



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME IX, ISSUE 19 ♦ MAY 12, 2011

IN THIS ISSUE:

BRIEFS.....	1
JIHADIS SHARE METHODS OF BRINGING DOWN U.S. PREDATORS OVER LIBYA By Abdul Hameed Bakier.....	3
EUROPOL IDENTIFIES SECURITY THREAT TO EUROPE FROM NORTH AFRICA'S "ARAB SPRING" By Raffaello Pantucci.....	5
THE ISLAND AT THE CENTER OF THE WORLD: THE SILENCING OF BAHRAIN'S CRISIS By Derek Henry Flood.....	7



Libyans waiting at the port in Benghazi

Terrorism Monitor is a publication of The Jamestown Foundation. The Terrorism Monitor is designed to be read by policy-makers and other specialists yet be accessible to the general public. The opinions expressed within are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of The Jamestown Foundation.

Unauthorized reproduction or redistribution of this or any Jamestown publication is strictly prohibited by law.



For comments or questions about our publications, please send an email to pubs@jamestown.org, or contact us at:

1111 16th St. NW, Suite #320
Washington, DC • 20036
Tel: (202) 483-8888
Fax: (202) 483-8337

Copyright ©2011

LIBYAN BERBERS DEFY REGIME THAT DENIES THEIR EXISTENCE (PART TWO)

Under increasing pressure from Qaddafi loyalists, the Berbers of the Western Mountains of Libya continue to defy military odds in their resistance to a regime that has denied their very existence.

According to one Berber from the mountain town of Nalut: "We have 80 per cent unemployment in Nalut, there are no good roads, no healthcare and the education system is very poor. We are fighting because for 42 years we have been oppressed" (*Irish Times*, April 28). Sixty miles east of Nalut is Zintan, which is currently experiencing bombardment by Grad rockets prior to an expected government advance on the town. A massive flight of Berber civilians to Tunisia is under way, with some 30,000 people having crossed the border at the small crossing point of Dehiba (UNHCR, April 29). Government spokesman Moussa Ibrahim said the regime had proof the refugee crisis was the result of a Qatar-financed campaign to have Berber rebels force family members across the border to prompt NATO air attacks on loyalist forces.

Under Qaddafi's rule, Berber language instruction in schools was banned, as were many forms of Berber cultural expression. Activists have been subject to detention, disappearance, or public execution. According to the regime, the non-Semitic Berber language is nothing but a dialect of Semitic Arabic. In June 2010 Qaddafi told a gathering of journalists and intellectuals that the Berbers were ancient North African tribes that no longer existed and it was therefore "pointless to use the language of these tribes which have disappeared." Claims to the contrary were nothing but "colonialist propaganda" (Jana [Tripoli], June 2, 2010).

A 2008 Libyan diplomatic note to the U.S. mission in Tripoli presented the regime's viewpoint on the Berber question, together with a rather dubious linguistic explanation of why these "early Arabs" had come to be known as "Berbers":

In Great Jamahiriya, there is nothing called Berber community, and the use of this term denotes lack of true knowledge of the history of the region in general and Libya in particular, and does not reflect the reality and nature of the homogeneous Libyan society. All Libyans come from Arab origins; they came from the Arab Peninsula by land (*Barr*) and that's why some tribes that had arrived earlier in Libya are called "*Barbar*" (or Berber). [1]

Most Libyan Berbers are members of the Ibadite sect of Islam rather than the Sunni Malikite school of Islamic jurisprudence dominant elsewhere in Libya. Though many Ibadites reject the connection, the sect is largely believed to be a more moderate form of the early Islamic Kharijite movement, whose strict interpretation of Islam and advocacy of jihad to overthrow Muslim rulers accused of ignoring Islamic law led to two centuries of bitter conflict in the Islamic world. The movement's emphasis on asceticism and egalitarianism attracted both the Bedouin and the Mawali (converts to Islam who found themselves oppressed by Arab Muslims who considered themselves superior due to the Arab origin of Islam). However, the Kharijite injunction to rebel against any ruler who fell short of religious expectations coupled with the tendency of individuals to decide for themselves when a ruler had failed to meet these expectations was not a recipe for political stability.

While the Kharijites ("Those who Secede") were eventually eliminated and their name turned into a pejorative term for non-Orthodox Muslims, a breakaway group known as the Ibadites (for their founder Abd Allah ibn Ibad) maintained many of the core beliefs of the Kharijites while adopting a greater willingness to live in harmony with other Islamic groups. Today, Ibadites are estimated to number 1.5 million and are found mostly in Oman (1.2 million), with smaller communities in Libya, Zanzibar, the Djerba Island of Tunisia and the Mزاب oases in Algeria.

Note:

1. U.S. Embassy Tripoli cable 08TRIPOLI530, July 3, 2008, published by the Telegraph, January 31, 2011.

(Part One of this article appeared in the May 5 issue of *Terrorism Monitor*).

SALAFI-JIHADI IDEOLOGIST CALLS FOR PLANNED RESPONSE TO BIN LADEN ASSASSINATION

A noted Salafi-Jihadist shaykh who is regularly featured on jihadi internet sites has called for a carefully planned retaliation for the killing of late al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden by American Special Forces. Shaykh Hussein bin Mahmud's message, entitled "Osama is Alive!," suggests the death of Bin Laden is actually a victory for the mujahideen in a mixture of commentary, hadiths, poetry and quotations from both the Quran and Sayyid Qutb (ansarullah.com, May 9; the message itself is dated May 3). Shaykh Hussein has also issued statements on the recent Egyptian revolution and ongoing Libyan uprising (see *Terrorism Monitor*, February 10; *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, April 7).

Shaykh Hussein's postings always carry a healthy amount of invective directed towards his targets; in this case he describes President Obama as "you son of an infidel woman!" He continues with a warning: "We say to Obama: we will not cry over Osama. We will not cry over his death. We will accept no condolences for him. We will not eulogize him. We will leave you to celebrate for a few days, and then after it we will continue our Islamic war against infidelity. However, it will not be a war like that of the past."

The American version of Bin Laden's death does not meet with the approval of the shaykh, who suggests other alternatives were more likely: If you killed him face to face, he has sped the journey of some of your troops to Hell, and if not, you struck the house from afar with your aircrafts as you did with Zarqawi, the body of whom you could not dare approach until hours after his death, may Allah have mercy on him and accept him among the martyrs." The shaykh also mocks the United States for spending ten years and "a trillion dollars" in its efforts to find Bin Laden.

Shaykh Hussein calls on the mujahideen to avoid hasty acts of revenge and to select their targets with more care than has been practiced in the past. "We do not want sporadic operations of vengeance. Rather, we want special operations which are properly planned out, with wisdom and patience, so that it can... make America forget the attacks on Washington and New York, and say goodbye to the good old days. This is an extremely

important matter, as individual and random operations of vengeance usually have negative effects.”

Shaykh Hussein discusses the assassinations of a mix of Islamic figures such as the second, third and fourth Caliphs and a variety of more recent political and military Islamist leaders such as Hassan al-Banna, Abdullah Azzam, Omar al-Baghdadi, Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, Ibn al-Khattab and Shamyil Basayev, asserting that in each instance these commanders were ably replaced. In conclusion he reminds his readers that the Prophet Muhammad himself died, yet jihad went on. “Jihad did not stop with the death of the highest commander of the Muslims, so how can these idiots hope that Jihad will stop with the killing of a mere soldier from the soldiers of Islam, which will remain in existence?”

Jihadis Share Methods of Bringing Down U.S. Predators over Libya

By Abdul Hameed Bakier

Most jihadi internet forums have sections on training manuals and special postings for their members. When a jihadi operational priority arises, certain training tactics are typically discussed at length. Since the American deployment of the unmanned Predator drone in a military effort to protect Libyan civilians, jihadi forum members have begun discussing ways of downing the aircraft (al-jahafal.com, April 2).

A forum member nicknamed Nosra, regarding himself as the “General Commander of al-Zarqawi Battalion,” commenced a posting entitled “How to Down the Predator” by labeling the Predator the most criminal type of aircraft. Nosra claims a technique to jam the Predator’s satellite signal is an easy one, requiring only simple devices and proper software. By jamming the frequency of the satellite, an inaccurate signal would be transmitted to the Predator falsely indicating no satellite GPS signal, consequently causing the collapse of the Predator’s systems. Nosra’s long explanation of the technique focuses on jammers that work within a fixed range radius. The jammers’ capability to intercept the Predator’s signal and the simplicity of building such jammers from material readily available in the market is a great opportunity for jihadis to take down the number one killer of mujahideen, says Nosra.

Another method discussed in the lesson is producing a focused microwave beam with a commercial microwave and using a parabolic dish to direct the beam on a single source. According to Nosra, this is capable of disrupting circuitry in the Predator’s camera motor. There are also a few GPS jammers available in the market; the mujahideen could procure and develop these for use against UAV’s.

Nosra reports that Iraqi mujahideen hackers have used software available in the market to intercept data transmitted by American drones. The software used is the “SkyGrabber,” developed and marketed on the internet by Russian company SkySoftware. [1] Nosra refers here to the 2009 discovery that insurgents belonging to the Iraqi Shiite Kata’ib Hezbollah were using the SkyGrabber software to intercept the drones’ video transmissions, though they were unable to control the drones or interfere with their flight (see *Wall Street*

Journal, December 17, 2009; BBC, December 17, 2009; CNN, December 17, 2009). The insurgents used the software to exploit the fact that the UAVs' video transmissions were unencrypted to increase the speed of communication with ground control operators.

Finally, Nosra promises to do more research on the technique and urges the mujahideen to share their findings on UAV's such as the Predator, the Reaper and another small UAV made by Jordan and approved by the United States for use in Iraq (possibly a reference to the "Jordan Falcon," a tactical UAV intended for surveillance tasks). The Falcon is a joint venture between Jordan Aerospace Industries (JAI) and the King Abdullah II Design and Development Bureau (KADDB).

Other forum members considered acquiring the methods outlined in Nosra's posting a high priority. Developing such abilities would help protect the mujahideen in Palestine, Yemen, Pakistan, Afghanistan and all other Muslim countries. Forum member Abu Fahad al-Misri deemed the techniques very timely and very much needed to counter U.S. attacks in Libya and Egypt in the near future (al-Jahafal, April 2).

Another jihadi forum conducted a month-long online workshop entitled "How Do We Shoot Down the Enemy's Aircraft?" (alboraq.info, April 15). Many forum chatters contributed to the workshop with ideas and techniques, posting pictures and drawings of different UAVs. Bu Omar al-Ghanim, who started the workshop, concluded the findings and knowledge share by recommending, firstly, the use of homemade smoke bombs to cover mujahideen firing on attacking gunships. Secondly, the mujahideen are encouraged to try to manufacture magnetic cannons capable of sending electromagnetic vibrations. Al-Ghanim does not mention how these cannons would be manufactured, but he may be referring to an adaption of the High Power Electromagnetic System (HPEMS) being developed by California-based Eureka Aerospace with funding from the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Department of Defense. [2] The device is intended to use a beam of microwave energy to stop moving vehicles or boats by disabling or destroying their computerized control systems, but is only in the prototype stage.

Al-Ghanim quotes from a message by the Amir of the Islamic Army in Iraq in which he encourages the mujahideen in Gaza to shoot down Israeli aircraft: "Our hero brothers: You are in the heart of the nation. You are the symbol of its dignity and pride, hold your

ground, attack the enemy and prepare intensive crossfire arcs to destroy enemy aircraft." [3] The workshop also discussed the ability to interrupt the electronic systems of enemy aircraft by using 700mW Chinese-made laser pointers. According to al-Ghanim, the laser can jam and burn a fighter aircraft's electrical equipment at a 28 kilometer distance. Al-Ghanim posts links to some Chinese websites that sell the laser pointers. Although many of the tactics recommended by the workshop are unconventional and unlikely to succeed, it shows the continuous endeavors of the mujahideen to invent ways to defeat counterterrorist air superiority.

Despite Salafi-Jihadi claims to have shot down U.S. or Jordanian-made attack and surveillance UAVs in Iraq and elsewhere, none of the videos released by the mujahideen's media outlets, especially al-Furqan, show any advanced air defense techniques being used to down UAVs. The existing videos only show downed UAVs that could have crashed because of technical malfunctions.

Abdul Hameed Bakier is an intelligence expert on counter-terrorism, crisis management and terrorist-hostage negotiations. He is based in Jordan.

Note:

1. <http://www.skygrabber.com/en/index.php>.
2. <http://eurekaaerospace.com/content/high-power-electromagnetic-system-stopping-vehicles> Video of the device prototype can be seen at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oT5EJYY_6HQ&feature=player_embedded.
3. Al-Ghanim doesn't provide a source for this statement.

Europol Identifies Security Threat to Europe from North Africa's "Arab Spring"

By Raffaello Pantucci

Without food, employment or security, thousands of sub-Saharan Africans are taking to the sea in overcrowded and unseaworthy boats in desperate attempts to escape the violence in Libya. They are joining some 25,000 Tunisians who have already fled to the Italian islands of Lampedusa and Linosa in hopes of gaining a foothold in Europe. Many boats have been lost in the Mediterranean crossing, at the cost of hundreds of lives (AP, May 9; EU Observer, May 3).

Last year, Mu'ammarr Qaddafi struck a €50 billion deal with the European Union to regulate its borders as a "transit country" for refugees and economic migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa. Despite this payoff, Qaddafi has not hesitated to use it against Europe, threatening to "turn Europe black" if various demands are not satisfied (*Der Spiegel*, February 24). The French minister of foreign affairs, Laurent Wauquiez, has warned: "Libya is the funnel of Africa. Flows of illegal immigrants from countries such as Liberia, Somalia and Eritrea pass through Libya... We must defend our frontiers on a European level. What we're talking about isn't a few tens of thousands of illegal immigrants who could arrive in Europe; it's a potential 200,000 to 300,000 this year" (Radio France Internationale, March 2).

Taking a quite traditional view on events in North Africa, the recently published annual Europol (European Law Enforcement Agency) report on terrorist and counter-terrorist activity in Europe concludes early on that "in the short term, the absence of terrorist organizations amongst the mass Arab protests across the region has left al-Qaeda struggling for a response." For Europol, however, there is a danger in the longer term that if the expectations of those on the streets are not met, "it could result in more powerful terrorist organizations impacting the European Union." [1] Paired with the current tensions between Italy and France over boatloads of North African migrants who arrived in Europe via Italy and then headed immediately for their linguistic homeland in France only to be stopped by police at the French border – something infringing the free movement of even those possessing only temporary

papers within the Schengen zone in Europe – the threat posed by a potential overspill of the Arab Spring into Europe becomes evident. The report mentions this potential threat early on, highlighting that "the current and future flow of immigrants originating from North Africa could have an influence on the EU's security situation" by offering an easy way for terrorists to slip onto the continent.

Events in North Africa are not, however, the only focus of the overall report and the main conclusions are, as usual, that separatist and left-wing terrorists are the most active in Europe. In total the report covers 249 attacks, with 160 considered separatist, 45 left-wing, three Islamist and one "single-issue." Forty of the attacks were for "unspecified reasons" – all of these coming from the UK, which does not specify the ideological driver of British-based terrorist attacks.

The numbers in the annual Europol report are notoriously unreliable given the different ways in which member states classify terrorism and the growing variety of criminal legislation under which terrorists suspects are charged. Nonetheless, the report opens its key judgments with a statement that "the threat of attacks by Islamist terrorists in the EU remains high and diverse," a blunt declaration that shows the priority European police forces continue to place on Islamist terrorism. [2]

In fact, based on the numbers in the report, it is far more likely that European citizens are going to come into contact with separatist terrorists - 349 suspects are reported to have been arrested in the past year. In the UK in particular, this has become increasingly obvious as Irish dissident groups become ever more deadly – in April, a car bomb in Omagh, Northern Ireland killed Roman Catholic policeman Ronan Kerr, an act believed to have been carried out by the Oglai na hEireann (ONH - Volunteers/Soldiers of Ireland), a splinter group of the Real IRA (*Telegraph* [London], April 3; BBC, April 3). ONH operatives are reported to have been under surveillance recently by the Special Reconnaissance Regiment (SRR) while scouting potential targets believed to be related to the 2010 London Olympics (*Belfast Telegraph*, April 21). Dissident Republican factions have returned to violence to protest the recruitment of growing numbers of Roman Catholics to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the replacement for the formerly Protestant-dominated Royal Ulster Constabulary.

A few days after Kerr's murder, a 500 lb truck bomb was found in Londonderry, and in the week before the royal wedding, the Real IRA paraded in a show of force through a cemetery in Londonderry. They concluded by delivering a speech in which they threatened police officers "regardless of their religion, cultural background or motivation," as well as announcing that "the Queen of England is wanted for war crimes in Ireland and is not wanted on Irish soil" (BBC, April 25).

But even within the resurgent Irish militancy in the UK there are hints of the threat from North Africa. Those with a keen sense of history will recall that Colonel Qaddafi gave Irish dissidents large quantities of Semtex explosives and it was being investigated whether some of this might have been used to kill Constable Kerr. Defecting Libyan Foreign Minister Moussa Koussa is believed to have played a major role in supplying Republican terrorists with Semtex. Conservative MP Robert Halfon said: "If this is true then we must take every step to indict Mr. Koussa in the international war crimes courts or in the British courts for allegedly supplying the IRA with weapons which appear to have killed a policeman on Saturday" (*Telegraph*, April 3, 2011).

The EUROPOL report also touches upon the bigger strategic question that has been bothering experts about what the Arab Spring means for al-Qaeda's global narrative. As the report puts it, developments in Tunisia and Egypt show that "peaceful demonstrations by ordinary people may be more effective than terrorist attacks" in effecting political change. However, the resulting "democratic space" could provide room for groups to "expand their activities," using the "instability of state security forces" as an opportunity to launch attacks. The report notes the "clear contradiction to what al-Qaeda has insisted is the only means of defeating entrenched regimes is likely to result in a notable setback for terrorist organizations in terms of support and recruitment." [3] So a short-term gain for terrorist groups may be overshadowed by a long-term loss.

This conclusion, however, is based on data prior to the descent of chaos on Libya. It is unclear to what degree that state might become a new jihadist battlefield that spills back into Europe like Algeria or Bosnia did in the 1990s, or like Iraq and Afghanistan more recently. The overriding nationalist flavor of the fighters in Libya and the continuing presence of the rich target of Qaddafi and his clique is likely to keep fighters busy for the

immediate future, but in the longer term it is unclear what the implications of this might be for European security. The report highlights "ongoing concern" about "the number of predominantly young EU nationals travelling to conflict areas that include Afghan/Pakistani border, Somalia and Yemen with the intent to take part in armed combat," it remains to be seen if Libya will soon need to also be added to this list.

Raffaello Pantucci is an Associate Fellow at the International Center for the Study of Radicalisation (ICSR).

Notes:

1. "TE-SAT 2011 – EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report," Europol, April 19, 2011: http://www.europol.europa.eu/publications/EU_Terrorism_Situation_and_Trend_Report_TE-SAT/TE-SAT2011.pdf.
2. Europol Report, p.6.
3. Europol Report, p.7.

The Island at the Center of the World: The Silencing of Bahrain's Crisis

By Derek Henry Flood

Bahrain's state television recently announced that the Kingdom's "State of National Safety" emergency law, which allowed the monarchy to swiftly crush once pulsing opposition protests, will not be extended further than June 1, two weeks ahead of the original deadline (al-Jazeera, May 8). The three-month state of emergency was declared on March 15, as pro-democracy protests developed into an anti-regime uprising and engulfed much of downtown Manama's financial district. A day prior to the emergency law's declaration, armored columns from Saudi Arabia poured into the tiny island nation via the 26 kilometer long King Fahd Causeway that connects Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province with the Bahrain archipelago (see *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, March 24). According to a statement from Bahrain's state news agency, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia "enjoy ideal relations," having stood together in solidarity when faced with "Iranian threats" (Bahrain News Agency, May 9). In a very unfortunate development for Bahrain's nascent pro-democracy movement, no sooner did the uprising devolve into violence than both Saudi Arabia and Iran turned the island into a sectarian propaganda proxy war. Neither side in the conflict has let up on the constant drumbeat of drama in a situation largely cast aside by both the global media and great powers. In an attempt to further agitate the situation, Iranian state television aired a documentary equating the Saudi intervention in Bahrain with the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, broadcasting footage of desecrated Shi'a mosques and *hussainiyas* (congregation halls for Shi'a rituals), as well as damaged Shi'a holy books (Press TV, May 9).

Bahrain's principal opposition party is al-Wefaq, which withdrew from parliament at the outset of the crisis to demonstrate its abhorrence at the crackdown (AFP, February 17). Al-Wefaq claimed in April that government forces had demolished no less than 30 Shi'a places of worship. Representatives of Bahrain's ruler, King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, have issued thinly justified decrees that such "unlicensed" sites are being destroyed "regardless of any doctrine." Al-Wefaq released a statement refuting the regime's legal rationale: "Any attempt to showcase the measure as a

legal action will neither be convincing nor objective" (AP, April 24). The bulldozing of Shi'a centers, some of them ancient, may be due to the growth of intolerant Wahhabi values in the Sunni-run security forces. These security forces have become stocked with recruits from Sunni communities in Pakistan and from poorer regions of the Sunni Arab world. Another possible driver in the attacks on Shi'a institutions may be an opportunistic attempt by descendants of Sunni settlers to erase the history of the island's indigenous Shi'a communities, which long predate the al-Khalifa dynasty established in 1783.

On the Ground

The author paid a hurried visit to the besieged Persian Gulf kingdom in early April. During an attempt to visit the now notorious Pearl Roundabout, once the site of camping protesters in a pro-democracy uprising that began on February 14, Bahraini National Guardsmen rushed over in an armored vehicle informing the author that the roundabout had been designated a closed area where photography was forbidden. Not only was photography forbidden, but apparently simply looking at the heavily militarized zone with the naked eye was also unwelcome. Jamestown was instructed to leave the area shrouded in row upon row of concertina wire, entirely barricaded off from the rest of Manama's Central Business District. Forlorn South Asian migrant vendors milled about, unable to do any trade in fish or produce in the once bustling Central Market area after it became isolated from the other half of the city by Kevlar-clad troops.

Other areas of downtown Manama maintained the appearance of a war zone with tanks and armored personnel carriers careening around with abandon, driving over traffic medians and manning a plethora of intimidating checkpoints. Jamestown was told by a pair of bearded soldiers manning a checkpoint along King Faisal Corniche opposite Reef Island that walking in this zone was no longer permitted. These soldiers bore no national insignia on their fatigues, paid no attention to several Bangladeshi men casually bicycling by and attempted to detain this analyst for an unspecified violation. A Sunni taxi driver who said he supported the regime described the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) intervention forces from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates as a "cocktail" in that they readily blended with Bahraini units so as to lessen the appearance of a foreign military occupation. A leaked U.S. Embassy cable from 2007 describes the Bahraini security forces

as containing almost “no Shi’a,” describing the use of Shi’a “community police” in Shi’a majority areas of the country. [1]

Jamestown spoke with prominent dissident and Director of the Bahrain Center for Human Rights Nabeel Rajab about the festering crisis. [2] An outspoken critic of the al-Khalifa monarchy, Rajab viewed the announcement of the ending of the state of emergency two weeks ahead of schedule with a high degree of cynicism. He believed that the monarchy was essentially trying to save the economy from a total meltdown. The announcement, meant to forestall further capital flight from Bahrain’s once thriving financial services sector, was, in Rajab’s view, principally driven by the need to preserve the prestigious annual Formula One Grand Prix auto race. While the 2011 race was cancelled before Saudi troops entered Bahrain, a decision on whether the 2012 race will still be held in that country is to be made on June 3, 12 days before the planned date to end the emergency (AFP, May 3).

Rajab described the Formula One issue as an important socio-economic indicator for the monarchy. A negative decision by the international sports body may further the continued outflow of foreign investment and Asian migrant workers on which the services sector is desperately dependent. The return of the Grand Prix may signify an economic lifeline. A denial by the sport body may be a walk to the gallows for Bahrain’s endangered business sector as international confidence continues to ebb.

The Role of Iran

Nabeel Rajab scoffed at the constant talk of Iranian interference in Bahraini affairs. He spoke of a concerted effort by the Bahraini government to link the pro-democracy movement with Iran in any way possible. When asked about King Hamad’s public talk of as yet unproven Iranian linkages to the crushed protest movement, Rajab asserted: “No Bahraini democrats see Iran as a system to emulate.”

Rajab related recent appearances by both King Hamad and Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa— also the Deputy Supreme Commander of the 9000-strong Bahrain Defense Forces— in which they stated, respectively, that there was “no problem” with Iran and “no one [in Bahrain] has any relations with Iran.” High-ranking Bahraini officials regularly make bellicose, though mostly unsubstantiated, accusations

about their Iranian neighbors but do not seek to anger Tehran on a diplomatic level. Bahraini Foreign Minister Shaykh Khalid bin Ahmad al-Khalifa stated in a closed-door meeting of MPs that the Kingdom had no intention of severing ties with the Iranian state despite its “continuous interference” in Bahrain’s internal dynamics (*Gulf Daily News* [Manama], May 10). Rajab sees the Bahraini government’s contradictory stance toward Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as evidence that Manama is in a bit of policy disarray: “The [Bahraini] opposition insists the uprising is an internal issue [unrelated to alleged Iranian agitation]... there are no formal political relations [with Iran].”

While the Bahraini government makes inconsistent declarations about its thoroughly rocky and complicated relations with the Islamic Republic, a formerly confidential quote appearing in a leaked embassy cable provides insight into the Iranian question vis-à-vis Bahrain. In a discussion with leading Sunni parliamentarian Ghanem al-Buanain during a 2007 visit to Bahrain by President Ahmadinejad, U.S. Ambassador Joseph Adam Ereli inquired as to why, when the regime regularly slams the Iranian president publicly, Crown Prince al-Khalifa still greets Ahmadinejad at the airport while King Hamad, in turn, sends him off. Al-Buanain replied: “Because we’re Arabs. We don’t like them [Iranians], but we need them.” [3] It is interesting to note that, despite the official pleasantries bestowed on Ahmadinejad, he was whisked from the airport on the adjacent island of al-Muharraq, a Sunni stronghold, to al-Gudiabiya palace in central Manama, flanked by heavy security and with no way to personally interact with the country’s Shi’a Arab populace, something Ahmadinejad would surely love to have done if provided the opportunity.

The Diversified Future of Bahraini Energy

For all of the bitter rhetoric between Bahrain and Iran since the February 14 uprising and the brutal, Saudi-backed crackdown, neither the al-Khalifa monarchy nor the Ahmadinejad government, both bound by pure economic *realpolitik*, wants to derail a protracted *quid pro quo* natural gas deal both sides have been constructing for years. Manama and Tehran have been in talks for several years about the expanded development of the South Pars gas field. South Pars is the world’s largest natural gas field with a roughly 1/3-2/3 split between Iran and the State of Qatar, respectively (Mehr News Agency, June 15, 2010). [4] The potential of

the massive deposits in South Pars could have massive mutual economic benefits for both parties if they can put their sectarian differences aside long enough to finalize an agreement.

To the dismay of American officials in the region, Ahmadinejad has been actively working to get Bahrain to invest heavily in South Pars in exchange for Iranian gas exports. Iran's then foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, described the deal in a Bahraini pro-government daily: "According to agreements, Bahrain will invest in South Pars phases and Iran will take part in Bahrain's refining and petrochemical industries, and finally Iran's gas will be exported to Bahrain" (*Gulf Daily News*, June 30, 2010). Since an initial agreement was signed between the two Persian Gulf nations in 2008, intermittent ethno-religious tension has been a persistent hindrance to a long-lasting, definitive agreement on South Pars. Bilateral energy sector ties are under severe pressure since the February 14 Shi'a-led uprising, but the process has not been derailed beyond repair. As recently as the fall of 2010, Iran's Oil Minister Masoud Mir Kazzemi met with Bahrain's Oil and Gas Affairs Minister Abdul Hussain bin Ali Mirza to discuss a deal on the export of Iranian gas to Bahrain. Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Javed Oji told Iran's semi-official news agency "If [a South Pars deal is] finalized, a new natural gas pipeline will be built under the Persian Gulf waters; the pipeline is expected to transfer one billion cubic feet of Iran's gas to Bahrain" (Fars News Agency, September 5, 2010).

Bahrain's energy strategy does not simply rely on Iran. Bahrain has made it clear that not only is its domestic gas production in decline, but that it seeks to import gas on a global scale, thereby becoming a net gas exporter and greatly boosting the Kingdom's prosperity. Following months of turmoil, such a deal may be a means of reviving Bahrain's sagging economic outlook. Qatar, the world's largest producer of liquid natural gas, is considering a deal for Bahrain to install a floating re-gasification facility for LNG which would help Bahrain achieve its goal of becoming an energy exporter (*Gulf Times* [Doha], May 12). More interestingly, Manama's National Oil and Gas Authority signed a deal with Russian energy giant Gazprom to import natural gas to Bahrain coupled with a potential future pipeline deal or Russian-assisted deep exploration drilling (Arabian Business, October 28, 2010).

Conclusion

Relations between Bahrain and Iran have been historically tense since Bahrain's independence from the United Kingdom in 1971 was followed by Iran's Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi claim that Bahrain belonged to Iran. In post-1979 revolutionary Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini did little to ease Bahraini fears on Iranian claims of sovereignty over their country. Bahrain's sovereignty is currently ensured by the presence of the U.S Fifth Fleet / U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, which replaced an earlier British Royal Navy detachment in 1971. In another revealing U.S. diplomatic cable, an American official says that the al-Khalifas often tell their American partners that they are under constant threat of Iranian "subversion." The cable goes on to categorically state that the Bahraini claims of Iranian meddling have never been supported by any kind of evidence. [5] American officials based in Manama have never believed that the Shi'a opposition has had weapons supplied to them by Tehran nor do they believe they are involved in any kind of terrorism.

Bahrain is adept at maintaining a delicate balancing act between their larger neighbors, Saudi Arabia and Iran, as well as those further afield, including Britain, the United States, and now the Russian Federation. Caught up in an labyrinthine web of regional ethno-religious demographics, layered with energy sector rivalries, King Hamad will continue to keep up this complex geo-political dance, playing the larger powers off one another while simultaneously trying to suppress his internal Shi'a opposition into submission, if only temporarily.

While Bahrain's rulers seek to portray a nation returning to a modicum of normalcy, the root causes of Shi'a unrest-turned-rage have yet to be genuinely addressed. Opposition members believe show trials are coming that will prosecute dozens of doctors and nurses, along with prominent jailed MPs like Matar Ibrahim Matar and Jawad Fairuz. As the regime prepares the legal cases against its enemies, Bahrain's stifled Arab Spring will likely be followed by a darker Arab Autumn.

Derek Henry Flood is the editor of Jamestown's Militant Leadership Monitor publication. Mr. Flood is also an independent author and journalist who blogs at the-war-diaries.com.

Notes:

1. To view the original cable, see: Shi'a Youth In Weekend Skirmishes with Security, Section 5(C), November 15, 2007, <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2007/11/07MANAMA1033.html>
2. Author's interview with Nabeel Rajab, May 10, 2011.
3. To view the original cable, see: Ahmedinejad Visit To Bahrain, Section 5(C), November 19, 2007, <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2007/11/07MANAMA1045.html>.
4. The Qatari share of South Pars is called the North Dome gas-condensate field. The entire field totals 9700 square kilometers in area and is estimated to contain approximately 51 trillion cubic meters of gas.
5. To view the original cable, see: Bahrain's Relations with Iran, Section 11(S), August 5, 2008, <http://wikileaks.ch/cable/2008/08/08MANAMA528.html>.