



MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

Personalities Behind the Insurgency

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El Comandante Diablo

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SWISS JUND AL-KHILAFAH AMIR KILLED IN MIRANSHAH, PAKISTAN

Jund al-Khilafah (JaK) is a terrorist group based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, which was founded by three Kazakhstani men from Atyrau (see *Terrorism Monitor*, September 13). Although JaK issued several propaganda videos about Kazakhstan in 2011 and carried out and claimed three attacks in October, November and December 2011 in Atyrau, Taraz and a village outside of Almaty, in 2012 it has shown a much more international dimension. Now it has come to light that the amir of Jund al-Khilafah was a 44-year-old Tunisian-born Swiss citizen named Moez Garsallaoui.

Garsallaoui was eulogized on October 15 by Abu al-Laith al-Waziri, who claims to be based in Waziristan, on the Shumukh al-Islam online jihadist forum in a statement called “On the Departure of the Commander and Scholar From the Flag of Jihad Mu;iz al-Gharsalawi al-Qayrawani” Shumukh al-Islam, October 15). Al-Waziri said Garsallaoui was killed in “a cowardly, treacherous raid” somewhere in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, presumably in a drone strike. In detailing Garsallaoui’s life, al-Waziri noted that Garsallaoui ran a center where Kazakhs trained to wage jihad in their homeland.

Garsallaoui first traveled to Pakistan in 2007 and soon after sent a photo of himself posing with a rocket-propelled grenade launcher to his wife, who was the widow of one of the two Arabs who killed Afghanistan’s Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Shah Masoud on September 9, 2001 (*Telegraph [UK]*, February 10, 2009). It was Garsallaoui’s wife who helped him connect with the late Abu Leith al-Libi, a senior al-Qaeda leader from Libya, in Pakistan, and recruit other Westerners interested in fighting in Afghanistan.

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In 2012, JaK is best known for its claim to having trained the French citizen of Algerian descent Mohammed Merah, who carried out a series of shootings in southwest France in March 2012 that killed seven people, including three Jewish schoolchildren and French paratroopers of North African descent. While negotiating with French security forces in the hours before they shot and killed him, Merah said that he planned the shootings alone, including selecting the Jewish schoolchildren and French paratroopers as victims, but that an al-Qaeda leader who had spent time in France encouraged him to carry out the attacks when Merah was training in Pakistan. This al-Qaeda figure, according to Western intelligence analysts, was Garsallaoui (AP [London], October 18). This would explain why a JaK leader under the pseudonym “Abul al-Qaqa al-Andalusi” a common pseudonym for fighters of North African descent like Garsallaoui, issued a statement on April 1, saying, “I knew the brother [Merah] up close and sat with him on many occasions, and I was for a short time one of those who guided him” (<http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=58377>).

BIFF LEADER KATO THREATENS MILF “FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT” IN MINDANAO

Ameril Umbra Kato is the former commander of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front’s (MILF) 105th Base Command and is the current leader of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF). Even now in his 70s and, according to a photo released by the BIFF in late July, ailing to the extent that he can no longer walk, he continues to sabotage attempts at peace and reconciliation between Mindanao’s Moro Muslim militants and the Philippine government (PhilStar [Cotabato City], August 23).

The Saudi-educated leader broke away from the MILF with 300 fighters in November 2011, claiming that the MILF was “wasting its time” in negotiations with the government (Philstar [Manila], August 28). Kato and his fighters insisted that the MILF accept no agreement but one that provides an independent state in Mindanao to be governed by Sharia law for Mindanao’s Muslims, who form the majority in several provinces of southern Mindanao. The MILF, in contrast, pushed for “strong local autonomy” in negotiations and on October 15, 2012, the MILF and the Philippine government concluded a “framework agreement” that will establish a new autonomous political entity called Bangsamoro to replace the currently existing Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) (*Manila Standard*, October 15). When

a similar agreement called the Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain (MOAAD) was accepted by the MILF in 2008, Kato carried out attacks on civilians in North Cotabato to disrupt the agreement, which was ultimately scrapped when the Philippine Supreme Court, pressured by politicians, declared the MOAAD unconstitutional.

In August 2012, in the run-up to the signing of the framework agreement, Kato’s forces launched attacks on several army camps and outposts, prompting a Philippine army offensive that killed more than 50 of Kato’s fighters (Inquirer [Manila], October 14). In late August 2012, when reports emerged that the framework agreement might be signed, BIFF spokesman Abu Misri Mama, called it a “surrender” and suggested that Kato will carry out new attacks in response to the deal. “In time we will launch our harassment, we are already near to our enemies... Civilians, whether Muslims, Christians or indigenous peoples, are residing near military detachments or headquarters. They can start to evacuate so they will not be hurt in the crossfire” (Manila Times, August 26). Given Kato’s poor health, it is unclear what will happen to the BIFF should he pass away. The fighters will either continue fighting as the BIFF, accept the MILF’s agreement, or join Abu Sayyaf and other Islamist militias in Mindanao, such as the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), which also have a hostile view toward the framework agreement.

A Post-Mortem Analysis of Turkistani Amir Emeti Yakuf: A Death that Sparked More Questions than Answers

Rafaello Pantucci

In late August, a series of drone strikes in Northern Waziristan were reported to have killed a number of jihadist leaders. Most media attention focused on the possible demise of Badruddin Haqqani, son of the fabled mujahedeen leader, with conflicting reports about whether he had died or not. Almost as an afterthought, some of the stories highlighted that the strikes were believed to have also killed Emeti Yakuf, the current leader of the Turkistan Islamic Party (TIP) (Dawn, August 24). This overshadowed death reflected the generally low profile that TIP is often given amongst

jihadist groups, and highlighted once again the difficulties in obtaining information about the mysterious China-focused terrorist organization.

Emeti Yakuf first achieved prominence in the wake of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, when the Chinese Ministry of Public Security (MPS) published a list of eight individuals it identified as members of the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM). [1] Considered by the government as a “key member” of the organization, he was reported to also use the aliases Aibu Aduburehman and Saifula. According to Chinese MPS information, he was born on March 14, 1965, and was reported to have fled Xinjiang for “a South Asian country” (believed to be Pakistan) in November 1996. Once there, he is believed to have risen rapidly in the ranks of the organization and by 1998 was a leader in the group. By 2001, he was directing operations, recruiting individuals and generally serving the organization in a leadership role (Xinhua, October 21, 2008).

He moved into a new role of orchestrating attacks against China starting with the Beijing Olympics in 2008. A year before the Olympics, Chinese authorities believe he dispatched a team of ten from his base in Pakistan to carry out poisonings and bombings against Chinese citizens within and beyond China. During the Olympics, he is believed to have been the “Commander Seyfullah” figure who was responsible for a series of videos that directly threatened the Olympic games in Beijing. According to Chinese official claims, he “issued several directives to his followers to conduct terrorist activities targeted at the Beijing Olympics” (Xinhua, October 21, 2008).

Around this time he was allegedly in contact with extremists in Norway as well. In these communications that were overheard by Norwegian authorities, he purportedly identified Mikael Davud, a Uighur-Norwegian citizen who was arrested two years later, as the leader of an Oslo-based cell that was apparently plotting to carry out an unspecified attack under direction from Rashid Rauf and other senior members of al-Qaeda (VG, July 30, 2010). This was the same network of cells that included Najibullah Zazi’s aborted attempt to attack New York’s subway system in 2009; it is unclear, however, whether he was involved in that plot at all. [2] Whilst under interrogation, Davud claimed to be planning to target the Chinese Embassy in Oslo, and his Uighur heritage makes the ETIM (or Turkistan Islamic Party, TIP, as they were by now identifying themselves) connection likely, the plot seemed to be something that was in fact directed by the al-Qaeda core. But it is worth bearing in mind other factors going on at this time. In May 2011, another prominent TIP member, Abu Sakoor Turkistani,

was promoted to assume control over al-Qaeda’s operations in Pakistan. He played a key interlocutor role directing operations for the group, as well as being the amir of the Uyghur contingent in Pakistan. [3]

Additional reinforcement of Yakuf’s importance is his appearance as the seemingly key individual in a recording that the organization released in the wake of the July 2009 riots in Urumqi. Published with an Arabic transcript, the audio recording by Yakuf (using his title Commander Seyfullah) threatens revenge for Han Chinese actions in the province, calling them “genocide.” What is interesting about this recording is that it was released through the Al-Fajr Media Center, in contrast to the numerous videos that the organization released around the Olympics the year before which were for the most part released via YouTube. The Al-Fajr stamp suggests an official al-Qaeda imprimatur. Given the fact that now defunct al-Qaeda ideologue Abu Yahya al-Libi released a long video in October 2009 calling attention to the Uyghurs’ plight in China, it seems possible to conclude that the rioting in Urumqi seems to have acted as a catalyst that the TIP profited from to draw the organization closer to al-Qaeda.

Timings here are useful to note, as it seems that Mikael Davud, the Uighur-Norwegian, was in Waziristan during this time. Whilst Davud is reported to have trained at a separate camp from the other members of the network that Rashid Rauf and others were directing to carry out attacks in New York and northern England, he was in contact once he was back in Oslo with the same “Ahmad” who was acting as the point of contact for the U.K. and U.S. cells. According to court documents, Davud returned to Scandinavia in October 2009. [4] One thesis is that in the wake of the closer alignment between TIP and al-Qaeda, the TIP might have offered its European passport-bearing recruit to al-Qaeda. Given Yakuf’s prominent role and his connections to Davud, it would not be surprising if he had played a role in this link.

Much of this, however, remains speculative conjecture at this point. In court documents that emerged from Davud’s trial, there is no mention of Emeti Yakuf or Commander Sayfullah. Also, aside from the 2008 official biography provided by Chinese authorities, there is very little information about Yakuf available in the Chinese press. Further adding confusion to this picture is the fact that there is no mention of Yakuf or any of his aliases in a series of recent videos or the latest issue of Sawt al Islam released by TIP. Whether this is because the publications were prepared prior to his death or because he was not killed is unclear. What is interesting, however, is that the organization seems to have suddenly surged into action, publicizing itself once again. Whether

this presages an assault—possibly something to coincide with the upcoming leadership transition in China—is unclear, but given the group’s low record of achievement in the past few years it seems unlikely that they would suddenly be able to carry out an attack of this sort. Whether this capacity is something that has been notably reduced by the death of Yakuf is unclear, though his death will doubtless complicate TIP’s connection with the al-Qaeda core, as well as further weaken both organizations’ ability to launch attacks anywhere around the world.

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Notes:

[1] <http://www.mps.gov.cn/n16/n1237/n1342/n803715/1634373.html>.

[2] For more on this network, please see Raffaello Pantucci ‘Manchester, New York and Oslo: Three Centrally Directed al Qaeda plots,’ CTC Sentinel, vol. 3, no.8, August 2010.

[3] For more on Abdul Shakoor Turkistani, please see Jacob Zenn, “Al-Qaeda’s Uighur Jihadi: A Profile of the Turkistan Islamic Party’s Abdul Shakoor Turkistani,” *Militant Leadership Monitor*, vol. 2, no.12, December 2011.

[4] Oslo court documents, January 30, 2012.

Majid bin Muhammad al-Majid: The New Commander of the Abdullah Azzam Brigades

Elie Issa

The controversial Abdullah Azzam Brigades, an al-Qaeda-linked terrorist network that has been operating throughout the Middle East in recent years, named Majid bin Muhammad al-Majid its emir on June 19 (Jihadology.net, June 20; Al-Jazeera, June 20; Assafir, June 20). Majid is an obscure Saudi national included on Saudi Arabia’s list of 85 most wanted individuals for links to al-Qaeda.

The appointment of Majid as new Emir likely means that the

Abdullah Azzam Brigades decided to publicly legalize and affirm its rising status given the mushrooming of alleged al-Qaeda franchises. Majid’s nomination also probably implies that the Abdullah Azzam Brigades has adopted a strict hierarchical structure similar to other well-rooted jihadist organizations. Majid’s nomination as Emir is therefore likely a key step toward further recruitment of new young operatives and advocates. The Abdullah Azzam Brigades might be seeking to tap into the hidden and well-structured tab of global jihad sponsorship. The behind-the-scenes sponsors of global jihad usually prefer to deal with a known and well-structured organization where loyalty to the Emir stands above anything else. All these parameters likely imply that the Abdullah Azzam Brigades might be planning to intensify its operations in the Arabian Peninsula. But this might take some time pending further restructuring and potential nominations of new operatives and military commanders in key positions.

Almost nothing is known about Majid except that he was born in Riyadh on July 31, 1973, according to the Saudi Interior Ministry. Majid does not have an alias, which is a rarity in the world of jihadists. Majid has so far not been named by the United States as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist, despite the fact that two of his alleged associates are on that list. Majid, thus, might be just a spiritual leader with no real operational or visible role in the organization. The Al-Fajr Media Center, which spreads al-Qaeda’s propaganda, had previously released two audio speeches from Majid about Saudi Arabia, but did not identify his role in any jihadi group.

Majid released a statement on June 19, however, dubbed “Al-Sham Spring,” that was circulated on several jihadist forums (Al-Thawra, June 20; Al-Akhbar, June 20). Majid called on Syrians to support the “uprising against the Assad regime,” vowing that further revolutions against Muslim governments would follow. Such a statement is widely seen as an implicit threat mainly to the GCC states and especially to Majid’s home country, Saudi Arabia. Therefore, one can understand the wariness of the Saudi government and its placement of Majid on the list of 85 most wanted individuals. Operatives like Majid and their organizations are being used to infiltrate the Syrian territory and wage attacks against President Bashar al-Assad’s regime. Such tactics might be useful and fruitful in the near term but may eventually destabilize the GCC regimes in the medium term.

It was not surprising therefore, that the United Arab Emirates’ Foreign Minister Shaykh Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahayan recently called on the GCC states to join forces against the Muslim Brotherhood’s alleged plan to undermine

governments in the region (Gulf News, October 8). “The Muslim Brotherhood does not believe in the nation state. It does not believe in the sovereignty of the state,” said al-Nahayan. Besides the Muslim Brotherhood, some GCC governments also fear that other Islamist groups might seek to destabilize their rule.

On August 18, Majid lashed out at Hezbollah’s chief Hassan Nassrallah for Lebanon’s Shiites allegedly supporting the Assad regime (Al-Akhbar, August 19; Assafir, August 19). In a 15-minute speech aired on YouTube, Majid threatened Lebanon’s Shiites with revenge and consequences for their support to Syria’s regime. Majid also warned Lebanon’s Shiites that they will pay for their silence against what he said were crimes committed by the Assad regime against its people. Several top-ranking Lebanese politicians are reportedly potential targets of assassination by Jihadist networks, with the Abdullah Azzam Brigades being the main suspect (Al-Akhbar, August 19; Assafir, August 19). Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, a Shiite, is reportedly among the key targets. Thus, one cannot underestimate the ability of allegedly small and relatively unknown organizations like the Abdullah Azzam Brigades to carry out lethal and very efficient attacks against selected targets anywhere and anytime in the Middle East.

Perhaps one of the most important figures in the Abdullah Azzam Brigades is also a Saudi national called Saleh al-Qarawi, who is also on the Saudi most wanted list released in 2009. Qarawi is said to be a top military commander in the Abdullah Azzam Brigades. Qarawi was added to the United States’ list of Specially Designated Global Terrorists in December 2011 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/12/178882.htm>). Saleh al-Qarawi set up the Abdullah Azzam Brigades sometime after 2004 as an offshoot of al-Qaeda in Iraq, according to various sources. Al-Qarawi is currently wanted for extradition by the Saudi government for participating in extremist activities abroad (State Department, December 15, 2011). He is also the target of an Interpol Orange Notice circulated on March 25, 2009, for activities related to terrorism. On May 24, the State Department classified the Abdullah Azzam Brigades as both a Foreign Terrorist Organization, under the Immigration and Nationality Act, and as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist group under Executive Order 13224.

Elie Issa is a Lebanese analyst focusing on the Middle East and North Africa regions for the past eight years. His interests include geopolitical, security and macroeconomic topics.

Note:

1. Office of the Spokesperson, “Terrorist Designations of the Abdallah Azzam Brigades,” U.S. Department of State, May 24, 2012, Available at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/05/190810.htm>.

Ethnic Warfare in Burundi: A Profile of Hutu Warlord Agathon Rwasa

Andrew McGregor

The Central African nation of Burundi has reached a political crossroads. In the last decade Burundi has managed, with international assistance, to bring an end to a vicious civil war and install a government that reflects demographic and tribal realities in Burundi. However, since the opposition decided to drop out of the political process by boycotting the 2010 elections, Burundi has witnessed a rise in political violence and state repression. The September announcement of a return to arms by the nation’s most notorious Hutu militia, the Forces nationales de libération (FNL) of veteran militant Agathon Rwasa has raised new concerns about a return to civil war between the Hutu-dominated government and Hutu militants. Rwasa has suggested the announcement was the work of a rogue commander, but the question now is whether Rwasa, who is in hiding, can maintain his iron-fisted control of the Hutu militants in the face of a government campaign to eliminate present and former members through extra-judicial killings. [1]

Burundi’s Civil War

Landlocked and desperately poor, Burundi passed through periods of colonial rule by both Germany and Belgium before attaining independence in 1962. Like its neighbor Rwanda, Burundi has been consumed from the beginning by the rivalry between the majority Hutu (with 85% of the population) and the minority Tutsi community. In the first democratic elections, held in 1993, Burundians split from the traditional Tutsi elite by electing a Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, and a Hutu-dominated parliament. However, Ndadaye was killed by Tutsi troops only a few months later,

launching a brutal 12-year civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi populations that left over 300,000 dead.

Early Life

A reported born-again Christian, Agathon Rwasa grew up in the culture of ethnic and political violence that dominated Burundi. His career became inevitably tied to the fortunes of Palipehutu, a Hutu militia dedicated to the extermination of the Tutsi community. Palipehutu had its origins in the post-independence period of Burundi, when the political aspirations of the Hutu majority collided with Tutsi control of the military. By 1972 a Hutu organization (Umugambwe w'Abakozi b'Uburundi – UBU) had emerged with the intention of wiping out the Tutsi community in Burundi. Hutu massacres and Tutsi repression of UBU left over 100,000 dead. UBU reorganized in the Hutu refugee camps in Tanzania in 1980, adopting the name Palipehutu and resuming massacres of thousands of Tutsi civilians in northern Burundi in the late 1980s. Many of these killings were carried out by Palipehutu's military wing, the Forces pour la liberation nationale (FNL). The latter, under the name Palipehutu-FNL, split from the Marxist-influenced political wing of the movement in 1991.

By 2001, Agathon Rwasa was challenging Cossan Kabura for leadership of the movement, with Rwasa representing a hardline faction uninterested in negotiations with the government. In February 2001, the FNL announced it had sacked Kabura for pursuing peace talks without authorization, followed by a Rwasa-led assault on the capital of Bujumbura. Rwasa had already gained a degree of notoriety for his leading role in the so-called “Titanic Express Massacre” of December 2000, in which 20 Hutu and one British woman were removed from a local bus and murdered (Reuters, December 30, 2000; *Sunday Times*, January 11, 2004).

FNL official Alain Muhabarabona announced on August 8, 2002 that he had in turn sacked Rwasa as leader and taken over command of the movement – the first of several such attempts to displace Rwasa as FNL leader, all of them unsuccessful (AFP, August 22, 2002). Internal divisions did not prevent Rwasa from launching a major attack on Bujumbura in August 2002 that demonstrated he was still firmly in control of the movement (AFP, August 25, 2002). By the end of the year the other major Hutu militias had made peace with the government, leaving only the FNL still in the field.

The Gatumba Massacre

In the spring of 2004 there appeared to be some softening of

the FNL position and it seemed possible that peace talks with the government would resume. This process was derailed, however, by the Rwasa-authorized massacre of roughly 160 Banyamulenge Congolese Tutsis at the Gatumba refugee camp on August 13, 2004. Pointing to previous massacres of Hutus by Burundian Tutsis, responsibility for the slaughter was quickly and proudly claimed by the FNL (Radio Publique Africaine, August 14, 2004). Though the massacre was roundly condemned by the international community and was cited in UN Resolution 1577, there was little follow-up, with no arrests made and no referral to the International Criminal Court.

The movement's next schism occurred in October 2005, when a government-supported faction was created under the leadership of former FNL deputy leader Jean-Bosco Sindayigaya, who had left the movement maintaining that all its demands had already been met. This faction had little impact as it fielded very few fighters but created some confusion by continuing to use the name Palipehutu-FNL. An apparent plan to transfer two battalions of well-armed Hutu fighters of the Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (FDD) returning from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Sindayaigaya's command in order to negotiate with this version of the FNL rather than Rwasa's collapsed when the scheme became known to Rwasa's FNL (AFP, October 10, 2005; Radio Publique Africaine [Bujumbura], October 10, 2005; June 25, 2006; Net Press News [Bujumbura], September 21, 2005).

Funding for the movement came largely through local taxation, reported to be set at the rate of 1,500 Burundian francs from each household and 2,000 francs for every cow owned, these amounts to be paid every three months in FNL-controlled areas (Burundi Press Agency, November 16, 2007). Commercial vehicles passing through FNL areas were also charged 2,000 francs (Burundi Press Agency, June 25, 2007).

Making Peace (2006)

From October 2005 to March 2006 there were numerous raids and skirmishes with security forces, particularly near the rebels' base in the Rukoka Forest. Eyewitnesses reported that many of the rebels appeared to be under 18-years of age (Agence Burundaise de Presse, October 3, 2005).

Despite international condemnation for his role in the Gatumba massacre, Rwasa surfaced in Dar-as-Salaam in May 2006, where he engaged in talks with then-Burundian president Domitien Ndayizeye that yielded a ceasefire and would eventually lead to a June 2006 peace agreement (South

African Press Association, June 18, 2006). Rwaswa identified three main issues to be addressed in the talks:

[First,] The problem of ethnicity which has always undermined the Burundian society which has been turned into a hobby-horse by governments. Secondly, the fact that all the governments killed and continue to kill innocent citizens instead of protecting them and promoting the Burundian society. There is also the problem of democracy, because democracy agrees that people express their opinions. We are asking to be recognized and to be able to exercise our political functions without being hunted down or pursued... (RFI, May 31, 2006).

Rwaswa's chief demand (not met by this agreement) was complete reform of the once Tutsi-dominated Burundian military, where 50% of personnel were to remain Tutsis according to the constitution as a counter to further genocide (RFI, June 16, 2006; Bonesha FM [Bujumbura], June 6, 2006). Despite the peace agreement, FNL fighters remained active in Bujumbura Rural Province and grenade attacks on bars and the murder of police officers in the capital continued through 2006. In July 2006, Rwaswa's followers shelled Bujumbura from the hills surrounding the capital in response to the arrest and alleged torture of three FNL leaders (Burundi Press Agency, July 24, 2006).

Destroying the Dissidents and Deserters

By mid-February 2007 there were reports that Rwaswa had crossed the border from Tanzania into Burundi to reorganize the FNL (Net Press News [Bujumbura], February 19, 2007). Rwaswa's presence was essential as large numbers of FNL fighters said to be tired of life in the bush, constant warfare and the intransigence of the FNL leadership had begun to desert the movement in 2006-2007. According to an army spokesman, deserters had revealed FNL fighters were short of food by mid-summer, 2006 and were forced to eat grass to combat hunger (Burundi Press Agency, August 19, 2006). Many of the deserters were regrouped by the army under new leaders, but the old Palipehutu-FNL name was retained by the government to create dissension within the movement. In early September 2007, FNL loyalists attacked one of these camps in a northern suburb of Bujumbura, driving the upstart FNL faction into the bush with heavy losses (IRIN, September 4, 2007; Bonesha FM [Bujumbura], September 5, 2007).

Mainstream FNL militants killed nine men in October 2007 in the camp of dissidents who continued to use the Palipehutu-FNL in defiance of FNL spokesman Pasteur

Habimana's demands the dissidents change the name of their group (Bonesha FM [Bujumbura], October 22, 2007). Habimana accused the chief mediator, South African security minister Charles Nqakula, of gathering "bandits" together under the FNL name, though it was more widely believed that the divisions in the FNL were being promoted by the Bujumbura government. Only days earlier, FNL forces had attacked dissident FNL leaders at the Hotel Albatros in downtown Bujumbura, killing three and seriously wounding dissident leader Nestor Banzubaze (a.k.a. Banés) (Net Press News, October 15; RFI, October 15). Further embarrassments followed as other "FNL dissidents" loyal to Emmanuel Sindayigaya (a.k.a. Gatayeli) bearing newly issued Burundian military gear began carrying out atrocities in southern Burundi, compelling government authorities to seize and imprison their new ally (Net Press News [Bujumbura], November 23, 2007).

Making Peace

Peace efforts suffered a serious blow in April, 2008 when the FNL began shelling Bujumbura to reinforce FNL demands for full immunity from prosecution and a healthy share of government positions. The dispute descended into street clashes between the army and FNL fighters, angering the Tanzanian and Ugandan brokers of the peace deal (BBC, May 8, 2008). International pressure finally forced Rwaswa to agree to a May 25 ceasefire that laid the foundation for a new peace agreement with the government.

Under the protection of a detail of South African troops, Rwaswa returned to Bujumbura on May 31, 2008 aboard a South African aircraft to the cheers of thousands of people after two decades in the bush (RFI, May 31, 2008). Rwaswa declared the end of the armed struggle at a ceremony on June 17, 2008, saying the movement wished to show the international community that it was "committed to reaching a lasting peace." The demobilization process was complicated, however, by Rwaswa's reluctance to declare how many fighters he had under his command (IRIN, June 17, 2008).

In June, 2008 the Army arrested over 100 young men who they claimed had been recruited to the FNL after the ceasefire in order to boost FNL numbers in a newly-integrated Burundian army (BBC, June 19, 2008). Rwaswa was now claiming a vastly inflated strength of over 21,000 FNL fighters. By late July, 2,450 fighters had surrendered only 40 weapons (IRIN, July 29). Despite many difficulties, the government and the FNL came to an agreement in December, 2008 that called for 33 senior government posts to be offered to FNL members as well as the release of political prisoners from state prisons (Radio Burundi, December 4, 2008). Rwaswa

was eventually appointed head of Burundi's national social welfare agency (AFP, June 5, 2009). South African troops foiled an assassination attempt on Rwaswa by assailants armed with grenades a month later (Net Press News [Bujumbura], July 14, 2009).

Rejection and Flight

The FNL began demobilizing its fighters with a ceremony in western Burundi in April, 2009 (Radio Publique Africaine [Bujumbura], April 18, 2009). In a process assisted by the South African military, 3,500 fighters were destined to be integrated into the Burundi Defense Forces and police, with the remainder (an estimated 5,000) being completely demobilized (Institute for Security Studies [Pretoria], May 8, 2009).

The FNL put Rwaswa forward as its candidate for the 2010 presidential elections, with Rwaswa announcing: "The time of taking power by force is over. Now is the time for dialogue and democracy" (Reuters, November 30, 2009). Though Rwaswa was viewed as the main challenger for the presidency, he joined five other opposition candidates in announcing their withdrawal from the June, 2010 elections after the ruling CNDD-FDD won easily in a round of local elections preceding the presidential poll.

Rwaswa went into hiding in July, 2010, claiming he feared for his life as the government wanted to kill him (Net Press News [Bujumbura], July 8, 2010). In a cassette tape distributed to his followers, Rwaswa said: "They're looking for me because I told the truth [about election rigging], because I said publicly that I don't accept the results of the local elections... [Last] Wednesday they wanted to arrest me again. I got wind of it and I disappeared from circulation" (AFP, June 30, 2010).

The FNL leader was believed to have fled to the DRC's Kivu region, a common refuge for many regional militants, terrorists and bandits. FNL members claimed Rwaswa's flight had followed a raid on his home in Bujumbura in which tear gas, live ammunition and rockets had been used. Police denied these details, but said they had acted after FNL activists had gathered near Rwaswa's house after rumors of his impending arrest began to circulate, searching passers-by and stopping vehicles (AFP, June 17, 2010).

His opponents within the FNL saw their opportunity, and on August 1, 2010, a number of dissident FNL leaders announced they had replaced Rwaswa as leader of the movement with Emmanuel Miburo at a congress from which Rwaswa was absent. (RFI, August 1, 2010). Rwaswa described the leadership congress as "a provocation. It is very

clear that the intention of the government is to allow people affiliated to it to take over the FNL party leadership" (RFI, August 7, 2010). Rwaswa appealed to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for help in the "restoration of the FNL party and its leaders in their rights" (Jeune Afrique, September 25, 2010). Rwaswa loyalists began to search for the dissident RFL leaders and their followers and the murder of seven sugar factory workers and the discovery of bound and mutilated bodies in the Rusizi River in northern Burundi was taken as an indication FNL fighters were regrouping in the nearby Rukoko marshes (AFP, September 15, 2010; September 22, 2010).

By December 2010, Rwaswa was telling journalists that he had "totally renounced the war" even as a UN report suggested the FNL leader had re-mobilized 700 of his most dedicated fighters in the eastern DRC (IRIN, December 10, 2010). Authorities in Bujumbura continued to maintain the fiction that the frequent episodes of grenade-throwing and armed attacks were the work of "armed bandits" rather than political dissidents gathering in the Congo, even in the face of reports from Congolese Colonel Delphin Kayimbi that his forces were battling FNL guerrillas in the North and South Kivu provinces of the eastern DRC (Net Press News [Bujumbura], November 10, 2010).

At the same time FNL spokesmen and other opposition leaders were warning of "an explosive situation" in Burundi with the entire opposition sidelined from the political process, though this was partly the result of their own electoral boycott. Without access to government, the opposition began to complain of a constant campaign designed to harass the opposition through arbitrary arrests, torture and extra-judicial killings. Murders of demobilized FNL fighters by uniformed men were becoming common (IRIN [Nairobi], November 26, 2010; December 1, 2010; AFP, October 16, 2010). By May 2011, Burundian defense minister Major-General Pontien Gacyubwenge was ready to admit that the growing violence in western Burundi (especially in Burundi Rural Province) was the work of Agathon Rwaswa and his followers (RFI, May 7, 2011). A year later, President Nkurunziza would promise Rwaswa: "We will follow you and bring you back with your arms tied behind your back" (AFP, May 18, 2011).

On May 30, 2011 a group of fighters believed to be members of the FNL threw a grenade into a crowd watching a soccer match at the home of a ruling party member in Kanyosha district, killing four people and wounding others (Reuters, May 30, 2011).

According to a document produced by the Service National

de. Renseignement (SNR), Burundi's national intelligence service, Rwaswa was personally involved in the planning of an attack on the Chez les Amis bar in Gatumba (near Bujumbura) on September 18, 2011 that killed 39 people (al-Jazeera, September 19, 2011; AFP, September 19, 2011; October 6, 2011). The attack, allegedly carried out by a group under the command of Bariyanka Antoice (a.k.a. Shuti), came a week after Rwaswa accused the government of torturing and killing over 100 members of the FNL. Many of those at the bar when it was attacked were members of a local football club with ties to the ruling party.

In mid-September, 2011, Rwaswa claimed 169 of his followers had been killed since the start of the year, 20 of them after being detained by police. He claimed the latter, together with the intelligence services and the ruling party's youth wing, were behind a series of "unacceptable massacres, arbitrary arrests and imprisonment, cruel acts of torture, intimidation, death threats and extra-judicial executions" (AFP, September 16, 2011). One of the organizers of the Gatumba massacre, FNL commander Laver Nduwayezu (a.k.a. Carmel, a.k.a. Mukono) was killed by Congolese troops in early May, 2012 and his body handed over to Burundian security forces (AFP, May 4).

A Return to War?

Overt and covert government operations against the FNL that began in July, 2012 have played an important part in encouraging the movement to renew its armed struggle against the Bujumbura government. On September 2, veteran Hutu rebel General Aloys Nzabampema announced the creation of a new FNL faction of 1,000 fighters, which would take up arms against the regime in response to the government's "policy of extermination of FNL members" (AFP, September 4; RFI, September 4). The statement declared their goal was the removal of President Pierre Nkurunziza, the Hutu leader of the Conseil National Pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (CNDD-FDD - National Council for the Defense of Democracy and the Forces for the Defense of Democracy).

Though the statement caused great consternation in Bujumbura, it was quickly rejected by Rwaswa's spokesman, Aimé Magera, who denied a resumption of hostilities and described Nzabampema as a deserter who "has never been a leader of the FNL" (*Jeune Afrique*, September 4; IWACU [Bujumbura], September 3).

Conclusion

Extrajudicial killings by security services or members or allies of the ruling party are encouraged by a culture of immunity in which the current CNDD-FDD government denies the very existence of such a problem despite ample UN documentation of scores of such killings since the 2010 elections. President Nkurunziza appears to be overly reliant on his military advisors, leaving few options for other means of addressing the impasse with the FNL, which still sees itself as the senior Hutu liberation movement and thus deserving of the fruits of political supremacy. Rwaswa, a consummate political survivor, is under strong pressure from his movement's rank-and-file to resume the armed struggle against the government, which is quickly becoming a matter of personal survival for many FNL members. Though the still-hidden Rwaswa insists the FNL has abandoned its arms, this is a familiar refrain oft heard shortly before Rwaswa launches yet another deadly attack in this seemingly interminable conflict.

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Note:

1. Rwaswa's organization is still often referred to by its earlier name, the Parti pour la libération du peuple hutu (PALIPEHUTU). A common usage is "PALIPEHUTU-FNL."

A Profile of Mexico’s “El Comandante Diablo” and How His Use of Atrocity-Based Propaganda Backfired

Guy Fricano

David Rosales Guzmán, alias “El Comandante Diablo”

David Rosales Guzmán, alias “El Comandante Diablo” (the Devil Commander), was captured alive by Mexican authorities on September 1, 2012. He is accused of functioning as the Gulf Cartel’s leader in Monterrey, Mexico, and is held in connection with the deaths of at least 19 victims (www.blogdelnarco.com, October 1). Two were hanged from a bridge outside of Monterrey, and four others were kidnapped from unknown locations. Additional attacks occurred at bars including the Makiavelo (August 8, three dead), Matehuala Men’s Club (August 14, nine dead), Azul Tequila, Jarros 2, and Eternidad (August 20, one dead) (info7.mx/a/noticia/348422, October 1). Those locations were probably targeted for suspected ties to illegal profit-generating activities controlled by Los Zetas, an enemy organization. The attacks outraged the local population, which had already become weary of Comandante Diablo’s gratuitous violence. This was because he had advertised it only too effectively through a psychological warfare campaign utilizing public violence and atrocity-based propaganda videos disseminated through social media. The negative public reaction served to prioritize him as a target for Mexican authorities. A closer examination of his approach to psychological warfare against Los Zetas will help to clarify the significance of his capture.

El Comandante Diablo’s Atrocity-based Psychological Warfare Campaign against Los Zetas

In mid April 2012, Comandante Diablo released images depicting beaten and beheaded victims alleged to be operatives of Los Zetas leader Miguel Treviño Morales (alias “Z-40”) (www.blogdelnarco.com, October 1). Two victims appeared to have been in their mid to late teens, and one may have been female. [1]

Comandante Diablo later released a three-part video in early May 2012 (www.blogdelnarco.com, May 15). The first segment was a drive-by shooting at a guard post on April 20 resulting in one death and one injury. The second was a gun- and knife-point interrogation of a prisoner who denied

present criminal involvement with Los Zetas. Thoroughly terrified, he lost composure as the interrogators demanded him to apologize “for being part of the filth” (a reference to Zeta membership), and he complied. Diablo’s operatives also demanded information on local Zetas and threatened to kill the prisoner’s family if he did not comply. He tearfully asked his captors to verify with his wife that he did not know anything of value to them. The prisoner’s execution was edited out of the video, but it did show operatives stepping into a wooded area to shoot the mortally wounded man for good measure. An operative can be heard demanding the woman be brought to him, though no female appears on the video. The third section featured the gun- and knife-point interrogation of another prisoner who suggested his uncle was of significance to the Zetas. Terrified and kneeling before three of Diablo’s operatives, his hands drifted upwards to protect his head. One of the operatives threatened to sever his genitals if he didn’t lower his hands. They displayed a small plastic bag of marijuana claimed to have been found on the prisoner as evidence of supporting local Zeta marijuana sales. They laughed obnoxiously after shooting him in the back.

A video released in mid-May 2012 displayed an execution by gunfire and three decapitations, one of whom was dismembered (www.mundonarco.com, October 1). One decapitation was performed by a female operative. Two of the victims were beheaded in a manner that maximized the nervous twitching that occurs as a spinal cord is severed. Their heads were held up to the camera, then tossed aside dismissively. One head was placed by the victim’s genitals. Diablo’s operatives threatened Los Zetas’ Miguel Treviño Morales (alias “Z-40”) and his Zeta supporters, and claimed to have killed all the Zetas and their families within the area.

The Zetas responded by releasing a video in June 2012 featuring a severely beaten man alleged to be one of Comandante Diablo’s operatives (www.tierradelnarco.com, October 1). The captors pressured him to portray Diablo as afraid of the Zetas, dishonorable, and a victimizer of innocents uninvolved in the Zetas-Gulf Cartel dispute. He was then beheaded while alive.

In early July 2012, Comandante Diablo released a video that depicted the beheading and dismemberment of two alleged Zetas, one of whom was killed in the beheading process (www.notaroja.mundonarco.com, June 7). That individual was interrogated only briefly, with little more than his Zeta affiliation being established before the violence began. Most of the video’s 18-minute duration was devoted to dismemberment. Diablo’s operatives appeared to retain at least one small body part, perhaps as a trophy. [2]

The Zetas released another video in July 2012 featuring the interrogation and execution of four prisoners alleged to be Gulf Cartel informants (www.notinfomex, October 1). However, all of the prisoner identified themselves using the family name, “Banderas Padilla”, and all stated they were there because they were related to Comandante Diablo. [3] The Zetas clubbed each several times before beheading them on video. Like Diablo’s propaganda, the Zetas’ responses were cruel, reprehensible, and terrifying. Unlike Diablo, they attempted to frame the violence as sensible (i.e. revenge-retaliation for his murder of Zetas’ relatives) and restrained (as clubbing spares the experience of beheading).

Comandante Diablo responded in late July 2012 with a video beginning with an acknowledgement that the Zetas struck his family, “but no problem—we all know what we’re into” (mexicorojo.mx, July 25). It went on to threaten the Zetas and their families in retaliation. The video shows his operatives severing the tongue of a captive and then beheading him to the aria, “la habanera.” After the gruesome scene is completed, the video displays an earlier interrogation of that victim. He gives his name, some information on a friend, the alias of his Zeta commander, and acknowledges being a lookout (*halcon*) for the Zetas. He testifies that Zeta colleagues have fled Ciudad Victoria, and briefly informs on Zeta lookouts there. The operatives threaten the Zetas’ organization, and offer the captive in an act of retribution, referring to him as “your brother.” They demand he apologize to Comandante Diablo and the King of Kings “for being part of the filth,” and he complies. [4] The torture-execution scene replays with audio of the prisoner’s screams and the laughter of his tormentors. It concludes with a warning for others not to communicate with soldiers.

Problems with El Comandante Diablo’s Psychological Warfare against Los Zetas

Narco-propaganda in Mexico’s drug war is frequently brutal and stylized. [5] Comandante Diablo’s overall approach was less aberrant in its brutality than in its stylization. Although Diablo has left public messages in Ciudad Victoria claiming opposition to the victimization of innocents, his attacks upon authorities, gratuitous violence endangering the public, and atrocity propaganda appeared intended to terrorize through the display of gore, cruelty, and humiliation, with little effort—beyond claiming some victims were Zetas—to frame the violence as sensible according to underworld norms (www.mund0narco, October 1).

Mexico’s public is deeply ambivalent about much of the drug war violence, but Comandante Diablo’s psychological

warfare approach polarized public opinion against him for several reasons. His videos depicted disproportionately cruel behavior to low-level enemies. It is true that lookouts are regularly tortured for information and executed, but the torture is not usually disseminated on video, even when the execution is. Cutting out the tongue of a compliant prisoner thus appears to the broad public as atypically cruel. Killing a prisoner for purchasing a small amount of marijuana from an enemy organization also appears atypical, and will not garner public support. It is a fact that women are increasingly involved with drug war violence. However, the use of a female operative to behead enemies resonates poorly with a public that still implicitly regards such dirty work as properly masculine. [6] The negative public reaction also owed to Diablo’s pattern of threatening and killing family members of the Zetas. The targeting of enemies’ relatives is a drug war reality that remains despicable within Mexico’s public consciousness. Equally disturbing was Diablo’s cavalier response to the deaths of those claimed by Zetas to be his relatives. To dismiss the loss of family is to mock a fundamental basis of social organization in Mexico. In conjunction, these factors inadvertently facilitated local perception of Comandante Diablo as a terrorist, and not merely a drug trafficker. The distinction is critical within Mexico’s drug war. A drug trafficker may be regarded as a hero who invigorates the local economy, albeit by profiting from the problems of foreign drug-consuming societies. A terrorist, however, is more readily interpreted as a problem facing the local community.

Additionally, the basic strategy of “heating up a plaza” is to attack authorities or initiate other public displays of violence to provoke repression upon an enemy organization within that area. It should have been anticipated as counter-productive to release a video of one’s own operatives committing the deed, as did Comandante Diablo. Mexican authorities responded predictably by intensifying efforts already bearing upon the Gulf Cartel. His campaign also scandalized the Sinaloa Cartel because Diablo announced an alliance with its leader, Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, in that same video.

Conclusions and Implications

Comandante Diablo is not the first in Mexico’s drug war to spread terror throughout the public, provoke authorities, inflict unnecessary cruelty upon low-level enemies, utilize female killers, retain trophy body parts, or target enemies’ relatives, but he is one of the few who has used social media to publicize his involvement with such activities. To cast an enemy as evil personified is among the most time-tested of propaganda strategies. [7] David Rosales Guzmán’s alias

and satanically-themed propaganda ultimately facilitated its backfire, resulting in his own satanization. Unlike certain other cartel leaders who employ more thoughtfully stylized terror, his approach alienated the public. [8] Those who replicate Comandante Diablo's errors in their own psychological warfare campaigns will find themselves similarly prioritized for capture or death by the Mexican state.

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Notes:

[1] The sex of one victim was difficult to determine because of hair obscuring the face and poor image quality.

[2] Some drug war violence is cast with religious significance, with reports of body parts being used in religious rituals dedicated to Satan, Santa Muerte, or other deities. See: Sullivan, J. & Bunker, R.J. (2012). Mexico's Criminal Insurgency: A Small Wars Journal – El Centro Anthology. iUniverse.com.

[3] While the victims of this video appeared related to one another, it is less clear whether they were literally relatives of David Rosales Guzmán. The Zetas' claim of relation may simply have serviced a symbolic gesture of retaliation, with these victims being relatives to Guzman only in the broadest organizational sense, that is, common connection with the Gulf Cartel.

[4] Because of the current alliance between the Gulf and Sinaloa Cartels against Los Zetas, the phrase, "King of Kings" (Rey de Reyes) has been interpreted by some as a reference to Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, leader of the Sinaloa Cartel. Comandante Diablo has stated solidarity with El Chapo within his videos, but his primary affiliation is with the Gulf Cartel. A plausible alternative is that "King of Kings" referenced Eduardo "El Coss" Costilla, leader of the Gulf Cartel.

[5] Campbell, Howard. Narco-propaganda in Mexico's "Drug War": An Anthropological Perspective. Latin American Perspectives (April 30, 2012).

[6] This popular sentiment has led another cartel, La Familia Michoacana, to avoid recruiting female enforcers.

[7] Lasswell, Harold (1927/1971). Propaganda Technique in World War I. The MIT Press.

[8] Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán of the Sinaloa Cartel is perhaps the most notable example of a cartel leader who employs a variety of violent techniques (including terrorism) in conjunction with bribery to achieve desired results, yet whose persona is regarded as heroic even by some of Mexico's law abiding citizens.