



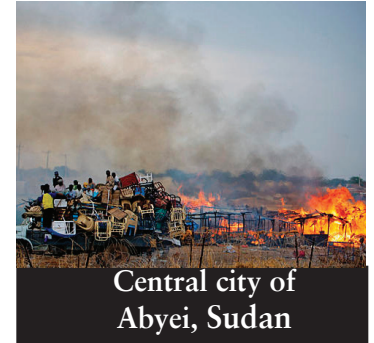
Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME IX, ISSUE 26 ♦ JULY 1, 2011

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Central city of Abyei, Sudan

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TALIBAN SUSPECT U.S. DRAWDOWN IN AFGHANISTAN A COVER FOR PERMANENT BASES

Afghanistan’s Taliban movement has reacted to Washington’s announcement that it would begin a phased military withdrawal from Afghanistan, beginning with the withdrawal of 10,000 troops by the end of the year. In an official statement issued in the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, the Taliban described the announcement as an attempt to deceive both the American and Afghan people by its failure to acknowledge an alleged U.S. plan to build permanent military bases with American garrisons in Afghanistan. [1]

The statement claims that President Obama “and his war mongers” have no intention of bringing the American occupation of Afghanistan to an end. In the Taliban’s eyes, the suggestion that the Afghan police and army can take over security duties from the Coalition “holds no significance,” as most of the police and army “are drug addicts” and are considered by Afghans as “enemies of their nation and religion”: “They perform their duty only to spread vice and corruption. They can neither fulfill the demands of the Afghans nor help the Pentagon and CIA to achieve their goals.”

The Taliban statement goes on to describe the American “surge” as a strategic failure that has only increased American loss of life and equipment: “They have not gained progress in the battlefield, nor can they bring forth any proofs of this progress... persecution of people and the destruction of people’s homes and farms to protect themselves cannot be called victory or progress by any sound mind.”

The statement concludes by warning American taxpayers that their money is “still being wasted” on the prosecution of the war or by finding its way into “the pockets of officials in the corrupt Kabul regime.”

Despite recent talk of new negotiations between the Taliban and the Karzai regime and its American sponsors, the two sides appear to be far apart. While Washington demands a renunciation of violence, the end of cooperation with al-Qaeda and support for the Afghan constitution, Taliban leaders continue to call for an immediate and complete withdrawal of foreign troops and the replacement of the Karzai “stooge” regime in Kabul.

Some in the U.S. administration still seem to be working on the assumption that Afghanistan’s Taliban movement is little more than a subordinate element of al-Qaeda. According to recent Senate testimony presented by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: “With (Osama) Bin Laden dead and al-Qaeda’s remaining leadership under enormous pressure, the choice facing the Taliban is clear: be part of Afghanistan’s future or face unrelenting assault” (AFP, June 23).

Rumors of negotiations regarding permanent U.S. military bases in Afghanistan have been dismissed by Secretary of State Clinton and a number of other senior officials. A Karzai government spokesman also denied the report: “It has not been officially discussed yet... We have not proposed that the U.S.A. establish permanent bases in Afghanistan” (Tolo TV [Kabul], June 20).

Taliban fears of a permanent American military presence in Afghanistan are based on a June 13 *Guardian* article which claimed, according to unnamed “American officials,” that quiet but difficult negotiations are underway to provide for a continued American military presence beyond 2014 at one or more of five existing bases in Afghanistan. One of the sticking points allegedly centers on their possible use in operations against neighboring countries such as Pakistan and Iran. According to the *Guardian*’s sources, American denials are a matter of interpretation; such bases would not necessarily be “permanent,” and though American “combat troops” would not be deployed, military “advisors” routinely accompany their trainees on combat missions.

Note:

1. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: “Statement of Islamic Emirate regarding Obama’s announcement of

the withdrawal of a limited number of U.S. troops from Afghanistan,” Afghan Islamic Press News Agency, June 23, 2011.

NIGERIAN SALAFISTS FOLLOW “MARTYRDOM OPERATION” WITH CALL FOR JIHAD

Styling themselves as the *Muwahiddin* [Unitarians], a common self-appellation for Wahhabists and Salafists, Nigeria’s Islamist extremists have shared a number of their goals and aims in a statement carried on jihadist websites entitled “Demands of the Muwahiddin to the Tawaghit [those who rule without recourse to the Shari’a] and their Allies in Nigeria” (ansar1.info, June 21). The statement is allegedly penned by “Abu Muwahid” for the Brigades of Tawhid [Oneness of God] Publications.

The statement claims that the June 16 car bombing of the national police headquarters in Abuja (described here as a “martyrdom” or suicide bombing) had thrown the Nigerian *tawaghit* into a state of confusion and panic, leading them to seek negotiations with the Islamist militants (or Boko Haram, though the movement is not mentioned by name in the statement; For the bombing, see *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, June 23). However, the Islamists indicate that they have no interest in pursuing talks with the government: “One major thing they forgot in their consideration of negotiation is that our *millah* [religion], the *millah* of Ibrahim, forbids negotiating with all those who have rejected the supremacy of Allah’s Shari’a and all those who have taken themselves as lords besides Allah.”

Reacting to suggestions that a combination of incentives and amnesty might bring Boko Haram to the negotiating table much as it did southern Nigeria’s Movement to Emancipate the Niger Delta (MEND), the Salafists responded: “They initially thought that our ideology could be bought off with materialism like the MEND Militants of the Niger Delta region. Our ideology is far from materialism; it is an ideology that abhors *shirk* [polytheism] and *kufr* [disbelief] and seeks to eradicate the *tawaghit* and all their allies in the whole universe, such that the earth will become purified and all *ibadah* [worship] will then be directed solely to Allah.”

In addressing Nigeria’s Islamic scholars, the Muwahiddin raise the issue of colonialism, asking the scholars if they have “forgotten the pains of your fathers in the hands of the white monkeys?,” while reminding them it would be treacherous to be seen in the forefront of the grandchildren of former Nigerian colonial governors such as “Lugard, Richard, MacPherson and other white

criminals whose hegemony still reigns over our head after 108 years.” [1]

With the first claimed suicide bombing in Nigeria, there are fears that others will follow, leaving Nigeria destitute of new foreign investment. As a statement from the Nigerian political party Action Congress of Nigeria (ANC) noted: “No foreign investor will wait for a travel advisory from his/her government before deciding not to visit a country where security is not guaranteed, where a drink in a pub can fetch one a bomb” (*The Nation* [Lagos], June 20). Meanwhile, the Nigerian police have backed away from their earlier belief that the bombing was a suicide attack, now stating instead that the evidence is inconclusive (*Nigerian Tribune*, June 23).

Much of the response of Nigeria’s many security services to the security crisis has consisted of trying to blame each other for the “intelligence failure” that President Goodluck Jonathan has identified as the cause of the ongoing violence in Borno and Bauchi states and its spread to the capital city of Abuja (*Vanguard*, June 26). Nigeria’s security services tend towards competition rather than cooperation, and intelligence sharing is a low priority.

The militants’ statement affirmed the loyalty of the Nigerian muwahiddin to the new al-Qaeda leader, “the Amir of our caravan, Shaykh Ayman al-Zawahiri.” The Nigerian Salafists also expressed their appreciation for the work of leading Jordanian Salafi-Jihadi ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, once the mentor of the late al-Qaeda in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. The Salafist message also alludes to the arrival of foreign jihadists in Nigeria, who will “surely make Nigeria ungovernable the same way our brothers in Somalia have made the country ungovernable for the apostate stooge [Somali president Shaykh] Sharif [Shaykh] Ahmad.”

Even after the attempt to destroy the leadership and the Abuja headquarters of Nigeria’s national police, Boko Haram violence continues unabated in northern Nigeria. Twenty-five people were killed in Maiduguri on June 26 when motorcycle-riding militants threw bombs at local outdoor beer parlors (*Vanguard*, June 27).

Note:

1. Sir Frederick Lugard, Governor General of Nigeria, 1914-1919; Sir Arthur Richards, Governor of Nigeria, 1943-1948; Sir John Stuart MacPherson, Governor of Nigeria, 1948-1954, Governor General of Nigeria, 1954-1955.

Franco-Algerian Security Rapprochement is Threatened by Divergent Views on Libya

By Dario Cristiani

A series of recent meetings in Algiers have been devoted to creating a “special partnership” between France and its former colony of Algeria, based on ties unifying the countries in terms of history, proximity and density of human relations (*Jeune Afrique*, Jun 14). French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe’s recent visit to Algeria (the first visit by a French foreign minister since 2008) for two days of high level meetings with Algerian authorities officially marked a détente between the two countries, whose relations have been strained over the past few years. During a visit that followed an invitation from the Algerian foreign minister, Juppe met with Algerian Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia, Foreign Minister Mourad Medelci and President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in discussions on a number of bilateral issues, particularly those presented by the changing strategic picture of the Mediterranean region. In a press conference following these meetings, Juppe stressed the need to look to the future concerning the thorny issue of Algeria’s colonial past (AFP, Jun 16; *Le Figaro*, Jun 16). Colonial memories have been rekindled in Algeria by the recent NATO intervention in Libya, in which France is playing a major frontline role.

One issue where Algiers and Paris already share a close relationship is security cooperation in the Sahel region of Africa. Both countries share concerns over the growing role of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in the Sahel, which is composed of states whose ability to effectively control their territories is very low. France, as the major external political and economic player in the region, wants to reduce the impact that the activities of al-Qaeda could have on French companies operating there, as well as on its citizens living and travelling in the region. AQIM still represents a major security concern for Algeria, even if its activities and presence on Algerian territory are now much less prominent than in the past. Juppe has praised Algerian efforts to increase regional cooperation against this threat, stressing French availability to attend future meetings of the countries involved in this cooperation (*El Moudjahid*, June 17). Increasing economic cooperation is another feature of the common agenda. The recent economic partnership forum held in Algiers, the first of its kind,

is a clear example of the common willingness to deepen the French-Algerian relationship beyond the common misperceptions and historical resentments (*Algérie Plus*, May 16; *La Tribune*, May 31).

Such resentments came to the surface in May, when Franco-Algerian relations were particularly disturbed by the attendance of Sadek Bouguetaya, a leading member of Algeria's ruling Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) and primary aide to FLN president Abdelaziz Belkhadem, at a May 8 gathering in Tripoli of Libyan tribal leaders sponsored by the Qaddafi regime. In a speech broadcast by Libyan state television, Bouguetaya expressed the FLN's support for the Libyan regime, described the opposition as "pawns of the West," asserted that "violence in Libya benefits the European powers and America," and concluded by suggesting that the Libyans would defeat France just as the Algerians had defeated the French in 1962 (*Echorouk* [Algiers], May 8; *Ennahar* [Algiers], May 7; al-Jazeera, June 26).

With France and Algeria presumably having dealt with these provocative statements, there still remains a major point of friction which has the potential to harm the future of the new Franco-Algerian *entente* - Libya and its future (*El Watan*, 17 June). After meeting with his Algerian counterparts, Foreign Minister Juppe clearly said that it is true that UN Resolution 1973 does not demand the departure of Mu'ammarr Qaddafi, but France desires it. Juppe emphasized the argument that Qaddafi lost his legitimacy after using guns and other weapons against his own population (*Ennahar*, June 17). Algeria, on its part, has stressed the need to reach a political solution to the Libyan stalemate, based on the position taken by the African Union. In a recent trip to Luxembourg for meetings with European Union officials, Foreign Minister Medelci stressed the Algerian commitment to respect the UN resolution in a literal sense (*El Moudjahid*, June 21).

France has now officially confirmed it has provided rebels with light weapons supplies, though it did not inform its allies about this move. The supplies began in early June and are a further confirmation of French determination to break the stalemate of the conflict as well as its intention to accelerate efforts to eliminate Qaddafi. The move will likely fuel new criticisms from those countries believing that NATO and its allies have already gone beyond the provisions of UNSC Resolution 1973 (*Le Figaro*, June 29; Reuters Africa, June 30; *El Watan* [Algiers], June 30).

Even though the disagreement over implementation of the Security Council resolution remains, Juppe has made a diplomatic concession to Algerian interests by clearly stating that France does not believe the allegations made by the rebel Transitional National Council (TNC) concerning an Algerian role in supporting Qaddafi with mercenaries and weapons (*Tout sur l'Algérie*, June 16). Strategic interests on this issue are divergent and the distance between them has the potential to harm renewed cooperation in the future.

Algeria fears that prolonged instability in Libya could turn the country into a major safe haven and weapons market for AQIM. It is also concerned over the possible domestic effect the example of Qaddafi's overthrow could have on its own political stability. The possible increase of the influence of France and some of Algeria's regional rivals (such as Morocco and Egypt) over Libya is viewed in Algeria as a major threat to its interests (see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 29).

France, on the other hand, is strongly committed to the overthrow of Qaddafi, which it perceives as a major opportunity to increase its international status. Though domestic motives are important to explain France's tougher stance on Libya, even more important are geopolitical, strategic and economic interests. A tougher stance on Libya has provided an opportunity to reduce the impact that the collapse of Tunisian and Egyptian regimes have had on France.

Pushing for a military intervention in Libya and being the most critical anti-Qaddafi voice in the international community was instrumental to France in reacquiring a pro-active political initiative in the Arab world, since French political moves related to the Arab uprising had been mostly reactive until that point. Abandoning Qaddafi, even though France signed several agreements with him over the past few years, and being the first country to recognize the TNC represents a sort of "political bet" over Libya's future, and is aimed at increasing France's regional influence. Given the highly personalized foreign policy of Qaddafi, it is likely that Libya's foreign policy will be completely different should the Colonel's regime collapse. France could then play a major political and economic role in a post-Qaddafi Libya. Strategically, that means boosting its "ring of influence" in the Maghreb, from Morocco to Libya, which will better serve French interests in the Mediterranean as well as enhance its position in Africa, a continent in which Paris still has great interest and influence.

Historically, relations between Paris and Algiers have never been easy: colonial memories, historical resentment and the peculiar features of post-independence Algerian foreign policy have made this relationship complex and at times unstable. In 2010, some signs of improvement started to emerge, while the visit of Juppe to Algiers has sealed this improvement. Security cooperation in the Sahel, as well as economic and energy interests, represent those issues in which a greater convergence can be achieved. Libya's future, instead, represents a thorny issue which has the potential to again harm the relationship between the two countries. France is at the forefront of the international coalition against Qaddafi; it wants to acquire a new position of primacy in the Mediterranean and Africa as well as to re-establish the historical profile of France as a normative power, supporting and defending those values of freedom which France considers part of its historical background. Algeria, instead, is concerned about a prolonged state of instability in Libya as well as the possible domestic effects of a Qaddafi fall from power.

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Salafist Ideologue's Book Urges the Tribes of Yemen to Join al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula

By Murad Batal al-Shishani

As both government and opposition forces in Yemen vie for the allegiance of the nation's powerful tribal groupings, the Salafi-Jihadi movement is now also trying to rally tribal fighters to the side of Islamist militants who have taken advantage of the political chaos to step up their armed activities.

In early June, a website belonging to Jordanian jihadi ideologue Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi released a booklet entitled *Al-Qaba'il al-Yammanyah bayn al-Nusrat al-Islamiyah w'al-Nakhwa al-Arabiya* (The Yemeni Tribes between Islamic Advocacy and Arab Magnanimity), written by Abu Bakr bin Abdul Aziz al-Athri (Minbar al-Tawhid w'al-Jihad: <http://www.tawhed.ws/>).

Obviously, publishing the booklet at this time is a response to developments in Yemen as tribal pressures and armed clashes continue with Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh still being treated in a Saudi hospital for serious injuries incurred in a June 3 assassination attempt (see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 9). Popular protests demanding the permanent departure of President Saleh from office have left al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) feeling threatened by a democratic youth movement that is presenting a political alternative to Saleh's regime.

Al-Athri also seems to be countering reports that claimed the governments of Yemen and Saudi Arabia are paying tribes in Yemen to confront AQAP. [1] Since AQAP first based its operations in Yemen, al-Athri maintains that the "infidels" have tried to undermine the "righteous" by "tempting" the tribes with material incentives to act against AQAP.

Appealing to the local tribes and creating alliances with them was one of the major factors behind AQAP's resilience in Yemen since 2009, following the merger between Saudi members of al-Qaeda and their Yemeni counterparts. For instance, American-born Yemeni cleric Anwar al-Awlaqi, whose assassination American President Barack Obama authorized in 2010, remains hidden and safe because of the protection provided to him by his tribe.

AQAP thus realizes the importance of the tribal factor in Yemeni politics and society. Al-Athri says Yemen's tribesmen are of three types, based on their response to government efforts to win their support:

- Some tribesmen, acting on dignity, have rejected the overtures of the government.
- Some have hesitated in declaring their allegiance, “stepping forward and stepping back.”
- Others have fallen “into the abyss and fought against the [jihadists], aiming for a transient life of the world.”

In his booklet, al-Athri aims to send messages to the second and third groups, those who are hesitant and those who are fighting against AQAP. Al-Athri bases his appeal not only on the call to religion, but also on Arab nationalism, a rarity in jihadi literature: “This is a shout in the dark night to those [who have not joined jihad]: Where is Islamic advocacy? Where is faith brotherhood? And if you left religion... where is Arab magnanimity?”

In order to encourage jihad in Yemen, al-Athri gives examples of both “Islamic advocacy” and “Arab magnanimity” as motivating factors:

- In the category of “Islamic advocacy,” al-Athri cites the example of the *Ansar* (advocates), the Madinan tribes of al-Aous and al-Khazraj that hosted the Prophet Muhammad after his migration from Mecca.
- In the category of “Arab magnanimity,” al-Athri gives examples drawn from a time rarely mentioned in Salafist works - the pre-Islamic period in the Arabian Peninsula: “Arabs before the Prophet was sent had good ethics and clear qualities... including helping [others], advocacy, sacrifice and altruism.”

Al-Athri is sending a message to the tribes, urging them to support AQAP while threatening them with retaliation from the movement if they do not: “So everyone look at himself, and choose his trench and his grave; from where he will be raised [after death], from the trenches of the righteous, or from the hotels of infidels! [Everyone] be aware of being fooled by apostates' guarantees, and traitors' gifts; the sword of Shari'a is long, and the soldiers of Shaykh Abu Basir [i.e. AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi] are not few!”

According to a recent comprehensive study on the political role of the tribes in Yemen, people's adherence to the tribal system is inversely proportional to the state's ability to ensure law, security, justice and equality. Because of the state's failure in providing these elements, the majority of Yemenis continue to look positively at the continued existence of the tribal system, with figures favoring the system as large as 77% in Hadramawt, 75% in Imran and 74.5% in Sana'a. [2]

AQAP deputy commander Sa'id al-Shihri (a.k.a. Abu Sufyan al-Azdi) recorded an audiotape about the situation of the Sunni tribes in Yemen on January 28, particularly those in the regions of Sa'ada and al-Jawf, where Shiites from the Houthi tribes are dominant. Al-Shihri alleged that “under command from the American Secretary of State” the Yemeni government halted its operations against the Houthi rebels and left the Sunni tribes behind “to suffer bitterness, whether assassinations or forced displacement by the Houthis.” Al-Shihri encouraged Sunnis in Yemen to stockpile arms to defend themselves: “By Allah, buy weapons, prepare yourselves and be equipped before it is too late. And if these cooperative governments stand between you and your mujahideen sons, then you must buy weapons even if that costs you highly...and your duty is to support Allah, raised and glorified.” [3]

Furthermore, on April 22, jihadist websites released a Pal Talk interview with AQAP's “Shari'a advisor” Adel al-Abbab (a.k.a. Abu al-Zubayr al-Abbab), in which the advisor announced AQAP had formed a group called the “Movement of al-Shari'a Supporters” to attract local people and tribesmen to Shari'a rule in the areas under the control of al-Qaeda. He stated that the influence of AQAP in various areas of Yemen is increasing because the movement is turning Shari'a rule “into popular action instead of keeping it as an elite one.” AQAP provides public services and solves people's problems, according to al-Abbab.

This “popular action” is intended to benefit from the contradictions between state and tribes. Al-Athri's booklet can be understood as a theoretical effort by a global jihadist ideologue to assist AQAP in winning the battle for Yemen. The stature of al-Athri as a jihadi scholar is increasing, and he appears to be a leading successor of al-Maqdisi as a jihadist ideologue. His appeal to the tribes of Yemen indicates that AQAP's attempt to win these groups over is a top priority for the entire Salafi-Jihadist movement.

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Notes:

1. Middle East Online, December 9, 2010: <http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=101448>; Islam Online, February 10, 2010: <http://www.islamonline.net/i3/ContentServer?pagename=IslamOnline/i3LayoutA&c=OldArticle&cid=1265700441527>.
2. Adel al-Sharjabi, M. al-Mukhlafi, A. al-Bana, A. al-Haimi, & al-Salahi, *Al-Qasir w al-Diwan: al-Daor al-Sjiyasi ll Qabilah fi al-Yaman* (Palace and the Divan: The Political Role of Tribes in Yemen), Observatory for Human Rights with the International Development Research Center, Sana'a, 2010, pp. 43-44.
3. For a full English translation of his recording, see: http://www.flashpoint-intel.com/images/documents/pdf/1210/flashpoint_aqapsufianalazdi0211.pdf.

The Abandoned Army: War Returns to Sudan's Nuba Mountains

By Andrew McGregor

The people of South Kordofan have become caught up in the unresolved contradiction of the post-John Garang Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), which is now leading South Sudan into independence; what happens when a national federalist political movement becomes an ethnic separatist political movement? This is the problem in several areas of Sudan outside the new borders of South Sudan, areas in which the then federalist SPLM/A recruited fighters to combat the Khartoum regime in the interests of creating a federal "New Sudan." With South Sudan declaring full independence on July 9, a force of roughly 40,000 Nuba SPLA fighters have been abandoned in their homeland, with the SPLA declaring they are no longer part of the Southern military and the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) determined to clear their presence as soon as possible.

South Kordofan is home to a number of armed groups at present, including the SPLA, the SAF, and various militias allied to both sides. Khartoum's position is that South Kordofan is "100% Northern," and that only the SAF would be permitted to carry arms after Southern independence is declared on July 9 (*Sudan Tribune*, June 16).

Khartoum's attempt to consolidate control of South Kordofan followed its seizure of the disputed oil-producing region of Abyei in May (see *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, May 27). The local SPLA claim to control roughly one-third of South Kordofan (mainly in the Nuba Mountains), while the rest is controlled by the SAF's 14th Division, much of which is locally raised and possibly reluctant to carry out operations against fellow Nuba. An SPLM press release said the SAF's mission was to "disarm the Sudan People's Liberation Movement component of the Joint Integrated Units in South Kordofan and to clear the area of Nuba in order to settle Arab tribes there as done in Darfur and Abyei" (*Independent*, June 17). [1]

The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that provided for an independence referendum in the Southern Sudan after a six-year period also called for "popular consultations" to determine the status and form of governance for South Kordofan and Blue Nile

State, both of which hosted large numbers of local fighters affiliated to the SPLA during the 1983-2005 civil war. The CPA stated that the consultations could not be held until local elections were held. In Blue Nile State, the SPLM candidate, Malik Agar, won election as governor, but in South Kordofan, numerous delays held up elections until May, when the candidate of the NCP, Ahmad Haroun, was a surprise victor over the SPLM candidate. The NCP were also majority winners for the local state legislative assembly. As a result, the mostly Nuba SPLA fighters were given the choice of disarming or leaving for the South by June 1 (The CPA does not call for the complete removal of SPLA forces until July 9). Since nearly all the fighters are residents of South Kordofan, moving to South Sudan was rejected as an option. By June 5, SAF tanks, infantry and artillery began to roll into the regional capital of Kadugli in a show of force that quickly broke out into open conflict.

The Nuba

Most of the SPLA fighters remaining in South Kordofan are members of the Nuba, a collection of various indigenous tribes that took refuge in the easily defended Nuba Mountains (more a chaotic collection of hills and ravines covered by a multitude of giant boulders) and gradually adopted a common culture and identity, though the vast range of Nuba languages require the use of Sudanese Arabic as a *lingua franca*. Fiercely independent, they resisted Mahdist efforts to conquer them in the late 19th century and later British efforts to control the hills and their thousands of caves and other places of refuge continued into the 1920s. The development by necessity of a “warrior culture” has helped stiffen the Nuba defenses – as one British officer sent to the region noted: “Second to their interest in female society comes a love of firearms. No man among them is of account until he is the owner of a rifle of sorts, and the methods employed to gain this end would often make an Afridi border thief blush with envy.” [2]

Under the current regime, there have been extensive efforts to “Islamize” the Nuba, by force if necessary. Many Nuba are already Muslims, though there are also large communities of Christians and followers of traditional beliefs. This and growing pressure on their lands led to SPLA recruitment in the area in 1986. By 1989 local Nuba leader and SPLA Commander Yusuf Kawa led the newly formed “New Kush Division” into the hills to open a new front in the civil war. Divisions within the SPLM/A leadership left the Nuba largely on their own to combat government forces that extracted

revenge on the local population through a series of offensives. The death of the charismatic Yusuf Kawa from cancer in 2001 took much of the steam out of the rebellion, and an internationally supervised ceasefire was in place by 2002.

The May Elections

While the exact spark that began the fighting may be hard to identify, the stage for the conflict was set during the May elections for South Kordofan. SPLM candidate and veteran SPLA commander Abd al-Aziz al-Hilu lost the governor’s post to the NCP’s Ahmad Haroun, while the ruling NCP took a surprising 33 seats in the legislative assembly to the SPLM’s 21 (*Sudan Tribune*, May 18). Al-Hilu withdrew from the elections as the votes were counted, charging the NCP with vote-rigging. Soon after, he announced he was in high-level talks with the SPLM government of South Sudan and had received their support (*Sudan Tribune*, May 18).

The new governor, Ahmad Haroun, is a veteran of the largely Arab Murahileen mounted militias formed to raid Southern Sudanese tribes in the border regions during the 1980s. In the 1990s Haroun was involved in the brutal campaign to punish the Nuba of South Kordofan for supporting the SPLA, a reprisal campaign that did not differentiate between Muslim and non-Muslim and left roughly 200,000 civilians dead. By 2003 Haroun was Minister of the State for the Interior and played a major part in organizing the Arab Janjaweed militia to attack non-Arab Muslim civilians suspected of supporting the Darfur insurgency. In respect to these activities, the ICC issued an arrest warrant for Haroun on multiple charges of crimes against humanity in April 2007. In response, Khartoum appointed Haroun to head an investigation into human rights abuses in Darfur.

Fighting Breaks Out

Clashes between the SAF and the SPLA are reported to have begun when government troops attempted to disarm SPLA fighters in Kadugli, the administrative center of South Kordofan. Attempts to do the same in the nearby town of Dilling appear to have led to SPLA troops opening up on the SAF, killing an SAF officer and eight soldiers (*Sudan Tribune*, June 9). SAF sources cited an attack on a police station in Kadugli on June 4 and a nearly simultaneous attack by SPLA forces against SAF troops in Um Dorain, 35 km southeast of Kadugli (*Independent*, June 17).

The Khartoum government presented the events in Kadugli as a SPLM/A attempt to overthrow the regional government in South Kordofan. According to President Omar al-Bashir: “The armed forces have aborted the plot of the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) which was aiming to occupy Kadugli... and inaugurate Abdul-Aziz Al-Hilu as ruler for Sudan... What happened in South Kordofan was a betrayal operation by the SPLM. Unfortunately, there was killing, destruction and displacement. The development in South Kordofan, which has been witnessing the biggest development process in Sudan, was crippled” (Xinhua, June 22).

Presidential advisor Dr. Nafi Ali Nafi called the fighting in South Kordofan proof of a specific SPLM/A agenda in the region that involved taking control of South Kordofan either through elections or force as the first step in joining with other unnamed parties in seizing Khartoum (Sudan Vision, June 15). Dr. Nafi also said the NCP had given the SAF “a free hand” to eliminate disturbances in South Kordofan (SUNA, June 8). President Omar al-Bashir accused the SPLA in South Kordofan of “treachery,” adding: “We hope that now they understand... anyone who looks our way, we will stab his eyes” (*Sudan Tribune*, June 20).

Despite the looming independence of South Sudan, a form of the SPLM known as SPLM-Northern Sector (SPLM-NS) remains active in the North. The chairman of the SPLM-NS is Malik Agar, a former SPLA commander in the Blue Nile Region in the 1990s who was later elected governor of Blue Nile State in 2010. Agar became chairman of the SPLM-NS in February 2011. Despite its associations with the Southern secessionist movement, the SPLM has now become one of the largest political parties in North Sudan. However, like the SPLA fighters in Kordofan, the SPLM-NS has an uncertain future after South Sudan takes independence. An NCP spokesman has already announced that the movement would not be allowed to continue operating in its present form “because it is the party of another country” (AFP, June 18).

Governor Haroun has promised “the severest punishment” will be dealt out to al-Hilu when he is seized by SAF forces who are looking for him in the mountains south and east of Kadugli. Haroun blamed “left-wing elements” under SPLM-NS Secretary General Yasir Arman for inciting resistance to the state against the wishes of many SPLA fighters in South Kordofan who desired a peaceful resolution of existing problems (Sudan Vision, June 11).

In a June 9 interview with pan-Arab daily *al-Sharq al-Awsat*, al-Hilu seemed to confirm the government’s allegations by saying he was leading a battle to accomplish “fundamental change in the center.” Al-Hilu called on the Sudanese people to overthrow the Bashir regime in order to eliminate political, social, economic and religious marginalization in Sudan, policies which generate “civil wars, discrimination and instability.”

Khartoum Describes a Plot

Local residents and aid workers have reported house-to-house searches for SPLA troops and supporters conducted by Popular Defense Force (PDF) militias. Extrajudicial killings by government militias and a series of assassinations of local NCP leaders by the SPLA have also been reported (AFP, June 12). NCP cabinet minister Haj Majid Swar claimed government security forces had discovered documents in al-Hilu’s home outlining a campaign to target senior NCP figures in Kadugli and nearby Dilling before liquidating SAF forces in the area and seizing Kadugli (Sudan Vision, June 15; Sudanese Media Center, June 20). Colonel Osama Muhammad of the SAF’s 14th Division elaborated on these claims on June 18, saying seized documents showed a SPLA plot to assassinate military and political figures in South Kordofan, including Governor Ahmad Haroun. According to the Colonel, the plot was supported by the willing participation of the UN and a number of local and foreign NGOs (*Sudan Tribune*, June 18).

Much of the fighting has consisted of ancient SAF Antonov bombers, Mig fighter jets and ground-based artillery shelling SPLA positions in the hills surrounding Kadugli. The Antonovs are Soviet-made transports last made in 1979 that have been converted to use as bombers in the Sudanese Air Force. Due to their improvised nature and the poor quality of their munitions (primitive “barrel-bombs” were often used in Darfur), the Antonovs must fly relatively low to have any degree of accuracy in bombing runs. On June 12, a SPLM-NS spokesman claimed the group’s fighters had downed two government warplanes on June 10, including an Antonov bomber and a MiG fighter. An SAF spokesman responded by describing the claim as “completely wrong” (AFP, June 12).

The International Role – The United Nations and African Union

As part of its mandate, the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) section of the UN Mission

in Sudan (UNMIS) has disarmed thousands of pro-government and pro-SPLA fighters since 2009 (Miraya FM, December 28, 2009). UNMIS has complained that the closing of the Kadugli Airport and restrictions on South Kordofan airspace imposed by the SAF have made it difficult to distribute much-needed humanitarian aid. On June 17, SAF aircraft dropped several bombs close to the UN compound at Kadugli. At one point, four UNMIS soldiers were detained and abused by SAF troops in Kadugli (*Sudan Tribune*, June 29). Egyptian peacekeepers with UNMIS in South Kordofan have also been accused of collaboration with the Khartoum regime as well as criminal activities by Abd al-Aziz al-Hilu (*Sudan Tribune*, June 9). By mid-June, reinforcements led by 120 Bangladeshi troops were on their way to join AMISOM forces in Kadugli, whose base had become the focus of fighting in the town as it tried to shelter displaced locals (AFP, June 17).

The African Union has created the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to mediate between North and South Sudan on issues such as the status of South Kordofan and Abyei. Former South African president Thabo Mbeki chairs AUHIP after having previously chaired the African Union Panel on Darfur (AUPD). Just as Mbeki came under criticism from Darfur rebel groups for siding with Khartoum, the former president has now come under fire in some quarters for similarly siding with Khartoum in the South Kordofan crisis. A letter to Mbeki from leading SPLM figure Edward Lino told the AUHIP chair: “All your plans are pro-Khartoum... Khartoum has long decided to ‘use you’ properly and you accepted willingly, letting our people in Abyei and the Nuba Mountains be exterminated!” (*Sudan Tribune*, June 19).

However, by June 30, Mbeki had managed to broker a deal calling for the SPLA fighters in South Kordofan to be either disarmed or integrated into the Northern army, with a provision that disarmament was not to be carried out by force. The effectiveness of these measures remains uncertain, as it would appear initially that neither of these options would be palatable to the Nuba SPLA forces.

Darfur’s Rebels and the Conflict in South Kordofan

The election of Ahmad Haroun as Governor of South Kordofan appears to have attracted the interest of Darfur’s rebel groups, who believe they have a score to settle with the former Janjaweed commander. In

an interview from Kampala, Abu al-Gamim Imam al-Haj, a prominent member of the largely Fur Sudan Liberation Movement – Abdul Wahid (SLM-AW), announced that his movement would work with Abdul Aziz al-Hilu and the Kordofan branch of the SPLA to use any means available to bring down the Khartoum regime, including strikes, civil disobedience and military operations (Radio Dabanga, June 17).

Darfur’s Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), with a largely Zaghawa leadership, claimed to have used its long-range desert raiding skills to mount a June 9 attack and brief occupation of the Heglig airport in Western Kordofan, center of the North Sudan’s most productive oil field. JEM Field Commander Elnazir Osman said the raiding force had fired a number of RPGs at oil field installations, forcing a temporary shutdown (Radio Dabanja, June 11). A JEM statement said that the attack by “JEM Kordofan” was “meant to send a clear message to oil companies that use of their airports and other facilities by the Government of Sudan [and] its army and militia will not go unpunished...” (*Sudan Tribune*, June 14).

The speaker of the JEM Legislative Assembly, Dr. Tahir al-Faki, has called for the imposition of a no-fly zone in the Nuba Mountains to protect civilian lives. He described the fighting in South Kordofan and the “appointment” of Ahmad Haroun as the beginning of a process of ethnic cleansing similar to that experienced in Darfur: “Having orchestrated the Darfur genocide, Haroun is the right choice for the Government of Sudan to complete the unfinished job to ethnically cleanse the Nuba People and bring in Arabs to occupy their lands” (*Sudan Tribune*, June 21).

Khartoum has repeatedly claimed that JEM guerrillas are fighting on behalf of Mu’ammar Qaddafi in Libya, though these claims have not been confirmed (see *Sudan Tribune*, June 21, May 31; see also Jamestown Foundation Special Commentary, February 24).

Conclusion

Khartoum seems to have correctly assessed that the SPLM/A of South Sudan would be reluctant to intervene in South Kordofan so close to independence. The SPLM seems to have given little thought to the fate of its abandoned Nuba Army; if they did, it seems they were unable to come up with some other solution than the nebulous “Popular Consultations,” which, being short

of any mechanism enforcing the popular will, seem simply to be code for “Return to the North.”

Khartoum has little choice but to allow the South to leave; the overwhelming vote for independence (98.83 %) has left no room for dispute. However, the regime appears to have decided to draw the line there. There will be no more “disputed territories” or regions “whose future will be decided by popular consultations.” In South Kordofan and Abyei, the North will want to consolidate control over the few productive oil fields left within its grasp.

Khartoum’s attempt to consolidate its position in South Kordofan and eliminate potential sources of opposition there have been coupled with reinvigorated attempts to strike a deal with the Darfur rebels before South Sudan becomes independent on July 9. Khartoum’s policy has always been to prevent Sudan’s multiple centers of discontent from acting in concert to depose the Nile-based Arab regime in the capital. The government faces potential opposition from the Beja tribes of east Sudan (who have already conducted a low-intensity rebellion against the regime), growing discontent in Nubia over a series of dam-building projects and possible armed opposition in the Blue Nile region. There is also sure to be dissatisfaction within the NCP’s traditional power-base over the government’s failure to prevent the oil-rich South from seceding. Under these conditions and with so many unresolved issues still outstanding between Khartoum and the SPLM, including the still unresolved fate of the Nuba SPLA, it seems unlikely that the ceasefire in South Kordofan will hold for long, adding yet another element of instability to Africa’s largest and possibly most diverse country.

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Note:

1. 40,000 SPLA troops in South Kordofan, 6000 of which belonged to the Joint Integrated Units, a largely failed attempt under the CPA to integrate SAF and SPLA forces to regulate disputed border territories.
2. A.J.P., “The Hillmen of the Soudan,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* 1308, October 1924, p.560.