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IN THIS ISSUE:

BRIEFS.....1

CONFRONTATION LOOMS AS PKK CEASEFIRE FAILS TO STOP TURKISH SECURITY OPERATIONS
By Jacob Zenn.....4

AL-QAEDA'S EGYPTIAN IDEOLOGUES PLANNING CALIPHATE'S RETURN TO EGYPT
By Hani Nasira.....6

REGIME LOYALISTS FIGHT ON AS OPPOSITION PREPARES FOR A POST-QADDAFI LIBYA
By Camille Tawil.....8



Libyan rebels in the Nafusa Mountains

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UGANDA REORGANIZES MILITARY TO PRESS WAR AGAINST SOMALIA'S AL-SHABAAB

Even as Somalia's fragile Transitional Federal Government (TFG) threatens to collapse, Uganda is shaking up its military structure in order to sustain what it sees as some hard-won momentum in its struggle with al-Shabaab militants in Mogadishu. Uganda is the driving force behind the African Union's "peace-enforcement" effort in Somalia – the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The AU's military presence in Somalia began with a lone contingent from the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) in 2007. Despite pledges of assistance from several African nations, Uganda continues to supply roughly two-thirds of the 9,000 strong AMISOM force, the remainder consisting of a contingent of Burundian troops. Ugandan officers tend to dominate AMISOM's highest posts.

In the wake of a devastating attack by al-Shabaab that killed Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Sibihwa and 12 other Ugandan soldiers in Mogadishu on June 3, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni made a secret visit to the Somali capital to assess the situation and raise the morale of Ugandan troops (*Observer* [Kampala], June 16). Sibihwa was the first high-ranking AMISOM officer to be killed in the fighting and was a 27 year veteran of the UPDF (*New Vision*, June 12). The death in the Ugandan military hospital from incompetent medical care of seven soldiers injured in the attack has led to an inquiry concerning the possibility some military doctors are working with forged academic qualifications to take advantage of the generous compensation and captain's rank offered to medical school graduates to serve in the UPDF (*Observer* [Kampala], July 3).

While Museveni, the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, made sweeping changes in the officer corps, there were important changes in the leadership of the Ugandan AMISOM contingent. Three majors working in Mogadishu, Chris Ogumiraki, Joab Ndahura (1st battalion commander) and Paddy Ankunda, were promoted to acting lieutenant colonels (*Observer* [Kampala], June 29). Ankunda is the public face of AMISOM, acting as its communications director and spokesman.

In the most important move, Major General Nathan Mugisha was replaced as AMISOM chief by Ugandan chief of artillery and air defense Brigadier Fred Mugisha (no known relation). The appointment takes effect in September, when AMISOM is expected to make its final push to seize Mogadishu's Bakara Market, an al-Shabaab stronghold. Brigadier Mugisha has been promoted to Major General while Nathan Mugisha will remain in Mogadishu as the deputy Ugandan ambassador. The new AMISOM chief has taken courses in intelligence and counterterrorism in the former Soviet Union (1987-1989) and the United States (*Daily Monitor*, June 15). The change in overall command follows an earlier change of the commander of the Ugandan contingent of AMISOM. Colonel Michael Ondoga was promoted to Brigadier and sent for studies in the United States and replaced by Colonel Paul Lokech (*New Vision* [Kampala], June 15). Service in AMISOM is seen as a prestigious posting and an important factor in promotion for Ugandan and Burundian officers (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], June 20).

AMISOM will also be supplied with four drone aircraft as part of \$45 million worth of military aid going to Uganda and Burundi. The package includes communications equipment, body armor, night vision equipment, generators, surveillance systems and heavy construction equipment. Training will also be made available (AP, June 26).

The unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) supplied to AMISOM are small, hand-launched aircraft designed for day or night aerial surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance. With a wing-span of 4.5 feet and a weight of just over four pounds, the AeroVironment RQ-11 Raven has a flight time of 60 to 90 minutes in an operational radius of 6.2 miles. The drones should provide enhanced intelligence collection in Mogadishu's urban warfare environment.

The U.S. announcement came six weeks after U.S. Africa Command chief General Carter Ham held talks in

Uganda with President Museveni regarding the situation in Somalia. According to an official at the U.S. mission in Kampala, the United States has "and will continue to provide equipment, training and some logistical support to Ugandan and Burundian soldiers" (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], July 4). In March, Uganda and Burundi pledged to supply another 4,000 troops to the AU mission in Somalia (SunaTimes, July 2; Raxanreeb Radio, July 2).

The increased U.S. support for AMISOM coincides with a new campaign of strikes on al-Qaeda suspects in Somalia by American Predator UAVs. While TFG officials do not appear to be informed prior to U.S. drone attacks, Defense Minister Abdulhakim Haji Faqi has encouraged further strikes: "We welcome it ... We urge the U.S. to continue its strikes against al-Shabaab, because if it keeps those strikes up, it will be easier for us to defeat al-Shabaab" (al-Arabiya, July 4).

According to the commander of the Ugandan contingent of AMISOM, Colonel Paul Lokech, the Ugandan military has had to develop new skills in fighting a modern urban counterinsurgency in terrain very unlike that of Uganda:

We are involved in urban-warfare, which is majorly counter-terrorism in an urban terrain. Therefore, the tactics and the way you maneuver here is slightly different from the way you maneuver in an open savannah land. In the savannah, you can move faster. In a built up area like Mogadishu, you must restrict the pace of your movement. Therefore, you have to move very slowly. You must move consciously to minimize casualties (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], June 25).

Al-Shabaab has reinforced its positions in Mogadishu with deep trenches, tunnels connecting buildings and barriers made from shipping containers. According to Colonel Lokech, the militants have borrowed their defensive plans from the Chechen defense of Grozny in 1999-2000 (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], June 22). UPDF chief General Aronda Nyakairima recently noted: "In Mogadishu even taking half a street takes a lot of planning. We need more soldiers to add to what we have from Burundi and Uganda, more boats to control the ocean, more helicopters" (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], June 20). AMISOM has been much criticized in Somalia for indiscriminate fire in civilian neighborhoods, but tries to win popularity through the provision of free medical care and the supply of much needed food and water to the long-suffering residents of Mogadishu.

Ugandan journalists have noted the absence of TFG troops from the frontlines, where Ugandan and Burundian troops are often involved in intense firefights with al-Shabaab militants. Ugandan officers have noted the poor organization of the TFG fighters and their tendency to favor clan above national or other loyalties (*Daily Monitor*, June 25).

Museveni has also been busy on the diplomatic front in Somalia, mediating the Kampala Accord, designed to break the political deadlock between Somali president Shaykh Sharif Shaykh Ahmad and Speaker of Parliament Sharif Hassan Shaykh Aden. The accord calls for the resignation of Prime Minister Muhammad Abdullahi Muhammad “Farmajo,” a move that appears to have only made things worse, with the popular prime minister refusing to resign and his supporters filling the streets in protest. The transitional government’s mandate expires on August 23. With the TFG’s existence relying mostly on Ugandan support, Yoweri Museveni is increasingly seen as the most powerful individual in determining the future of Somalia.

MALI AND MAURITANIA CONDUCT JOINT OPERATIONS AGAINST AL-QAEDA BASES

Fighting continues along the Mali-Mauritania border after al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) mounted a July 5 raid on the Mauritanian military base at Bassiknou, in the southeast corner of the country. Mauritanian security sources claim as many as 20 AQIM fighters were slain in the attack, which was repulsed after a half hour of heavy fighting. An AQIM statement claimed only two fighters were killed in the “well prepared” operation that was “carried out with top mujahideen leaders” (Agence Nouakchott d’Information, July 6). Mauritanian air and ground forces were pursuing the raiders to the Malian border. The AQIM assault appears to have been in retaliation for the destruction of an AQIA base in Mali on June 24.

Joint Malian-Mauritanian military operations in western Mali led to the discovery and destruction of the AQIM base roughly 70 km from the border with Mauritania. The camp was found in the Wagadu Forest in the Nara *cercle* (subdivision) of the Kouikoro region of western Mali.

Joint operations in the area involving hundreds of soldiers began on June 21 after reports emerged that suspected AQIM members were planting mines in the area around a new AQIM camp. Suspicions were

confirmed on June 22, when a camel was blown up after stepping on a mine (AFP, June 24).

The AQIM camp was discovered and destroyed in a June 24 attack. Two Mauritanian soldiers were killed when their vehicle struck a mine at the entrance to the camp, but otherwise AQIM took the worst of it in the heavy fighting that followed the surprise strike. Some 15 AQIM fighters were killed and the rest fled into the bush. Locals reported seeing some fugitives heading north toward the Sahara (AFP, June 26; June 28). It was possibly some of these fighters who regrouped to help mount the attack on the Bassiknou military base.

Mauritanian military sources said the AQIM camp had housed anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons that posed a threat to national security. The origin of the weapons was unclear – there are concerns that AQIM has procured weapons from Libyan stockpiles during the ongoing rebellion in that country.

AQIM released a statement on July 4 claiming the raid had been “a crushing defeat” for the Mauritanian military, which it suggested had lost 20 soldiers and 12 army vehicles in the attack, to a loss of only two AQIM members. The statement accused Mauritania’s leaders of carrying out a “proxy war on behalf of France” and said the AQIM unit was under the command of veteran Mauritanian militant Khalid al-Shanqiti (a.k.a. Mahfouz Ould al-Walid) (AFP, July 4). Algerian AQIM commander Yahya Abou Hamam has also been reported to be active in the Wagadou Forest area with the largely Mauritanian “al-Mourabitoun Battalion” (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], June 25).

The successful operation nonetheless incurred the ire of the Mauritanian opposition on the grounds it had endangered the lives of soldiers and civilians without consulting parliament (PANA Online [Dakar], June 30). Others suggested the operation would only have a “negative impact” on counterterrorism efforts and asked why Mauritanian troops were alone in the fight and without the assistance of their counterterrorism partners, Algeria, Mali and Niger (Sahara Media, June 27). Questions have also been raised about the state of Mali’s sovereignty as Mauritanian troops carry out their third military operation in Mali (*Le Republicain* [Bamako], June 24).

Malian troops apparently did not take part in the actual attack on the AQIM camp, but were involved along with Mauritanian troops and aircraft in searching for

AQIM elements that had escaped the raid (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], June 25). The searchers were forced to proceed with caution, fearing both mines and ambushes in the rough bush country. Mine-clearing teams went to work in the area but were unable to prevent three civilians being killed by a mine on June 28 (*Le Combat* [Bamako], June 27; AFP, June 28).

Malian president Amadou Toumani Touré made extensive changes in early June to the leadership of the armed forces involved in combatting al-Qaeda, removing a number of officers suspected of collaboration with local criminals assisting bandits and terrorists (*Le Politicien* [Bamako], June 23).

Mauritania has serious concerns over repeated AQIM raids and infiltrations carried out across the border with Mali. Last February, three vehicles from Mali containing suspected AQIM operatives were intercepted by Mauritanian security forces outside the capital of Nouakchott. It was believed the suspects intended to kill Mauritanian president Muhammad Ould Abdel Aziz with a powerful car bomb, which was detonated by a mortar shell during the fighting, leaving three terrorists dead, nine soldiers wounded and a bomb crater eight meters deep (see *Terrorism Monitor* Briefs, February 10). Mauritanian security forces were searching Nouakchott in late June for three armed AQIM suspects believed to have infiltrated from Mali to carry out a suicide bombing (Sahara Media, June 22).

Confrontation Looms as PKK Ceasefire Fails to Stop Turkish Security Operations

By Jacob Zenn

Turkish security forces did not wait for the June 15 deadline set by Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned leader of the Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan (PKK – Kurdistan Workers’ Party), to make his decision on extending the PKK’s unilateral “non-attack” ceasefire. On June 14, hundreds of Turkish troops supported by helicopters launched an operation against ten PKK militants in the central Anatolian province of Sivas. Three PKK fighters were killed, including a Syrian national who is believed to have been part of a group that killed seven Turkish soldiers in a 2009 ambush in Tokat. The PKK cell in Sivas was far from the movement’s usual area of operations in southeast Anatolia and was believed to be on its way to the Black Sea coast (*Sabah*, June 15).

It is unclear whether the timing of the counterterrorist operation in Sivas had any relation to the June 15 deadline, but Turkey’s disregard for Ocalan’s self-imposed ceasefire is consistent with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s statement following the victory of his Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP – Justice and Development Party) in the June 12 parliamentary elections, in which he declared that his government would not hold talks with “terrorists” (*Sabah*, June 15). On June 17, Ocalan announced through his lawyers that he would extend the ceasefire and give the newly elected Turkish government several months to work toward a solution to the Kurdish question (RojHelat, June 17). However, his announcement has had little influence on the Turkish military, which continues operations against the PKK and follows Erdogan’s line regarding no negotiations.

The PKK refers to the ceasefire as a “non-attack” decision in which PKK guerrilla units adhere to a strategy of “active defense.” As defined by the PKK, active defense allows the PKK to attack the Turkish military only in retaliation for earlier attacks by the army or if the Turkish military is preparing to strike PKK positions (RojHelat, May 3; ekurd.net, February 28, 2011). For example, on June 22 the PKK claimed responsibility for the bombing of a police vehicle in Tunceli that killed two policemen, saying it was retaliation for the June

14 Sivas operation. In response to the Tunceli attack, Turkish Interior Minister Osman Günes said that more operations would be launched against the PKK (AK News [Erbil], June 25).

Ahmet Turk, the former chairman of the pro-Kurdish Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP - Democratic Society Party) believes that the ongoing war is only between the Turkish state and the PKK. However, he believes that the demands of the Kurdish people and the leaders of the pro-Kurdish Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi (BDP - Peace and Democracy Party, successor to the DTP, banned in 2009) are the same as those of the PKK and that the aspirations of Kurds from the mountains to the cities are now everywhere linked to the PKK's struggle. Ahmet Turk predicts that this will result in the war extending everywhere Kurds live unless the Turkish state addresses Kurdish demands. [1]

The main demands proposed by the PKK and the BDP in order to solve the "Kurdish question" are:

- Turkey must amend its constitution to emphasize equal citizenship rights for Kurds and Turks, including the right to Kurdish language education.
- Kurds must have a degree of autonomy in the southeast region where they are the majority.
- Turkey must release Kurdish leaders from prison, including Ocalan, and lower the 10% threshold required for a political party to enter parliament. Currently the Kurdish-led BDP is incapable of reaching the threshold, so its members run as independents.

Although the PKK's geographic range is expanding from the traditional battle zone in the Kurdish-dominated southeast region, its tactics and intelligence are becoming more sophisticated – as seen in the May 4 attack on a convoy of AKP officials near Kastamonu that the militants may have thought included Prime Minister Erdogan. Though the PKK's appeal shows signs of strengthening among the Kurdish population, Turkey has not moved any closer to meeting the Kurdish demands. On the contrary, Turkey has ignored Ocalan's ceasefire, alienated Kurdish elites by engaging in a massive clampdown on their leaders and continued operations against the PKK (such as the one in Sivas).

In October 2010, Turkey brought to trial 152 high-profile Kurdish politicians and activists suspected of being members of PKK offshoot Koma Civaken Kurdistan (KCK – Union of Communities in Kurdistan). The suspects were charged with crimes such as "aiming to destroy the unity and integrity of the State," "being a leading member of an illegal organization [i.e. the PKK]", and "making propaganda for an illegal organization." Although none of the defendants were accused of committing violence themselves, 11 of the defendants were sentenced to imprisonment for various terms averaging 8.5 years each on June 14 (ekurd.net, June 16; bianet.org, June 16).

The KCK case and prohibitions on BDP-supported candidates from running in the parliamentary elections sparked the anger of Kurdish masses in protests held throughout the country from March until the June 12 elections. Turkish police arrested more than 2,000 protestors, which further alienated the pro-BDP and PKK masses from the Turkish State.

Turkey has refused Ocalan a role in settling the conflict, burned bridges with the BDP, and lost credibility among large swathes of the country's Kurdish population. If the past is any indication, the Turkish military and the PKK will become the main forces to act on behalf of the Turkish state and the Kurdish minority in the absence of dialogue between the two groups' political leaders.

In May 2011, Ocalan predicted that after June 15 there would be either "an historic agreement or an all-out war that will lead to chaos and turmoil" (AK News, May 16). Despite extending the ceasefire, no agreement is under discussion and attacks and counter-attacks are on the rise throughout Turkey. The evolution of the conflict is heading in the direction of Ocalan's prediction of "all-out war."

Jacob Zenn graduated from Georgetown Law as a Global Law Scholar in May 2011. From June 4 to June 6 he was in Mardin, Turkey as a delegate in the Department of State's Young Turkey/Young America program, which was administered by the Atlantic Council of the United States and the Sabanci Institute of the Istanbul Policy Center.

Note:

1. Author's interview with Ahmet Turk at his headquarters in Kızıltepe. June 5, 2011.

Al-Qaeda's Egyptian Ideologues Planning Caliphate's Return to Egypt

By *Hani Nasira*

While al-Qaeda focused on the global jihad under the leadership of the late Osama bin Laden, an examination of the speeches and publications of his Egyptian successor, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, show that renewing his own failed jihad in Egypt has never been far from al-Zawahiri's mind.

- In speeches delivered before February 2010, al-Zawahiri mentioned Egypt 226 times, second only to the United States (mentioned 636 times).
- Al Zawahiri recently released the last in his six-part series about Egypt titled "The Message of Hope and Good Tidings for Our People in Egypt." The last four of its six parts focused on the Egyptian Revolution and ex-president Hosni Mubarak.
- In *The Exoneration*, his last and most important book, al-Zawahiri referred to Egypt 195 times and Mubarak 41 times while referring to Saudi leaders only once and the Kingdom not at all. The United States was mentioned 150 times. [1]

These works reveal the central position of Egypt in al-Zawahiri's thought and suggest the direction al-Qaeda may take now that al-Zawahiri has assumed leadership of the movement.

Conditions in Egypt now provide a suitable environment for al-Qaeda following the chaos in the internal security services, the rise of Salafist movements and the release from detention of a number of jihadi ideologues and the return of others from abroad. Al-Zawahiri may see a golden opportunity to renew jihad activities in Egypt after he was forced to suspend the activities of the Egyptian Jihad movement in 1995 due to the movement's inability to cope with severe pressure from the Egyptian security forces.

Al-Qaeda is expected to witness a new phase of activity coinciding with the popular Arab revolutions that may see the movement grow stronger due to al-Zawahiri's

pragmatism and deep and effective relations with a number of al-Qaeda sub-organizations in the Maghreb, the Horn of Africa, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula.

Al-Zawahiri claims to support the revolutions in Syria, Libya and Yemen, insisting they will result in an Islamic state with the help of an alliance of Islamist and jihadist groups. The al-Qaeda leader's views are mirrored in the works of Anwar al-Awlaki on the Yemeni Revolution and those of Attiya Allah al-Libi on the Libyan Revolution (for Attiya, see *Terrorism Monitor*, August 12, 2010; June 9).

A process of ideological reconsideration is taking place in Egypt's Salafist leadership. Some have opted for political action while others have announced they will focus on the Islamic Call. All of them stress the need for an Islamic state and Shari'a rule.

This process requires very little departure from the decisions adopted by many of the Islamist movements in Egypt to renounce violence since 1997. Nonetheless, the debate within the Egyptian Islamic Group over its future course has ended with the departure of a number of its historically prominent leaders and the appointment of cousins Aboud and Tarek al-Zomor as new leaders. The two were freed from three decades of imprisonment during the revolution after being connected to the assassination of President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981. [2] Despite describing al-Zawahiri as "a man who loves his religion and justice," the cousins have been eager to reassure Egyptians that they have renounced violence and believe the Islamic state in Egypt will be established "at the ballot box" (The Daily News Egypt, March 21).

Al Zawahiri's view of the Arab revolutions and the role of Islamists and mujahideen were outlined in his series "The Message of Hope and Assurance for Our People in Egypt." In his perspective, America retreated from supporting the overthrown leaders in Tunisia and Egypt as a result of al-Qaeda's activities. Al-Zawahiri also warned of "predators" who would seek to manipulate the revolutions in their own interests and insisted that "secular change" was not an option for the people of Egypt, claiming Shari'a has been the demand of the vast majority of Egyptians since the death of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna in 1949.

Perhaps in keeping with the revolutionary demands for social reforms, al-Zawahiri also addresses "social injustice" in a nationalist fashion unfamiliar to most Salafi-Jihadi literature:

Egypt must begin a popular campaign to regain the Egyptians' rights, especially those of the impoverished, and this campaign must seek to uproot the social injustice, poverty, needs and short-handedness in Egypt. Islamic advocacy must consider the social justice cases as one of its main priorities. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) said: "the believer is one who doesn't feel fed while his neighbor is hungry next to him." The *zakat* obligation must be revived... Stealing Egypt's resources must stop, and the clearest example is exporting gas to Israel, which the Egyptian judiciary ruled on and disallowed, and in spite of that the military council keeps exporting it to Israel" (As-Sahab Media/al-Fajr Media Center, May 21).

Al-Zawahiri has repeatedly warned of U.S. attempts to install a secular leader in Egypt after having abandoned its ally, first in a February 28 statement, again in two parts of "The Message of Hope and Assurance for Our People in Egypt," and finally in "The Noble Knight Alighted," his June 8 eulogy of Bin Laden. Al-Zawahiri has highlighted in various speeches the need to prepare for an Islamic state after these revolutions and the importance of making alliances with other Islamic forces in revolutionary countries to prevent the establishment of a secular state.

Explaining this vision was a recent essay released by al-Qaeda entitled "The People's Revolution and the End of Forced Rule" (al-Fajr Media Center, June 1). The document was written by Egyptian al-Qaeda member Abu Ubaydah Abdallah al-Adm, who appears to be very close to the movement's high command.

The essay outlines a strategic vision for al-Qaeda in dealing with the popular revolutions and interpreting them in a religious way favorable to the various Islamist movements, especially those with a focus on restoring the Islamic state (the Caliphate), such as al-Qaeda and Egyptian Jihad.

In his paper, Al-Adm explains that the revolutions and overthrow of regimes represent the end of forced rule or tyrannies, a phase that followed the eras of the prophets and Caliphates. Al-Adm believes that these revolutions hasten the arrival of the Islamic state, though he notes that the establishment of such a state may be preceded by a period of chaos – possibly as long as 50 years, as suggested by Syrian jihad theorist Mus'ab al-Suri (a.k.a. Mustafa Setmariam Nasar). In al-Adm's view, God has

driven these revolutions, supporting the mujahideen as the Muslim people wake up to reject everything else but Islamic Shari'a.

At the end of the paper, al-Adm emphasizes that "The Global Jihad Movement, no doubt, is waiting for the fruits of this popular movement in which it sacrificed the blood of its members and spent decades calling for it and fighting to plant the idea in the minds of Muslims who rose up today demonstrating [against] the tyrannical oppression they used to face. Al-Qaeda paved the way for these revolutions and waits for its fruits..."

Hani Nasira is an Egyptian writer who specializes in ideological movements.

Notes:

1. Al-Zawahiri's book (Full title: *A Treatise Exonerating the Community of the Pen and the Sword from the Debilitating Accusation of Fatigue and Weakness*) was a March 2008 refutation of a book entitled *Tarshid al-amal al-jihadi fi misr wa al-alam* (Rationalizing the Jihadi Action in Egypt and the World) by the imprisoned founder of the Islamic Jihad organization, Sayed Imam Abdulaziz al-Sharif (a.k.a. Dr. Fadl). (See *Terrorism Focus*, April 30, 3008).
2. <http://www.egyig.com//Public/articles/announce/index.shtml>.

Regime Loyalists Fight On as Opposition Prepares for a Post-Qaddafi Libya

By Camille Tawil

After months of bombardment by NATO warplanes, Qaddafi's military is no longer the force it was when it was on the verge of defeating the rebels by taking their "capital" of Benghazi prior to the March 27 commencement of the NATO intervention. Since then, NATO has destroyed many of Qaddafi's tanks and armored vehicles and obliterated his air force and navy. Realizing that his soldiers are "sitting ducks" for NATO's warplanes, Qaddafi sought to protect them by changing their tactics; they no longer behaved as a regular army, but instead replaced their armored vehicles with civilian vehicles, including pick-up trucks similar to the ones used by the rebels. NATO countered this move by introducing attack helicopters to the theater such as the British AH-64 Apaches and the French EC-665 Tiger HAD (Hélicoptère d'Appui Destruction) and older SA 342 Gazelles. The helicopters can help NATO pin-point targets that are difficult to hit with high-flying planes, especially if they are hidden within residential areas or camouflaged as civilian vehicles.

NATO attacks succeeded in reversing the situation on the ground in the rebels' favor. In the east, opposition forces moved from Ajdabiya toward the oil port of Brega (al-Burayqah - some 80 miles to the west), but they have not yet been able to take it, despite heavy bombardment by NATO from air and sea. It has been reported that one of Qaddafi's sons, Muatasim, is leading the defense of Brega, which, if true, indicates how important the town is to his father (*al-Hayat*, May 19). The fall of Brega can open the road for the rebels to reach Sirte, Qaddafi's birthplace and a stronghold of his tribe, the Qadadfa.

In western Libya, the rebels of Misurata have also been on the offensive, after breaking the siege laid by Qaddafi's forces on the city since the start of the uprising in February. However, the rebels have been trying for weeks to overrun the nearby town of Zliten, which blocks their advance on Tripoli, around 100 miles to the west. The rebels claim that they have not entered Zliten yet because they are waiting for the town's own rebels to rise against Qaddafi. Despite claims that the rebels are indeed active inside Zliten, the town is still

held firmly by Qaddafi, either because the majority of its own citizens are still loyal to his regime, or because of fear of his troops stationed inside the town. Here, again, it has been reported that Qaddafi has deployed one of his sons, Khamis, the head of the 32nd Brigade, to lead the defense of Zliten (*al-Khaleej* [UAE], June 2).

But if the rebels in the east have failed to overrun Brega, and their colleagues in Misurata have also failed to enter Zliten, the opposition forces in Jabal Nafusa, south west of Tripoli, have managed to score an important victory against Qaddafi, whose forces were pushed out from almost the entire region, which lies 70 miles west of Tripoli. In June, the rebels of the Nafusa Mountains broke the siege which Qaddafi forces had laid against them from the start of the uprising, and they quickly advanced north towards Tripoli. In order to continue to Tripoli, they must first take Gharyan from loyalist forces, a task the rebels are confident can be achieved sometime this month. Rebel success in this region seems to have been the result not only of their patience and courage, but also due to weapons drops from French aircraft, including Milan anti-tank missiles (*Le Figaro*, June 28). The rebels are also reported to be receiving weapons from Qatar and are known to have received aid smuggled in via Tunis. Even if the Nafusa rebels manage to take Gharyan, they will soon find themselves facing major populated areas still loyal to the regime.

The Looming Battle for Tripoli

Qaddafi has obviously understood that the rebels have their eyes on Tripoli, so he moved a major part of his fighting forces into the capital. The city of 1.6 million people seems firmly held by his loyalists, despite claims by the rebels that they have succeeded in smuggling weapons to active cells involved in nightly attacks against the regime forces. The two neighborhoods where Qaddafi opponents are known to be active inside Tripoli are Tajoura and Souk al-Juma, and it has been noted that NATO has been bombing Qaddafi forces specifically in Tajoura. The hope, it seems, is that citizens in this area will take the opportunity to kick the regime units out, as they clearly tried to do at the start of the revolution in February. In addition to attempting to foment another uprising in Tajoura, east of Tripoli, the rebels have been trying to encircle the Libyan capital from the west. They recently tried to regain a foothold in Zawiyah, 18 miles west of Tripoli, but the regime forces managed to clear them out of this important town (BBC, June 12).

The priority in Qaddafi's strategy seems to be to prevent the rebels from advancing toward Tripoli, in addition to trying to reach a ceasefire that includes NATO stopping its attacks. Here he seems to be playing on time, hoping to exhaust the NATO alliance, whose states are under considerable internal pressure to cut back on their military budgets. The alliance insists that its member nations, despite financial restraints, have all that is needed to finish the mission in Libya.

Qaddafi also seems to be keen on protecting himself from NATO raids which, according to his spokesmen, are intended to "assassinate him." NATO has indeed bombed sites associated with the Libyan colonel, especially his Bab al-Aziziya compound in Tripoli. Furthermore, the Libyan regime claimed that one of NATO's attacks resulted in the May 1 death of Qaddafi's youngest son, Saif al-Arab, and some of his grandchildren. Although NATO insists that Qaddafi personally is not a target, it also says it continues to attack the regime's "command and control" sites, and if Qaddafi happens to be in one of them, then his death would be justified. As a result, Qaddafi is reported to have sought protection in places he knows NATO would not hit, such as hospitals.

It is not obvious what would happen if NATO or the rebels were to succeed in killing Qaddafi. His sons appear to be united in protecting him, but this unity could evaporate if he is gone and the siblings start fighting amongst themselves over succession. Saif al-Islam is indeed a candidate, as is Muatasim and al-Saadi. Another option for the regime would be to seek direction from the Revolutionary Command Council which includes the Free Officers who, with Qaddafi, led the 1969 coup against the Libyan monarchy.

If Qaddafi is able to protect himself in Tripoli, and the rebels fail to conquer Brega, Zliten and the southern and western suburbs of Tripoli, the war in Libya could easily drag on for many more months, with the possibility of the country turning into another Somalia. Barring significant developments in the meantime, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, which starts around the end of July, may prove to be a crucial period in deciding the fate of Libya's uprising. Libyans under Qaddafi's control may revolt against him because of the shortages in fuel and food supplies. On the other hand, Qaddafi could also play the role of a victim who is being attacked by Christian "crusaders" who are cutting Muslims off from essentials during their holy month of fasting.

The Fate of Qaddafi's Allies

It is worth noting that Qaddafi's opponents have failed to take important towns, such as Brega and Zliten, despite being backed by constant bombing from NATO. What is even more puzzling is their failure to instigate major revolts in the areas inhabited by tribes Qaddafi considers loyal to his regime, such as Sabha, in the south of Libya, and the towns of Beni Walid and Trahouna, southeast of Tripoli. This clearly indicates that Qaddafi still has considerable support among members of the tribes of western Libya, especially among his own Qadadfa, the Megharha and the Warfalla.

Those who are still loyal to Qaddafi must surely know by now that they may face trial and possible punishment at the hands of the rebels if the regime is toppled. The retribution could even be handed out by opponents to the regime from within their own tribes. There may be a need for the rebels to clarify who from among Qaddafi's loyalists will be prosecuted when he falls. Such a move could encourage those wishing to "jump off the sinking ship" to do so. However, there are questions as to whether the Benghazi-based Transitional National Council (TNC) has the authority to declare even a limited amnesty, even though delay makes reconciliation more difficult as additional blood is spilled.

Rebels and Opposition Groups Prepare for Elections

Despite the rebels' failure to finish off Qaddafi quickly, there are still promising signs that life in Libya will be rosier after his demise. The rebel TNC has promised to work for an elected government in a new and democratic Libya. Any differences that may exist between the different factions that form the rebellion have now been put aside in order to achieve the goal of toppling Qaddafi. The Council has also promised that its members will not be candidates in the first elections that will be organized after the fall of the regime; this clearly intends to send a message that the council does not wish to cling to power (Libya TV, May 28).

While the rebel fighters have been busy on the frontlines, some opposition figures have been busy preparing the stage for a future election, though no date has been set yet. The Islamists, represented mainly by the Libyan branch of the Muslim Brotherhood and the jihadists of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), are known to be working on the ground to rebuild their networks and to appoint local leaders in different cities, in addition to supporting the fighters on the frontlines or becoming

involved in the fighting themselves. On the other hand, the Nationalists, led by the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), have also been working on the ground to reconnect with their supporters after decades in exile. Other independent players are also likely to be operating on a local level.

Conclusion

The participation of the different Libyan factions, including the jihadists, in the elections planned for post-Qaddafi Libya, may prove to be an important element in countering efforts by al-Qaeda to operate in that country. Some cells may indeed have infiltrated the rebel ranks and are now active in the country. However, to have al-Qaeda's supposed jihadist allies participate in elections and the democratic process will surely send a message to Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri's group that it is not welcome to operate in Libya. Yet if the rebels fail to topple Qaddafi soon and the war drags on for months, then there may be an opportune chance for al-Qaeda to jump in, claiming to be defending the Libyan population. However, it is not likely that al-Qaeda would score a major success by doing so; the majority of the rebels feel an immense gratitude to NATO, al-Qaeda's enemy, for saving their uprising when Qaddafi's forces were approaching Benghazi in March to hunt them (according to Qaddafi) "from house to house and from alleyway to alleyway."

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