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Ansar al Din

ISLAMIST GROUPS MOUNT JOINT OFFENSIVE IN MALI

Andrew McGregor

Just as the days of cooperation between the three Islamist groups that seized control of northern Mali last year seemed to be over, the three groups appear to have mounted a joint push southwards towards Malian Army lines near Mopti and Sévaré. The move may be intended to present a united front before peace talks resume in Ouagadougou on January 19, though the exact composition of the force remains uncertain. The advance may also offer an opportunity to test the resolve of the Malian Army and its allied militias, which have been talking tough but showing little signs of mounting an offensive against the Islamists any time soon.

In the last few weeks, a combination of internal racial and religious tensions between the Islamist groups has been exacerbated by a perceived need to reconfigure alliances in the region to prepare for an inevitable external military intervention. The largely Tuareg Ansar al-Din movement commanded by Iyad ag Ghali (a.k.a. Abu al-Fadl) also appears to be making efforts to consolidate a leading role amongst the militant groups. Important changes are also afoot in the command structure of the other Islamist groups in northern Mali which have, until now, been dominated by Mauritanian and Algerian Arab commanders.

In an interview with an Algerian newspaper, Shaykh Awisa, a leading member of Ansar al-Din’s military command, referred to the movement’s shift away from an alliance with the largely Black African Islamists of MUJWA (Movement for Jihad and Unity in West Africa) in favor of closer ties to its former partner, the Tuareg nationalist MNLA: “Our relations with the MNLA are very good. We have a common enemy [i.e. MUJWA]. There are no problems between our movement, Ansar al Din, and the MNLA” (*Le Temps d’Algérie*, November 27, 2012). The MNLA fought a fierce battle with MUJWA on November 16, 2012.

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MUJWA has identified a replacement for Hisham Bilal, believed to have been the first sub-Saharan individual to command an al-Qaeda-associated jihadist combat unit. Bilal and a number of his men returned to his native Niger and surrendered to authorities there on November 8, 2012, complaining that the Arab commanders of MUJWA viewed Black African jihadists as “cannon fodder” and believed “a black man is inferior to an Arab or a white” (AFP, November 9, 2012). Bilal’s successor is a Beninese national using the *nom de guerre* “Abdullah.” The new commander is reported to speak Yoruba, a major language in Nigeria as well as Benin, and may have been responsible for contacts between MUJWA and northern Nigeria’s Boko Haram movement (Radio France Internationale, December 31, 2012). According to one report, MNLA leader Bilal ag Acherif was in the Nigerian capital of Abuja in mid-December, trying to convince authorities there that his movement could, with Nigerian arms and logistical support, provide a bulwark against the expansion of Boko Haram (*Jeune Afrique*, December 16, 2012).

MUJWA speaks of itself as an alliance between native Arab, Tuareg and Black African tribes and various *muhajirin* (“Immigrants,” i.e. foreign jihadists) from North and West Africa. According to MUJWA, their “war” against the MNLA was sparked not only by the Tuareg nationalists’ refusal to adopt Shari’a as the law of the land, but also by their racial attitudes, suggesting that in the MNLA, “the Black has no rights, while the White has rights” (in Malian usage, “white” is applied to Tuareg, Arabs and Mauritians). [1] To further its official position on race relations, MUJWA cites a familiar *hadith* (saying of the Prophet Muhammad) recorded by Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780-855 C.E.): “An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black, nor does a black have any superiority over a white except by piety” (*Musnad Ahmad* 22391).

On January 2, MUJWA’s Salah al-Din Brigade announced it had decided to leave MUJWA and join Iyad ag Ghali’s Ansar al-Din movement. The decision by Brigade leader Sultan Ould Badi (a.k.a. Abu Ali) to swear allegiance to Ag Ghali apparently came after lengthy efforts by Ansar al-Din leaders to unify the Islamists. Most of the fighters in the Salah al-Din Brigade are reported to hail from Gao and Kidal (Sahara Media, January 2).

A leading member of the MNLA and its provisional Azawad government denied rumors of dissent within his movement while warning at the same time that any member of Ansar al-Din who allies himself with MUJWA will be treated as a MUJWA fighter (*Le Temps d’Algérie*, December 10, 2012). At the moment there are no hostilities between the MNLA

and Ansar al-Din, both primarily Tuareg rebel movements who have been engaged in joint peace talks being held in Ougadougou and Algiers despite their conflicting goals. However, on January 3, Ansar al-Din leader Iyad ag Ghali announced that his movement would no longer abide by its offer to end hostilities with the Bamako government due to the latter’s failure to bring anything of substance to negotiations in Ougadougou and its decision to recruit mercenaries from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire to fight in northern Mali (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], January 3; AFP, January 3).

Within al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a Mauritanian, Muhammad al-Amin Ould al-Hassan Ould al-Hadrami (a.k.a. Abdallah al-Shinqiti), is reported to have been appointed the new amir of the Furqan Battalion to replace Yahya Abu al-Hammam, who took over as amir of AQIM’s Sahara command (see Terrorism Monitor Brief, October 18, 2012). Al-Shinqiti finished a degree from Nouakchott’s Higher Institute for Islamic Studies and Research in 2006 while serving a 14-month prison term before joining AQIM (Sahara Media [Nouakchott], December 31, 2012). AQIM’s penchant for cigarette and drug smuggling has created friction with Ansar al-Din, which has vowed to eliminate the trade in areas under its control (*Le Temps d’Algérie*, November 29).

In order to broaden its base, Ansar al-Din now appears to be abandoning its strict adherence to the non-native Salafism that brought the movement into conflict with many residents of northern Mali. In negotiations being held in Burkina Faso, Ansar al-Din has backed away from its insistence that Shari’a be applied throughout Mali rather than just northern Mali (Azawad). Movement leaders such as Iyad ag Ghali and Algabass ag Intalla have been meeting with local religious leaders and tribal chiefs to assure them Ansar al-Din does not intend to interfere with the traditional form of Islam practiced in the region (*Jeune Afrique*, December 21). By doing so, the movement hopes to marginalize the foreign Salafists commanding AQIM. If Ansar al-Din is to have any success in the ongoing negotiations with Bamako it must be able to demonstrate some degree of popular support and thus cannot afford to continue alienating local Muslims. Such moves also help bring Ansar al-Din closer to the MNLA, which rejects the introduction of Islamist extremism into the region.

Meanwhile, Mokhtar Belmokhtar (a.k.a. Khalid Abu al-Abbas), who split from AQIM after a dispute with the movement’s leadership in November, is reported to have relocated with a detachment of loyalists and MUJWA fighters equipped with dozens of vehicles armed with heavy machine-

guns to al-Khalil, an important transit point for smugglers and legitimate traders alike near the Algerian border (*Le Temps d'Algérie*, December 26, 2012; for Belmokhtar's split, see Terrorism Monitor Brief, November 15; November 30). The occupation of al-Khalil gives Belmokhtar an opportunity to control fuel smuggling in the region as well as shipments of food and other goods to northern Mali. [2]

While northern Mali was once neatly divided between the three armed Islamist groups in the region, Ansar al-Din has now moved its forces out of Kidal into Timbuktu and Gao regions, once the preserves of AQIM and MUJWa, respectively. AQIM appears to have responded to this move by creating a new brigade to operate in Kidal, the Katibat Yusuf bin Tachfine, led by a Kidal Tuareg named Abu Abd al-Hamid al-Kidali (*Le Temps d'Algérie*, December 3, 2012). In the current environment of mistrust in northern Mali, a joint operation may be the only way of preventing an outbreak of clashes between the sometimes cooperative, sometimes antagonistic Islamist movements operating in the region.

Notes

1. Statement from the Majlis Shura al-Mujahideen, Gao, November 23, 2012.
2. For al-Khalil, see Judith Scheele, *Smugglers and Saints of the Sahara: Regional Connectivity in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge, 2012.

AFRICAN TROOPS POUR INTO CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC TO HALT REBEL ADVANCE

Andrew McGregor

African troops from several nations have begun to arrive in the Central African Republic (CAR) in an effort to save the embattled regime of President François Bozizé Yangouvonda. The latest threat to the Bozizé regime began on December 10, 2012, when a coalition of three rebel movements began an offensive in the north of the country, covering 500 kilometers over rough terrain in only 19 days before halting close to the capital of Bangui. The rebels met only minimal resistance from government troops (the Forces armées centrafricaines – FACA) and troops belonging to the Mission de consolidation de la paix en République Centrafricaine (MICOPAX), an international force of over 500 troops from Chad, Gabon, Cameroon and the Congo. Bozizé has dismissed his own son, Jean-François, from his post as Defense Minister over the failure of the army to offer

any resistance to the rebel advance (PANA Online [Dakar], January 4). For now the rebel advance has halted outside Damara, roughly 100 miles from the capital of Bangui as both parties head to talks in the Gabon capital of Libreville.

The CAR has abundant reserves of uranium, diamonds and timber, but continued insecurity and corruption have left the landlocked nation one of the poorest and most underdeveloped on earth. The military often goes unpaid for months at a time and has occasionally relied on emergency shipments of cash from France to prevent new rounds of mutinies. As a result, the poorly trained and ill-led force has come to resemble yet another bandit group that rarely conducts operations of any size outside the capital. The Presidential Guard is largely composed of Chadian mercenaries.

The rebel coalition has adopted the name “Seleka,” and is composed of three groups that came to terms with the government in the 2008 Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement; the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (UFDR), the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (CPJP) and the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC). These groups accuse Bozizé of failing to meet the terms of the agreement over the last five years and now demand his ouster. Seleka is under the nominal command of Michel Djotodia, a founding member of the UFDR and is represented in Paris by Eric Massi, the son of Charles Massi, a former government minister and CPJP leader who was killed in mysterious circumstances after his arrest in 2009 (see Terrorism Monitor Brief, June 25, 2009). Seleka's military chief is Aubain Issa Issiaka. Though the coalition is united in their hatred of Bozizé, they appear to be unable to agree on little else (Jeune Afrique, January 2). Despite the unwillingness of the international contingent to confront the rebel advance so far, Gabonese MICOPAX commander General Jean-Felix Akaga has warned Seleka that “We will not give up Damara, this must be clear. If the rebels attack Damara, this will mean that they have decided to take on the ten countries of Central Africa” (*Jeune Afrique*, January 2).

The CAR's Territorial Administration Minister, Josué Binoua, claims that the rebel groups are in fact composed of rebels from Darfur and the remnants of Mahamat Nouri's Alliance nationale pour le changement démocratique (ANCD), a relatively inactive Chadian rebel group since it lost the backing of Khartoum in 2010 (for the collapse of the Chadian rebellion, see Terrorism Monitor, October 28, 2010). The ANCD has denied any involvement in the rebellion (AFP, January 4). According to Binoua, the leaders of the rebellion studied in Saudi Arabia and Qatar and intend

to impose Wahhabist beliefs on the CAR (*Jeune Afrique*, January 7). Though many of the rebels are indeed Muslims from the northern CAR, these claims seem designed to rally international support behind the Bozize regime by raising the specter of a takeover by Salafi-Jihadists similar to that in northern Mali.

Several nations have responded to an appeal for more troops from Chadian president Idriss Déby Itno, chairman of the Communauté économique des Etats d'Afrique centrale (CEEAC), the multinational body sponsoring MICOPAX. Congo-Brazzaville has committed 120 troops, as has Gabon and Cameroon. These forces are expected to join the 400 Chadians deployed at Damara, the last outpost before Bangui (PANA Online [Dakar], January 1; RFI, January 2; January 4; AFP, December 31, 2012). The reinforcements will operate under the command of MICOPAX. However, Gabonese Defense Minister Ruffin Pacome Odzonga has made it clear that “the mandate of the Gabonese troops is to provide a buffer and not to fight the rebels” (RFI, January 2). CEEAC is composed of Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tomé and Principe.

South Africa is also sending 400 members of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) to the CAR on a limited deployment ranging from January 2 to March 31. Whether these troops would participate in operations against the rebels remains uncertain, as their mandate mentions only assisting FACA with “capacity building” and assisting in the “planning and implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and re-integration processes” (SANEWS [Tshwane], January 7).

A detachment of several hundred French troops in Bangui as part of Operation Boali (intended to support the CAR military and international forces of the CEEAC) have been detailed to protect French nationals and diplomatic premises in the CAR capital. [1] CEEAC forces are expected to replace local vigilante groups in the capital known as Kokora. Armed with machetes and bows and arrows, these groups have detained or abused Muslims in the capital whom they accuse of being a fifth column for the rebels (AFP, January 2; January 5).

Note

1. France Diplomatie, December 27, 2012, <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/central-african-republic-188/france-and-the-central-african/political-relations-6283/article/central-african-republic-q-a> For

Operation Boali, see <http://www.defense.gouv.fr/operations/autres-operations/operation-boali-rca/dossier/les-forces-francaises-en-republique-centrafricaine>.

Syria Emerges as a New Battlefield for Jordan's Jihadists

Murad Batal al-Shishani

While the influence of jihadists is increasing in Syria where they are fighting alongside other Syrian armed groups to topple Bashar al-Assad's regime, the country is increasingly attracting Arab fighters from neighbouring countries, including Jordan. More than 200 jihadists from Jordan have flocked to Syria since the crisis entered its military phase by the end of 2011 (*al-Ghad* [Amman], October 13, 2012). The migration to Syria is opening a new stage in Jordan's jihadist history.

The jihadist movement in Jordan emerged after the Second Gulf War (1990-1991), when Iraqi president Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and the Gulf states invited American troops to help expel Saddam from Kuwait. The American presence on the soil of the Arabian Peninsula had a profound influence on the development of jihadist ideology. A second contributing influence was the failure of a nationalist ideology that emphasized Arab unity as Arab states confronted each other in the Second Gulf War. The simultaneous collapse of communism discredited the socialist influences that had once been closely tied to Arab nationalism, leaving the field open to the development of Islamism as an alternative ideology.

Moreover, thousands of expats returned to Jordan from the Gulf during this period, including those who carried Islamist ideas with them. Among these was Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi, who can be considered the “founding father” of the jihadist movement in Jordan (for al-Maqdisi, see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, July 30, 2010 and *Terrorism Monitor*, July 9, 2009). Jordanians returning from Afghanistan after fighting the Soviet occupation also fed the growing jihadist movement in Jordan.

While there were a number of incidents and foiled plots in this period, the relation between Jordan's jihadists and the Jordanian security services (Mukhabarat) grew steadily worse after the 9/11 attacks on the United States. As a U.S.

ally, the Mukhabarat tightened security throughout Jordan.

However, the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq turned that nation into a hotbed for jihadists from a range of Arab countries, including Jordan, which supplied the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, the late Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi (killed by a U.S. airstrike in June, 2006). The war in Iraq produced a new and more radical generation of Jordanian jihadists who escalated their enmity toward the Jordanian government by undertaking attacks against various targets within Jordan. Most notable among these was a Zarqawi-orchestrated attack on three hotels in Amman that killed 60 people and injured over 100 more (al-Jazeera, November 9, 2005).

A new stage in relations between the jihadists and Jordanian authorities began with the commencement of the "Arab Spring." In an unprecedented move, Jordan's jihadists took to the streets of Amman and other major Jordanian cities such as Ma'an, Salt, Irbid and Zarqa. These marches were inspired by the power of the Arab Spring revolutions, but such demonstrations came to an abrupt end in April 2012, when clashes erupted between jihadists and security forces after Friday prayer in Zarqa, the hometown of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi. After some 80 pro-government demonstrators and policemen were injured, Jordan's state security court charged 146 Islamists with plotting terrorist attacks (*Jordan Times*, April 26).

Since then the jihadists in Jordan have been divided between a traditional faction that supports peaceful action and the neo-Zarqawists who prefer to pursue violent jihad and consider themselves the inheritors of al-Zarqawi's legacy (see *Terrorism Focus*, November 19, 2008). The Zarqa incident plays in favour of the new generation's arguments and, more significantly, the escalation of violence in Syria has played a major role in starting a new stage in the history of Jordan's jihadist movement.

According to an informed source who spoke to the Jamestown Foundation on the basis of anonymity, the new generation of jihadists in Jordan is well-connected to global jihadists and are migrating to Syria to wage jihad against the Assad regime while Jordan's traditional jihadists are more involved in political activism. [1] However, the Syrian crisis has narrowed the divisions between these parties.

A prominent jihadist ideologue, Abu Muhammad al-Tahawi, has issued two fatwas urging Muslims to join the jihad in Syria and expressed sympathy for the al-Qaeda-style militant group in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra (as-ansar.com Dec 25, 2012; for Jabhat al-Nusra, see *Terrorism Monitor*, November 30, 2012). In an interview with Jamestown, al-Tahawi said that "Muslims in Syria have been oppressed by Assad's brutal and

barbaric regime; therefore, according to Islam, it is obligatory for any able-bodied Muslim to support his brothers there."

[2] While al-Tahawi believes it is the duty of Muslims from all over the world to join the Syrian jihad, he believes the proximity of Jordan to Syria will make the journey easier for Jordanian Muslims.

A mid-December report by al-Jazeera quoted a Jordanian jihadist as saying that Jabhat al-Nusra had appointed a Jordanian named Abu Anas al-Sahabah as the new Amir of the group (al-Jazeera, December 13, 2012). The next day, however, al-Tahawi denied this news, saying that jihadists in Jordan are not involved in operational decisions (BBC Arabic TV, December 14, 2012). Jabhat al-Nusra later confirmed this denial, stating that Abu Muhammad al-Jolani was the group's Amir (as-ansar.com, December 18, 2012). The above-mentioned informed source suggested that news of a Jordanian's appointment to Amir of Jabhat al-Nusra could have been fabricated and leaked by the Mukhabarat as part of an effort to force the group to reveal elements of its leadership structure and the role of Jordanians in it. [3]

The Syrian crisis has opened a new jihadi battlefield for Jordan's jihadists, but more importantly, it has unified them again after signs of division as the arguments of those who were looking to focus on "peaceful jihad" have failed. Of the estimated 200 Jordanian jihadists in Syria, at least 15 have been killed so far, some of them by carrying out suicide attacks. Such a situation is worrying for Jordan as the jihadists active in Syria could reproduce al-Zarqawi's strategy of targeting Amman from abroad, in this case substituting Syria for Iraq.

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Notes

1. Murad Batal al-Shishani, Interview with a journalist who requested anonymity, Amman, December 31, 2012.
2. Murad Batal al-Shishani, Telephone interview with Abu Muhammad al-Tahawi, October 19, 2012.
3. Murad Batal al-Shishani, Interview with a journalist who requested anonymity, Amman, December 31, 2012.

Securing Lebanon's Offshore Energy Raises New Security Challenges

Nicholas A. Heras

As the Lebanese government moves towards establishing commercial extraction of the country's natural gas and petroleum resources in its maritime Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), questions remain whether regional instability coupled with Lebanon's ongoing political deadlock, sometimes deadly social conflict and insufficient infrastructure will prevent it from benefiting from resource revenues. Although not yet realized, the extraction of Lebanon's energy resources could provide the country with significant benefits. Gibran Bassil, Lebanon's Energy Minister, stated that eventual revenues from energy resources could dramatically reduce Lebanon's \$54 billion debt (175% of the country's GDP) and provide the country with 100 years of energy for its chronically underperforming and inadequate electricity infrastructure (*Daily Star* [Beirut], September 25, 2012).

The U.S. Geological Survey estimates that Lebanon has 122 million cubic feet of natural gas and 1.7 billion barrels of oil in offshore deposits (*Forbes*, November 14, 2012). On February 1, the Lebanese government will obtain bids from international companies seeking to pre-qualify for natural gas and oil exploration drilling in its territorial waters and has established May 2 as the date for the submission of formal applications for exploration (Reuters, December 27, 2012). In 2011, the Lebanese government created PetroLeb to administer the bidding process for energy companies to extract the country's resources (*Daily Star*, November 27, 2012). Currently, more than 40 energy companies are reportedly bidding with natural gas extraction expected to start in 2014 and petroleum extraction in 2017 (Arabian Business News, December 30, 2012). In addition to extraction, significant investment in liquefied natural gas plants and pipelines will need to be obtained for Lebanon's energy resources to be exported (*Daily Star*, November 27, 2012).

The currently limited ability of Lebanon's military to protect offshore energy infrastructure from conventional military assaults or terrorist attacks will be a security concern when resource extraction begins off the country's shore. At present, Lebanon's naval forces are focused on a "coast guard" role with an emphasis upon search-and-rescue and smuggling interdiction operations. In this capacity, Lebanese naval forces are currently working with the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in implementing U.N. Resolution 1701 by policing the flow of weapons smuggling into the country. One recent high-profile example of this role was the April 2012 impoundment of a Sierra Leone-flagged ship sailing from Libya destined for the Lebanese port of

Tripoli. The ship was reported to be carrying weapons for armed Syrian opposition groups based in the northern Lebanese city (al-Jazeera, April 28, 2012).

Lebanese naval forces have also established blockades and provided offshore fire support for the Lebanese Army's littoral combat operations, such as the 2007 clashes between the Lebanese Army and the Fatah al-Islam jihadist group in the Nahr al-Barid Palestinian refugee camp north of Tripoli. [1] The Lebanese navy, recognizing the local and international significance of the country's offshore energy resources and the need to protect energy extraction infrastructure, is beginning to orient itself towards establishing a policy based on building its capabilities in Lebanon's territorial waters.

Lebanese Navy chief Admiral Nazih Baroudi recently wrote in the U.S. Naval Institute's *Proceedings* magazine that the Lebanese Navy's ten-year military strategy acknowledged the responsibility and the imperative of the Lebanese Navy to be able to patrol its EEZ and protect offshore oil and gas rigs from attack. [2] The recent commissioning of the U.S.-built 43.5m Lebanese Coastal Security Craft *Trablous*, an advanced multi-role patrol craft sold to the Lebanese Navy with the approval of the U.S. Navy, is another indicator of the Lebanese Navy's evolving orientation toward fielding adaptable craft that will allow it to patrol and defend its EEZ to protect future energy resource extraction.

In addition to military assistance, the United States has been active in working with the Lebanese and Israeli governments to delineate a maritime border between the two countries so that conflicting claims over energy resources are divided in a manner that is agreeable to both sides. A draft maritime boundary agreement is now being negotiated between Israel and Lebanon through the mediation efforts of the United States at the UN, with reports that it will eventually be agreed upon (*Haaretz* [Tel Aviv], December 16, 2012). In line with these recent diplomatic negotiations, the Lebanese and Israeli navies are also beginning to cooperate in patrolling their nominal maritime boundary. This cooperation reportedly includes a joint Lebanese-Israeli naval effort to prevent pro-Palestinian activists from reaching Gaza, including the monitoring of foreign fishing boats approaching Israeli waters from Lebanon (*Haaretz*, April 11, 2012).

Lebanon's political deadlock is also complicated by the potential of energy revenue. Noting this reality, Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah emphasized that any potential revenues derived from energy resources belonged to all the Lebanese people and that a fair distribution method of energy revenues needed to be designed. In addition, Nasrallah stated in his January 3 speech that Lebanon needed to adopt a national military strategy to incorporate maritime defense of its energy resources (ShiaTV, January 3).

As indicated in Nasrallah's speech, the pro-Syrian March 8

bloc (of which Hezbollah is a member) is likely to use the issue of energy resource revenue distribution to continue to reproach the anti-Syrian March 14 bloc (and particularly the Future Movement) for supporting *laissez-faire*, Beirut-centric economic policies that failed to build the country's infrastructure or provide equitable economic growth. Politically, Hezbollah and its March 8 allies could further their populist agenda for public sector overhaul and national infrastructure development by being forceful advocates of the use of energy-derived revenues and products for modernizing Lebanon's woeful public energy sector and for using these energy revenues for greater investment in several sectors of the Lebanese economy identified as being of utmost concern.

The potential effect of energy resource revenue on internal Lebanese politics will present a challenge to Lebanon's government. Lebanese political parties have yet to solve endemic state corruption and have neglected to effectively rebuild infrastructure and develop the country's inadequate public service, which has experienced frequent labor disputes, strikes and a reduction in already limited service. The poor state of Lebanon's public electrical infrastructure is a particularly intractable challenge that the country's energy resources could address.

It was recently estimated that the country's power plants can only accommodate 60% of its electricity requirements (*The National* [Abu Dhabi], January 4, 2011). Many rural areas of Lebanon have only 12 hours of electricity a day and rolling blackouts are common even in Beirut. Electricité du Liban, the state electrical utility, reportedly costs the Lebanese government over \$1 billion annually, increasing the country's national debt for poor electrical service that results in the widespread use of expensive generators for commercial and residential needs, electrical grids maintained by political parties or small enterprises and the common practice of off-meter electrical pirating from the public system (*Daily Star*, August 6, 2012). Lebanon's energy concerns are significant enough that the country commissioned a Turkish firm for a three-year contract to operate two electricity-generating ships off of the country's coast (*Hurriyet* [Istanbul], July 16, 2012).

In the foreseeable future, the potential political conflict over the exploitation of energy resources off the coast of Lebanon is most likely to follow the predictable pattern of conflict between the March 14 and March 8 blocs. It will accentuate the long-simmering public debate inside Lebanon over the deficiencies of public infrastructure and services that affect the daily lives of Lebanese citizens. These deficiencies are becoming greater sources of political conflict, not just for the majority of Lebanese, but also for the growing influx of unemployed and impoverished Syrian refugees that continue to enter the country and stay in some of its poorest and most underserved regions.

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Notes

1. See <http://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/English/NavyMain.asp>.
2. Nazih Baroudi, "The Commanders Respond: Lebanese Navy," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, 138(3), March, 2012, <http://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2012-03/commanders-respond-lebanese-navy>

Ansaru: A Profile of Nigeria's Newest Jihadist Movement

Jacob Zenn

After the death of Boko Haram founder and leader Muhammad Yusuf in July 2009, Nigerian security forces killed up to 1,000 Boko Haram members over a four-day period that month and arrested hundreds of other members in order to – in the words of then-Nigerian President Yar'Adua – "crush" Boko Haram. Yusuf's closest followers, including his deputy Abu Shekau and third-in-command Mamman Nur, moved underground and began operating clandestinely, evolving from Taliban-inspired Salafists into insurgents identifying with al-Qaeda. When Boko Haram launched an attack on Bauchi prison on September 7, 2010 to free more than 100 members detained in 2009 it also distributed pamphlets signed by Shekau threatening revenge on "whoever had a hand in killing our members from the state governor down to ward and district head" (*Daily Trust* [Lagos], September 9, 2010).

Shekau's movement is commonly called Boko Haram, though the full name is Jama'atu Ahlisunnah Lidda'awati wa'l-Jihad (the Group for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad). Since its assault on Bauchi prison, the group has been responsible for 500 attacks with a death toll of more than 3,000 people. However, a dissident faction that rejects Shekau's leadership emerged in January 2012, using the name Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan (Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa, or simply "Ansaru") (*Vanguard* [Lagos], February 1, 2012). This new movement appears to coordinate its operations in Nigeria with the northern Mali-based al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA). This faction may therefore

be the most imminent threat to foreign interests in Nigeria, while Shekau's faction of Boko Haram may be the more long-term strategic threat.

Boko Haram: Friend and Foe

On November 30, 2012, Ansaru sent an e-mail to a northern Nigerian media outlet and released a separate Hausa language video to claim responsibility for the November 25 prison break at the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) headquarters in Abuja. Although Nigerian police claimed that only five prisoners escaped, Ansaru alleged that it freed 37 members and 286 other prisoners who were subject to "real human rights violations," including "extra judicial killings," "termites" and "a complete lack of water" (*This Day* [Lagos], November 26). [1] On November 29, Shekau praised the operation in his own video, which featured Shekau and other militants training with rocket-propelled grenades and other weapons in an unknown desert location. Shekau offered "glad tidings" on the prison-break, claiming it free "more than 150 mujahideen." [2] Among the Boko Haram members freed from the prison was the wife of Kabiru Sokoto, the mastermind of the 2011 Christmas Day church bombings outside of Abuja (*Vanguard*, April 6; *Daily Independent* [Lagos], November 27).

That Ansaru and Shekau's faction of Boko Haram were united in praising the prison break is consistent with Ansaru's June 5 statement that it would "compliment" its "brothers" in Boko Haram, but would distance itself from Boko Haram when the movement does "bad things" (*Desert Herald*, June 5). In a November 26 statement, Ansaru elaborated on these "bad things" when it accused Shekau of ordering the killing of an Ansaru member for "taking a moderate stance on religious matters," "going too far in his interactions with people" and justifying his leadership with "extreme actions." [3] When Ansaru first announced its existence publicly on January 26, 2012 by distributing fliers in Kano after Boko Haram attacks in the city killed approximately 150 Muslim civilians, media reports described Ansaru's emergence as a reaction to the "loss of innocent Muslim lives" (*Vanguard*, February 1, 2012). In a June 2 video, Ansaru said that the sin of killing a fellow Muslim was second only to the sin of accepting laws other than the Shari'a and in a November 9 video Ansaru described the killing of Muslims as "inexcusable." [4]

Backlash against Shekau

Despite Ansaru's differences with Boko Haram, the group maintains that Ansaru and Boko Haram are like "al-Qaeda and the Taliban, pursuing similar objectives and engaging in the same struggle, but with different leaders" (*Desert*

Herald, June 5). Ansaru says its leader is Abu Usmatul al-Ansari, who appears with a veil covering his face in videos, and that its spokesman is Abu Jafa'ar, both of which are likely pseudonyms. Though Ansaru did not declare its formation until January 2012, UK Home Office Minister Mark Harper suggested the group was responsible for the May 2011 kidnapping of a British and Italian engineer, both of whom were subsequently killed by their captors during a failed rescue attempt by the UK's Special Boat Squadron (SBS) in March 2012 (BBC, November 22, 2012). [5] Responsibility for the kidnappings was claimed in two videos by a previously unknown group calling itself "al-Qaeda in the Lands Beyond the Sahel," though Nigerian security forces believed those responsible were a faction of Boko Haram (*Guardian*, March 9, 2012).

French news agency AFP reported that a Boko Haram informant claimed one of those responsible for the kidnappings was Khalid al-Barnawi a native of Nigeria's Borno State who is alleged to have trained with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Algeria in the mid-2000s and then carried out kidnappings of foreigners in Niger and Nigeria (AFP, June 21, 2012). He is also one of three Nigerians, including Abu Shekau, whom the United States designated as "global terrorists" in June 2012 and whom Nigeria declared "Most Wanted" in November 2012 for being on Boko Haram's Shura Council (*This Day*, November 24). [6]

Ansaru's leaders are among the many militants in northern Nigeria who reject Shekau's leadership. After Muhammad Yusuf's death, Boko Haram's Cameroonian third-in-command, Mamman Nur, fell out with Shekau when Nur took over the leadership of the movement while Shekau recuperated from gunshot wounds suffered in the July 2009 clashes. Nur loyalists believed Nur was fit to lead because of his international contacts, including alleged contacts with Somalia's al-Shabaab. However, Shekau succeeded in using his fearful reputation to emerge as the Boko Haram leader; according to a Boko Haram spokesman, "nobody even dared ask [Shekau] questions for fear of death" (*Vanguard*, September 3, 2011). When Shekau issued his first statement in July 2010, he said that "being the deputy to Yusuf," he had "stepped in and assumed the leadership." His leadership style came under rebuke in July 2011 when a group called the Yusufiya Islamic Movement distributed fliers in Kano calling on the "evil group" (i.e. Boko Haram) to desist and urged Muslims to "pray that Allah exposes those who perpetrated [bombings targeted at civilians]" (*The Nation* [Lagos], July 21, 2011).

Nur went on to mastermind the bombing of the UN Headquarters in Abuja on August 26, 2011 and is part of the

team that Boko Haram factional leader Abu Muhammad is proposing for negotiations with the Nigerian government in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. However Shekau's Boko Haram faction has called Abu Muhammad's faction "fake" and denied any connection to his group (Sahara Reporters, August 23, 2012). Nur and his loyalists were also reported to have assassinated Mohammed Yusuf's cousin, Babakura Fugu, in September, 2011 after he negotiated with the government for compensation for Yusuf's death. Shekau's group condemned this assassination as "immoral" (*Vanguard*, September 19, 2011).

Threat to Foreigners

Ansaru claimed responsibility for an operation on December 19, 2012 in which 30 militants raided an engineering company's compound in Katsina (30 miles from the border with Niger) and kidnapped a Frenchman. Ansaru warned France that it would continue launching attacks against the French government and French citizens until France ends its ban on the Islamic veil and its "major role" in the planned intervention in northern Mali (*This Day*, December 24, 2012).

Another kidnapping of a German engineer in Kano on January 26, 2012, was claimed by AQIM through AQIM's al-Andalus media wing and appears to have been connected to the kidnapping of the British and Italian men. The kidnapers, for example, warned Germany not to forget "the lesson taught to the British by the mujahideen" in Sokoto and the proof-of-life videos in both kidnappings were sent to the same Mauritanian news agency, Agence Nouakchott Internationale, which regularly receives AQIM videos. In contrast to AQIM, Ansaru and MUJWA, Shekau's spokesman has denied that Shekau's faction of Boko Haram engages in hostage-taking or ransoms, and, as a matter of verification, there have been no reports of kidnappings in northeastern Nigeria where Shekau's faction is most active (Sahara Reporters [Lagos], March 9, 2012).

Conclusion

There are several factions in northern Nigeria that have taken up arms against the Nigerian government since the death of Mohammed Yusuf in 2009. Most of these factions are likely connected through the relationships that Shekau, al-Barnawi, Nur and other militants had before Boko Haram went underground. Shekau has been the main face of the insurgency in northern Nigeria, but his record as a divisive, albeit effective and fearsome leader and Boko Haram's killing of innocents has bred dissent. Now Ansaru is gaining

prominence due to its kidnapping of foreigners in northern Nigeria, prison break operation in Abuja and a media strategy that challenges Shekau.

As 2009 recedes into the past, a split will likely emerge in Boko Haram between Nigeria-oriented and internationally-oriented militants. The former group's grievances are against the Nigerian government and largely inspired by a desire for revenge for the killing of Muhammad Yusuf and his followers in July 2009. The latter group, which includes Ansaru, will likely compliment AQIM and MUJWA through its operations in northern Nigeria and attract members who have trained with AQIM, such as al-Barnawi, or with al-Shabaab, like Nur. Shekau may also become more internationally oriented if, as some reports suggest, he has fled Nigeria and received refuge in northern Mali with other Boko Haram commanders.

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Notes

1. "Declared of Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fibiladis Sudan Garki II Abuja," YouTube, November 30, 2012, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1m5-zV3zfU.
2. "Glad Tidings, O Soldiers of Allah," Ana al-Muslim Network, December 1, 2012, <http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=188204>.
3. "Important Message From Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan," YouTube, November 26, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZ-6STrj2tI>.
4. "Video of Introduction of Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladis-Sudan," YouTube, November 9, 2012, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6ATD6bLaBI>.
5. Ansaru was proscribed by the UK government on November 22, 2012, though its connection to the kidnapping was not mentioned in the legislation. See http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2012/2937/pdfs/uksi_20122937_en.pdf.
6. U.S. Department of State, "Terrorist Designations of Boko Haram Commander Abubakar Shekau, Khalid al-Barnawi and Abubakar Adam Kamar," June 21, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/06/193574.htm>.