

# Terrorism Monitor

In-depth analysis of the War on Terror

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## EGYPT: THE RAFAH ATTACK AND HAMAS UNDER PRESSURE

*Alexander Sehmer*

Militants in northern Sinai killed at least 26 Egyptian soldiers in a suicide car-bomb attack on two military checkpoints near Rafah on July 7 ([al-Jazeera](#), July 8). The attack, which was claimed by Islamic State (IS), was one of the deadliest on the military in years, but unconfirmed reports that some of the attackers were former members of Hamas have given the attack an added political dimension.

According to IS supporters posting on social media, at least three of the participants in the attack were former members of the al-Qassam Brigades ([Asharq al-Awsat](#), July 9). There has been no official confirmation of that. Though under President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, Egypt has regularly pressured Hamas to hand over fighters in Gaza with links to IS' Sinai branch and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas may now be more forthcoming on this point as the Saudi-led political rift with Qatar accelerates a thaw in the group's frosty relations with al-Sisi and gives Egypt even greater leverage over the Palestinian group.

Egypt — along with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain — severed diplomatic relations with Qatar in June, accusing Doha of funding terrorism. Egypt particularly objects to Qatar's support for the Muslim Brotherhood and takes issue with Qatari broadcaster al-Jazeera. Adding fuel to the fire, Dhahi Khalfan, Dubai's often-vocal former police chief who has needled Qatar on several occasions, accused Doha of "funding, supporting and inciting" the Rafah attack ([Twitter](#), July 8; [Egypt Today](#), July 9).

All of this puts Hamas, which was quick to condemn the attack, in a tricky position ([el-Balad](#), July 7). The Palestinian group has been a major beneficiary of the humanitarian aid poured into the Gaza Strip by Qatar. For years, Qatar has hosted a number of its political leadership in Doha. With Qatar coming under pressure — Doha is already beginning to frame its support efforts as an act of compassion for the people of Gaza, rather than an endorsement of Hamas — the Palestinian group has been attempting to smooth things over with Egypt.

It has begun work on a buffer zone between Gaza and Egypt, an Egyptian demand that is expected to force a number of families from their homes ([Haaretz](#), June 30). Likewise, it is now also softening its position toward ex-

iled Fatah leader Mohammed Dahlan. Once hated by Hamas, there has been speculation over the last month that he could now return to Gaza ([Maan](#), June 26). In that respect, he is aided by the election in February of Yahya Sinwar as leader of Hamas ([al-Jazeera](#), February 18). The two have known each other since they were teenagers.

That would be a double win for Egypt. Dahlan is an adviser to Mohammed bin Zayed, Abu Dhabi's crown prince, and is on good terms with Egypt's al-Sisi. Having him in play would erode Qatar's position and further strengthen Egypt's hand in its dealings with Hamas.

## **THE PHILIPPINES: TIGHTENING THE NET ON THE MAUTE GROUP**

*Alexander Sehmer*

The Philippines' military has bombarded the city of Marawi in southern Mindanao for more than two months in an attempt to stamp out militants from the Maute Group. While this has been met with little success, their efforts may have been given a boost by the arrest of one of the group's main financiers.

Security forces raided a house in Barangay Macasandig, a village not far from Marawi, on July 5, arresting three people and seizing grenades and bomb-making equipment ([Inquirer](#), July 5). One of the three arrested was identified as Monaliza Solaiman Romato, known as Monay, who reportedly acted as a "spy" for the group, but is also said to be heavily involved with the group's logistics and financing ([Philippine Star](#), July 6). Another key figure in the group's finances, Irene Romato Idris, who was renting the house where the three were arrested, remains at large.

The Maute clan is supposedly matriarchal, and Idris and Monay have apparently taken over the purse strings from Ominta "Farhana" Romato, the mother of Abdullah and Omar Maute who instigated the fighting in Marawi ([SunStar](#), July 5; see [Militant Leadership Monitor](#), July 4, 2017). Both Idris and Monay are thought to be related to Farhana — Monay is her niece, while Idris is described by officials as a "distant relative" ([PNA](#), July 5).

The net has slowly been closing in around the Mautes. Farhana was captured in June as she tried to flee Masiu, Lanao del Sur, in the back of a Toyota Revo with seven other women ([SunStar](#), June 10). Just a few days earlier, Cayamora Maute, the Maute's father, was arrested in Sirawan, Davao City, picked up at a checkpoint travelling with his second wife. Apparently ill and flashing a peace sign at journalists as he was led away, he appears to have been less integral to his children's operation ([Inquirer](#), June 11).

The fighting in Marawi appears to be abating, but the place has been a warzone since May 23, when Philippine security forces tracked Abu Sayyaf leader Isnilon Hapilon to the city and attempted to capture him, clashing with the Maute's followers and Abu Sayyaf fighters. President Rodrigo Duterte imposed martial law across southern

Mindanao and bombing raids have reduced parts of Marawi to rubble. More than 460 people have been killed, including scores of civilians, and about 300,000 people have fled their homes ([al-Jazeera](#), July 4). The siege is now virtually over, but Hapilon and the Maute brothers all appear to have escaped.

Officials have talked up the recent arrests, and it may be that the capture of Maute family members can provide some leverage — Abdullah Maute reportedly entertained the idea of swapping a kidnapped Catholic priest in return for the release of his parents and relatives ([Inquirer](#), June 27). But with the Marawi assault at an end and the brothers still at large, it is more likely their group, which has links to both Jemaah Islamiyah and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and has pledged allegiance to IS, will simply continue its campaign elsewhere.

## Understanding Australia's Brighton Siege Terror Attack

Andrew Zammit

Last month, Australia experienced its fifth jihadist attack since September 2014. On the afternoon of June 5, 2017, a 29-year old man named Yacqub Khayre tampered with the electronic ankle bracelet he had to wear after being recently released from prison on parole. He then booked a serviced apartment located at a busy intersection in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton, hired an escort to meet him there and travelled to the apartment, armed with a sawn-off shotgun ([The Australian](#), June 7).

On arrival, he murdered the hotel clerk, a 36-year old Chinese-Australian man named Kai Hao, before forcibly dragging the escort into the apartment ([Herald Sun](#), June 11). After barricading himself in the apartment at around 4 p.m., he called emergency services to announce the murder and his possession of a hostage. This created a heavy police presence around the building. He then called the news chief of a television network at 5:41 p.m. to declare: "This is for [Islamic State], this is for al-Qaeda" ([The Australian](#), June 7). Soon after, he came out of the front of the building and fired at the police. He hit three officers, causing non-life threatening injuries, before being shot dead ([The Australian](#), June 7).

At this stage, Khayre's path toward the attack can only be tentatively pieced together from public information. He had a long history of drug use, theft and violence, but he cannot be regarded solely as another criminal opportunist latching on to the Islamic State (IS) brand. He had earlier been on the periphery of Australia's jihadist scene and had been connected to a terror plot in 2009.

### Yacqub Khayre's Path to Militancy

Khayre was born in Mogadishu in 1987, and he came to Australia as a child in 1991, travelling with his grandparents through a Kenyan refugee camp ([The Age](#), June 6). He grew up in Melbourne and turned to crime in his teens after his grandfather died ([The Australian](#), June 7). He used amphetamines and carried out car theft, burglary and assault ([The Australian](#), June 7). This led to

him being detained in a youth justice center until 2008 (*The Australian*, June 7).

Shortly after, he became involved with a small network of Melbourne-based supporters of the Somali jihadist movement al-Shabaab. This network dispatched him to Somalia on April 3, 2009 (*Sydney Morning Herald*, December 10, 2010). There he joined al-Shabaab, but became regarded as an unreliable recruit. After some basic training, he was assigned to a frontline unit, which a counter-terrorism officer described as a "cannon fodder brigade," before he deserted and returned to Australia (*The Australian*, June 7).

On August 4, 2009, he and four other members of the network were charged over a mass-shooting plot targeting Holsworthy Army Barracks in Sydney (*R v Fattal & Ors*, December 16, 2011). In court, his lawyer argued that his travel to Somalia was not part of the plot, and that he was instead seeking a *fatwa* (religious decree) to use fraud to obtain money and fighters in Australia for al-Shabaab (*Sydney Morning Herald*, December 10, 2010). The prosecution alleged that he was in fact seeking a *fatwa* to authorize the Holsworthy terror attack, but the jury was unconvinced. While three of the accused — Wissam Fattal, Saney Aweys and Nayef el-Sayed — were found guilty, Khayre was acquitted (*Fattal & Ors v The Queen*, October 2, 2013).

Freed from prison on December 23, 2010, he soon returned to crime. In 2011, he was imprisoned for car theft, illegal firearms possession and other offenses, only to be released in November later that year. On April 22, 2012, he burgled a house and assaulted the occupants, leading to a prison sentence of five years and six months (*DPP v Khayre*, October 12, 2012). He was released on parole in December 2016, and within six months would carry out the Brighton attack (*ABC*, June 7, 2016).

### Launching the Attack

Khayre's decision to carry out the attack appears to have been made on his own. While the police investigating the incident have charged four people with firearms offenses, they have not accused them of being involved in the plot (*Australian Federal Police*, June 13; *Australian Federal Police*, June 16).

There is also no indication that he received direct instructions from IS members in Syria and Iraq, or pledged

allegiance to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Instead, during the attack, he expressed support for both IS and al-Qaeda. This is not altogether unusual — the Orlando shooter Omar Mateen made similar statements — but does point to the strong likelihood of it being an inspired, rather than a directed, attack.

The incident occurred as part of a wave of jihadist attacks throughout the West in recent years. Ever since IS spokesman Abu Muhammad al-Adnani made his worldwide call to arms in September 2014, a number of unstable individuals with histories of violence have launched lone attacks. His criminal past and drug addiction resembles that of the IS "irregulars," and his earlier involvement with al-Shabaab and local jihadists may have made him more receptive (*Foreign Policy*, December 23, 2014).

There may have also been a copycat element, with his attack coming so soon after the well-publicized attacks in Manchester and London. There were also many examples to follow in Australia, which had experienced four jihadist attacks in the preceding years. These included the September 2014 stabbing of two counter-terrorism officers in Melbourne, the December 2014 hostage-seizure and murder in the Lindt Café in Sydney, the October 2015 murder of a police employee in Sydney, and the September 2016 stabbing of a civilian in Sydney. There have also been up to a dozen foiled plots, usually involving knives or firearms and targeting police officers (*CTC Sentinel*, March 10).

The process by which Khayre chose his specific attack method is also unclear, but there are several apparent advantages to it. Acting alone, he would have needed a method that he could carry out by himself. Being on parole and monitored by an electronic ankle bracelet, he would have needed a method that could be quickly prepared and carried out.

He chose a barricade hostage attack. That suited his circumstances and has become popular among Western jihadists in recent years (*CTC Sentinel*, January 20, 2015). The method provides an opportunity for a single, poorly armed individual to both attract mass media attention and potentially kill police officers. It was also a method explicitly recommended by IS. The "Just Terror Tactics" section of issue 9 of the group's magazine *Rumiyah*, released just a month before the attack, advised

renting apartments to take hostages and lure and kill police (*Rumiyah*, May 4). [1]

Another aspect of the method's appeal may have been martyrdom. The high likelihood of his own death must have been clear, and it was consistent with his earlier connection to the Holsworthy Barracks plot where the plotters aimed, *fedayeen-style* (guerrilla fighter), to shoot as many soldiers as possible before being killed themselves (see *R v Fattal & Ors*, December 16, 2011).

## Implications

The June 2017 Brighton attack was Australia's second barricade hostage incident and murder perpetrated by a lone actor jihadist armed with a shotgun. It was also the fifth jihadist attack in Australia since September 2014, and the third fatal one.

The use of a serviced apartment, and that the attack targeted both the police and the public at the same time, were new elements that suggest the influence of IS' *Rumiyah* magazine.

Another new, but little recognized, feature was that this was the first ever terror attack in Australia by an individual who had trained with a jihadist group abroad. On the whole, the Brighton attack reminds us that that jihadist plots will periodically recur in Australia, will evolve to take varying forms and will sometimes prove to be deadly.

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## NOTES

[1] One part of the *Rumiyah* article reads: However, in order for the operation to gain wide publicity and more effectively plant terror into the hearts of the disbelievers, one can keep some of his victims alive and restrained, making for a more lengthy and drawn-out hostage scenario. One may then notify the authorities, explaining to them that he is a soldier of the Islamic State and informing them of what he has just done. This will of course result in his location being surrounded, and eventually stormed, by armed forces. In such a scenario, he can delay their entry by using the surviving hostages as human shields – only keeping alive those necessary for this

purpose. The intention of this delay is therefore only to prolong the terror, as the ideal scenario is that they storm the location and he is killed as a shahid – inshaallah – after having inflicted upon the kuffar a just massacre.

# Jaish al-Adl's Reemergence Threatens Iran-Pakistan Relations

*Farhan Zahid*

Pakistan's tense relations with its neighbor Iran were further impacted on April 27 when militants from Jaish al-Adl (JuA, Army of Justice), a Sunni group that allegedly operates from across the border in Pakistan, killed 10 Iranian border guards in an attack in Iran's Baluchistan-Sistan province ([Dawn](#), April 27).

JuA has launched a number of attacks on Iranian security forces in the border areas since 2012, often resulting in the kidnapping and murder of members of the Iranian security forces.

The attack on April 27 in Mirjaveh County has since been overshadowed by the more daring attack, apparently perpetrated by Sunni militants allied with Islamic State (IS), in Tehran in June. However, the re-emergence of JuA is significant as it comes as Pakistan-Iran relations are reaching a new low, with Pakistan facing pressure to pull out of Saudi Arabia's anti-terror alliance.

## Pakistan-Iran Relations

Iran, which itself faces accusations of supporting insurgent groups abroad and was once designated part of the so-called "Axis of Evil," has time and again accused Islamabad of failing to curb Islamist militants operating from Pakistani soil. In particular, Iran claims that on a number of occasions JuA fighters have carried out attacks in Iran and then fled across the border into Pakistan.

Despite the Pakistani government's condemnation of the April 27 attack, the situation has recently gone from bad to worse. The Iranian government has warned that Pakistan must bear "ultimate responsibility" for the attack, and, in a statement from Iran's foreign ministry, that Islamabad "should be accountable for the presence of terrorist groups on its soil and for the outlaw groups operating against Iran from its territory" ([TOI](#), April 27; [IRNA](#), April 27).

JuA emerged from Jundullah (Army of God) following the capture, trial and execution of Jundullah's founder and leader, Abdul Malik Riggi, in 2010 by Iranian security forces. The group adheres to ultra-orthodox Sunni-Deobandi ideology. And although relatively little information is available about the group's ambitions, the aim of its parent organization was to fight for Sunni-Baluch rights *inside* Iran. In that regard, it is notable that Riggi never called for the separation of Baluchistan-Sistan from Iran.

JuA conducted 12 terrorist attacks between October 2013 and November 2015, resulting in a total of 53 fatalities and 25 injuries of Iranian security forces and civilians. [1] Most of these attacks involved ambushing border security patrols near the Pakistani border. In October 2013, JuA massacred 14 Iranian border guards, later claiming that it was in response to the hanging of 16 Sunni prisoners (suspected members of Jundullah) and the "cruel treatment of Sunnis in Iran, and an overall discriminatory behavior of Iranian regime against Sunnis" ([BBC](#), October 2013).

The group is currently led by militants named Salahuddin Farooqi and Mullah Omar. Little is known about Farooqi, but Mullah Omar is the brother of Maula Bux Darakhshan, the leader of another Sunni sectarian outfit named Sipah-e-Rasoolallah that is also active in Sistan-Baluchistan province. [2]

## Controversial Appointment

Further complicating the issue, Iran has also accused Saudi Arabia of carrying out subversive activities from Pakistani soil, albeit "against Pakistan's will." In June, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif claimed Iran had intelligence that Riyadh was "actively engaged in promoting terrorist groups operating on the eastern side of Iran in Baluchistan ... using the territory of one of our neighbors against its will to launch attacks against Iran" ([Times of Islamabad](#), June 14).

The Saudis have also impacted Pakistan-Iran relations with the appointment of retired Pakistani general Raheel Shariff, the former army chief of staff, as military advisor to the recently unveiled Saudi-led Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFIT). General Shariff was offered the post by the Saudi government prior to his retirement in November 2016, but the issue remained controversial and the Pakistani government did not al-

low him to take up the post for five months, only issuing him a so-called No Objection Certificate (NOC) in April this year (Geo TV, April 21).

General Shariff is well respected in Pakistan for overseeing Operation Zarb-e-Azb, which substantially reduced terrorist attacks during his tenure as army chief between 2014 and 2016. Riyadh attempted to justify Shariff's appointment on purely professional grounds, but there were serious concerns in Islamabad and elsewhere over the general's appointment. It was well understood that Tehran would never accept such a move, and would view it, along with IMAFT as a whole, from a sectarian perspective.

Since then, relations between Islamabad and Tehran have further declined with the shooting down of a drone that Iranian security agencies were reportedly using to track JuA's activities. According to reports, on June 20, a JF-17 Pakistan Air Force fighter jet shot down the drone that was flying about 3 kilometers inside Pakistani airspace. The incident took place near the Panjgaur district of Pakistani Baluchistan province, close to the Iranian border (Dawn, June 21).

### **Showing Restraint**

Neither Iran nor Pakistan finds the other to be an easy neighbor. Following the JuA attack, Tehran bolstered its security forces and carried out tactical maneuvers along its border with Pakistan. In the past, Tehran has also threatened to target terrorist bases "wherever they are" (al-Jazeera, May 9). However, both Islamabad and Tehran have hitherto shown restraint. Pakistan's shooting down of the Iranian drone in June was in fact an unusual escalation.

With cross-border tensions raised, the re-surfacing of JuA, a Sunni-Baluch group, at a time when Iran is reeling from recent terror attacks in its capital, has created great unease among the Iranian security establishment.

Previous Iran security efforts to wipe out Jundullah were ineffective, leading instead to the formation of JuA. Iran can ill afford a further deterioration in the security situation along its border with Pakistan. In order to avoid that, the two neighbors need to liaise on terrorism and border security issues. For that to happen, Tehran and Islamabad will need to focus on their common security concerns.

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### **NOTES**

[1] Information sourced from the START Global Terrorism Database <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

[2] Author interview with an Islamabad-based security analyst who requested anonymity (06/26/17).

# Qatar's Role in the Libyan Conflict: Who's on the Lists of Terrorists and Why

Andrew McGregor

The Middle East diplomatic crisis that has set a coalition of Arab states against Qatar has inevitably spilled over into Libya. A number of those states party to the dispute have been involved in a proxy war, with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt backing the eastern-based House of Representatives (HoR) and Khalifa Haftar's anti-Islamist Libyan National Army (LNA), while Qatar and (to a lesser extent) Turkey support the Tripoli-based and UN-recognized Presidency Council/Government of National Accord (GNA).

The main issues in the Gulf dispute are Qatar's sponsorship of al-Jazeera and the channel's willingness to criticize regional leaders (save Qatar's al-Thani royal family), Qatar's provision of a refuge for members of the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, its support for Islamist movements and its cooperative relations with Iran, with which it shares one of the world's largest natural gas fields.

Amid the dispute Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE produced a "terrorist list" of 59 Qatari or Qatari-allied individuals from nine Arab countries, including five individuals from Libya (*The National* [Abu Dhabi], June 9). [1] The list-makers seek to coerce Qatar to assist in Iran's isolation and to end its support for the Muslim Brotherhood. This Arab states' list was followed by a second list of 76 Libyan "terrorists" issued by the HoR's Defense and National Security Committee on June 12, seven days after the HoR and its interim government severed relations with Qatar (*Libya Herald*, June 12).

What follows examines the most notable Libyans named on those lists, their contacts with Qatar and the reasons behind their inclusion.

## Qatar's Involvement in Libya

During Libya's 2011 revolution, Qatar deployed its air force against then Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi's loyalists and installations. It also provided substantial arms and supplies to revolutionary forces in Libya, earn-

ing it a significant degree of good will within the country.

Since then, however, Qatar has focused its support on Islamist forces operating in Libya, a policy that has aggrieved nations such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, all of which seek to stifle the growth of Islamist movements that could challenge the legitimacy of their regimes. Qatar's continued insistence on playing a role in Libya's domestic politics since then has also brought on resentment and even anger in many quarters of Libyan society. Both Egypt and the UAE, meanwhile, mount regular air operations against Islamist targets inside Libya. [2]

On June 8, LNA spokesman Colonel Ahmad al-Mismari presented audio, video and documentary evidence of massive political and military interference by Qatar in Libya since the 2011 revolution, comprising a wave of assassinations (including an attempt on Haftar's life), recruitment and transport of Libyan jihadists to Syria, funding of extremist groups and training in bombing techniques via Hamas operatives from the Khan Yunis Brigade. Much of this activity was allegedly orchestrated by Muhammad Hamad al-Hajri, *chargé d'affaires* at the Qatari embassy in Libya, and intelligence official General Salim Ali al-Jarboui, the military attaché (*al-Arabiya*, June 9; *The National* [Abu Dhabi], June 8).

Mismari also claimed on June 22 to have records of "secret meetings" held by the Sudan Armed Forces and attended by Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir that confirmed a conspiracy to support terrorism in Libya, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and alleged that Qatar and Iran were operating arms factories in Sudan to supply Libyan terrorists (*Libya Herald*, June 22).

On June 29, al-Mismari declared that the LNA was fighting "not with Libyan terrorists, but with transnational terrorism" supported by "the triad of terrorism in Libya," Qatar, Sudan and Turkey. The colonel also claimed that the LNA's intelligence department had obtained recordings of an al-Jazeera correspondent coordinating covert flights by Qatari aircraft to Libya to "support terrorist groups" (*al-Arabiya*, June 29).

Egypt also views Libya as a battleground for its efforts to eliminate the Muslim Brotherhood. On June 28, Egypt's foreign ministry claimed Qatar was supporting terrorist groups in Libya operating under the leadership of the



Brotherhood, resulting in terrorist attacks in Egypt (*Asharq al-Awsat*, June 29; *al-Arabiya*, June 28)

Qatar provides a home and refuge for members of the Muslim Brotherhood, but it does so on the condition that they do not involve themselves in Qatari politics. The local chapter of the Brotherhood shut itself down in 1999 after expressing approval of the emirate's political and social direction (*The National* [Abu Dhabi], May 18, 2012).

The Muslim Brotherhood's political misadventures in Egypt led to distrust of the Brothers' agenda in Libya, especially as the movement still struggles to establish grass-roots support after decades of existence in the Gaddafi era as a movement for Libyan professionals living in European exile.

### **List One: The Arab States' List**

The "terrorist" list issued by Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE included the following Libyan individuals:

**Ali Muhammad al-Salabi** – Al-Salabi, a second-generation Muslim Brother, was sentenced to eight years in prison at 18-years-of-age for his alleged connection to a plot to kill Gaddafi.

The intellectual and spiritual leader of the Libyan Brotherhood, al-Salabi consistently presents himself as a proponent of democracy and cooperation with international efforts to combat terrorism (*Libya Herald*, March 1, 2016). Al-Salabi developed ties with Qatar in 2009, when Qatar funded an al-Salabi headed de-radicalization initiative for imprisoned members of the al-Qaeda associated Jamaa al-Islamiya al-Muqatila bi-Libya (Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, or LIFG). When the 2011 revolution erupted, al-Salabi returned to Libya to act as a local conduit for Qatari arms, intelligence and military training. He now holds Qatari citizenship and has a close relationship to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the Muslim Brotherhood's 91-year-old Qatar-based spiritual leader (also named on the list) (*Libya Herald*, October 5, 2015). Al-Salabi has close ties with Abd al-Hakim Belhaj (see below), with whom he founded the Islamist Hizb al-Watan (Homeland Party) in 2011.

**Abd al-Hakim Belhaj**– An allegedly reformed militant, Belhaj is chairman of Hizb al-Watan, believed to be fi-

nanced by Qatar. Belhaj was *amir* of the LIFG and the leader of the post-revolutionary Tripoli Military Council. He is believed to have received substantial support from Qatar during the 2011 revolution and routinely defends Qatari activities in Libya against their critics.

**Mahdi al-Harati** – A Libyan-born Irish citizen with military experience in Kosovo and Iraq, al-Harati returned from Ireland during the 2011 revolution and took command of the Tripoli Brigade. Briefly mayor of Tripoli before being ousted in 2015, al-Harati later led Libyan and Syrian fighters in Syria as part of the anti-government Liwa al-Ummah, a unit alleged to have included London Bridge attacker Rachid Redouane, a resident of Ireland (*al-Arabiya*, June 9; *Libya Herald*, June 9; *Telegraph*, June 6). The LNA alleges al-Harati is supported by Qatari intelligence (*al-Arabiya*, June 9).

**Ismail Muhammad al-Salabi** – Brother of Ali Muhammad al-Salabi, Ismail was imprisoned by Gaddafi in 1997 and released in 2004. He became a principal recipient of Qatari arms shipments during the revolution as commander of the Raffalah Sahati militia, part of a coalition of Islamist militias known as the February 17 Brigade (*al-Hayat*, May 19, 2014). Clashes with Hatar's LNA began in 2014 and continue to this day, with Ismail serving a prominent member of the Benghazi Defense Brigades (BDB) coalition. He is reputed to have a close relationship with Qatari intelligence chief Ghanim bin Khalifa al-Kubaisi (*al-Arabiya*, June 9).

**Al-Sadiq Abd al-Rahman Ali al-Gharaini** – The 75-year-old al-Gharaini was, until recently, the controversial Grand Mufti of Libya and the head of the Dar al-Ifta, the office responsible for issuing *fatwa*-s (religious rulings). The Mufti considers Haftar and those under him to be "infidels" and has called for the destruction of the HoR, which voted to sack him in November 2014. The Dar al-Ifta office in Tripoli was shut down by the GNA on June 1, 2017, and all its contents were confiscated (*al-Arabiya*, June 1). A strong supporter of Qatar's involvement in Libya who commands the allegiance of several Islamist militias, the Mufti is perceived by some Libyans as a supporter of religious extremism. Nonetheless, the League of Libyan Ulama (religious scholars) issued a strong condemnation of the Mufti's inclusion in the terrorist list, warning against "accusing the righteous" (*Libya Herald*, May 10).

**Benghazi Defense Brigades (BDB)** – The BDB was one of 12 organizations to appear on the “terrorist” list. A coalition of soldiers, Islamists and revolutionaries, the BDB has pledged allegiance to Mufti al-Ghariani. The BDB offered to demobilize and disband on June 23 following an intense backlash after their brutal attack on the Brak al-Shatti airbase on May 18 and their subsequent failure to hold Jufra against an LNA offensive. [3] The coalition claimed it had been disparaged as a terrorist group only after it exposed a plot by France, Turkey and the UAE to invade Libya (Libya Herald, June 23; Libya Observer, June 23). On June 6, Misratan officials ordered the BDB (which it called “the Mufti’s forces”) to disband and surrender their weapons, threatening force if their demand was not complied with (Libya Herald, June 6). Instead, the group relocated to Sabratha, where it remained under arms. By July 10, the still-undissolved BDB was reported to be leading an offensive by pro-Khalifa Ghwell forces against pro-GNA militias in Garabulli, east of Tripoli (Libya Herald, July 10; Libya Express, July 9). [4]

The BDB, noting the UAE’s active military role in the Libyan conflict and its support for the “war criminal” Haftar, described the list as a fabrication designed with the intent of imposing “political restrictions on anyone who poses a threat to the UAE’s attempt at supremacy over the entire region” (Libya Observer, June 10).

### **List Two: The HoR’s List**

The majority of those on the HoR list are based in Tripolitania. Most of those listed share an opposition to Haftar, the LNA and/or the HoR, though the role of many is inflated. Many are described as members of the “Muqatila,” a shorthand reference to the now defunct LIFG. The inference is that they are former members or remain sympathetic to the goals of the group, which was once closely associated with al-Qaeda.

While there is no apparent order to the HoR list, it makes more sense when those on it are gathered into focused groups, along with more detailed (and occasionally corrected) descriptions. There is, however, often some overlap in these unofficial categories.

### **The Muslim Brotherhood (MB)**

Twenty-nine members of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood made the list. The MB described the inclusion of

its members on a “terrorist list” as “defamation” (Libya Herald, June 11). Many are resident in Doha, the Qatari capital, and receive Qatari funding. The most prominent of those included are:

**Muhammad Sawan** – Chairman of the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Hizb al-Adala wal-Tamiyya (Justice & Construction Party, or JCP), since its founding in 2012. He is a Misratan who was imprisoned during the Gaddafi era.

**Ahmad al-Suqi** – The head of the Libyan Muslim Brotherhood, elected in October 2015.

**Nizar Kawan** – An Amazigh (Berber) member of the Libyan State Council and an official in the JCP. [5] Kawan was the victim of a failed assassination attempt and RPG attack on his home in June 2014. The attack was allegedly instigated by the pro-Haftar Libyan ambassador to the UAE, Aref al-Nayed, who was recorded urging a similar attempt on the life of Khalid al-Sharif (see below) (Libya Observer, September 3, 2015).

**Fawzi Bukatif** – A Misratan, Bukatif is the current Libyan ambassador to Uganda. A reputed financial coordinator for the MB with Qatar, he was the commander of the February 17 Brigade during the revolution and has close ties to Ismail al-Salabi. Bukatif accused the HoR of inciting violence with the list and threatened legal action: “I’m not against Haftar or the HoR, but I don’t agree with what they are doing. It seems they want to fight and kill anyone who disagrees with them” (Libya Herald, June 12).

### **Dar al-Ifta and Associates of Sadiq al-Ghariani**

The most prominent of these are:

**Abd al-Basit Ghwaila** – Director of the Tripoli office of the Ministry of Awqaf (religious endowments), Ghwaila is a Libyan-born Canadian citizen. He became the focus of attention when it was revealed that he was a close friend of the father of Manchester bomber Salman Abedi as well as the founder of an Islamic youth group to which Salman belonged. In 2016, his own son Awais was killed fighting alongside extremists in Benghazi. Ghwaila is an important official in al-Ghariani’s Tanasuh Foundation and a regular preacher on the Mufti’s Tanasuh TV station (Libya Herald, June 6).

**Salem Jaber** – A leader in the now dissolved Dar al-Ifta, Shaykh Salem advocates jihad and is a Salafist proponent of Saudi-style Islamic education. He demands beards for men and has called for drinkers and fornicators to be whipped. The list suggests he is a spiritual leader in the BDB.

**Hamza Abu Faris** – A leading Libyan religious scholar and former Islamic affairs minister, he is described on the list as an associate of the BDB and “instigator of jihad.”

### **The Manchester/Birmingham Connection**

**Tahir Nasuf** – A Manchester-based LIFG fundraiser and former director of the group’s main fundraising organization, the now banned UK-based al-Sanabel Relief Agency. Funds flowed from Sanabel to Abu Anas al-Libi in Afghanistan, wanted for alleged involvement in the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar al-Salaam (*The Guardian*, May 28). Nasuf was on the UN sanctions list from 2006 to 2011.

**Khalid Tawfik Nasrat** – A former LIFG leader and the father of Zuhair Nasrat, one of the detainees in the investigations of the Manchester attack. Zuhair was arrested at the south Manchester Nasrat family home where Manchester bomber Salman Abedi frequently stayed. Nasrat and his two eldest sons returned to Libya to fight in the 2011 revolution (*Daily Mail*, May 29).

**Abd al-Basit Azzouz** - After fighting in Afghanistan, LIFG member Azzouz arrived in Manchester in 1994, where he settled alongside other LIFG members. In 2006, he was arrested by British police for alleged ties to al-Qaeda and detained for over nine months before being released on bail. Azzouz left for Pakistan and was appointed head of Libyan al-Qaeda operations by al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in May 2011. An expert bomb-maker, Azzouz had some 200 recruits under his command in Libya. Suspected of involvement in the 2012 attack on the American consulate in Benghazi, he was named in 2014 by the U.S. State Department as one of ten “specially designated global terrorists” (*Telegraph*, September 27, 2014; *Express* [London], May 24). He was arrested in Turkey in 2014 in a joint Turkish/CIA operation and sent to Jordan before his expected deportation to the United States to face charges. His public trail goes cold after that (*Hurriyet* [Istanbul], December 4, 2014). In February 2016, the UN added him to its

al-Qaeda sanctions list, implying he was again at large. [6]

**Bashir Muhammad al-Faqih** – He is described in the list as “the spiritual leader of al-Qaeda and the LIFG in Libya.” As a resident of Birmingham and former member of the LIFG, al-Faqih was convicted and sentenced to four years in prison in 2007 after admitting to charges under the UK’s Terrorism Act. In 2014, his appeal to the European Court of Justice resulted in an EU order to overturn his conviction and return his passport (*BBC*, July 17, 2007; *Manchester Evening News*, October 8, 2010). He was involved in al-Qaeda financing via the Sanabel Relief Agency, which put him on the UN sanctions list from 2006 to 2011.

### **Politicians**

The most prominent of these are:

**Abd al-Rahman al-Shaibani al-Suwehli** – As chairman of the Libyan State Council since April 6, 2016, Suwehli has challenged the legitimacy of the HoR. A bulletin from the State Council said that the HoR was using the term “terrorism” to vilify and denigrate their opponents through the list and threatened legal action (*Libya Herald*, June 12). Suwehli and Presidency Council chief Fayez Serraj were targeted for assassination when their motorcade came under heavy fire on February 20. Suwehli later accused GNS head Khalifa Ghwell of being behind the attack (*Libya Herald*, February 20).

**Omar al-Hassi** – After the formation of the elected HoR in 2014, the Islamist al-Hassi became “prime minister” of an alternative parliament formed from GNC members who had failed to be re-elected. He was dismissed in 2015 after unspecified accusations by an auditor. The list provides the unlikely description “field commander and political official in BDB.”

### **Benghazi Defense Brigades (BDB)**

The most prominent commanders on the list are:

**Brigadier General Mustafa al-Sharkasi** – A professional soldier and former air force colonel in the Gaddafi-era, al-Sharkasi has emerged as the dominant commander in the BDB. Turning against the regime, he acted as a militia commander in Misrata during the revolution. Once

part of Haftar's LNA, he is now bitterly opposed to him ([Libya Herald](#), November 13, 2016).

**Al-Saadi al-Nawfali** – The leader of the Operations Room for the Liberation of the Cities of Ajdabiya and Support for the Revolutionaries of Benghazi. This group cooperates closely with the BDB, in which he also holds a leadership position. Al-Nawfali has been variously described as an al-Qaeda operative, a former Ansar al-Sharia commander in Ajdabiya and a supporter of Islamic State (IS) forces.

**Anwar Sawan** – A Misratan supporter of the BDB and the Benghazi Shura Council, Sawan is a major arms dealer to Misratan Islamist militias. He supported the fight against IS in Sirte and opposes both Haftar and Serraj.

**Ziyad Belam** – A commander in the BDB and former leader of Benghazi's Omar al-Mukhtar Brigade and the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council (BRSC), an alliance of Benghazi-based Islamist militias that once included local IS fighters. He was seriously wounded in an assassination attempt in October 2014.

The BDB responded to the HoR's "terrorist" list by providing their own "top 11" terrorist list focused on eastern-based civilian supporters of Haftar and the HoR. The most prominent individuals on the list were HoR President Ageela al-Salah and HoR Prime Minister Abdullah al-Thinni. ([Libya Herald](#), June 16).

### Islamic State (IS)

**Ali al-Safrani and Abd al-Hadi Zarqun (a.k.a. Abd al-Hadi al-Warfali)** – Both were accused of being financiers for IS in Libya. Sanctions were imposed on the two by the U.S. Treasury Department in April.

**Mahmoud al-Barasi** – A former Ansar al-Sharia commander in Benghazi, now purported by the list to be an IS *amir* in that city. He once said Ansar's fight was against "democracy, secularism and the French," and labeled government members "apostates" who could be killed ([Libya Herald](#), November 25, 2013).

### Al-Qaeda Operatives

The most notable of these are:

**Muhammad al-Darsi** – A leading al-Qaeda figure in Libya, Darsi was given a life sentence in Jordan in 2007 for planning to blow up that nation's main airport. He was released in 2014 in exchange for the kidnapped Jordanian ambassador to Libya, who was seized by gunmen in Tripoli ([al-Jazeera](#), May 14, 2014).

**Abd al-Moneim al-Hasnawi** – Allegedly a high-ranking member of Katibat al-Muhajirin in Syria, Abd al-Moneim was recently spotted back in Sabah (Fezzan), where he was allegedly working with the Misratan Third Brigade, the BDB and the remnants of Ibrahim Jadhnan's Petroleum Facilities Guard (PFG) ([Menastream.com](#), November 15, 2016). The list describes him as a representative for al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in southern Libya.

### Militia Commanders

**Salah Badi** – A Misratan, Badi was an officer in Gaddafi's army but was later imprisoned. A former GNC parliamentarian, he resigned in 2014. Badi formed the Jabhat al-Samud (Steadfastness Front) in Tripoli in June 2015. Badi supports Khalifa Ghwell's GNS and opposes both the GNA and Haftar. He was recently seen leading the Samud Front in a pro-GNS offensive against Tripoli in early July ([Libya Herald](#), July 7).

**Tariq Durman** – Leads the Ihsan Brigade in Tripoli, which is made up of supporters of Mufti al-Ghariani. He supports the GNS.

**Khalid al-Sharif** – A deputy *amir* in the LIFG, Khalid was captured in 2003 and held prisoner in a secret CIA detention center in Afghanistan for two years. He was then returned to Libya and imprisonment under Gaddafi ([Christian Science Monitor](#), May 7, 2015). Khalid controlled Tripoli's Hadba prison until May 26, when it was seized by Haitham Tajouri's Tripoli Revolutionaries' Brigade, which then destroyed al-Sharif's home ([Libya Herald](#), May 27). A search revealed the prison to have contained a bomb-making factory ([Libya Herald](#), June 4). In June, the Libyan National Committee for Human Rights tied Manchester bomber Salman Abedi to Khalid al-Sharif and other former LIFG members and demanded the International Criminal Court and the UN investigate "Qatar's role as a financier of this group" ([Arab News](#), June 3).

**Sami al-Saadi** – Al-Saadi left Libya for Afghanistan in 1988, where he became a deputy *amir* of the LIFG. He was arrested in a joint UK/US operation in 2004 and returned to Libya, where he was tortured and spent six years in prison. The UK paid £2.2 million in compensation in 2012 but did not accept responsibility for the rendition. After the revolution, he became close to Mufti al-Ghariani, founded the Umma al-Wasat Party and was a commander in the Islamist Libya Dawn coalition. In late May, Saadi's Tripoli home was destroyed by the Tripoli Revolutionaries' Brigade (Libya Herald, May 27).

**Ahmad Abd al-Jalil al-Hasnawi** – A Libyan Shield southern district commander, the LNA claimed al-Hasnawi planned and led the BDB's Brak al-Shatti attack (Libya Herald, May 19; Channel TV [Amman], May 22, via BBC Monitoring). A GNA loyalist, al-Hasnawi commands wide support within his Fezzani Hasawna tribe.

## Outlook

The Libyan component of these two "terrorist" lists have a common purpose — to lessen foreign resistance to the takeover of Libya by the HoR-backed LNA while simultaneously discrediting the counter-efforts of Qatar.

Egypt's military regime in particular is determined to eliminate Muslim Brotherhood influence in the region. Another common theme of the lists is the insistence that the arms embargo on Libya be lifted in order to supply Haftar with the weapons needed to defeat "terrorism" and control the flow of "foreign fighters" (despite their being used by both Haftar's LNA and pro-GNA forces).

Clearly designed for an international audience, the HoR's list is light on IS militants (already despised by the West) and heavy on political, military and religious opponents to Haftar and his Egyptian and UAE backers. The BDB, as one of the strongest military challengers to Haftar's LNA, is particularly singled out.

While some of the individuals mentioned above have long histories of supporting terrorist activity, many of the lists' lesser individuals not included here can only be regarded as having the most tenuous of links, if any, to terrorism.

In this sense, the list may be viewed as political preparation for an expected Haftar assault on Tripoli later this

year, branding all possible opposition in advance as "terrorists" for international consumption.

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## NOTES

1. A Qatari official insisted that at least six of the individuals on the list were already dead (Foreign Policy, June 15).

2. The UAE uses al-Khadim airbase in Marj province for operations by AT-802 light attack aircraft and surveillance drones (Jane's 360, October 28, 2016). The UAE also controls an estimated 70% of Libyan media, according to an Emirati investigative website (Libya Observer, June 13).

3. See "Libya's Military Wild Card: The Benghazi Defense Brigades and the Massacre at Brak al-Shatti," *Terrorism Monitor* 15(11), June 2, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/libyas-military-wild-card-benghazi-defense-brigades-massacre-brak-al-shatti/>

4. Khalifa Ghwell is leader of a third rival government, the Government of National Salvation, which has some support from Mufti al-Ghariani. The offensive is the latest in a series of attempts by Ghwell to overthrow the GNA administration in Tripoli.

5. The State Council was formed by the 2015 Libyan Political Agreement as an advisory body to the GNA/ Presidency Council and HoR as a third element of the unified government.

6. [https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/individual/abd-al-baset-azzouz](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/individual/abd-al-baset-azzouz)