



Terrorism Monitor

In-Depth Analysis of the War on Terror

VOLUME XII, ISSUE 11 ♦ MAY 31, 2014

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ATTACK ON CHINESE COMPANY IN CAMEROON DRAGS YAOUNDÉ INTO CAMPAIGN AGAINST BOKO HARAM

Andrew McGregor

An assault on a Chinese road-building camp in northern Cameroon is the latest in a series of regional attacks on Chinese workers and facilities. The camp with 52 staff was run by a Sinohydro engineering unit involved in road improvement as part of a joint World Bank/Cameroon government project. Close to the camp is an oil exploration site run by Yan Chang Logone Development Holding Company, a subsidiary of China’s Yanchang Petroleum (Reuters, May 20). The exploration group is working in the Logone-Birni basin in north Cameroon.

The nighttime attack, believed to have been the work of Nigeria’s Boko Haram movement, overcame resistance from a much-diminished Cameroonian guard force before the attackers seized ten Chinese employees, wounded another and lifted ten Sinohydro vehicles as well as blasting equipment used in road construction (Xinhua, May 18). China has expressed concern over the possibility of military action to rescue the hostages: “We urge the Cameroonian authorities not to put the lives of the Chinese nationals missing in danger if actions to liberate them are launched” (*China Daily*/Xinhua, May 19). France quickly offered its assistance to China in finding the ten missing workers (AFP, May 18).

The timing of the attack appears to have been well-planned, coming as most of the camp’s guard from the elite Brigade d’intervention rapide (BIR) was in Yaoundé preparing to take part in a military parade marking Cameroon’s National Day on May 20 (*This Day* [Lagos], May 17). Pursuit by Cameroonian air assets was also impossible as the helicopters normally deployed to the frontier region were also in the capital for the military parade (AFP, May 18). Ironically, the parade’s highlight was Cameroon’s

newly acquired Chinese armor, including two platoons of Type 07P infantry fighting vehicles (equipped with a 30 mm gun and a coaxial 7.62 mm machine gun) and three platoons of PTL-102-type armored tank destroyers (equipped with a 105 mm gun). The new armored vehicles are part of Cameroon's Bataillon blindé de reconnaissance (BBR – Armored Reconnaissance Battalion) (Cameroon Tribune, May 21; *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, May 21). On May 26, the BIR returned north to the Nigerian frontier along with some of Cameroon's new Chinese-built armored vehicles. The force of roughly 1,000 troops is expected to join 700 other troops already deployed to the frontier region in March to combat Boko Haram (Reuters, May 27).

The attack also came at the same time Cameroonian president Paul Biya was in Paris attending the “Paris Summit for Security in Nigeria” with high-level representatives from Nigeria, Chad, Niger, Benin, the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Cameroon has committed to joining Nigeria, Benin, Niger and Chad in contributing one battalion each of troops dedicated to combatting Boko Haram (*Vanguard* [Lagos], May 20). An existing joint force of troops from Nigeria, Niger and Chad has been largely ineffective in halting cross-border violence. Nigeria's president, Goodluck Jonathan, recently complained that Nigerian forces are unable to pursue Boko Haram forces when they cross the border without getting special permission from Yaoundé (*Daily Trust* [Lagos], May 19). Cameroon is now in the process of creating military bases in all ten regions of the country to improve local security as regional conditions deteriorate (*Cameroon Post*, May 18).

On the same night as the raid on the Chinese camp, gunmen also looted a police armory in Waza National Park, where Boko Haram is believed to be responsible for the kidnapping of a French family of seven last year (the family was later released, though it was unclear whether a ransom was paid). The attackers also destroyed a bridge linking different communities in the area, a tactic likely designed to inhibit the movement of security forces in the area. Several weeks earlier, Boko Haram attacked a military post 37 miles from the town of Waza to free a detained member (VOA, May 17). Waza is only 12 miles from the Nigerian border and the Sambisi Forest, a main base for Boko Haram and the suspected origin of the attacking force.

The Chinese operations in northern Cameroon are part of China's rapidly expanding role in Cameroon's economy. China is now Cameroon's number one customer for exports and became that nation's second-largest oil producer in 2011 after Sinopec purchased former Shell interests in Cameroon, uniting with Cameroon's National Hydrocarbon

Corporation as a junior partner in the newly formed Addax Petroleum Cameroon Company (APCC). [1] China has also become a major arms supplier for Cameroon and is currently building two ships for use by the Cameroon Navy.

Note

1. John Daly, “Cameroon, West Africa's Latest Oil Battleground,” March 25, 2012, <http://oilprice.com/Energy/Crude-Oil/Cameroon-West-Africas-Latest-Oil-Battleground.html>.

KHARTOUM STRUGGLES TO CONTROL ITS CONTROVERSIAL “RAPID SUPPORT FORCES”

Andrew McGregor

Since independence in 1956, Sudan's central government has formed a habit of using tribal-based (usually Arab) militias and paramilitaries to squash regional rebellions. Usually well-armed but poorly disciplined, these groups have operated under the light hand of various security agencies willing to ignore atrocities and war crimes to re-establish central government control. Now, however, this long-standing policy has begun to backfire on the Islamist-military regime in Khartoum, with the recently formed “counter-terrorist” Rapid Support Forces (RSF) began to operate outside the control of government authorities, creating even greater resentment against the government in Sudan's numerous regions of unrest.

The RSF commander is Major General Abbas Abd al-Aziz, a Ja'alin Arab from north Sudan and a trusted relative of President Omar al-Bashir as well as a senior member of the National Security and Intelligence Service (NISS – Jihaz al-Amn al-Watani wa'l-Mukhabarat), Sudan's much-feared internal security organization, under whose command the RSF operates. Abd al-Aziz's deputy and field commander is Muhammad Hamdan Daglo (a.k.a. Hemeti), a member of the Mahariya branch of the Northern Rizayqat of Darfur. The paramilitary of 5,000 to 6,000 men is believed to have the patronage of Sudanese Second Vice President Hassabo Muhammad Abd al-Rahman, a native of Darfur and the political secretary of the ruling National Congress Party (NCP). The commander of the South Kordofan-based RSF-2, Colonel Hussein Jabr al-Dar, was killed in a mid-May battle with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army Northern Command (SPLM/A-NC) near the South

Kordofan capital of Kadugli (Sudan Tribune, May 24; Radio Dabanga, May 26).

A common demand of much of Sudan's armed and political opposition is the dissolution of the NISS. The creation of a large, well-armed militia under its own command and officially tasked with "counter-terrorism" activities is an important step in entrenching itself within the larger national administration (Middle East Online, May 21).

According to General Abd al-Aziz, the RSF includes in its ranks retired and experienced military men as well as recruits from various parts of the country who receive four months of training before deployment on the battlefield, including lessons on international human rights and the rights of civilians in war zones (Sudan Vision, May 29; AFP, May 21). However, there is widespread concern that former members of Darfur's notorious Janjaweed militias implicated in serious war crimes are being brought into more formal formations such as the Border Guards and RSF to shield them from prosecution.

The leading rebel movements still active in Darfur, the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army of Abd al-Wahid al-Nur (SLM/A-AW) and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army of Minni Minnawi (SLM/A-MM) urged the UN Security Council in April to launch an "immediate investigation of the recent escalation of genocide in Darfur by the Rapid Support Forces from February 28 this year to date" (Radio Dabanga, April 23).

Two-time Sudanese prime minister and current leader of the opposition National Umma Party (NUP) Sadiq al-Mahdi was detained and interrogated by national security prosecutors in mid-May after making public remarks critical of the RSF for its violence against civilians (the NUP has a significant power base in Darfur) and its alleged inclusion of foreign (mostly Arab) fighters from the Central African Republic, Chad, Libya and Mali in its ranks. National Assembly speaker al-Fatih Izz al-Din even accused al-Mahdi of "treason," saying the RSF deserved praise for its anti-insurgency operations (Radio Dabanga, May 15). NISS charges against the former PM included "inciting the international community against Sudan" and "causing unrest among the regular troops." Al-Mahdi responded with an allusion to President al-Bashir, noting that: "Speaking the truth is the best form of jihad when the sultan is unfair" (Radio Dabanga, May 14). It is worth noting that when al-Mahdi was in his second term as prime minister (1986-1989), he relied heavily on Baqqara (cattle-raising) Arab militias known as *murahalin* who committed

numerous atrocities against South Sudanese Dinka tribesmen during the second civil war.

Malik Agar, chairman of the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF – an umbrella group of armed opposition movements), denounced attempts to "muzzle" al-Mahdi, claiming that the RSF had "expanded their activities to the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile and even North Kordofan's al-Ubayd and its surroundings. They burn hundreds of villages and kill and displace thousands of Sudanese citizens, rape and kidnap hundreds of women and loot civilians' property, for their systematic impoverishment" (Radio Dabanga, May 16).

Backed by field commander Muhammad Hamdan Dalgo, General Abd al-Aziz held an angry press conference to respond to al-Mahdi's charges and earlier allegations from United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) chief Muhammad ibn Chambas:

We didn't loot. We didn't burn any villages. We didn't rape... It's the rebels who are destroying water resources, burning villages and committing race-based killings. Then they try to put the blame on us (AFP, May 14).

The NISS director of operations, Major General Ali al-Nasih, insists that the RSF is a highly disciplined force and part of the NISS command structure: "More than 6,000 security personnel are distributed at petroleum sites, co-deployed with the armed forces at borders and co-working with police to protect the national capital and other major towns" (Sudan Vision, May 25). The general also maintains that the paramilitary engages in such activities as public health, environmental protection and food distribution.

General Abd al-Aziz has admitted that the RSF has committed some human rights violations, but described these incidents as "limited and individual" (Radio Dabanga, May 16). Such dissimulation has not impressed SPLM-N secretary-general Yasir Arman, who urged all Sudanese to "campaign against the RSF war criminals" at home and abroad: "The RSF troops are mercenaries, who do anything for material gains. This [absorption of the Janjaweed into the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF)] may tear Sudan apart by destroying the social fabric" (Radio Dabanga, May 14).

On May 19-20, heavy fighting broke out in the North Darfur capital of al-Fashir between police and Haras al-Hudud (Border Guard) units allegedly supported by allied RSF members (both units draw heavily on former Janjaweed members) (*Independent*, May 20).

The paramilitaries, who are accused by local residents of looting, armed robbery, rape and drug trafficking, had clashed earlier with police in January 2013, killing two policemen, and again this last April when Border Guards attempted to break into the Agricultural Bank in al-Fashir (Radio Dabanga, January 31, 2013; March 18, 2014). The former Janjaweed, who were once richly rewarded for targeting civilian populations in Darfur, have fallen victim to budget cuts forced by the separation of oil-rich South Sudan in 2011 and are eager to make up the difference at the expense of the residents of Darfur and Kordofan. Using government-supplied arms to extort cash is nothing new to RSF field commander Muhammad Hamdan Dalgo, who led a 2007 rebellion by Mahariya Border Guard irregulars demanding payment of back-wages. [1]

In late 2013, thousands of RSF recruits (mostly from Darfur) were shipped to the battlefields of South Kordofan, where they suffered heavy losses in fighting against SPLM/A-NC rebels. Subsequently, they were stationed in the North Kordofan capital of al-Ubayd. After various rampages and assaults on the local population (generally viewed as pro-government) were followed by massive protests against their presence, the RSF was ordered back to Darfur in February, where they immediately began attacking local villages and displacing tens of thousands of people (Sudan Tribune, February 26). Unable to control the militia, the Sudanese government was reported to have paid the RSF \$3 million to evacuate its forces from al-Ubayd (*al-Taghyeer* [Khartoum], February 13). In west Kordofan, repeated incidents of looting, assaults and sexual attacks by RSF personnel in 2013 led local people to rise up against the paramilitary, eventually receiving armed support against the RSF from the local SAF garrison in Kharasan (Radio Dabanga, February 26).

Under these conditions, the RSF was naturally as unwanted in Darfur as it was in Kordofan; a statement by a coalition of 12 Darfur civil society organizations condemned the praise heaped on the paramilitary by its commanders and patrons:

The RSF militias, under the command of the National Intelligence and Security Services, seemingly have been commended for the burning of hundreds of villages in South and North Darfur since February this year; for killing, wounding, raping and looting the property of innocent civilians, and causing the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Darfuri people (Radio Dabanga, April 24).

On May 21, a pro-opposition news website claimed that “an informed source” had described a major clandestine airlift of RSF fighters to Libya in post-midnight flights from Khartoum Airport. Accompanied by Qatari-bought Sudanese-manufactured weapons, these RSF units were being sent to support hard-pressed Islamist forces in Libya in return for emergency financial support and oil shipments from Qatar and Libya respectively (Hurriyat Sudan, May 21). If this unconfirmed report is true, such a deployment may be more an effort to remove this unruly paramilitary from Sudan than a sincere effort to support Libya’s Islamists.

Note

1. “Border Intelligence Brigade (al-Istikhbarat al-Hudud, a.k.a. Border Guards),” Sudan Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA), Small Arms Survey, Geneva, November 2010, <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/sudan/darfur/armed-groups/saf-and-allied-forces/HSBA-Armed-Groups-Border-Guards.pdf>.

Tunisian Jihadists Establishing New Networks with Libyan Islamists

Stefano M. Torelli

The Tunisian Salafist movement Ansar al-Shari'a in Tunisia (AST) was declared a terrorist organization by the government of Tunis in August 2013. Since then, it seems to have adopted concealment tactics, given the impossibility of operating openly. Meanwhile, Tunisian authorities have launched an unprecedented counter-terrorism campaign aimed at combating the jihadism phenomenon, though these measures may have actually contributed to the creation of small, isolated cells that both state authorities and Salafist leaders may find even more difficult to control. It is likely that the jihadi networks currently active in Tunisia – mainly related to the Algerian jihad – will be able to attract new recruits among these local pockets of resistance to the Tunisian institutions.

Counter-terrorist operations have proliferated under the government of Prime Minister Mehdi Jomaa, who has identified the fight against terrorism as a national priority. The jihadists in turn, have renewed their previous focus on attacks along the Algerian border after focusing earlier this year on attacks in urban centers:

- On February 3, Tunisian security forces had a firefight with a group of militants in Raoued, near Tunis. A member of the National Guard was killed, as well as eight suspected terrorists, among them being Kamil Gadhgadh, a suspect in the February 2013 murder of opposition politician Chokri Belaid (Direct Info [Tunis], February 11).
 - On February 9, another security operation led to the identification of a jihadist cell, the killing of a militant and the arrest of three others (Business News [Tunis], February 9). Among those detained was Hamid al-Maliki (a.k.a. "the Somali"), a suspect in the July 2013 assassination of Muhammad Brahmi (Jawhara FM [Tunis], February 14).
 - On February 16, a group of five men with fake uniforms mounted a sham checkpoint and killed four people, including two members of the National Guard (Tunisie Numerique, February 16). The attack took place in the village of Ouled Manaa, near Jendouba. Three of the terrorists were identified as Tunisians, while the other two were Algerian, suggesting a correlation between the Algerian jihadi network and local elements in Tunisia.
 - On March 14, seven militants were killed by the Algerian army on the border with Tunisia. The militants were armed with Kalashnikovs, grenades and ammunition (*Le Courrier d'Algerie*, May 7). These alleged jihadists were for the most part Tunisians and may have been under the guidance of Djebbar Abd al-Kamil (a.k.a. Abu Djafaar), an Algerian militant accused of having planned attacks in Algeria. This would appear to confirm ties between the Algerian and Tunisian jihadist groups. Confirmation of this relationship came in another operation conducted in the Algerian region of Tinzaouatine on May 6, in which ten suspected terrorists (including Tunisian citizens) were killed (Business News [Tunis], May 8).
 - On March 16, Tunisian counter-terrorist forces conducted an operation in Jendouba, during which three suspected jihadists were killed, including Ragheb Hannachi, previously identified as one of the militants who had taken part in the February 16 Ouled Manaa attack (African Manager [Tunis], March 17; Tunis Times, February 17).
 - On April 11, the explosion of a mine on Jabal Chaambi caused the wounding of five soldiers (Business News [Tunis], April 11). Mines continued to take a toll at Jabal Chaambi, with one soldier killed and two others wounded on April 18 and another soldier killed in a mine explosion on May 23 (*Jeune Afrique*, May 23).
 - At the end of April, nine people were arrested in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen, accused of planning an attack against institutional objectives in Tunisia (Direct Info [Tunis], April 28).
 - On May 5, eight other militants were arrested in Kasserine (Business News [Tunis], May 6).
 - The escalation of violence and instability in neighbouring Libya is an additional source of concern for the Tunisian security forces – on May 21, eight suspected jihadists who infiltrated Tunisia from Libya were arrested (Shems FM [Tunis], May 21).
- The wave of arrests and preventive actions seems to have had the effect of forcing the jihadists to withdraw into the Jabal Chaambi region near the Algerian border, but it has not eradicated their presence.
- AST's mode of action seems to echo the tactics of the

Algerian jihadists during the 1990s; for Tunisian militants, the tactic of donning government uniforms and setting up fake military checkpoints is a novelty (*Réalités* [Tunis], February 24).

The government mounted a determined response to the latest manifestations of jihadism in the Jabal Chaambi region – already on April 11, the area of Jabal Chaambi and Sammama was declared a closed military zone (Tunisie Numerique, April 21). According to Ministry of Defence spokesman Colonel-Major Taoufik Rahmouni, security forces launched a campaign on April 18 against the supposed positions of the militants, using helicopters, fighter planes and artillery (Direct Info [Tunis], April 21).

The escalation in counter-terrorism operations started following the visit of Prime Minister Jomâa to Washington, during which the United States pledged its support to Tunisia in an area that is becoming increasingly sensitive for regional security (Agence Tunis Afrique Press, April 5). Jomâa himself announced on May 14 the creation of a special center exclusively committed to counter-terrorism (Globalnet [Tunis], May 14). The declared intention of the Tunisian government is to move from a reactive approach to a preventive one to combat new forms of jihadism – with explicit reference to cyber-terrorism – in coordination with Algeria and Libya. This has not resulted in an end of the terrorist attacks. On the contrary, on May 27, militants raised the stakes by assaulting Interior Minister Lotfi Ben Jeddou's home in Kasserine, killing four policemen, in a rare urban attack (Tunisie Numerique, May 28).

The references to cyber-terrorism and to Libya bring us to one of the most interesting developments of the Tunisian Salafi-Jihadism.

As Abu Iyad – the AST leader wanted by the Tunisian authorities – has found refuge in Libya, the coordination between the Libyan and Tunisian radical Islam's networks could become ever closer. In particular, many AST militants have moved to Libya taking advantage of the unstable conditions of the country and have begun to re-organize their network of contacts through the coordinated action of several internet sites.

In March 2014, a new channel for the dissemination of the Tunisian jihadist message appeared – Shabab al-Tawhid Media (STM). Most messages conveyed by the channel are related to Tunisia; on April 21, STM released a video of Mohamed Bechikh, the Tunisian diplomat kidnapped in Libya on March 21 by a local Islamist group (Shabab al-Tawhid Media, April 21). The video message was

addressed directly to the Tunisian government and called for the release of Libyan activists arrested in Tunisia. These elements suggest that there is a sort of “Libyan connection” linking AST and jihadi movements active in Libya. This has led to the supposition that the creation of STM could be just a way for AST to resume its *da'wa* (preaching) activities in Tunisia without succumbing to government pressure.

Tunisia has implemented a new counter-terrorism strategy since Jomâa has assumed the office of prime minister. As in the past, this policy requires regional (Algeria and Libya) and international (France and the United States) cooperation. However, despite the banning of AST, jihadi attacks on the border with Algeria continue, indicating the presence of active cells. Moreover, in recent months a new concern has arisen concerning the connections between Tunisian and Libyan jihadist elements in conjunction with the deterioration of the security situation in Libya. Tunis has ordered the deployment of a further 5,000 troops on the border with Libya and there is some evidence indicating infiltration attempts by militants in Tunisia from Libya are ongoing (Libya Herald, May 18). If so, this would create a new combat frontline to for Tunisian counter-terrorism efforts in addition to the existing frontline on the border with Algeria.

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Al-Shabaab Exploits Kenyan Crackdown to Recruit Muslim Youth

Muhyadin Ahmed Roble

Kenya, which in recent years has found itself surrounded by countries plagued by chaos and insurgency, is itself becoming another theater for terrorist attacks, with more than 90 such attacks recorded since Kenya's 2011 military intervention in Somalia. The latest attack on May 22 injured a police officer and a civilian in the coastal town of Mombasa. Six days earlier, on May 16, two explosions killed more than ten people and injured 70 others inside Gikomba, Nairobi's biggest open air market (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi] May 22; *Standard* [Nairobi], May 22).

The latest attacks coincided with massive searches and a crackdown by security forces in Eastleigh, a suburb and commercial hub of Nairobi. The district is often referred to as "Little Mogadishu" as its population is 80 percent ethnic-Somali. Known as the Usalama Watch operation, the security crackdown began immediately after an explosion killed six people (including two Somalis) on April 2. The operation, however, has been marred by a lack of strategic goals and priorities as well as accusations of harassment, extortion and various other abuses.

Over 4,000 people, mostly ethnic-Somalis, including women, children, elderly people and youths, were rounded up and taken to the Safaricom Football Stadium Kasarani, which was converted into a police post (*Capital FM* [Nairobi], April 7; *Standard* [Nairobi], April 7). While some of these people were later released and many others remain in custody, the perpetrators of the explosion that incited the operation remain unknown and uncaptured nearly two months after the attack. The Somali-based al-Shabaab militant group that claimed responsibility for September 2013's four-day terror siege at Nairobi's Westgate Shopping Mall that resulted in the death of more than 70 people was blamed for the rise in attacks, but the group has not so far claimed responsibility for any of them.

The racial profiling of ethnic-Somalis has so far succeeded only in sowing division and creating friction between ethnic-Somalis and other communities in Kenya, a situation al-Shabaab has been trying to achieve for many years. The group has a history of capitalizing on the long-standing grievances of Somalis and Muslims in general to recruit and radicalize youth from Muslim-dominated regions such as the North-Eastern Province, the coastal region and Nairobi.

However, recruitment has declined in recent years because of the movement's internal power struggle and the growing number of Somali clerics publicly opposing al-Shabaab's ideology, both in Somalia and Kenya.

There are growing fears that the government's recent sweep targeting only Muslim-dominated areas could help open doors for al-Shabaab's efforts to radicalize youth, a prospect that poses a grave threat to regional security and stability. Al-Shabaab has already begun to exploit the situation with three of its top leaders sending different messages targeted at ethnic-Somalis and Muslims in Kenya over the past two months. In a 36-minute video presentation entitled "Muslims of Bangui and Mombasa: a Tale of Tragedy," al-Shabaab leader Ahmad Abdi Godane "Abu Zubayr" began by giving an account of the infamous 1984 Wagalla massacre, in which Kenyan security forces were responsible for the death of an estimated 5,000 ethnic-Somalis in northeastern Kenya. [1] Godane went on to condemn the recent harassment of ethnic Somalis and Muslims in Nairobi and Mombasa: "Do not waste your time protesting in front of courts and petitioning parliament... They only respect those with power and only understand the language of weapons." The message was a clear disappointment to the Somali and Muslim activists trying to address their genuine grievances and injustice through legal means and dialogue between the community and the government.

Eight days after Godane's presentation, a senior al-Shabaab commander, Shaykh Fu'ad Muhammad Khalaf, threatened in an al-Shabaab radio broadcast that his group was going to shift its war to neighboring Kenya by launching teenage suicide bombers in Nairobi. Khalaf urged Muslims in Kenya to fight against their government in retaliation for their "Muslim brothers and children" killed in Kenya and Somalia:

When their soldiers and war planes kill your people, God permits you to retaliate accordingly; we will fight the Kenyans... We shall kill those inside our country and make their graveyards here in Somalia – and we will kill them in their homes as well (Radio Andalus, May 21; Radio Alfurqaan, May 21).

This broadcast was followed by another on April 15 from the group's spokesman, Shaykh Ali Mohamud Raage, who told Somalis that Kenya is targeting them because of their ethnic backgrounds and religion and urged them to side with the militants and join the war against Kenya: "[The Kenyans] want you to be stateless... defend yourself and come help us to defeat the enemy" (Radio Alfurqaan, April

15).

Though the speakers and dates differ, all these messages have one goal: to take advantage of Kenya's mishandling of the terrorism issue, make local Muslims (Somalis in particular) feel victimized and provoke the ethnic-Somali community in Kenya to turn to violence.

Though the crackdown and the collective criminalization of ethnic Somalis are not the only errors Kenya is committing in its counter-terrorism strategies, deporting young people to Somalia could be a major error.

The unemployment rate for 14- to 29-year-old youth in Somalia is one of the highest in the world at 67 percent, leading many young people to earn their livelihoods through criminal activities such as piracy, working for warlords or joining al-Shabaab. The 500 people that Kenya has deported back to Somalia in the past two months, the hundreds still in custody awaiting deportation and the hundreds of other young people going back to Somalia for fear of arrest and harassment are all vulnerable to recruitment by al-Shabaab.

Somalia's State Minister for Interior and Federalism Affairs Mohamud Moalim Yahye, who asked Kenya to suspend the mass deportation of Somalis, told Jamestown on May 23 that the chance these young people could join the militants is very high as there are no job creation and integration programs ready for the deportees and returnees. If these youth join al-Shabaab, they could help Godane to materialize his ambition of spreading conflict through East Africa using their knowledge of Swahili language, culture and lifestyle.

As security conditions within Kenya continue to deteriorate, the Kenyan security apparatus will need to review its counter-terrorism strategy. Given that roundups have failed to provide a solution to the growing number of terrorist attacks, Kenyan authorities may look at counter-radicalization and de-radicalization strategies to improve relations and cooperation between the ethnic-Somali community and the state. Strategies of this sort could improve intelligence gathering and enable the pre-emptive location of terrorist safe-houses in preference to maintaining the current focus on raiding residential estates for mass roundups.

Muhyadin Ahmed Roble is a Nairobi-based analyst for the Jamestown Foundation's Terrorism Monitor publication.

Note

1. Al-Kataib Media Foundation, May 14, 2014.

Operation Dignity: General Haftar's Latest Battle May Decide Libya's Future

Camille Tawil

General Khalifa Haftar, the self-declared leader of the Libyan National Army, announced the launch of Operation Karama (Dignity) on May 16 with the aim of cleansing Libya of "terrorism and extremism" (al-Arabiya, May 24). Haftar's latest battle may have far-reaching consequences, with its success or failure leading to one of four scenarios:

1. Libya continues on a course towards becoming a failed state;
2. Libya starts the process of building a national army that is able to unify the country and protect its elected institutions;
3. Libya descends into a long struggle, or even civil war, between competing groups, mainly Islamists and nationalists;
4. Libya becomes a military-led dictatorship.

There is also a possibility of the outcome resulting in some combination of all the above.

Haftar's Military Record

Considering the importance of Operation Dignity, it is worth examining Haftar's record in past battles, and how this may influence current operations.

Haftar's military record is a mixed one and is open to different interpretation by supporters and opponents. The general, a member of the powerful Firjan tribe, first came to prominence through his role as one of the "Free Officers" who deposed King Idriss al-Sanusi and brought Colonel Mu'ammarr Qaddafi to power in 1969. Haftar had been a Qaddafi loyalist since 1964, when they were brought together in a Free Officers cell in Benghazi. [1]

In 1973, Haftar was part of the Libyan contingent that fought alongside the Egyptian Army and participated in the successful crossing of the Suez Canal in the October (Ramadan) War. Haftar was decorated with the Egyptian Sinai medal for his role in the campaign whose initial stages, at least, were viewed as a military success in Egypt. [2]

These successes were followed by a series of failures in the 1980s and 1990s. Haftar's closeness to Qaddafi led the latter to task him with an important mission: expanding Libya's influence into neighboring Chad. The general was placed in command of the Libyan forces sent into Chad for this purpose and who scored some early success against weak Chadian forces.

However, Haftar's victories were short-lived as his better-armed troops were out-manoeuvred by the highly mobile Chadians. On March 22, 1987, the Chadian troops of President Hissène Habré defeated the Libyans in the battle of Wadi al-Doum, killing more than 1,000 soldiers and taking 438, including Haftar, as prisoners of war. [3]

It was then that Haftar turned against his master, who denied that Libyan troops were present in Chad and even went so far as to suggest that his general may actually have been a camel herder who had lost his way in the desert. [4] Viewing this as a personal and professional betrayal, Haftar then offered to join forces with the Libyan leader's opponents. Through his captors, he sent a message to the leaders of the opposition National Salvation Front of Libya (NSFL), offering to assist their efforts to topple Qaddafi. [5] It was an offer that could not be rejected - Haftar was bringing with him hundreds of soldiers who had fought under his command and were imprisoned with him in Chad.

Haftar joined the NSFL and became the leader of its armed wing, the Libyan National Army (coincidentally the same name as Libya's reorganized post-Qaddafi army). However, hopes of marching through the desert from Chad towards Libya soon evaporated. In 1990, Idriss Déby toppled Habré in N'Djamena and Haftar and his men had to be spirited out of the country in case Déby intended to hand them over to Qaddafi. Haftar's army was taken by the CIA to Zaïre (modern Democratic Republic of Congo) and then to the United States.

Haftar's time in America is still an issue for some Libyans who still question whether he became a CIA operative during his long residence there. His opponents point to the fact that he ran a training camp for his forces in Virginia, claiming that this would not be allowed to happen if Haftar's men were not part of a possible CIA plan to topple Qaddafi (*al-Hayat*, December 18, 1991). However, his supporters say it was an open secret that Haftar and the NSFL had contacts with the Americans and even cooperated with them to further their efforts to rid Libya of Qaddafi, but this does not mean that these Libyans were in any way "agents" for the Americans.

Whatever the intent behind the Virginia-based training camp, events in Libya soon overtook these efforts. In 1993, Qaddafi discovered a plot between a group of army officers in league with elements of the NSFL to overthrow him. The plotters, mostly from Bani Walid, were arrested and executed. The discovery of this plot led to recriminations within the NSFL, and Haftar eventually broke away from this opposition group.

Haftar remained in exile until the 2011 revolution, though his opponents claim that he did a deal with Qaddafi in 2005, when it appeared that the Libyan leader had consolidated his power by resolving his issues with the West, including ridding Libya of WMDs and paying compensation for Lockerbie and UTA airplane bombings. A March 18, 2005 audiotape of a conversation recorded in Egypt between Qaddafi and members of Haftar's family features a member of Haftar's family explaining to the Libyan leader that Haftar's actions against his old master came about because he felt Qaddafi had abandoned him and his men in Chad. [6]

Haftar and the Revolution

In March 2011, Haftar arrived in Benghazi and joined the battle against Qaddafi. However, Haftar's role during the revolution was not very impressive. His men operated in eastern Libya and were – at least on paper – part of the opposition's Libyan government in exile, though Haftar does not seem to have had a good relationship with leaders of the armed opposition during the revolution such as Abdul-Fattah Younis and Omar al-Hariri.

After the revolution, Haftar hoped to become the chief-of-staff of the new Libyan armed forces and was endorsed for this post by dozens of officers. The new Libyan government gave the post instead to another general, Yusuf al-Mangoush, who was later blamed for building a parallel army of Islamist militiamen. Instead of going into exile, Haftar stayed on and obtained the support of some army units in central Libya, near Sirte, as well as in the east.

It is not entirely clear if Haftar was planning his next move during the two years he spent in Libya after the fall of Qaddafi. However, things in Libya were going from bad to worse. The Islamists were becoming the dominant force, despite a poor performance in the July 2012 General National Congress (GNC) elections. The Islamists managed to force Mahmoud Jibril, the leader of the Alliance of National Forces that won those elections, into a self-imposed exile. They were also suspected of involvement in the assassination of dozens of army officers. The Islamists'

“parallel army” (the Libya Shield militia) assumed many of the responsibilities of the still nascent national army and was the force used to crush any attempt to revolt against the new Islamist-dominated regime.

Haftar’s first move came about on February 14, 2014, as the 18-month mandate of the GNC was about to expire. However, his attempt was described as “no more than a television coup,” according to one of his critics, Abd al-Basit Haroun, a prominent militia commander now involved in Libyan intelligence activities (al-Jazeera, February 15; *al-Hayat*, February 15). Haftar appeared on a local television station to announce that the army was taking over and suspending the GNC. The next day, however, the then prime minister, Ali Zeidan, ridiculed him, saying that the age of coups in Libya is something belonging to the past, though Haftar denied he was leading a coup (Skynewsarabia.com, February 14).

The situation changed little until May, when Haftar announced Operation Karama in Benghazi. Although the operation took the country by surprise, it did not appear to have achieved its goals. The Islamist bases which were attacked in Benghazi managed to repulse their assailants, who were forced to withdraw and regroup.

This apparent failure was followed by a surprising avalanche of support. Dozens of regular army units, including Wanis Boukhmada’s respected Saiqa (Thunderbolt) Special Forces brigade in Benghazi (Alrseefa.net, May 19). [7] The army units’ quick support of Haftar can be viewed as the result of the wave of assassinations – blamed on Islamists – that have targeted military and security officers for the past three years. Haftar now claims that “around 70,000 soldiers have joined us, including the air force, the navy, the air defence force, and, of course, the army” (*Elyoum7* [Giza], May 22). Irregular armed forces also gave their support, including the powerful Zintan-based al-Qaqa Brigade and the Tripoli-based al-Sawaiq Brigade (both units come officially under the direction of the Libyan Defense Ministry).

In addition to these army units and armed groups, Haftar’s move was also supported by various politicians and ordinary people who, despite threats of reprisals, arrived in their hundreds, or even thousands, into Tripoli and Benghazi. Some of the banners lifted during these demonstrations in support of Haftar carried slogans claiming that “The Muslim Brotherhood equals al-Qaeda.” [8]

Slogans such as this give the impression that Haftar’s supporters see him following the road taken by Egypt’s Field

Marshal Abd al-Fattah al-Sisi in Egypt. Al-Sisi justified his actions against former president Muhammad Mursi by saying that he was given the people’s authority to go after the Muslim Brotherhood by the mass demonstrations against the movement in the streets of Egyptian cities in June and July 2013. Similarly, Haftar has said that the demonstrations in Tripoli and Benghazi have justified his pursuit of the Islamists in Operation Karama. While there is no comparison in terms of the sheer numbers that turned out in Egypt and Libya, it must be remembered that Libya’s population is only six million people, compared to Egypt’s estimated 86 million.

Haftar’s “fight against terrorism” can also be seen as a way of gathering external support by taking into account European and American concerns over the growing presence of militant groups following al-Qaeda’s ideology in Libya. The Europeans in particular seem to be extremely worried because of the proximity of Libya to their shores across the Mediterranean. However, the Americans and the Europeans were quick to deny that they were supporting Haftar’s operation.

Haftar may have also thought of gaining the support of Arab states wary of the Islamists. Al-Sisi, expected to be Egypt’s new president, may lend the Libyan general a helping hand in his efforts to curb the influence of Islamist militant groups that have been accused of harbouring Egyptian jihadists and even smuggling weapons, including anti-aircraft missiles, to Sinai-based jihadi groups. Haftar has given assurances that if his operation succeeds, Libya will hand over to Egypt the Muslim Brotherhood leaders who fled after the ouster of Mursi. [9]

It is also possible that Haftar may get help from the Gulf states, especially the UAE, which is reported to be ready to aid the Libyan general’s efforts (*al-Araby*, May 19). It is alleged that the UAE offered Haftar backing with 800 million dollars, which includes paying money to armed groups willing to join Operation Dignity. This aid is also alleged to include Egyptian backing. It is noteworthy that this alleged aid plan includes a requirement that forces loyal to Haftar will take control of oil exporting terminals along the Libyan coast and that the exported oil will be bought through the government backed by Haftar and not the one based in Tripoli and backed by the Islamists. [10] It was noticeable that al-Qaqa and al-Sawaiq, the two Zintan and Tripoli-based groups thought to be supported by the UAE, were quick to join Haftar’s Operation Kamara.

Does all this internal and external support indicate that Haftar’s way to power in Tripoli is now wide open? Of

course not. His opponents are in no way lightweight. Misrata, which broke Qaddafi's back during the revolution, may turn out to be a hurdle between Haftar and Tripoli. Misratan forces have already moved into the capital to protect the new government, which is now led by Ahmad Meitig, a fellow Misratan who was elected in disputed circumstances. In the east of Libya, the Islamists are well-entrenched in the major cities. Derna, in particular, could be a problem for Haftar's troops, who have been flying military planes low over the city, as a message to the Islamists there that they could be bombed from the air. As for the external hurdles, it is expected that Qatar will not be happy with Haftar's actions and view them as an undesired coup attempt.

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Notes

1. See former Libyan foreign minister Abd al-Rahman Shalgam's piece on Haftar at: <https://www.facebook.com/137240689650976/posts/664527176922322>. For a profile of Khalifa Haftar, see *Militant Leadership Monitor*, March 2011.
2. See Annahar TV [Cairo], May 25, 2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1yMGZZk95Zo&app=desktop>.
3. Shalgam describes this battle as *Umm al-Ma'asi*, or the "Mother of all Tragedies." See www.facebook.com/137240689650976/posts/664527176922322.
4. Ibid.
5. See Camille Tawil: *Al-Qaeda wa Akhawatuha*, Saqi Books, 2007.
6. See: <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=720365421338403&set=vb.563593777015569&type=2&theater>.
7. A Facebook page supporting Haftar's Operation Karama keeps a record of all the units that have sided with him: <https://arar.facebook.com/pages/%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%A1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B1%D9%83%D9%86-%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%AD%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%B1/180728631978737>.
8. Ibid.
9. <http://videoyoum7.com/2014/05/22/>.
10. The allegations regarding the UAE's backing of Haftar are widely circulated in the Arab world. Many of these reports seem to be based on a popular twitter account by someone who calls himself 'tameh0' whose allegations are then distributed by critics of the UAE government.