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Libya Tuareg Fighters

FORMER DEPUTY COMMANDER DESCRIBES WORK OF RUSSIA'S ALFA COUNTERTERRORISM UNIT

The former deputy commander and 15-year veteran of Russia's elite Alfa counterterrorist unit, Sergey Goncharov, has shed some light on various controversial operations carried out by his former unit in a wide-ranging interview carried by a Russian magazine (*Itogi*, October 10). Goncharov is currently head of the Alfa Veteran Association which has engaged in anti-Yeltsin political activism in the past but is mainly concerned now with providing protection to Russian "VIPs."

Alfa's participation in incidents such as the January 1991 massacre of Lithuanian civilians in Vilnius has left some Alfa veterans open to prosecution (see Rian.ru, July 22). Nonetheless, Goncharov maintains that Alfa Group does not act as an enforcement team for politicians: "We have never been afraid to disagree with decisions imposed from above. And when some kind of TsK [Central Committee] member, who has never held anything other than a hunting rifle, orders us to resolve a problem in a particular way, he needs to be politely sent away. And they have been sent away."

Goncharov defended the Alfa Group's role in the 2002 Nord-Ost Theater crisis (in which 129 hostages were killed by poison gas released by Russian Special Forces) and the 2004 Beslan hostage crisis (in which 334 hostages and 21 security men were killed in a bungled rescue operation): "Both operations are black marks on both the unit and on the history of Russian antiterrorist efforts. Nonetheless, in the first one, in my opinion, the tactic that was selected was the only possible solution to avoid an enormous loss of life. Of course, it is a great pity that

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hostages were killed and died from [gas] poisoning, but the use of the so-called “laughing gas” was just about the only solution available at that time... The use of the gas allowed us to enter the auditorium and with precise sniper fire neutralize the terrorists, without incurring huge losses [to Alfa forces]. But at Beslan actually there was no assault. There the guys saved the children, and did not kill the terrorists. They drew fire on themselves as they covered the students with their own bodies.”

In 2005, Goncharov made the surprising claim, against all available evidence, that the assassination of former Chechen President Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev in Qatar was carried out by American Special Forces rather than Russian agents (*Pravda*, August 20, 2005; for the assassination see *Terrorism Monitor*, May 17, 2005).

However, Goncharov advocates the “targeted elimination of terrorist leaders,” suggesting that the Alfa group has an important role to play in such operations: “[Assassination] is one of the most effective methods of combating terrorism under contemporary conditions. Using medical terminology, the ‘Alfa’ group is a sharp scalpel, a direct action instrument, and the final argument when pills and enemas do not help.” Goncharov notes, however, that such operations can only have a limited effect: “If someone thinks that the elimination of a single leader will result in the destruction of an entire command, this is not correct. Terrorism is an enormous business, in which many countries are engaged. This business is passed on as a legacy, from one killed leader to another.”

Turning to the ongoing conflict in the North Caucasus, Goncharov maintains that the struggle there is financed by external sources: “Fighting in our North Caucasus has been going on so long not for an ideal, but only because combat operations are so lavishly financed. And by whom? One can only speculate. But I personally think this: no matter how hard we try to become friends with the Americans, we will never become friends with them. We can only be fellow travelers with them up until the time they use us for their own purposes. And then they will continue on their own way. And instability in the North Caucasus plays into their hands.”

EGYPTIAN POLICE STRIKE IS LATEST CHALLENGE TO NATIONAL SECURITY

While Egypt’s military not only survived the January 25 Revolution, but succeeded in taking complete control of all government functions, the internal collapse of the nation’s Interior Ministry continues (see *Terrorism Monitor*, April 7, 2011; *Terrorism Monitor* Briefs, July 22). Responsible for Egypt’s domestic security and policing, the Interior Ministry was blamed for much of the violence inflicted on demonstrators during the Revolution. Former Interior Minister Habib al-Adly is now facing charges connected to the deaths of protestors, as are a number of other police officials. However, many police never returned to work after the Revolution, while others have engaged in anti-Ministry protests and arson attacks on police facilities. Now a series of police strikes has broken out across Egypt that threatens to bring an end to the Egyptian Interior Ministry in its current form.

Demoralization is the dominant trend in Egypt’s police forces since the Revolution, with many fearing prosecution by the nation’s new military rulers. The police strikes are also part of a larger wave of labor unrest that continues to sweep Egypt since the Revolution, with damaging effects on the national economy and the nation’s tourism industry, an important source of jobs and foreign currency.

The police strikes began on October 24. Thousands of police have gathered in a camp outside the gates of the Interior Ministry headquarters in Cairo, while in the Red Sea Province city of Hurghada, striking police stormed the local police headquarters and destroyed the office of its director. Police at Cairo’s international airport have erected tents in the airport’s arrivals hall (*al-Masry al-Youm* [Cairo], October 26). Most importantly, the strikers’ have threatened not to provide security for Egypt’s November 27 parliamentary elections.

Though he was regarded as an unpopular choice within the ministry, new Interior Minister Mansur Essawy took office last March by pledging he would restore security and reduce the role played in Egyptian life by the security services (*Ahram Online*, March 23; *al-Jazeera*, March 7). However, since the revolution police are rarely seen on the streets and Egyptians have been urged to take measures to ensure their own security. Crime rates are soaring and car-theft has become an epidemic as police fail or refuse to respond to complaints (*Ahram Online*, October 26).

Many of the protestors' grievances predate the Revolution, but complainants at that time were routinely met with investigation, punishment or dismissal. Though the nature of the exact grievances differs according to local circumstances, most can be grouped into the following categories:

- Calls for the resignation of Interior Minister Mansur Essawy.
- Higher wages, though some police have said this does not necessarily entail greater funds from the public purse, only the proper distribution of funds now stolen by senior police officials.
- Access to police hospitals, which in practice are only open to senior police officers and their friends and families.
- Improved working hours and coverage of transportation expenses.
- The dismissal of a number of police generals known for corruption and their close ties to former Interior Minister Habib al-Adly.
- An end to military trials for policemen. Some policemen claim it was fear of military trials for disobedience that was responsible for their brutal treatment of protestors during the Revolution (*Bikya Masr* [Cairo], October 25; *al-Masry al-Youm*, October 24, October 26).

Some demonstrating policemen have complained that their representatives have emerged from discussions from senior ministry officials with raises for themselves, but nothing for their comrades (Daily News Egypt, October 25).

Civilian ministry workers have also joined the protests, claiming they are treated worse than the policemen, although demands such as institutionalized recruitment of their sons and daughters for ministry jobs seem to reflect the ways of the old regime (Daily News Egypt, October 25).

On October 25, the ministry issued a statement saying it had agreed to most of the strikers' demands, but warned that it would not tolerate any threats to the security of the November parliamentary elections (*al-Masry al-Youm*

[Cairo], October 26). Deputy Interior Minister General Abd al-Latif al-Bidiny offered some observations on the strike on state TV on October 26, acknowledging the legitimacy of the strikers' demands while suggesting the entire structure of the Interior Ministry needed to be replaced, but only after the political and security spheres had stabilized (*al-Masry al-Youm* [Cairo], October 26).

The Third Intervention: Kenya's Incursion into Somalia Goes Where Others Have Failed

Muhyadin Ahmed Roble

As grenades explode in crowded Nairobi pubs, Kenyan jet fighters bomb targets inside Somalia and France agrees to supply Kenyan forces, Kenya's military intervention in Somalia against the Islamist militant group al-Shabaab raises many questions regarding the future security of East Africa. The Kenyan Army entered Somalia on October 16 after the September-October cross-border kidnappings of foreign tourists and aid workers in Kenya blamed on al-Shabaab (one French hostage, 66-year-old Marie Dedieu, disabled and ill with cancer, has since died, apparently of ill-treatment). The intervention, known as "Operation Linda Nchi (Defend the Country)," was launched a day after Kenya's internal security minister George Saitoti branded al-Shabaab "the enemy" and vowed to attack them "wherever they are." [1]

Kenyan foreign minister Moses Wetangula said the army was in Somalia to drive out al-Shabaab fighters who were threatening Kenya's tourism industry, its second largest foreign exchange earner. (BBC, October 16). Al-Shabaab has denied the accusations of kidnapping, describing them as "a flimsy pretext for the Kenyan military's incursion into the Somali border." [2]

On October 19, Kenyan military spokesman Major Emmanuel Chirchir said that Kenyan soldiers were marching on Afmadow, about 120 km. east of the Kenyan border, where they expected to meet up with troops of Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) who were already trying to take the town from al-Shabaab forces (Capital FM News [Nairobi], October 19). "The next town is Kismayo. The troops are ready for anything. If it takes us to December they are willing to celebrate Christmas there," said Major Chirchir. The port of Kismayo is a key target as it is a major source of revenue for al-Shabaab, which is otherwise suffering financially during the ongoing drought in southern Somalia (*Star* [Nairobi], October 19; Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, October 20).

However, there are fears that Kenya's first foreign intervention might end like previous interventions in Somalia by the United States and Ethiopia. "As it seems,

it will end in retreat and failure," said Professor Ibrahim Sheikh Hassan who used to teach political science at Strategy College in Mogadishu. Although Kenya has a well-equipped army, Professor Ibrahim said it has no experience in engaging in war with terrorists and guerrilla forces, adding that it will be hard for Kenyans to defeat al-Shabaab in Somalia. He notes that pushing al-Shabaab back from the border will not be hard but keeping them at bay will be challenging. Regarding the small force of 2,000 men deployed by the Kenyan Army across the border, Professor Ibrahim says a force of this size is unlikely to penetrate far into al-Shabaab-held territory: "It seems to me that they know nothing about al-Shabaab and the conflict in Somalia." [3]

In response to the intervention, al-Shabaab threatened retaliatory attacks in Kenya if authorities do not withdraw troops from Somalia. "Kenya has peace, its cities have tall buildings and business is flourishing there, while Somalia is in chaos. If your government ignores our calls to stop its aggression on Somali soil, we will strike at the heart of your interests," said Shaykh Ali Mohamud Dheere, an al-Shabaab spokesman. "Your attack on us means your skyscrapers will be destroyed. Your tourism will disappear. We shall inflict on you the same damage you inflicted on us," he added. [4]

An official statement from al-Shabaab outlined some of the group's grievances with Kenya:

Kenya has been forcibly recruiting refugees and training militia along the border for several years and has also been heavily involved in Somalia's political affairs – both internal and external. The recent incursion of Kenyan troops into Somali territory, however, not only highlights Kenya's imprudence in sending her non-combat-tested troops to become entangled in Somalia's intricate web of war, but also a willful negligence towards her citizens. [5]

A former chief of the Somalia Appeals Court, Ahmed Shaykh Ali, told Jamestown that the main object of the intervention is unclear: "As I know, they entered the country without any consultation with [the Somali] government and actually that is against international laws. It is against the sovereignty of Somalia. [Kenya] was [supposed] to talk to the government before its army crossed the border." While he welcomes the drive to force al-Shabaab out of the country, Ahmed Shaykh Ali worries that Kenya has a secret plan for the future

of the Somali border towns: “Somali people distrust neighboring countries. And neighboring countries themselves create the distrust.” [6] Kenyan Foreign Minister Wetangulu maintains that Kenya is eliminating the Somali militants at the request of the TFG, while denying Kenyan plans to occupy any part of Somalia (*The People*, October 20).

Mogadishu-based analyst Abdikadir Osman warned that the operation will end in failure if Kenya does not state clearly the future of its army in Somalia. “How long will they remain in the country? They have to address the issue now, not after seizing the land.” Osman noted that the Somalis do not welcome foreign intervention because “we always have suspicion.” [7]

Precedent suggests that the Kenyan operation will not be entirely successful. A multinational intervention, the United Nations Operation in Somalia II (UNOSOM II) which involved more than 28,000 U.S. and international troops, ended in failure after the 1994 Battle of Mogadishu.

Ethiopia, which has an historic conflict with Somalia, carried out the second foreign intervention in Somalia in late 2006 to oust the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), justifying its U.S. backed invasion, like Kenya, as “self-defense.” Although it succeeded in getting rid of the ICU, the latter was replaced by a more determined military offshoot, al-Shabaab. Ethiopian troops were never secure during a two-year occupation and eventually withdrew in early 2009 with Somalia more unstable than before the intervention.

The third and ongoing intervention is by the Ugandan and Burundian troops of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which began operations in 2007. With recent reinforcements bringing the mission to a high of 9,000 troops, AMISOM’s progress in retaking Mogadishu has been struck hard by a series of al-Shabaab ambushes and suicide attacks in the last two weeks.

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Notes:

1. Kenyan Security and Defense Ministers’ press conference, Nairobi, October 15, 2011.
2. Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, “Statement

Regarding the Kenyan Accusations and Incursion into Somalia,” Mogadishu, October 17, 2011.

3. Author’s Interview with Professor Ibrahim Sheikh Hassan, Nairobi, October 20, 2011.

4. Al-Shabaab spokesman Sheikh Ali Dheere, Press Conference, Mogadishu, October 17, 2011.

5. Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahideen, “Statement Regarding the Kenyan Accusations and Incursion into Somalia,” Mogadishu, October 17, 2011.

6. Author’s interview with Ahmed Shaykh Ali, Nairobi, October 18, 2011.

7. Author’s interview with Abdikadir Osman, political analyst, 19th October, 2011, Mogadishu.

Growing Urban Islamist Militancy in Punjab Province Poses New Challenge for Pakistani Authorities

Zia Ur Rehman

While Pakistan has directed its focus and significant resources to fighting terrorism in the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), the growing activities of banned militant organizations and their influence in Punjab, the country’s most populous province, have been largely ignored. Militants, most trained in Afghanistan and others ex-inmates of Afghan prisons, have recently surfaced in Punjab and become active in Punjabi jihadi groups.

The Punjabi militant network is a loose conglomeration of members of banned militant groups of Punjabi origin that have developed strong connections with the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and other militant groups based in FATA and KPK. Members shuttle between FATA and the rest of Pakistan, providing logistical support to FATA and Afghanistan-based militants to conduct terrorist operations deep inside Pakistan.

The main banned organizations with leadership and headquarters in Punjab include Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP), Jummat ud-Dawa (JuD), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Harkatul Jihadul Islami (HJI), all working in collaboration with the TTP and al-Qaeda (Central Asia Online, May 10). These sectarian groups are active in the Punjabi cities of Jhang, Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Khanewal, Dera Ghazi Khan, Rahimyar Khan, Muzaffargarh, Layyah, and Gujranwala, leaving the government with the difficult task of eliminating these groups with actions other than those already taken in the tribal areas. [1] The LeT's governing offices are located in Muridke and Lahore while the SSP is controlled from Jhang district. Similarly, LeJ takes directions from Rahimyar Khan and the JeM is linked with its center in Bahawalpur (Viewpoint Online [Pakistan], July 16, 2011). [2]

Media reports suggest that a large number of militants from Punjab have joined hands with the TTP as well as the Afghan Taliban in recent years. With significant numbers of recruits from Punjab-based sectarian organizations, the TTP has proved to be lethal to government efforts to establish order on the frontier (*Outlook* [Kabul] May 6). According to the figures of the ten largest jihadi organizations, the number of "martyrs" from Punjab is more than 12,000, of which roughly 4,000 have lost their lives in Afghanistan. [3] An intelligence report recently prepared by the provincial government's Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) revealed that 2,487 militants trained in Afghanistan and 556 militants released from Afghan prisons have surfaced in the province and are now active in the Punjabi Taliban Network (*Express Tribune* [Karachi] August 30).

Terrorist and suicide attacks inside Punjab have increased significantly since the Pakistan military's offensive in South Waziristan in October 2009. Most of the terrorists involved in the attacks belonged to a variety of Punjabi cities, with most hailing from the province's southern region:

- The terrorists involved in the September 20, 2008 suicide attack on the Marriot Hotel Islamabad belonged to Toba Tek Singh, Attock and Chakwal. These militants were members of the HJI, headed by Qari Safiullah (*Asia Tribune*, July 28, 2009).

- Dr Usman, who masterminded the October 10, 2010 attack on the Pakistan Army's General Headquarter (GHQ) as well as several other suicide attacks, is a native of Kabirwala.
- Asmatullah Muwaia, a key leader of the TTP in South Waziristan and master trainer of suicide bombers, also belongs to Kabirwala.
- Osman, the head of a LeJ splinter group operating in the southern region of Punjab, was wounded and arrested in the GHQ attack. Recently a military court pronounced a death sentence on the LeJ commander (*The News* [Islamabad] August 13).
- Similarly, the persons attacking the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) headquarters in Lahore also belonged to cities in South Punjab.

A large number of "Punjabi Taliban" belonging to the LeJ, the SSP, the JuD, the HJI and other splinter groups, are especially active in the tribal region (*The News* [Islamabad] August 18). [4] Interior Minister Rehman Malik has also written to the Punjab government asking them to take action against the anti-Shi'a militants based in Jhang district, following a September 20 attack on an Iran-bound bus in the Mastung district of Balochistan that killed 29 Shi'a pilgrims (BBC, October 4).

According to security officials, Shehbaz Taseer, son of slain Punjab governor Salman Taseer, was abducted from the provincial capital of Lahore on August 6 by Punjab-based militants. [5] Interior Minister Rehman Malik has said that Taseer has been shifted to the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, most probably to North Waziristan (*Dawn* [Karachi], October 17). The abductee's family members disclosed that they had received threats from militant groups since Governor Taseer was shot dead earlier this year for urging reforms to Pakistan's blasphemy laws (see *Terrorism Monitor*, February 24). Similarly, responsibility for the killing of Pakistan's Christian Minorities minister Shehbaz Bhatti was claimed by a group calling itself the "Punjabi Taliban" (AP, March 2). Punjabi militant groups have also played an important role in attacking Ahmadis, Shi'a, Sufis and other civilian targets in the province (see *Terrorism Monitor*, June 12, 2010).

The main reason for the emergence of a militant mindset in Punjab is the rapid growth of religious madrassas (seminaries), most of them tied to militant organizations. There are a total of 5,500 religious madrassas in the Punjab, the majority of them belonging to the Deobandi sect. Students enrolled in these madrassas are from Pakistan-controlled Kashmir and KPK as well as Punjab. Religious madrassas based in Punjab provide 40% of recruits to the jihadi outfits. [6] A Punjab CTD report reveals that at least 170 madrassas in Punjab are involved in “suspected activities,” a reference to their role in militant networks, preaching of jihad and spreading sectarian violence against the Punjab’s Shi’a and Ahmadi communities (*Express Tribune*, August 30).

It is also believed that Pakistan’s intelligence agencies and Punjab’s ruling party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), have good relationships with the banned militant organizations. The Punjab government is known to have provided nearly \$1 million worth of financial assistance to JuD in its provincial budget while senior leaders of PML-N (particularly law minister Rana Sanaullah) are seen campaigning with militant leaders and aggravating interfaith harmony (*Express Tribune*, June 18, 2010).

Although Punjab is not in imminent danger of a Taliban takeover, the expansion of militant activities in the province, if unchecked, could have serious outcomes for Pakistan’s stability, the war in Afghanistan, the Indo-Pakistani relationship and the future of international terrorism. Unlike the Taliban entrenchment in South Waziristan and Swat, Punjabi militants are scattered across a large province instead of being concentrated in a single region where effective counterterrorism, intelligence and police operations are more likely to be able to contain their operations without massive military intervention. An initial step to dealing with the security crisis in Punjab would involve the provincial government and the national intelligence agencies abandoning their “strategic partnership” and selective attitude in dealing with banned militant groups.

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Notes:

1. Mujahid Hussain, *Punjabi Taliban*, Nigharshat Publishers, Lahore, 2009.
2. Interview with Muhammad Amir Rana, Director of Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), August 16, 2011. A government ban on these jihadist organizations merely led them to operate under different names. SSP began operating under the names of Millat-e-Islamia and Ahle-e-Sunnat Wal Jammāt, JeM as al-Furqan and Khuddamul Islam, and JuD or Lashkar-e-Tayyaba as Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation.
3. Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jihadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Mashal Books, Lahore, 2009.
4. Interview with a Bannu-based journalist who requested anonymity, October 16, 2011.
5. Interview with a Lahore-based senior police official who requested anonymity, October 16, 2011.
6. Muhammad Amir Rana, *A to Z of Jihadi Organizations in Pakistan*, Mashal Books, Lahore, 2009.

A Portable War: Libya's Internal Conflict Shifts to Mali

Andrew McGregor

Mali, like its neighbor Niger, is facing the return of an estimated 200,000 of its citizens from Libya. Most are Malian workers and their families who have been forced to flee Libya by the virulently “anti-African” forces that have seized power in that country. Some, however, are long-term Tuareg members of the Libyan military who have suddenly lost their jobs but not their arms. Armed Tuareg began returning to northern Mali in large numbers in August and continue to arrive in their homeland in convoys from Libya (*El-Khabar* [Algiers], August 29).

Unfortunately, Mali has nothing to offer these returnees; not aid, not employment, nor even a sense of national identity; in sum, nothing that might provide some counter-incentive to rebellion. Disenchantment with the West is at an all-time high among the Tuareg. Even the French have fallen from favor; while the Tuareg could once count on a sympathetic reception in Paris and from elements of the French military, in the last few months Tuareg fighters have found themselves on the receiving end of French airstrikes and their home communities attacked by French-armed rebels. Both France and the United States have also made extensive efforts to train and equip the generally ineffective and cash-strapped militaries of Mali, Niger and several other Sahara/Sahel states in the name of combating terrorism, improvements that run counter to Tuareg interests. A Malian government minister was quoted by a French news agency as saying the returning Malians were really a Libyan problem: “They’re Libyans, all the same. It’s up to the Transitional National Council [TNC] to play the card of national reconciliation and to accept them, so that the Sahel, already destabilized, doesn’t get worse” (AFP, October 10).

Another 400 armed Tuareg arrived in northern Mali from Libya on October 15, with many keeping their distance from authorities by heading straight into the northern desert (*Ennahar* [Algiers], October 18). Their arrival prompted an urgent invitation from Algeria for President Touré to visit Algerian president Abdel Aziz Bouteflika (*Maliba* [Bamako], October 17). According to Malian officials, the returned Tuareg were in two armed groups; the first with some 50 4x4 trucks about 25 miles outside the northern town of Kidal, the second

consisting of former followers and associates of Ibrahim ag Bahanga grouped near Tinzwatene on the Algerian border (Reuters, October 20; *L’Aube* [Bamako], October 13). An ominous development was the recent desertion of three leading Tuareg officers from the Malian Army, including Colonel Assalath ag Khabi, Lieutenant-Colonel Mbarek Akly Ag and Commander Hassan Habré. All three are reported to have headed for the north (*El Watan* [Algiers], October 20).

Colonel Hassan ag Fagaga, a prominent rebel leader and cousin of the late Ibrahim ag Bahanga who has already deserted the Armée du Mali twice to join rebellions in the north, was given a three-year leave “for personal reasons without pay” by Malian defense minister Natie Plea beginning on July 1, apparently for the purpose of allowing ag Fagaga to lead a group of young Tuareg to Libya to join the defense of Qaddafi’s regime (*Le Hoggar* [Bamako], September 16). Ag Fagaga is now believed to be back in northern Mali, preparing for yet another round of rebellion.

The Malian government’s response to these developments was to send Interior Minister General Kafougouna Kona north to open talks with the rebels. General Kona has experience in negotiating with the Tuareg and is trusted by President Touré (BBC, October 17).

According to some reports, Qaddafi offered the Tuareg their own Sahelian/Saharan state to secure their loyalty (al-Jazeera, September 28; *El Watan* [Algiers], October 20). Only days before his resignation, Dr. Mahmud Jibril, the chairman of the Executive Bureau of the Libyan TNC, suggested that Mu’ammarr Qaddafi had planned to use the Tuareg tribes to fight his way back into power, adding that the late Libyan leader was constantly on the move in Tuareg territories in southern Libya, northern Niger and southern Algeria. Rather bizarrely, Jibril then claimed that Qaddafi’s operatives in Darfur were raising a force of 10,000 to 15,000 Rashaydah tribesmen from Sudan (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 19). The Rashaydah are an Arab tribe found in the Arabian Peninsula, but also in Eritrea and the Eastern Province of Sudan, where they moved in large numbers in the mid-19th century. In general the Rashaydah remain aloof from local politics, preferring to focus on their camel herds. Jibril’s suggestion that large numbers of Rashaydah tribesmen could have been rallied to Qaddafi’s cause seems strange and highly unlikely.

Arms Smuggling and Drug Trafficking

The Tamanrasset-based Joint Operational Military Committee, created by the intelligence services of Algeria, Mali, Niger and Mauritania in 2010 to provide a joint response to border security and terrorism issues, has turned its attention to trying to control the outflow of arms from Libya (see *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, July 8, 2010). The committee, which got off to a slow start, has announced its “first success”; identifying 26 arms traffickers and issuing warrants for their arrest (*Jeune Afrique*, October 14; *L’Essor* [Bamako], October 6). The list includes a number of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) commanders and is based on an investigation that discovered three major networks for smuggling arms out of Libya, the “most dangerous” consisting of Chadians and Libyans (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], October 8).

Security sources in the Sahel are reporting that AQIM is expanding its operations into the very lucrative business of people-smuggling by setting up an elaborate network that has the added advantage of allowing AQIM operatives to infiltrate into Europe (*Info Matin* [Bamako], October 6).

Drug trafficking continues to be another destabilizing factor in northern Mali as well-armed gangs battle over the lucrative trade. In early September at least five gunmen were killed in a battle between Tuareg traffickers and Reguibat Arabs with ties to the Saharawi Polisario Front. The battle ensued after the Tuareg kidnapped three Reguibat, including a senior Polisario officer, Major Harane Ould Zouida (*Jeune Afrique*, September 20). Such incidents are far from unknown in today’s Sahara; in January a major battle was fought between Bérabiche Arabs running drugs to Libya and Tuareg demanding a fee for passing through their territory (*El Watan* [Algiers], January 4; see also *Terrorism Monitor*, January 14). In this environment, drug traffickers are likely to be offering premium prices for military hardware finding its way out of Libya.

Traditional authority is now being challenged in both the Arab and Tuareg communities of northern Mali as AQIM, smugglers, rebel leaders and traffickers compete for the loyalty of young men in a severely underdeveloped region. The “noble” clans of the Arab and Tuareg communities have also suffered electoral defeats at the hands of “vassal” clans, a development the former blame on the vassal candidates buying votes with smuggling money (U.S. Embassy Bamako

cable, February 1, 2010, as published in the *Guardian*, December 14, 2010; *Le Monde*, December 22, 2010; MaliKounda.com, December 7, 2009). The rivalry has spilled over into a contest for control of trafficking and smuggling networks. Ex-fighters of the Sahrawi Polisario Front (currently confined to camps in southern Algeria) have also entered the struggle for dominance in cross-Saharan drug smuggling. Members of Venezuelan, Spanish, Portuguese and Colombian drug cartels engage in frequently bloody competition in Bamako that rarely attracts the attention of the police (*El Watan* [Algiers], January 3).

A Tuareg Member of Parliament from the Kidal Region, Deyti ag Sidimo, has been charged by Algeria with involvement in arms and drug trafficking. The MP may be extradited to Algeria if his parliamentary immunity is lifted (*Info Matin* [Bamako], October 13; *Le Combat* [Bamako], October 4; *Jeune Afrique*, October 9-15).

Attack on the Abeibara Barracks

An example of the government’s inability to secure the Kidal region of north Mali was presented on October 2, when gunmen arrived at the site of a military barracks under construction in Abeibara. The gunmen sent the workers away with a warning not to return under pain of death before blowing up the construction materials. A National Guard unit tasked with protecting the work was apparently absent at the time of the attack. Military officials admitted that they did not know if the gunmen were AQIM, soldiers just returned from Libya or part of a criminal gang involved in the trafficking the construction of the barracks was meant to prevent (*Info Matin* [Bamako], October 26; AFP, October 3). It has also been suggested the attack was the work of local companies that had been outbid on the construction contract (*Le Prétoire* [Bamako], October 5). Fifteen soldiers were killed when a military garrison at Abeibara was attacked by a Tuareg rebel group under Ibrahim ag Bahanga in 2008 (Reuters, May 23, 2008).

Mauritanian Raid in Mali’s Wagadou Forest

Mauritanian jets carried out air strikes on October 20 on AQIM forces gathered in the Wagadou Forest (60 miles south of the Mali-Mauritania border), allegedly destroying two vehicles loaded with explosives (L’Agence Mauritanienne d’Information [AMI – Nouakchott], October 20; AFP, October 22). The Mauritaniens appear to have hit their primary target, AQIM commander Tayyib Ould Sid Ali, who was on

board one of the vehicles destroyed in the air strike. Mauritanian officials confirmed his death, saying Sid Ali was preparing new terrorist attacks in Mauritania after having been active in the region since 2007 (*Ennahar* [Algiers], October 22). The precision of the attack in difficult terrain suggested that Nouakchott had received accurate intelligence information regarding Sid Ali's location. Mauritania's security services had disrupted a Sid Ali-planned attempt to assassinate Mauritanian president Muhammad Ould Abdel Aziz in Nouakchott in February by intercepting AQIM vehicles after they crossed the border (*Quotidien Nouakchott*, February 3; see also *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, February 10).

Mauritania's aggressive French-backed approach to the elimination of AQIM has seen several Mauritanian military incursions into Mali in the last year, including a previous ground assault on an AQIM camp in the Wagadou Forest in June that killed 15 militants and destroyed a number of anti-tank and anti-aircraft weapons possibly obtained from looted Libyan armories (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], June 25; AFP, June 26; see also *Terrorism Monitor* Brief, July 7). Mali's military has played only a minimal role in these operations and questions have been raised in Bamako regarding the government's prior knowledge of these events and the military's relative lack of participation.

2012 Elections

With the second term of Amadou Toumani Touré's presidency coming to an end, national elections will determine a new government for Mali in Spring 2012. Though at least 20 individuals are expected to run for president, the contest is expected to be fought out between three prominent candidates, Dioncounda Traore, Soumaila Cisse and Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.

Mali's Islamists see a political opportunity in the coming elections, with noted religious leaders Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara and Imam Mahmoud Dicko making it clear Islamist groups will be involved (*L'Indépendant* [Bamako], September 29).

Reshaping the Rebellion

Three factors have redrawn the shape and ambition of the simmering rebellion in northern Mali in the last few months:

- The arrival in northern Mali (and neighboring Niger) of hundreds of experienced Tuareg combat veterans with enough weapons and ammunition to sustain an extended and possibly successful rebellion against a weak national defense force.
- The death of the controversial rebel leader Ibrahim ag Bahanga has removed a powerful but often divisive force in the Tuareg rebel leadership. This has opened space for the development of new coalitions and the emergence of new leaders with a broader base of support.
- The July declaration of independence by South Sudan has provided the lesson that a determined and sustained rebellion can overcome internal divisions and foreign opposition to arrive at eventual independence, even if secession means leaving with valuable resources such as oil or uranium.

On October 16 the Mouvement National de l'Azawad (MNA) announced its merger with the Mouvement Touareg du Nord Mali (MTNM), led until recently by the late Ibrahim ag Bahanga (mnamov.net, October 17). The resulting Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA) stated its intention to use "all means necessary" to end Mali's "illegal occupation" of "Azawad" if the Bamako government does not open negotiations before November 5. Azawad is the name used by the Tuareg for their traditional territory in the Sahel/Sahara region north of Timbuktu. The term can also include traditional Tuareg lands in northern Niger and southern Algeria. The MNLA spokesman, veteran rebel Hama ag Sid'Ahmed, (former father-in-law of Ibrahim ag Bahanga) said that a number of high-ranking officers from the Libyan military had joined the group (BBC, October 17; *Proces-Verbal* [Bamako], October 17).

Two other groups have emerged since the return of the fighters from Libya with the stated intent of achieving autonomy for "Azawad." The first is the

Front Démocratique pour l'Autonomie Politique de l'Azawad (FDAPA), which includes veterans of the struggle for Bani Walid under the command of Colonel Awanz ag Amakadaye, a Malian Tuareg who served as a high-ranking officer in the regular Libyan Army (Kidal.Info, October 18; AFP, October 12; MaliWeb, October 25). The other group is an Arab "political and military movement" called the Front Patriotique Arabe de l'Azawad (FPAA). The group appears to be a kind of successor to the Front Islamique Arabe de l'Azawad (FIAA), an earlier expression of Arab militancy in northern Mali. Like the Tuareg, the Arab nomads of northern Mali have in the past suffered attacks from Songhai tribal militias such as the Mouvement Patriotique Ganda Koy ("Masters of the Land," founded by Mohamed N'Tissa Maiga), which advocated the extermination of the nomadic Arabs and Tuareg of Mali (see interview with Maiga - *Le Politicien* [Bamako], July 21). These assaults played a large role in initiating the Tuareg and Arab rebellions of the 1990s and there have been calls in certain quarters of Mali for a revival of the Ganda Koy (*Le Tambour* [Bamako], November 25, 2008; *Nouvelle Liberation* [Bamako], November 19, 2008).

Conclusion

Mali is experiencing its own "blowback" as a result of its support for the Qaddafi regime in Libya. No effort was made to prevent Malian Tuareg from joining Qaddafi's forces; indeed, the government even granted leave of absences to Tuareg officers who wished to fight in Libya. Bamako's thinking no doubt went along the lines of believing that such assistance might help preserve the ever-generous Qaddafi regime; if, on the other hand, things did not go well for the Libyan regime, Bamako could at least count on the loss of a number of troublemakers and officers of uncertain loyalty. What was likely not anticipated was the return of hundreds of well-trained and well-armed Tuareg military professionals, some of whom have been absent from Mali for decades, along with most of the more recent pro-Qaddafi volunteers. Mali is suddenly faced with the possible existence of a professional insurgent force that needs only to fight a war of mobility on its own turf, territory that has often proved disastrous for a Malian military composed mostly of southerners with little or no experience in desert conditions and tactics. If another round of Tuareg rebellion breaks out in Mali, the security forces will be hard pressed to deal with

it, leaving ample space and opportunity for AQIM to expand its influence and power at the expense of the Malian state.

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