



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME XII, ISSUE 6 ♦ MARCH 20, 2014

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Congolese soldiers assigned to the Congolese Light Infantry Battalion

IRAQI PRESIDENT ACCUSES QATAR AND SAUDI ARABIA OF WAGING A TERRORIST WAR AGAINST THE IRAQI GOVERNMENT

Andrew McGregor

As Iraq descends further into a pattern of intensive sectarian violence and terrorist attacks, Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has accused Qatar and Saudi Arabia of supporting terrorist groups active in his country, likening this support to a declaration of war:

They are attacking Iraq, through Syria and in a direct way, and they announced war on Iraq, as they announced it on Syria, and unfortunately it is on a sectarian and political basis... I accuse them of inciting and encouraging the terrorist movements. I accuse them of supporting them politically and in the media, of supporting them with money and by buying weapons for them. I accuse them of leading an open war against the Iraqi government... These two countries are primarily responsible for the sectarian and terrorist and security crisis of Iraq (France 24, March 9).

Al-Maliki concluded that he had no intentions of retaliating, but warned the two Gulf states that “support of terrorism will turn against you.” Al-Maliki reiterated his warning at a Baghdad anti-terrorism conference on March 12, saying “the state that supports terrorism holds responsibility for [the] violence faced by our countries” (Shafaq News, March 12). Al-Maliki added that terrorism in Iraq “does not differentiate between Sunni and Shiite” (Iraqi National News Agency [Baghdad], March 12). Over 1,800 Iraqis have been killed in the political and sectarian violence already this year (AFP, March 8).

The Iraqi prime minister’s comments came in the midst of campaigning for parliamentary elections next month and a very public dispute with parliament over his decision to carry on disbursing government funds despite failing to get parliament to ratify the budget. Parliamentary speaker Osama al-Nujaifi has accused the prime minister of

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violating the constitution and described the decision to disburse funds without ratification as “embezzlement” (Iraq Pulse, March 19). Al-Maliki has little support amongst Iraq’s Sunni minority and is also engaged in a dispute with the Kurds of northern Iraq (Gulf News [Dubai], March 14). A range of Iraqi Sunni and Shi’a political and religious groups denounced the prime minister’s remarks as an effort to deflect attention from his failures in Anbar Province, the heart of the Sunni rebellion (*al-Sharq al-Awsat*, March 11).

Riyadh described al-Maliki’s accusations as an attempt to cover up the Iraqi prime minister’s internal shortcomings: “Instead of making haphazard accusations, the Iraqi prime minister should take measures to end the chaos and violence that swamp Iraq” (Gulf News [Dubai], March 14; *Saudi Gazette* [Jeddah], March 11).

Saudi allies Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) both reacted angrily to al-Maliki’s accusations against Riyadh, with the UAE summoning the Iraqi ambassador to receive its protest in person (Emirates News Agency [Abu Dhabi], March 12; Arab News [Jeddah], March 13). The Iraqi prime minister’s statement was also condemned by Gulf Co-Operation Council secretary-general Abdullatif al-Zayani, who said the allegations were “aggressive and baseless” (Kuwait News Agency [Kuwait], March 11). Beyond their political usefulness for al-Maliki, who appears to be focusing on Iraq’s Shi’a voters for support, the prime minister’s remarks are a reflection of the strains being placed on relations between Arab nations by growing Shi’a-Sunni tensions in the Middle East.

GULF CO-OPERATION COUNCIL THREATENS TO SPLIT OVER QATAR’S SUPPORT FOR THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

Andrew McGregor

Changing political alignments in the Gulf region now appear to threaten the continued existence of the Gulf Co-Operation Council (GCC), an important six-nation organization designed to further the political interests of the Gulf’s conservative monarchies with an eye to eventual unification. Though tensions have been growing within the GCC for some time, the dramatic rupture in diplomatic relations between Qatar and three other members of the GCC (Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates [UAE] and Bahrain) over the former’s backing of the Muslim Brotherhood has the potential of dealing a fatal blow to the Council. GCC members include Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait and Oman.

Rather than a simple alliance, the GCC is better thought of as a complex network of relationships in which common goals such as security and prosperity are intended to override competing interests.

On March 7, Saudi Arabia declared the Muslim Brotherhood, Syria’s al-Nusra Front, the Houthis of north Yemen, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and a little-known group the edict called “Hezbollah within the Kingdom” to be terrorist organizations. A Brotherhood front organization in Egypt expressed “surprise” at Riyadh’s choice to “continue support for the coup” and to “criminalize opposition to the unjust coup” (Ahrām Online [Cairo], March 10). Riyadh also gave 15 days for all Saudi citizens engaged in fighting abroad to return home without penalty. Under a decree issued by King Abdullah on February 3, Saudi citizens fighting in conflicts outside the kingdom will face imprisonment for a term of three to 20 years, with members of extremist or terrorist groups facing even harsher penalties (Ahrām Online [Cairo], March 7).

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain withdrew their ambassadors from Doha in early March in an unusual show of dissatisfaction with the policies of a fellow GCC member. Qatar’s foreign minister, Khalid al-Attiya, responded to the moves by asserting that: “The independence of Qatar’s foreign policy is simply non-negotiable” (al-Jazeera, March 18). Qatar was a strong financial supporter of the short-lived Mursi regime in Egypt but now has nothing to show for its investment other than growing diplomatic isolation. The Saudis and the UAE, on the other hand, have backed the military government of Field Marshal Abd al-Fatah al-Sisi with massive financial support to keep the regime afloat in a difficult period and can expect their political influence to grow if al-Sisi becomes the next president of Egypt, as expected.

Saudi Arabia is reported to have warned Qatar that it would be “punished” unless it met three demands; the closure of al-Jazeera (accused by Egypt of backing the Muslim Brotherhood), the severance of all ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and the expulsion of two U.S. institutes from Qatar, the Brookings Doha Centre and the Rand Qatar Policy Institute (Qatar News, March 15; AFP, March 15). The promised alternative is a Saudi air and land blockade of Qatar, which not only relies heavily on imports of food and other goods, but is also an important regional transportation hub. The Saudi and Qatari militaries last clashed along their mutual border in 1992. The UAE has been somewhat less bellicose than the Saudis, given that the Emirates depend on Qatari natural gas for power generation (*Financial Times*, March 14). Otherwise, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain

will find it difficult to apply economic pressure on Qatar, which has broad overseas investments, Asian markets hungry for its natural gas production and does only five percent of its trade with the three GCC partners opposing its policies (Bloomberg, March 13).

Qatar continues to host the Brotherhood's unofficial leader, Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an influential preacher with considerable media skills. Qatar's ambassador to the UAE was summoned to the foreign ministry in Abu Dhabi in February to explain a sermon broadcast from Qatar by al-Qaradawi in which the shaykh condemned the UAE as a nation that opposes Islamic rule. The remarks came a day after UAE authorities imprisoned 30 Emiratis and Egyptians accused of forming a Brotherhood cell in Abu Dhabi (al-Jazeera, February 2). Qatar has offered refuge to fugitive members of the Brotherhood, while the UAE has imprisoned scores of members of the Brotherhood and its UAE affiliate, the Islah Party (al-Jazeera, March 18).

In recent years, Qatar has grown closer to Iran and Turkey, the latter's ruling Justice and Development Party also being a strong supporter of the Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar's ties to Shi'a Iran in the midst of an ongoing regional Sunni-Shi'a power struggle are particularly alarming to the Saudis (whose oil-rich Eastern Province has a Shi'a majority) and the Sunni rulers of Bahrain, who are trying to repress simmering discontent in Bahrain's Shi'a majority. Kuwait appears to be dismayed by the whole dispute and has offered to act as a mediator. The last member of the GCC, Oman, has an Ibadite majority and has traditionally close ties to Iran as part of a resolutely independent foreign policy. Oman is a strong opponent of Saudi-led efforts to create an economic, customs and defense union within the GCC. Egyptian officials announced Cairo had decided not to close its embassy in Doha because of the large number of Egyptian nationals working in Qatar but would not send a new ambassador (Al-Monitor, March 12).

Qatar's active role in the Syrian and Libyan rebellions has been a leading element of an increasingly aggressive foreign policy that has at times alarmed its conservative neighbors. Despite this, there is a tremendous incentive to cooperation within the GCC as its members will all suffer economically if political disputes lead to blockades, closed borders or confrontations in an already compact and volatile region.

Iran's Sunni Baloch Extremists Operating from Bases in Pakistan

Abubakar Siddique

An Iranian Sunni extremist group operating out of hideouts in southwestern Pakistan, Jaysh al-Adl (JA - Army of Justice), has started to threaten Iran's security and darken relations between Tehran and Islamabad.

Days after JA abducted five border guards from a remote border post in southeastern Iran on February 6, Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli warned Iran could send forces into Pakistan's Balochistan Province to free the captives: "If Pakistan doesn't take the needed steps to fight against the terrorist groups, we will send our forces onto Pakistani soil... We will not wait" (*Dawn* [Karachi], February 18).

Pakistan reacted cautiously. The Foreign Ministry said Islamabad "regrets the suggestions of negligence" put forward by Iran. The statement reminded Tehran of Pakistan's "active support against terrorist groups in the past," but emphasized that "the Iranian forces have no authority to cross our borders in violation of the international law. We must respect each other's borders." [1]

The two sides agreed to meet to discuss ways to curb cross-border terrorism. After a three-day meeting in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, Islamabad agreed to help Tehran with recovering the kidnapped guards. "Pakistan will act if we get any information regarding the presence of kidnapped Iranian soldiers on our soil," pledged Babar Yaqoob Fateh Muhammad, a senior Balochistan official (*Dawn* [Karachi], February 21). Two weeks later, another Balochistan official said Iranian claims about the presence of JA militants in remote parts of the province had been proven wrong. Asad Gilani, one of the most senior civilian security officials in Balochistan, said Iranian tips about militant hideouts inside Balochistan had not borne fruit. [2]

JA is strengthened by multiple conflicts brewing in the Baloch homeland, a vast desert on the Iranian Plateau that spans Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran along the Arabian Sea. Thousands of civilians and soldiers have died and hundreds of thousands have been displaced by Baloch separatist violence and military crackdowns in Pakistan since 2003. JA's shadowy nature makes it difficult for Iran and Pakistan to cooperate to contain or shut down the group. It appears to be the largest and most active Sunni organization targeting government forces in Iran's impoverished southeastern

province of Sistan-Balochistan. The nearly two million residents of the region are mostly Sunni Muslims and ethnic Baloch. The Baloch have long-standing grievances against Shi'ite-led Iran. Tehran's dismissive treatment of the Baloch since the Islamic revolution in 1979 has only aggravated grievances and provoked Sunni radicalism.

JA appears to have absorbed a large part of Jundallah (God's Soldiers), a Sunni extremist group that has conducted raids and suicide bombings inside southeastern Iran for the past decade. Both groups have maintained strong ties to Pakistan's anti-Shi'ite Sunni extremists since the 1990s and their leaders have sheltered inside Pakistan.

The first known Iranian Baloch militant faction was the Sipah-e-Rasoolallah (Army of the Prophet of Allah). Its leader was a little-known Iranian Baloch figure, Maula Bux Darakhshan, who launched cross-border attacks in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan from hideouts in Pakistan. He was believed to be hiding in Kech, a Balochistan district. Darakhshan was eventually killed by Iranian forces, prompting Sipah-e-Rasoolallah to merge with Jundallah in 2006 (*The News* [Islamabad], December 11, 2013).

In subsequent years, attacks attributed to Jundallah in Sistan-Balochistan killed hundreds of civilians and soldiers. The group also kidnapped Iranian border guards. It was suspected of involvement in an ambush on Iranian President Mahmud Ahmadinejad's motorcade in 2005 that killed one of the president's bodyguards. Large car bomb attacks killed scores of Iranian officials and soldiers in 2006 and 2007. After a suicide bombing in October 2009 that killed 42 people, including senior commanders of the elite Revolutionary Guards, Tehran accused Islamabad of backing Jundallah and protecting its leader, Abdul Malik Rigi (RFE/RL, October 20, 2009).

Tehran captured Rigi in February 2010. He was hanged that June, but Jundallah was not defeated. It claimed responsibility for the July 2010 bombings that killed more than 20 Shi'ite worshippers in a mosque in Zahedan, the capital of Sistan-Balochistan. Similar attacks targeted scores of Shi'ites in Chabahar in December 2010 and October 2012. Tehran blamed Jundallah for the attacks (Press TV [Tehran], October 21, 2012). A faction of Jundallah continues to operate out of Pakistan under the leadership of Haji Muhammad Zahir, but little reliable information has emerged about his strength and the activities of his forces.

In 2012, many Jundallah members merged into Jaysh al-Adl. Two little-known figures, Salahuddin Farooqui and Mullah Omar, were named leaders of the new organization (Omar

is not related to the Afghan Taliban leader). In its first major attack, the JA killed 14 Iranian border guards in October 2013. Tehran retaliated by executing 16 Baloch men it branded as "bandits." Iranian forces also carried out missile strikes targeting the suspected JA leadership inside Pakistan. The strikes in the remote Turbat district of Balochistan were acknowledged and condemned by the region's most senior civilian politician, Chief Minister Abdul Malik Baloch (*The News* [Islamabad], December 11, 2013).

JA is likely to continue to complicate relations between Islamabad and Tehran. Pakistan has not won Iranian favor by its move to back Saudi Arabia's pro-rebel position in the Syrian war. Islamabad has refuted reports that it agreed to provide Syrian rebels with weapons paid for by Saudi Arabia but has not denied other reports that it will provide manpower to train Syrian rebels in Jordan (*The Express Tribune* [Islamabad], February 24; February 26).

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Notes

1. Pakistan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Reaction to the reported statement made by Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli," February 18, 2014, <http://www.mofa.gov.pk/pr-details.php?prID=1737>.
2. Khudai Noor Nasir, "Pakistani Official Says Iran's Information about Rebels Wrong," March 7, 2014, <http://gandhara.rferl.org/content/pakistan-irans-information-about-rebels-wrong/25289350.html>.

Assad's Hurricane: A Profile of the Paramilitary Wing of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party

Chris Zambelis

The presence of numerous auxiliary forces fighting alongside the regular Syrian military and security services against the armed opposition to Ba'athist rule is without question. Acting as ancillaries for the Ba'athist regime's defense are a similar number of paramilitaries, including the Popular Committees, their successor, the National Defense Force (NDF), the irregular *shabiha* (ghosts) militias, Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and fighters of the Syrian Social Nationalist Party (SSNP), the latter being distinguished by the party's *zawba'a* (hurricane) logo on their uniforms and flags.

The activities of the SSNP's paramilitary and militant wings are most associated with high profile operations executed in Lebanon by its Lebanon-based contingent. SSNP armed cadres in Syria are reported to have mobilized under Popular Committee and NDF auspices as well as independently. There are indications, however, that the SSNP has intensified its activities on the Syrian battlefield and under its own banner (*al-Akhbar* [Beirut], February 3; *Rozana Radio* [Paris], January 28). The SSNP has taken to social media to publicize its armed campaign through its network of official websites and online messaging platforms. [1] The SSNP has also begun to deliver public eulogies for its fallen fighters. The death of Muhammad Ali Awad, a Lebanese hailing from the town of Aalmat in Lebanon's north central Jbeil District in Mount Lebanon Governorate, in fighting in Homs Province in western Syria in late December 2013, represented the first among a growing list of fallen SSNP fighters being lionized as martyrs and heroes (SSNP.info, December 27, 2013). The SSNP's notable profile in Lebanon makes its role in Syria's civil war even more salient for gauging developments in Lebanon.

Founded in 1932 by Antoun Saadeh, a Greek Orthodox Christian from just outside of Beirut, the SSNP's ideology promulgates a vision of a "Greater Syria" that encompasses an amalgam of the histories, cultures and civilizations of the ancient Fertile Crescent and Mesopotamia. In today's geographic terms, this includes all of modern Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel and Palestine, Iraq, Kuwait and Cyprus, as well as swaths of southern Turkey, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and western Iran. Thoroughly secular in principle, the SSNP's concept of "Greater Syria" transcends religion and ethnicity for an idealized pan-Syrian nation that is very

much suggestive of European-style nationalism. The SSNP also invokes a narrative of resistance and anti-imperialism. Its detractors often accuse it of harboring a far-right and even fascist agenda. The SSNP's ideology has put it at odds with the pan-Arabism promoted by Ba'athism and Islamism. Nevertheless, the SSNP has frequently set aside its principles in pursuit of broader objectives. While its secular philosophy made it attractive to religious minorities, especially Christians, the SSNP has always boasted a diverse base that has included adherents of all faiths. In the context of the conflict in Syria, however, the SSNP, along with the regular Syrian Army and NDF, is seen as a mechanism for organizing Christians to take up arms against a radical Islamist-dominated opposition (*Al-Monitor* [Washington], March 10).

Even with its relatively modest membership and resources, the armed wing of the SSNP based in Lebanon has earned a reputation for executing bold and daring missions. While suicide bombings in the Middle East have generally been associated with Islamist militancy, it was the SSNP (and other secular factions) that pioneered their widespread tactical use against Israeli and Israeli-allied forces in southern Lebanon during Israel's occupation. The SSNP was implicated in the 1982 assassination of Lebanese president-elect Bashir Gamayel only days before he was to assume his post. Notably, the SSNP fought alongside Hezbollah and other factions to expel Israeli forces from Lebanon. Today, fallen SSNP fighters are extolled alongside Hezbollah's fallen cadres throughout south Lebanon and other parts of the country. The SSNP mobilized alongside Hezbollah following Israel's 2006 invasion of Lebanon. The extent of the SSNP's coordination with Hezbollah was illustrated in May 2008, when Hezbollah and allied paramilitary factions associated with the March 8 coalition, including the SSNP's armed wing, defeated militias attached to the rival March 14 political bloc headed by former Lebanese prime minister Saad al-Hariri's Future Movement in street fighting in Beirut (*al-Akhbar*, October 12, 2012). The SSNP's role in the hostilities elicited retaliation by supporters of the Future Movement against the SSNP's headquarters in Halba in the northern Akkar region. Future Movement loyalists killed and mutilated the bodies of 11 SSNP members in what has come to be referred to as the "Halba Massacre" (*Daily Star* [Beirut], May 10, 2012; *al-Jazeera* [Doha], May 10, 2008).

The SSNP's growing involvement in the conflict in Syria has aggravated tensions in Lebanon. Hardline Salafists that are sympathetic toward the Syrian opposition in Lebanon's flashpoint northern city of Tripoli clashed with SSNP loyalists and other factions in May 2012 and again in June 2013 (*al-Arabiya* [Dubai], June 16, 2013; *al-Jazeera*, May 14, 2012).

Most of the SSNP's fighters are reported to be operating in the Syrian governorates of Homs and Damascus and include Lebanese and Syrians. More importantly, the SSNP appears to be joining the combat in some of the most contentious fronts, including at Zara, Talkalakh, Qusair and Wadi al-Nasara in Homs Governorate and the Damascus suburbs of Jaramana and Ghouta. The SSNP is also reported to be operating in the governorates of Tartous, Sweida and Dera'a (*al-Akhbar*, February 3; February 5).

The SSNP's political orientation towards the Ba'athist regime in Syria is convoluted. The SSNP has been riven by internal cleavages over its relationship with Damascus. One faction of the SSNP joined the Ba'athist-led National Progressive Front coalition in 2005 while the other led by Ali Haidar remained on the outside as a self-proclaimed opposition movement (Dam Press [Damascus], March 12, 2012). [2] Despite this, SSNP head Ali Haider was appointed in 2011 as Syria's minister for national reconciliation affairs. Together with the National Committee for the Unity of Syrian Communists, Ali Haidar and the SSNP established the Popular Front for Change and Liberation to contest Syria's May 2012 parliamentary elections (*al-Jazeera*, May 25, 2012). It later joined the Coalition for Peaceful Change Forces, which, together with the National Coordinating Committee for Democratic Change, represents what is commonly referred to as the "loyal" or "patriotic" opposition that seeks a political resolution to the conflict while rejecting foreign intervention in Syria (*Al-Monitor*, January 14; *al-Safir* [Beirut], September 26, 2012; Syrian Arab News Agency, May 12, 2012). Opponents of Ba'athist rule consider the creation of these entities as a regime strategy to divide the opposition and demonstrate that it is committed to political reform. Nevertheless, the divergent currents within the wider SSNP milieu likely have a negligible impact on the SSNP rank-and-file when it comes to taking up arms in Syria. Much like its ally Hezbollah, the SSNP has come to view the conflict in existential terms. And while the SSNP's performance on the frontlines in Syria warrants consideration, its potential to raise the barometer of tensions in Lebanon may prove to be more important to shaping events in the Levant in the weeks and months ahead.

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Notes

1. The Syrian Social Nationalist Party and its affiliate associations operate a number of official websites and related social media platforms. These venues are replete

with photographs of alleged SSNP fighters and activists operating in Syria and accounts from the battlefield. An official website representing the SSNP is available at: <http://www.ssnp.net/>; an official information section managed by the SSNP is available at: <http://www.ssnp.info/>; the official SSNP discussion forum is available at: <http://www.ssnp.com/>; an official SSNP Facebook page is available at: <https://www.facebook.com/SSNPFanPage>; the SSNP also operate a number Twitter accounts, including: <https://twitter.com/SSNPSY>; <https://twitter.com/ssnpmediateam>; <https://twitter.com/SSNPYouth>; <https://twitter.com/BeirutStudents>; and <https://twitter.com/SSNPDesigns>. In addition, the SSNP also publishes *al-Binaa* newspaper, available at: <http://al-binaa.com/>.

2. The official website of Ali Haidar's SSNP faction is available at: <http://www.alqawmi.info/>.

Congolese Forces Take the Offensive Against Uganda's ADF-NALU Militants

Andrew McGregor

Fresh from a victory over the rebel troops of the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23) in the unsettled but resource-rich Nord-Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Congolese army has launched an offensive against the self-described "Islamists" of the Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF-NALU) who have operated in that region since 2004. [1] After several years of dormancy, ADF-NALU renewed operations in July 2013 with a wave of raids, kidnappings, massacres of civilians and attacks on security forces and UN peacekeepers. The once poorly-armed ADF-NALU militants appear to be newly supplied with machine-guns, mortars and rockets to replace their previous reliance on machetes and knives. According to the UN, M23's defeat was followed by large-scale surrenders by thousands of members of various militant groups in the Nord-Kivu region, but few of these came from ADF-NALU (IRIN, January 27).

Operation Sokola

The operation against ADF-NALU was intended to begin in December 2013 but was delayed after the intended leader of the campaign, Colonel Mamadou Moustafa Ndala, was killed by a rocket in an ambush originally attributed to ADF-NALU fighters in early January (Uganda Radio Network, February 1). Ndala was the Muslim commander of the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) in the eastern DRC and the successful leader of Congolese Special Forces operations against M23. The loss of the capable and popular colonel represents a serious blow to the Congolese army, a situation made worse by the claims of a bodyguard who survived the attack that the attackers were uniformed members of FARDC. Two individuals have been arrested in connection with the incident, including Colonel Tito Bizuru, who is described as a Tutsi, the same ethnic-group that formed the base of the rebel M23 movement (AFP, January 3; Africa Review [Nairobi], January 7; *Jeune Afrique*, January 22). [2]

FARDC launched its operation against ADF-NALU in the Beni region of Nord-Kivu on January 16. As operations began, Uganda's military confirmed that it would not play a direct role in the campaign, preferring to only share intelligence with FARDC while maintaining a sufficient

presence on the border to prevent fleeing elements of the ADF from entering Uganda (Reuters, January 13; IRIN, January 27). On February 14, the Congo government announced the destruction of the ADF's headquarters in the ongoing offensive and the death of 230 ADF militants opposed to the loss of 22 members of FARDC (AP, February 14). The elimination of the ADF HQ brought about a personal call of congratulations to DRC president Joseph Kabila from long-time rival Yoweri Museveni, the president of Uganda (*Observer* [Kampala], February 10).

A new UN Intervention Brigade (IBDE), formed mainly by 3,000 troops drawn from Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa under the broader command of the Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en RD du Congo (MONUSCO), has been deployed to the Nord-Kivu region with an offensive mandate enabling them to participate in operations designed to end the presence of a number of local and cross-border militant groups in the region. Acting in support of FARDC troops, the combination has so far been effective in ending the once-potent M23 threat and has begun to turn its attention to the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR, a Hutu rebel group from Rwanda) as well as the ADF, though Rwanda recently complained MONUSCO was not committed to taking the fight to the FDLR (*New Times* [Kigali], March 14). Other MONUSCO forces are opening operations further south in Katanga province, where a company of Egyptian Special Forces troops has joined some 500 MONUSCO troops in operations against the Mai Mai Kata-Katanga militia. MONUSCO, with a strength of 18,000 troops, has also deployed two Italian-made Falco surveillance drones based in Goma (capital of Nord-Kivu) to track ADF and FDLR movements in the area (VOA, December 4, 2013).

On March 1, two MONUSCO attack helicopters struck an ADF-NALU base northeast of Beni, an isolated town in North Kivu that has become a center for ADF activities (AFP, March 2). The aircraft involved were likely South African Rooivalk combat support helicopters, previously used against M23 and deployed several days after the ADF-NALU operation in support of a successful FARDC attack on a base of the Alliance des patriotes pour un Congo libre et souverain (APCLS), a militant group based on the Hunde ethnic group of Nord-Kivu province. Support from the Rooivalk gunships has been instrumental in the recent and unprecedented success of the FARDC forces in Nord-Kivu. The Rooivalk is a formidable weapon in skilled hands, with stealth capabilities, a nose-mounted, dual-fed 20mm gas-operated cannon capable of firing 740 rounds a minute and 70mm folding-fin aerial rockets. There are reports that

ADF-NALU fighters have broken into small groups headed further north to the Ituri Forest in Orientale Province to evade the ongoing FARDC-UN offensive (IRIN, January 27).

Rebels in Exile: The ADF

The ADF has its roots not in the western Uganda region, but in Kampala and central Uganda, where a number of Ugandan Muslim followers of the Indo-Pakistani Tablighi Jama'at (a normally non-violent Salafist religious reform movement) became radicalized in the early 1990s, claiming political persecution after they opposed the government's appointment of a new national *mufti* (chief interpreter of Islamic law). Under pressure from security forces, members of the group took refuge in the wild Rwenzori mountains along the Uganda-DRC border, where they formed the ADF as a means of resisting the Museveni government in Kampala with the assistance of the Sudanese military, which was seeking a proxy to combat Uganda's support of the independence struggle of the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). The ADF absorbed remnants of an earlier Rwenzori separatist movement and were joined by a number of Idi Amin loyalists who had sought refuge in southern Sudan and were likely encouraged by Sudanese intelligence to join the ADF.

An alliance was also created between the ADF and the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), a group drawn from the Nande ethnic group of the Rwenzori Mountains. This alliance may have followed introductions provided by Sudanese intelligence officers (al-Jazeera, December 24, 2013). NALU was a relatively inactive movement at the time that had once been responsible for regional raids and a suicide bombing on a Kampala bus that killed 30 people. The ADF-NALU alliance was very active in the 1990s, attacking Ugandan security forces, bombing buses in Kampala and carrying out a number of massacres in their home territory.

However, Ugandan operations in the DRC in 1999 weakened the group and by 2004, operations by the Uganda Peoples Defense Force (UPDF) had forced the movement out of its western Uganda bases and across the border into the lightly governed Nord-Kivu province of the DRC. The discovery of oil in Bundibugyo, a small district at the foot of the Rwenzori Mountain range along the border with the DRC, appeared to revive the movement. The ADF attempted to destroy new oil facilities in western Uganda in 2007, but a powerful response from the UPDF eliminated nine of the group's commanders and temporarily ended the ADF threat (*New Vision* [Kampala], June 19, 2007).

ADF leader Jamil Mukulu is a convert to Islam from Catholicism and is believed to have been part of Osama bin Laden's group in the Sudan in the mid-1990s, followed by training in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Military operations are led by Hood Lukwago and commanders Amis Kasadha, Muhammad Kayira and Filipino Bogere Muzamil (*Observer* [Kampala], January 10, 2013). Mukulu is rumored to spend his time in London, the Eastleigh neighborhood of Nairobi (known as "Little Mogadishu") and the coastal region of Tanga in Tanzania (desc-wondo.org, July 20, 2013). Most ADF leaders come from Muslim-dominated regions of central Uganda. Muslims are a minority in Uganda, forming about 15 percent of the total population.

Though the Muslim leadership of the ADF adopts an Islamist stance, it has never released anything in the way of a political program and now relies heavily on non-Muslim recruits from the DRC. The ADF relies on illegal timber-cutting and gold mining in Nord-Kivu for revenues, as well as funds raised in the Muslim communities of east Africa. In the Beni region, ADF fighters had settled into the local community, running car and motorcycle taxis and marrying local women (al-Jazeera, December 24, 2013).

Like other groups active in the northeastern Congo that have experienced difficulty in recruitment from their original core (in this case Ugandan Muslims) through physical isolation or failure to establish a popular following, ADF-NALU enlarged its following through abductions, the use of *kadogos* (child-soldiers) and financial enticements for local Congolese youth who may now form up to 50 percent of the movement. Other recruits appear to have been lured from Kampala by promises of employment in western Uganda (*New Vision* [Kampala], April 11, 2013). ADF-NALU can likely field some 1,200 to 1,600 fighters, of whom only 800 could be regarded as effectively trained, but their intimate knowledge of the inaccessible Nord-Kivu border region and deep roots in the local non-Muslim Bakonjo community will complicate efforts to eliminate the movement.

The Ugandan Role

Ugandan military adventures in the DRC have proved lucrative in the past; the Ugandan military presence in the Congo from 1998 to 2002 allowed senior ranks to make small fortunes from illegal mining and timber exports, but ultimately resulted in a 2005 International Court of Justice ruling against Uganda that found that state guilty of grave human rights abuses and the plundering of the northeastern Congo's wealth. While Kinshasa is looking

for \$10 billion in reparations, Uganda has yet to make any payments (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], July 21, 2013; Institute for War and Peace Reporting, July 31, 2007).

Uganda has become a heavily militarized state that requires continuous threats to justify the continued diversion of a large part of the nation's budget to support a large military base and its various operations. The UPDF's lead role in the African Union's military mission in Somalia has provided Uganda with a well-trained, well-equipped core of troops with significant combat experience. Some Ugandan opposition figures fear the revival of ADF-NALU activities and anecdotal allegations of ADF cooperation with Somalia's al-Shabaab Islamists will lead to new military activities in the cross-border Rwenzori region (for alleged ADF ties to al-Shabaab, see *New Vision* [Kampala], July 12, 2013, *Observer* [Kampala], July 14, 2013). Asuman Basalirwa, leader of the largely Muslim Justice Forum party (popularly known as "Jeema"), maintains that the ADF has no relationship with political Islam and suspects Uganda's powerful military establishment of exaggerating the Islamist element of the ADF to attract US funding: "Reports of war are commercial projects by security agencies... They are used to justify increased budgetary allocations and supplementary budgets" (*Daily Monitor* [Kampala], July 21, 2013).

Conclusion

The resumption of military activities by newly armed ADF-NALU fighters last year suggests that the group has found a new sponsor. Uganda's military has suggested Sudan is still supplying the group but cannot yet provide evidence to support this claim (*al-Jazeera*, December 24, 2013). Sudanese-Ugandan relations entered a steep decline several months before the militants resumed operations. However, the Ugandan military has become too strong for groups like ADF-NALU or the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to operate on Ugandan soil. Under military pressure in Nord-Kivu from combined Congolese/UN forces and facing UPDF troops along the Ugandan border, ADF-NALU has little choice but to disperse into the Ituri Forest and wait out operations. Kinshasa's challenge in the region is to provide a permanent security regime to establish its sovereignty in the region and prevent the re-entry of militants into areas where they had previously been cleared. FARDC appears to be gaining confidence through its joint operations with the UN Intervention Brigade; the question is whether it will have the trained manpower, equipment and funding to secure this resource-rich region once UN forces have stood down.

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Notes

1. For earlier assessments of the ADF, see Andrew McGregor, "Oil and Jihad in Central Africa," *Terrorism Monitor*, December 20, 2007 and "Ugandan Rebel Movement Reemerges along Oil-bearing Ugandan/Congolese Border," *Terrorism Monitor*, July 24, 2007.
2. Video of the incident can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P6hPwgdwH0E>. For the Mouvement du 23 Mars (M23), see *Terrorism Monitor*, January 4, 2013; *Terrorism Monitor*, July 26, 2012; a profile of M23 leader General Bosco Ntaganda is available in *Militant Leadership Monitor*, August 31, 2012.