

Terrorism Monitor

In-depth analysis of the War on Terror

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ISLAMIC STATE HOLDING ON TO HAJIN

Brian Perkins

Islamic State (IS) has seen a significant decline in the past year, with its territory and operations significantly reduced to small pockets in Syria and Iraq. The group, however, is still holding strong to portions of Syria just east of the Euphrates. In fact, the group has managed to recapture some of its key territory in eastern Syria over the past several weeks. On September 10, the U.S.-backed Syrian Defense Forces (SDF) launched a major offensive against the group in the Hajin area of eastern Syria—one of IS's last remaining and strongest hold-outs—but has since lost any of the momentum it had gained.

IS has reportedly capitalized recently on multiple sandstorms and their knowledge of the terrain to launch major counteroffensives against the SDF, effectively recapturing all of the territory in Hajin that the SDF had cleared since the operation began in September. According to some estimates, IS killed as many as 68 SDF members in the past week while around 100 others have fled ([Kurdistan24](#), October 27).

The Hajin area is one of the group's last major strongholds and it is seemingly going to be more difficult than expected to prevent IS from regaining ground in the surrounding areas—let alone to liberate Hajin. By some estimates, IS still has thousands of fighters in the area and has constructed a network of tunnels to evade detection by aircraft and escape the offensive while simultaneously conducting suicide attacks against the SDF and allied forces ([Al Arabiya](#), October 27).

The SDF temporarily withdrew toward the Iraqi border while it awaited hundreds of reinforcements comprised of SDF "special forces" and members of the People's Protection Units (YPG). Meanwhile, the Iraqi military was alerted to IS's gains in the area and quickly deployed hundreds of troops to reinforce the border near and prevent any potential cross-border incursions by IS. According to Iraqi Brigadier General Rasool, the military has reinforced border fences, installed thermal cameras, and are preparing for airstrikes against IS ([Kurdistan24](#), November 1). The Iraqi Army has also reportedly been joined by thousands of members of the Iran-backed Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization Forces).

IS's successful counteroffensive is not a sign of a significant resurgence but serves as a reminder of the group's

resilience and how quickly SDF gains can be lost. The concern now is whether or not the SDF and its cobbled-together forces can—or is willing to—withstand further counteroffensives and prevent IS from retreating into unsecured areas near Hajin or somehow find a way across the Iraqi border.

TUNIS BOMBING A WORRISOME SIGN FOR COUNTRY'S SECURITY

Brian Perkins

A Tunisian woman detonated a suicide bomb outside of the Municipal Theater on Habib Bourguiba Avenue in the capital city of Tunis on October 29. The attack did not cause any fatalities but injured 15 police officers and five civilians ([MosaïqueFm](#), October 30). This was the first terrorist attack to take place in Tunis since 2015, when a shooting at the Bardo Museum in Tunis and another at Sousse beach left at least 60 dead.

The woman—identified as 30-year-old Mona Guelba—allegedly targeted a gathering of police officers. Guelba had no known or confirmed connections to any local or international terrorist organizations. She held a degree in Business English and was reportedly unemployed ([Al Arabiya](#), November 2). Tunisia's Interior Minister, Hichem Fourati, described the attack as an isolated incident, likely due to Guelba's profile ([Middle East Monitor](#), November 2).

Just weeks before the attack, on October 5, the Tunisian government issued a one-month extension to the ongoing state of emergency that began after the attacks in 2015. The decision was likely due in part to recent unrest and the already combustible political environment in the country ahead of next year's presidential elections ([Asharq Al-Aswat](#), October 30).

The state of emergency and subsequent military operations that came in the wake of the 2015 attacks focused primarily on building the security force's capacity and creating militarized zones around the country's borders. These areas are known to be hubs for arms smuggling and hideouts for a variety of terrorist organizations, including Ansar al-Sharia in Tunisia and Katiba Uqba ibn Nafi—al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's Tunisian branch.

Tunisian security forces, however, have not been particularly successful in curbing radicalization elsewhere. Similarly, the government has been unable to improve staggering unemployment rates, bolster the economy, or foster a stable political environment—all of which would aid in reducing disenfranchisement among marginalized communities and even those with degrees. In fact, the state of emergency has only prompted further resent-

ment as it granted authorities sweeping powers to not only crack down on suspected terrorists but also on political dissent.

Government officials have already revived previous attempts to pass legislation that would grant security forces even broader authority to crack down on citizens suspected of terrorism, protesters, or anyone who speaks out against security forces. Meanwhile, the political climate has only worsened since President Beji Caid Essebsi announced an end to his Nidaa Tounes party's alliance with the Ennadha party ([Al Jazeera](#), October 30). With the future of the country's government as well as the makeup of its political landscape uncertain, much-needed security and economic reforms will continue to falter.

While this attack could very well be an isolated incident, the attack points to a worrisome trend in which individuals—who have no known connection or contact with terrorist organizations—are willing and capable of conducting attacks in the capital. Meanwhile, the ongoing political turmoil, struggling economy, and the government's response to the attack will likely combine to create an environment even more conducive to both more organized acts of terrorism and attacks from beleaguered citizens seeking to exact revenge on the Tunisian state.

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Recent Wave of Terrorism in Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan Region

Farhan Zahid

The recent wave of terrorist attacks on girls' schools in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan has once again highlighted the fact that no region of Pakistan is safe from terrorism and militancy. The mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan region previously remained sheltered from terrorism in mainland Pakistan. The region is a tourism hub due to its picturesque beauty and low-crime environment. Though economically struggling, the region has a high literacy rate in comparison with other provinces of Pakistan.

Shia-Sunni sectarian strife has been ongoing in the region for quite some time, but the communities have rarely adopted violent tactics. The most significant terrorist incident in the region took place in June 2013, when members of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) killed nine foreign tourists (hikers from the United States, China, Slovakia, Lithuania, Ukraine and Nepal), their guide and chef ([Express Tribune, June 23, 2013](#)). The hikers were at the base camp of Nanga Parbat Mountain when the terrorists attacked. The incident was disastrous for Pakistan's tourism industry, which suffered significantly after the incident. Just two months after the attack, the team investigating the case was ambushed in Chilas town. The district superintendent of police and two military officers were killed.

A New Wave of Terrorism

The Nanga Parbat terrorist attack was a watershed incident for Gilgit-Baltistan and underscored the region's vulnerability to future attacks. The current wave of terrorist attacks began on August 3 when, in a single night, suspected TTP militants simultaneously torched and bombed 12 girls' schools in Chilas district, 130 kilometers from the provincial headquarters in the city of Gilgit ([Geo News, August 3](#)). All of the targeted schools suffered significant damage as the terrorists burned the properties and planted explosive devices. Another girl's school was torched in the Diamer district on August 5 while the police were still investigating the previous cases ([Nation, August 5](#)). On August 11, militants opened

fire on the residence of Deputy Commissioner of Diamer district, Dildar Malik, and burned a bulldozer at a development project site in Khambri Village. Militants also conducted an attack on a police checkpoint near Kargah Nala, 30 kilometers from Gilgit city, which resulted in the death of three police officers and one militant. The militant killed was recognized as Commander Khalil of the TTP. He had a bounty of 3 million rupees (\$22,441.46) for his alleged involvement in the planning and execution of the Nanga Parbat attack and subsequent killing of three of the officers investigating that attack ([Dawn, August 11](#)).

The spree of terrorist attacks was seemingly disrupted when police foiled a bid to blow up a girls' school in Ghizer district. Police subsequently arrested 13 Islamist militants and seized a cache of weapons and explosives. The militants belonged to a local religious seminary adhering to militant Islamist views. A local cleric, known as Inayatullah, who ran the same seminary was also arrested by the police ([Dawn, Aug 26](#)). Authorities also stated that those arrested had confessed to other failed plots to attack Prince Kareem Agha Khan and former governor, Pir Karam Ali Shah.

The terrorist attacks showcased the resurgence of the TTP in the Gilgit-Baltistan region. The wave of attacks clearly demonstrated the group's recruitment as well as its ability and willingness to conduct a variety of attacks. In the past, aside from the Nanga Parbat attack, terrorist attacks had primarily focused on destroying girls' schools in the region. Nine girls' schools were destroyed in 2004 and four were torched and blown up in 2011. The current wave of attacks, however, display a higher intensity and frequency of terrorist attacks, suggesting a more concerted effort and increased planning compared to the past cases ([Geo TV, Aug 3](#)). Despite the local police and security forces' claims of arresting all the suspects and killing at least one terrorist, it is likely that the network still exists and more needs to be done to prevent the resurgence of Islamist militancy in the region.

Conclusion

The re-surfacing of Islamist terrorism in the northern Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan, which benefits from tourism in the region. The region is in close proximity to the restive Chinese Xinjiang Autonomous Region and also borders the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir. The region is

overwhelmingly Shia and has experienced sectarian strife in the past that militants might attempt to exploit. The recent growth of Islamist militancy in the region is a cautionary sign. According to one estimate, a total of 1,500 girls' schools have been burned down or blown up by Islamist terrorists during the last 10 years ([Nation, August 4](#)). Tribal areas of Pakistan—including in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province and Gilgit-Baltistan—have experienced burnings of girls' schools in the past, and often times such incidents have preceded a broader, full-fledged Islamist insurgency. Given past trends, security policymakers in Pakistan should take immediate action and frame policy measures to curb militancy in the region before it escalates further.

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Egypt Declares its Success in Dismantling Islamist Militancy

Muhammad Mansour

Eleven militants were killed by Egyptian security forces on October 24 in the latest of a series of preemptive attacks. The raid took place at a mountainous hideout located in the desert adjacent to Asyut province, 200 miles from Cairo ([Al-Ahram](#), October 25). Five days earlier, police exchanged fire with nine other militants and killed them on the spot. Searching the cave where they were hiding in the same province, police found and confiscated automatic rifles and explosive charges that were potentially intended for use in would-be terrorist attacks ([Al-Masry Al-Youm](#), October 10).

The police raids are part of coordinated efforts with the military forces, aimed at intensifying counter-terror operations against Islamist militants across the country. According to Egypt's military spokesperson, Tamer al-Refai, "The Sinai 2018 Operation (which began in February 2018) has resulted in dismantling, to a great extent, the infrastructure of militants." Al-Refai further stated, "Since embarking on the comprehensive campaign, the military killed 450 militants, foiled 1,200 explosive charges, and destroyed 900 vehicles used by militants. Also, the military arrested 4,000 militants and demolished 3,000 tunnels on the Egyptian borders" ([Sky News Arabia](#), October 25).

Since the launch of the Sinai 2018 Operation, there has been a remarkable decline in terrorist operations in Egypt's mainland. A year ago, militants were targeting the mainland to compensate for their strategic losses in Sinai. The only reported attack this year was an unclaimed and failed attempt to assassinate Alexandria's security chief—Major General Mostafa al-Nemr—which left two dead and five others injured ([Al-Ahram](#), March, 24). While the overall reduction in violence bodes well, the incidence of intermittent and underreported attacks in the Western Desert remains a concern.

Egypt has been hit by terrorist attacks in an unprecedented frequency since 2013, when then-Defense Minister and current President Abdel-Fattah El Sisi overthrew Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated President Mohamed Morsi and asked for a popular mandate to fight terrorism. This marked the declaration of the "war on terror" that

has lasted five years. Between the end of 2013 and September 2017, 1,343 attacks were carried out across Egypt. These attacks were carried out by several groups, including Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) in North Sinai, which pledged its allegiance to Islamic State (IS) in 2014 and rebranded itself as Wilayat Sinai; the Popular Resistance Movement and Revolutionary Punishment that emerged in December 2014; Hassm; and Liwaa al-Thawra ([TIMEP](#), July 24).

Wilayat Sinai alone claimed responsibility for 903 attacks that killed over 588 security personnel and 329 civilians. As of 2017, militant operations decreased to 110 terrorist attacks, thanks to the security forces' counter-terrorism operations, which included arresting 200 militants affiliated with Hassm. Meanwhile, security forces killed 180 militants, and IS's regional defeat and decline in 2017 has weakened its most deadly franchise in North Sinai ([Al-Watan](#), February 12).

Regionally, the Egyptian coordination with Libyan National Army (LNA) forces operating in the Eastern part of Libya—adjacent to Egyptian-Libyan borders—has resulted in a further crackdown on militants who carried out deadly attacks in Egypt's Western Desert. On October 8, the LNA captured Egypt's most wanted militant and ex-military officer, Hisham Ashmawy, the leader of al-Qaeda-inspired group Al-Mourabitoun. Ashmawy was arrested alive in Derna, 165 miles west of Libya's border with Egypt. Ashmawy is likely to be handed to Egyptian authorities to be tried for at least 17 deadly attacks he carried out in Cairo and the Western Desert ([Al-Masry Al-Youm](#), October 8).

Capturing Ashmawy is likely to lead to important information about the whole network of Islamist militants and micro-terrorist cells in Egypt and North Africa, given the experience of Egyptian security apparatus in extracting confessions and gathering intelligence data. ([Al-Ahram Center for Political & Strategic Studies](#), October 21). Statistics indicate that terrorism in Egypt declined remarkably, thanks to several factors which include the following:

- Targeting militant strongholds in Sinai and the mainland of Egypt.
- Confiscating funds of terrorist organizations. For instance, on September 11, Egypt's Committee for Inventory, Seizure, and Management of Terrorist Funds announced that it had seized assets belonging to

1,589 Muslim Brotherhood supporters ([Al-Watan](#), Sept 11)

- Monitoring and controlling Egypt's vast borders where militants smuggle weapons from overseas.
- Egyptian security forces' preemptive attacks that killed and led to the arrest of a large number of high-profile leaders.

Conclusion

The Egyptian government should not ignore the political and socio-economic aspects of the radicalization process by focusing only on the religious aspects. Further, reforming the Islamic discourse is likely to be a buffer against radicalization and recruiting. Authorities should start by training Imams and teachers to focus on identifying controversial concepts such as caliphate, the axis of Islam and the axis of infidelity (Dar Islam and Dar Kofr), excommunication, allegiance, political Islam, martyrdom, etc.

To prolong the recent success of counter-terrorism operations, more joint efforts are needed to dismantle the incubators where radicalization grows, especially in disadvantaged communities in Egypt. Major reconstruction projects should be implemented in North Sinai to help increase the population there and create a demographic change that would help minimize Islamist militants' ability to recruit among the marginalized. Last but not least, the Egyptian government needs to strengthen and engage civil society in its counter-terrorism operations.

Muhammad Mansour is a highly accomplished investigative journalist with more than ten-year, solid track record of producing high-quality print and online reports for international media outlets, including The Washington Post, The Guardian, The Times and Egypt Independent. He covers a broad range of topics related to Egyptian politics and global affairs. Mansour examines the junctions of Egyptian politics and society as they slowly disintegrate under the pressure of a ruthless military dictatorship. He gave lectures on new media and the Arab Spring in the Czech Republic and India. Mansour is currently a fellow at the Leaders for Democracy program at Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University in New York.

Violence and Viruses: How a Poorly Armed Insurgency in the Congo Poses a Global Threat

Andrew McGregor

On October 21, angry locals filled the streets of the Congo's Nord Kivu province town of Beni. The crowd torched the post office, destroyed parts of the town hall and threw stones at vehicles belonging to health workers fighting a deadly outbreak of the Ebola virus. Eventually driven off by tear gas and live ammunition fired into the air, the demonstrators were enraged by the inability of Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) troops and UN peacekeepers to prevent yet another terrorist strike in the town. 11 people were hacked to death and 15 others, including children, were abducted by militants of the Allied Democratic Front (ADF) ([Radio Okapi](#) [Kinshasa], October 21; [AFP](#), October 22).

Nord Kivu province borders Uganda and Rwanda to the east and has absorbed defeated militant groups from both countries. Scores of armed groups are active in the region now despite the presence of large numbers of UN peacekeepers and troops of the Armed Forces of the DRC (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo—FARDC).

After two decades of ADF activity in the Uganda-DRC border region, ADF operations are now concentrated in the Nord Kivu town of Beni, a hub for regional trade routes. Beni is close to Virunga National Park, the Ituri Forest and the Rwenzori Mountains, all used at some point as bases for ADF activities. The region is rich in gold, tin, timber and diamonds.

The Allied Democratic Forces

The ADF has its roots in the Ugandan chapter of the Tabliqi Jama'at, an Islamic revival movement which began to claim political persecution in the 1990s. Many of the group's members left the capital city Kampala for the wild Rwenzori Mountains of western Uganda, where they formed the ADF by allying themselves with remnants of the Rwenzori separatist movement, fugitive Idi Amin loyalists and the National Army for the Liberation

of Uganda (NALU)—a group drawn from the Nande ethnic group of the Rwenzori Mountains. Today, most ADF members are locally recruited residents of Nord Kivu.

The ADF's leader, Jamil Mukulu, was arrested in Tanzania in April 2015 and extradited to Uganda. Mukulu was carrying no less than nine passports when authorities arrested him ([Le Monde](#), May 15). Mukulu is a convert from Christianity who became involved in the Tabliqi Jama'at and eventually adopted a Salafi-jihadist stance with alleged ties to al-Qaeda ([The Independent](#) [Kampala], May 17, 2015).

The ADF was able to obtain Sudanese arms and training during the proxy war fought between Khartoum and Kampala, but this came to an end when the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement with South Sudan brought a finish to the proxy war.

The ADF has a low-profile and highly isolated leadership. Mukulu's successor as leader of the main ADF faction is believed to be Imam Seka Musa Baluku, the subject of an Interpol red notice ([Daily Monitor](#) [Kampala], September 24, 2015). As the prospect of actually overthrowing the Ugandan government has grown more distant, the movement has splintered, losing any sense of ideological cohesion in favor of extortion, illegal taxation and resource exploitation.

The ADF resents interference in its local economic operations, and a 2014 statement made their approach clear:

"You, the population, we are going to kill you because you have provoked us too much. The same goes for the FARDC with whom we used to live without any problems... Don't be surprised to see us killing children, women, elderly... In the name of Allah, we will not leave you alone." [1]

Other ADF factions include the Feza Group (more religiously inclined than the others), the Matata Group, the Abialose Group (commanded by "Major" Efumba) and the ADF-Mwalika. [2] Factional leaders have often married the daughters of local chieftains to strengthen local ties.

The Uganda Peoples' Defense Force (UPDF) succeeded in expelling the ADF from Uganda in 1999. The rebels,

however, re-established themselves across the border in the DRC's lightly governed but resource-rich Nord Kivu province. The ADF has posed little threat to Uganda since suffering heavy losses in battles with the UPDF in 2007-2008.

The situation in Nord Kivu, however, is different. Some 700 civilians have been killed by the ADF since violence intensified in the region in October 2014 ([Le Monde](#), September 9). Well over 200 civilians have been killed by armed groups in over 100 attacks in the region around Beni this year. [3] Hundreds of thousands have been displaced. The poorly-armed ADF typically relies on the use of machetes and axes in its attacks on civilian population centers and relies on raids on military bases to obtain more advanced weapons. Fighters often abduct civilians and take them to their bases in the bush for use as sex slaves or porters. Children are trained to become ADF fighters. Women and children participate in ADF attacks, looting and finishing off wounded victims, including other women and children. [4]

Jamil Mukulu used to issue cassette tapes to condemn Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni and the leaders of the West while urging violence against non-Muslims. Since his detention, the movement has drifted from jihadist rhetoric, or, indeed, any rhetoric at all, making its current aims something of a mystery.

MONUSCO and the ADF

The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la Stabilisation en République Démocratique du Congo—MONUSCO) was founded in 1999-2000. It is now the UN's largest peacekeeping mission, with 17,000 troops and an annual budget of \$115 billion. [5] The ADF—who travel light and know the difficult terrain intimately—have proven far more mobile than MONUSCO forces.

Fifteen Tanzanian peacekeepers and five Congolese troops were killed at Semuliki in the Beni region in a December 2017 ADF attack ([Reuters](#), January 13). The assault followed earlier attacks on the Tanzanians in September and October 2017. A UN investigation of the incident identified a number of weaknesses in MONUSCO:

“The mission did not have an actionable contingency plan to reinforce and extract its peacekeepers... Issues of command-and-control, leadership and lack of essential enablers such as aviation, engineers and intelligence were also major obstacles and need to be addressed urgently” ([Reuters](#), March 2).

The UPDF claimed to have killed over 100 ADF fighters in cross-border artillery and airstrikes (Operation Tuugo) on ADF positions following the attack on the peacekeepers ([New Vision](#) [Kampala], December 22, 2017; [Observer](#) [Kampala], December 28, 2017). Uganda is suffering a wave of assassinations and murders mostly tied to local tensions, though Museveni (without evidence) has blamed the ADF for many of the killings, including those of seven Muslim shaykhs between 2012 and 2016. He has also blamed the DRC and the UN for harboring and supporting ADF terrorists ([AfricaNews](#), June 6).

Insurgency and Disease

Ebola is a viral hemorrhagic fever with an extremely high fatality rate. The virus is spread through contact with the infected bodily fluids of people or primates (the latter is known as “bushmeat” by those who eat it, including ADF militants). Ebola emerged in the DRC in the 1970s and has since killed thousands across West Africa.

The epidemic was announced on August 1, shortly after an Ebola outbreak in the DRC’s Equateur Province. The epidemic might have been detected earlier, but local health workers were on strike after having not been paid for seven months ([Oxfam](#), August 8).

Though health officials have initiated a vaccination program, there are other factors besides the conflict that inhibit its implementation. The region’s topography is often difficult and a strong degree of resistance to vaccination in some communities can result in local flight into the forest where health workers cannot reach them. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned the virus could spread to Uganda and/or Rwanda at any time. In a worrying trend, the organization notes the 19 health workers who caught the disease by October 11 had all been infected outside health facilities, pointing to Ebola’s spread in the larger community ([Al-Jazeera](#), October 11).

In August, seven people were reported to be suffering from hemorrhagic fevers at Mboki, a village in the heavily forested southern region of the Central African Republic (CAR), close to the border with the DRC. The lightly inhabited area is frequented by a number of armed groups who often rely on bushmeat. Tests done on rebels arrested in the DRC and extradited to the CAR revealed 80 percent of them had Ebola antibodies in their system, suggesting both contact with the disease and their potential role as transmission vectors. Emmanuel Nakoune Yandoko, head of the CAR’s Pasteur Institute, has met with leaders of some of these cross-border militant groups. He believes they could be usefully integrated into a disease surveillance system as they also fear Ebola and other fatal diseases in the region ([Le Monde](#), August 17).

A recent OXFAM report identified several challenges in combating Ebola in Nord Kivu, including:

- The need to change culturally-entrenched burial practices to reduce infection; attempts by health workers to take over the burial of Ebola victims provoked attacks on them, forcing security forces to accompany health workers on such missions ([Al-Jazeera](#), October 10).
- The need to solve the puzzle of how to provide security for health-workers in a conflict zone while using as few FARDC and UN troops as possible in order not to provoke local flight into the forest.
- Establishing health education programs in remote communities where Ebola is often ascribed to witchcraft.
- Given the security situation, it is important to avoid gathering civilians in large numbers for vaccinations or other distributions.

The threat to health workers is serious; two nurses were killed on October 19 and there are three to four attacks a week against medical personnel fighting the virus. Many experience being stripped by the people they are trying to help and having their clothes burned in front of them ([Radio Okapi](#) [Kinshasa], October 23).

On September 23, 18 people and four soldiers were killed in the streets of Beni. Most were the victims of machete attacks in an incident that again revealed the inability of the Congolese Army to secure even Beni’s urban center against the ADF, which looted shops until

FARDC reinforcements arrived ([AFP](#), September 24; [Anadolu Agency](#), September 23). This attack and a second in Oicha—a village about 18 miles north of Beni where Ebola cases have been identified—led to a 48-hour suspension in efforts to treat the spreading disease ([AFP](#), September 25). FARDC and MONUSCO troops—who arrived well after the Oicha attack despite being based just outside the town—were met by stone-throwing civilians ([AFP](#), October 11). In July 2016, 19 people were slaughtered only 300 meters from a Nepalese MONUSCO base at Eringeti despite an informant warning MONUSCO officers of the attack the day before ([Le Monde](#), July 1, 2016).

FARDC Weakness and the Role of the UPDF

FARDC is far from a cohesive entity, being composed of both integrated and non-integrated former rebel factions with different languages and customs. President Kabila, who regards his army as a potential threat, relies on the three brigades of the Garde Républicaine (Republican Guard) for his own personal security. Pay problems are endemic and encourage trade and economic cooperation with the rebel movements they are intended to fight. There is little incentive to venture into the bush without remuneration.

With ADF militants wearing FARDC uniforms and operating with apparent immunity at times, there are major local suspicions of FARDC corruption and collusion in the attacks. There is growing anger in the region at the military's inability or unwillingness to bring armed groups under control. Locals arrested as suspected insurgents are often subject to summary executions. Many of the FARDC units operating in Kivu region are from the western provinces of the DRC and tend to behave more as an occupation force than defenders of Kivu civilians.

Led by General Marcel Mbangi, FARDC launched its own anti-ADF operations independent of MONUSCO in January. Though the military promised a conclusive campaign, local residents have noted lethargy and inefficiency in FARDC's efforts, which often appear to be focused on self-preservation rather than protecting the community. [6] Belief in collaboration between the two supposed antagonists is strong enough that locals refer to "the ADF FARDC" ([Le Monde](#), March 6, 2017). Both FARDC and MONUSCO suffer from poor intelligence work due to the suspicion and fears of the Nord Kivu community.

Military cooperation between FARDC and the UPDF is limited to a UPDF presence on the border to prevent ADF militants from escaping Congolese operations. A Ugandan presence in the DRC is unwanted in Kinshasa, as tensions between the two countries have remained high since the 1998-2003 civil war.

Brigadier General Muhindo Akili Mundos—an ally of President Joseph Kabila and commander of the anti-ADF Sukola (Lingala for "cleanup") operation—was alleged by a confidential UN report to have recruited, financed and armed ADF elements and others to carry out attacks on local civilians over 2014-2015. Included in the supplies were FARDC uniforms. The Brigadier denied the allegations, pointing out killings had continued after his transfer from North Kivu ([Reuters](#), May 14, 2016). The UN imposed sanctions on General Mundos in February on the grounds he had incited killings in Nord Kivu ([Jeune Afrique](#), February 2).

Other FARDC officers suspected of working with the ADF have been tried by the North Kivu Military Operational Military Court. Colonel David Lusenge was tried on charges of supplying arms and ammunition to the ADF, as well as participating in the planning of attacks on Beni civilians ([Radio Okapi](#) [Kinshasa], February 15, 2017). A former senior ADF military instructor testified that Colonel Shabani Molisho and other FARDC officers supplied the ADF with ammunition in 2014 ([Radio Okapi](#) [Kinshasa], February 11, 2017). Colonel Katanzu Hangi was sentenced to 12 months in prison after being found guilty of collaborating with the ADF ([Radio Okapi](#) [Kinshasa], June 6, 2017). Though three colonels were eventually convicted, there was a marked reluctance by the court to pursue allegations against more senior officers.

Conclusion

Over the last decade, the ADF leadership has avoided any public proclamation of their aims or intents, expressing themselves solely through their direction of uninhibited violence. The last negotiation with the ADF came in 2008 but were even then complicated by divisions within the movement.

Growing public anger in Nord Kivu with the government and its security forces works against local cooperation with health workers or the Congolese military. President Joseph Kabila's term expired last December, but his refusal to step down has ignited violence across the vast DRC, taxing the resources of both FARDC and the UN.

With little chance of a negotiated settlement or a military victory in Nord Kivu, the international community must address the question of how to tackle epidemics of disease in failed or failing states before they spread across borders in a shrinking world.

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Notes

[1] Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office on International Humanitarian Law Violations Committed by Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) Combatants in the Territory of Beni, North Kivu Province, Between 1 October and 31 December, 2014, https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/CD/Report-Monusco_OHCHR_May2015_EN.pdf

[2] United Nations Security Council, "Letter dated 23 May 2016 from the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo addressed to the President of the Security Council, May 23, 2016, http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2016/466

[3] "DR Congo: Upsurge in Killings in Ebola Zone," Human Rights Watch, October 3, 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/dr-congo-upsurge-killings-ebola-zone>

[4] Report of the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office, op cit.

[5] <https://monusco.unmissions.org/en/facts-and-figures>

[6] "DR Congo: Upsurge in Killings in Ebola Zone," op cit.