Islamist but mostly local criminal gangs seeking new business opportunities – have a deep knowledge of the Sahel/Sahara region, which is geographically harsh and difficult to control for national authorities. The lack of strong state authority and the importance of personal, tribal and ethnic loyalties make it easier to corrupt officials, a fundamental step to guaranteeing the passage of these illegal goods. The increasing regionalization of the movement - an unforeseen effect of the successful action of Algerian authorities against it - and its pluralization - AQIM is mainly Algerian but is opening up to young Islamists coming from other Sahel countries - make it easier for AQIM to operate in the countries of the Sahel region (see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 24; March 26).

AQIM protects the shipments with their arms and provides the vehicles to transport them to Morocco, which is the main African terminal (*L'Economiste du Maroc*, October 19). They are also involved in the logistical organization of the transports through the Mediterranean, dealing with criminal groups specialized in illegal sea transportation to the southern European coasts. The supplies are shipped to Spain, the main doorway for these drugs and the main center of distribution in Europe (*El Pais*, March 1).

Conclusions

Taking a leading role in narcotics trafficking through Africa allows AQIM to finance its operations through a remunerative, constant and relatively stable source of income (since the demand for drugs is both stable and high). It helps AQIM pay for weapons and necessary equipment and, lastly, to pay its members well and regularly, an important consideration in making AQIM more attractive to local youth.

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Cameroon Rebels Threaten Security in Oil-Rich Gulf of Guinea

By Andrew McGregor

A hybrid criminal/separatist movement operating in the swampy peninsula of Bakassi is now targeting oil industry infrastructure in the Gulf of Guinea in its effort to shake off Cameroonian control of the region, which was administered by Nigeria until last year. Like neighboring Nigeria, Cameroon has suffered a loss in oil production as a result of the activities of coastal “pirates,” recording a 13% drop in production in 2009. Though much of Cameroon’s oil industry is still in the exploration stage, there are high expectations for further discoveries in the area. The Gulf of Guinea is a resource-rich area, with Angola, Nigeria, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea already major oil producers. Ghana is expected to soon join their ranks as Washington estimates the Gulf of Guinea region will supply a quarter of U.S. oil supplies by 2015 (Reuters, May 19).

Cameroon is the twelfth-largest oil producer in Africa, with estimated reserves of roughly 200 million barrels in the offshore Rio del Rey Basin, the coastal Douala/Kribi-Camp Basin and the Logone Birni Basin in northern Cameroon. Despite this, Cameroon’s production has dropped from a 2005 high of 94,000 barrels per day to a current 77,000 barrels per day.

Covering an area of roughly 257 square miles, Bakassi is composed largely of creeks and mangrove covered islands, making it hard to patrol and a haven for smuggling activities. The abundant fishing grounds off Bakassi provide a livelihood for most of the population, most of whom are “Calabar people” from Nigeria’s Akwa Ibom State and Cross River State.

Violence on the Cameroon Coast

Fears of a Nigerian-style insurgency based on oil production increased with an attack on security forces near the offshore Moudi oil terminal (run by Franco-British Perenco) on the night of November 16. The attack, claimed by the “Africa Marine Commando,” left six dead, including three civilians, two members of Cameroon’s Bataillon d’Intervention Rapide (BIR – Rapid Intervention Battalion) and one of the assailants (*Quotidien Mutations* [Yaoundé], November 18; *La Nouvelle Expression* [Douala], November 18; AFP, November 18). Cameroonian security officials later said the attackers had been in contact with Perenco and the

French Total oil firm for several days before the assault, demanding payment of a “security tax” to continue operations. Cameroonian officials have criticized the foreign oil companies for paying protection money to insurgents and bandits, just as local fishermen do (AFP, November 18). Boats that have paid the tax are given a small flag to indicate payment has been made.

The same Africa Marine Commando (AMC) also claimed responsibility for the abduction of six sailors from a Belgian ship anchored 40 km off Douala last September. An AMC spokesman said the hostages were moved to a camp on Nigerian territory and demanded the release of ten Ijaw fighters in a Cameroonian prison and the immediate opening of direct talks with Cameroon president Paul Biya (*Le Jour* [Yaoundé], September 29). The AMC, which appears to be a faction of the larger Bakassi Freedom Fighters (BFF) movement, also kidnapped seven Chinese fishermen in Cameroonian coastal waters who were later freed in exchange for an undisclosed ransom (Radio France Internationale, March 13).

In May, gunmen in light boats attacked two cargo ships in Douala harbor, kidnapping two Russian crewmen from one ship and looting the safe and abducting the captain of the second ship, a Lithuanian refrigerated vessel (Reuters, May 19). The security of Douala’s port is a major regional concern as Douala acts as the commercial lifeline for the land-locked Central African Republic and Chad, another major petroleum producer which runs its oil through the Chad-Cameroon pipeline to the Cameroon port of Kribi.

The gunmen operating off Cameroon’s coast have carried out several daring raids, including a September 2008 operation in the fishing port of Limbe, in which gunmen landed in boats before breaking into the town’s Amity bank, where they stole several million dollars, killed one person and wounded many others (The Post [Yaoundé], September 29, 2008).

A number of other notable incidents of politically-generated violence have occurred in Bakassi in recent years:

- On November 12, 2007, 21 soldiers were killed in the Bakassi Peninsula by gunmen wearing uniforms. The attack was claimed by the previously unknown “Liberators of the Southern Cameroon People” (IRIN, November 13, 2007; November 20, 2007).

- Ten hostages (six French, two Cameroonians, one Senegalese and one Tunisian) were seized by Bakassi Freedom Fighters under Commander Ebi Dari on the night of October 30-31, 2008 (Radio France Internationale, November 2, 2008; *Jeune Afrique*, December 2).
- Gunmen in a canoe killed a police officer in a motorized canoe off Bakassi in December 2009, with the BFF taking responsibility for the attack (*Le Jour* [Yaoundé], December 21, 2009).

The Dilemma of the Bakassi Peninsula

The complex issue of what nation Bakassi belongs to began with the decision of the Obong (paramount ruler) of Calabar to sign a treaty of protection with the British in 1884, thus making his territory (including the Bakassi peninsula) a British protectorate. Bakassi fell under the Nigerian colonial administration until 1913, when Britain ceded the territory to the neighboring German colony of Kamerun in return for navigation rights to Calabar, an important commercial center. German control was short-lived, with a combined British-French-Belgian invasion force taking control of the colony in 1916 after a year-and-a-half of stiff resistance from a tiny German garrison reinforced by local troops. After the war, most of the former German colony fell under a French mandate, with a smaller portion becoming “the British Cameroons.” This included Bakassi, as recognized in a 1919 treaty with the French. However, when the rest of the former British Cameroons voted by a 1961 plebiscite to join with the new nation of Cameroon rather than join Nigeria, Bakassi remained under Nigerian administration.

After several border clashes with Nigeria over Bakassi and a northern region near Lake Chad, Cameroon took the issue to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 1994. With special reference to the Anglo-German Treaty of 1913 and colonial era diplomatic correspondence between the two imperial powers, the ICJ ruled in favor of Cameroon in 2002, ordering Nigeria to transfer sovereignty over Bakassi to Cameroon, but without requiring any of the Nigerian residents in Bakassi to leave or change their citizenship. The details of the transfer of sovereignty were worked out in the Green Tree Agreement, which was assembled with the additional participation of the United States, Great Britain, France and Equatorial Guinea.

Popular and political opposition to the decision within Nigeria delayed the transfer of sovereignty, though the government neither ratified nor rejected the court’s verdict. In Bakassi itself, there was wide dissatisfaction with the decision in the English-speaking Nigerian majority. As one Bakassi native told a Nigerian daily:

The United Nations should realize that we have the right to decide where we want to be and the right to self-determination. We are Nigerians and here in our ancestral home. You can see some of the graves here dating back to the 19th century. How can you force a strange culture and government on us? We appreciate what the Nigerian government is doing but let it be on record that they have betrayed us and we will fight for our survival and self-determination (*The Guardian* [Lagos], August 18, 2006).

Left in a political limbo, it was unsurprising that many residents of Bakassi tried to take control of their own political future. In July 2006 the Bakassi Movement for Self-Determination (BMSD) joined with the Southern Cameroons Peoples Organization (SCAPO) and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) to declare the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Bakassi, an unsuccessful attempt to found a new nation in the small peninsula that brought out few supporters. After the Nigerian Senate ruled the transfer of sovereignty was illegal in 2007, the three groups again declared the independence of Bakassi in July 2008, this time with BMSD declaring it would subsume all its activities under the “joint leadership” of MEND:

With the withdrawal of Nigerian troops from the Bakassi Peninsula, which takes away our last line of defense as Nigerian citizens and exposes our people to perpetual and permanent bondage of exploitation, under-development and death, which characterized life in the larger Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea over the last 50 years of multi-national oil companies’ occupation with the connivance of Nigerian leaders, we are left with no other option than to defend our land and people by any means necessary (*The Post* [Yaoundé], July 31, 2008).

Noting that the Green Tree Agreement violated the Nigerian constitution and had failed to be ratified by the Nigerian Senate, many Nigerian politicians condemned the transfer and challenged its legality (*This Day*, July

29, 2008). Nigerian residents of Bakassi were given the option of moving to a “New Bakassi” some 30 km inside Nigeria, but the new settlement had no fishing, no roads and few services. Many Nigerians wished to move from Bakassi but remained there after hearing reports of conditions in the new settlement (IRIN, November 13, 2007). The current Obong of Calabar, Edidem Ekpo Okon Abasi Otu V, has led an effort to overturn the ICJ ruling, which he says took no note of the opinions of the residents of Bakassi:

We expected that the government could have come to the people and called for a referendum so that the people would decide what they wanted for themselves. But I don't really know why it had to be done that way. That decision was taken and part of my territory was ceded. I am not happy and my people are not happy about it. Because it [the decision] is now creating problems for my people. We cannot take care of them. We have been struggling with the relocation issue (*Nigerian Compass*, July 9, 2009).

The secessionist SCAPO movement had a different plan - including Bakassi with the Southern Cameroons in a secessionist “Republic of Ambazonia.”

Although the Cameroon government refused to acknowledge the political dimension of the violence in Bakassi by declining to identify the insurgents as anything other than “armed bandits,” the decision to hold the August 14, 2009, ceremony marking the transfer of authority in the Nigerian city of Calabar rather than in Bakassi was interpreted as an acknowledgement that Bakassi was far from secure (Reuters, August 13, 2008; *Jeune Afrique*, December 2, 2008).

Prior to the transfer of power the BFF announced a merger with another militant group battling the military in Bakassi, the Niger Delta Defense and Security Council (NDDSC), with the intention of setting Bakassi “ablaze” and crippling its economy if the handover went through (Africa Press International, July 21, 2009).

Most of the Bakassi militants disarmed on September 25, 2009, but only weeks later ex-rebels claimed Cameroon's security forces took advantage of this to kill six Nigerians in Bakassi territorial waters as a warning to other Nigerians to stay out of Cameroonian territory. Complaints began to be heard from “Nigerian” residents of Bakassi that the Nigerian navy had abandoned them to “the Cameroonian gendarmes” (*Next* [Lagos], October

16, 2009). Several months after the transfer of authority, Dan Don Ateki, the former leader of the disbanded Bakassi Salvation Front (BSF), announced that his movement would renew hostilities against Cameroon government forces in 2010. Claiming 20 Nigerians had been killed by “these heartless Cameroonians” in the first two months after the transfer, Ateki stated: “We are being provoked to take up arms. We have no intention of doing so except for this unprovoked attack.” Ateki was also concerned with the failure of the Cameroon government to pay former militants the daily allowance called for in the transfer terms or to provide skills training or other means of rehabilitation (*Next* [Lagos], January 14).

Secession in the Southern Cameroons

The two mainly English-speaking provinces that joined Cameroon by plebiscite in 1961 (known as the Nord-Ouest and Sud-Ouest provinces of Cameroon, or collectively as the Southern Cameroons) have also become secessionist hotbeds since the 1990s. The secessionist movements active in the South Cameroons usually include Bakassi in their plans for an independent state.

The Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC) is a secessionist group that has adopted a peaceful approach to freeing Southern Cameroons “from the stranglehold of our oppressor - La République du Cameroun” (*The Post* [Yaoundé], October 8). The related SCAPO movement complains that the Cameroon government is interested only in the region's oil and not the Southern Cameroonians or the Bakassians. SCAPO declared the establishment of an independent “Republic of Ambazonia” in August 2006.

Cameroon's Bataillon d'Intervention Rapide (BIR)

The BIR was formed in 1999 as the Bataillon Léger d'Intervention (BLI), a special intervention force designed to eliminate foreign rebels, bandits and deserters (the “coupeurs de routes”) who were destroying the security of Cameroon's northern provinces through cattle rustling, abductions, murder and highway robbery. As part of military reforms carried out in Cameroon in 2001, the unit took on its current BIR designation. BIR officers are selected from the graduates of the Ecole Militaire Interarmées in Yaoundé. The BIR commandos were sent to the coast in 2007 to assist the Delta Command in dealing with a rapidly deteriorating security situation (*The Sun* [Limbe], October 13, 2008).

The BIR's mandate has expanded from providing border security since its formation, however, the elite force has mutated into something of a Praetorian Guard for President Paul Biya, an authoritarian who has ruled Cameroon since 1982, sometimes hiring his own international observers to legitimize his victories in largely unopposed elections.

The unit's reputation in Cameroon took a hit in February 2008, when roughly 100 unarmed civilians were killed when the unit was brought in to Doula and Yaoundé to put down protests against the high cost of living (IRIN, August 29, 2008). Several months later the BIR was again deployed in the cities to prevent protests against the elimination of presidential term limits and the granting of immunity to Biya for all actions taken while in office.

Conclusion

For once, oil is not the main source of the conflict, as Nigeria and Cameroon have agreed to share the revenues from any oil produced off the Bakassi coast. It is, however, an aggravating factor with local militants who complain of the inequitable distribution of oil revenues and the presence of large multinationals with little concern for the well-being of local residents. Bakassi remains largely underdeveloped and mounting insecurity will do little to change this state of affairs. In some cases there is resistance by the Nigerian population to use services such as hospitals provided by Cameroon, as it would be a sign of acceptance of Cameroonian rule (IRIN, August 8, 2009). Most important, however, is the growing perception in Bakassi of the BIR as a colonial-style occupation force with little, if any, local representation. The growing divide between the Anglophone residents of Bakassi and the new Francophone administration invites the spread of a Niger Delta style low-level insurgency that is willing to hobble the development of the oil industry in the Gulf of Guinea through kidnappings and armed attacks to achieve its political aims – independence or a return to Nigerian sovereignty.

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