



MILITANT LEADERSHIP MONITOR

Personalities Behind the Insurgency

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The ‘Emerging al-Qaeda Lion’ is No More: Hamza Bin Laden’s Demise is a Crucial Blow to al-Qaeda

Animesh Roul

On July 31, news of Hamza bin Laden’s death surfaced with only partial comment from U.S. intelligence officials and al-Qaeda media sources ([Dawn](#) [Karachi], August 1). The original report citing unnamed U.S. officials did not confirm the date, place or circumstances that led to the death of the chosen son of Osama bin Laden, who was touted as the “crown prince of jihad” and future leader of al-Qaeda. Despite the high level of esteem he held in the organization, no confirmation of Hamza bin Laden’s death has emerged from either al-Qaeda’s official media source *As Sahab* or even in pro-al-Qaeda social media channels in Telegram. Pro-al-Qaeda jihadist circles cautioned sympathizers to not take this news at face value, labelling it as disinformation from Western intelligence. Among the senior al-Qaeda backers who almost immediately questioned the news of Hamza’s death were al-Muhajir al-Khorasani and Shibl al-Aqida, who run an al-Qaeda propaganda channel on Telegram. They warned that the

news could be fake and a ploy to find out the location of their “beloved” Hamza. The clerics urged pro-al-Qaeda jihadists not to discuss the matter online (Telegram Messaging Service in Arabic via BBC News Monitoring, August 1).

Subsequent reporting on his alleged death continued to be sketchy and superficial, including vague speculation he was killed in an airstrike in Afghanistan or Pakistan that took place sometime in the past couple of years.

While it has not been confirmed conclusively, the news of Hamza bin Laden’s untimely demise is widely considered to be a blow to the future of al-Qaeda. In addition, the news received a stamp of approval on August 22 when U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper seemingly confirmed Hamza bin Laden’s death by cryptically answering "That's my understanding" when asked about it ([New Arab](#), August 23). However, he refused to provide details, thereby leaving room for speculation over when and how Hamza died and, most importantly, what it means for al-Qaeda’s future.

Hamza, who was in his early 30s, stormed onto the jihadist scene with an audio message in

August 2015 exhorting Muslim youth worldwide to join the jihadist movement and carry out lone wolf attacks against the United States and its allies (including the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia). He never shied away from expressing his wish to avenge his father's death in his powerful audio messages. Between his first and last audio-visual appearance in March 2018, he delivered over ten such messages under the al-Qaeda banner, which often tagged him as an “emerging lion.”

In February 2019, the U.S. State Department placed a \$1 million bounty on Hamza through its Rewards for Justice program ([Reward for Justice](#), February 2019). Before, that in early January 2017, the State Department named him a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) for threatening terrorist attacks against U.S. interests ([US State Department](#), January 5, 2017).

The Jamestown Foundation's *Militant Leadership Monitor* in February 2018 underscored that Hamza's physical survival would be vital for further consolidation of al-Qaeda and only Hamza had the ability to unify the fractured jihadist movement under the banner of al-Qaeda ([See MLM](#), March 8, 2018). If he was indeed killed in a U.S.-led airstrike—whether in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region or in Syria—his death certainly creates a roadblock to al-Qaeda's plans for a smooth leadership transition from the old guard to the new generation. His death comes at a time when al-Qaeda is under an ailing and aging Ayman al-Zawahiri, who has been struggling to put on a strong face against its rival, Islamic State, and its sworn enemies, the United States and the wider Western world.

His “illustrious” father Osama and mother Khairiah Sabar groomed Hamza for leadership from childhood. Perhaps they sensed the charisma, caliber, and clout he could have in the

future. The close aides of Osama bin Laden and the current al-Qaeda central leadership, especially Abu Khayr al-Masri, Saif al-Adel, Abu al-Ghaith, and Abu Mohammed al-Masri, also clandestinely supported Hamza's elevation to the coveted leadership position ([See MLM](#), March 8, 2018).

Indeed, within a short period, Hamza managed to arouse jihadist sentiments as an able propagandist through his intermittent speeches among the al-Qaeda rank and file, despite keeping a relatively low profile and his lack of battlefield or operational experience. With Hamza's reported death, al-Qaeda must be renewing its search for another charismatic young jihadist leader—albeit from the Arab world—to take the reins of one of the world's most infamous jihadist franchises. But it will be difficult to find a young leader matching Hamza's jihadist lineage and, more importantly, his natural oratorical talents, through which he was able to inspire and connect with Muslim youth worldwide. His death at any time would certainly be disappointing and discouraging for al-Qaeda members, supporters, and sympathizers alike.

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The GNA's Muscle in Southern Libya: Southern Protection Force Leader Hassan Moussa Keley

Nicholas A. Heras

Recently, fierce fighting has been raging in southern Libya for control over crucial oasis towns that serve as important nodes in trans-Saharan traffic—both licit and illicit—that moves into and out of Libya, and which are located close to significant oil resources. August has seen fierce fighting between forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord (GNA) and forces loyal to the Tobruk-based House of Representatives (HoR) and the Libyan National Army (LNA), commanded by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar, for control of the strategic town of Murzuq, which is located in the south-central area of the oil-rich Fezzan province ([RFI](#), August 8; [Anadolu Agency](#) [Ankara], August 7). By mid-August, the GNA-aligned South Protection Force seized control over Murzuq, which not only places the HoR's presence in southern Libya at risk, but represents a significant setback for the LNA and Haftar's military activities seeking to control large areas of that region ([Libya Ahrar](#) [Tripoli], August 18). The leader of the Southern Protection Force is Hassan Moussa Keley ([Libya Observer](#) [Tripoli], August 18).

Hassan Moussa Keley (generally referred to as Hassan Moussa), 52, is a native of the city of al-Kufra, an oasis town in the Sahara Desert located in the south-central area of Libya's Cyrenaica province. He is also believed to have a large extended family among the Tubu community inside Chad. Prior to the start of the uprising and subsequent civil war against the Gadhafi government in February 2011, Hassan Moussa was associated with ethnic Tubu, Chad-based armed groups that opposed the Gadhafi

government for its harsh and repressive policies towards the Tubu community in Libya ([al-Ain](#), June 7; [Facebook](#), August 27, 2017). [1] During the 2011 civil war, Hassan Moussa became one of the most important armed opposition leaders in southern Cyrenaica province, where he built a base of power among the Tubu community inside of al-Kufra and in its surrounding areas ([Inter Press Service](#), October 11, 2012; [France 24](#), July 2, 2012).

Shortly after the start of the 2011 Libyan civil war, Moussa organized the Martyr Ahmad al-Sharif Battalion, which was mainly composed of ethnic Tubu from al-Kufra and reportedly from Chad, although it included some local Arabs allied with the Tubu community ([al-Ain](#), June 7). [2] The Martyr Ahmad al-Sharif Battalion was one of the most powerful armed opposition groups in the al-Kufra region, and it spearheaded the capture of the city and surrounding Libyan military bases from the Gadhafi government. After the removal of the Gadhafi government, and under Moussa's leadership, the Martyr Ahmad al-Sharif Battalion became one of the primary protectors of the ethnic Tubu community in al-Kufra, and as a leader he is noted for his militant commitment to protecting the rights of the Tubu after years of repression under Gadhafi ([France 24](#), July 2, 2012; [al-Hurra](#), June 29, 2012). This repression is frequently associated by the Tubu with ethnic Arab chauvinism, which has been a contributing factor to communal violence between Arabs and Tubu in al-Kufra ([Inter Press Service](#), October 11, 2012; [France 24](#), July 2, 2012).

He has been one of the Tubu militant leaders most active in seeking power over the productive oil fields in southern Libya. Since 2013, the Martyr Ahmad al-Sharif Battalion has been one of the armed groups organized into the Petroleum Guards -- units charged with protecting, and determining who has access to,

southern Libya's oil facilities. [3] Under Moussa's leadership, the Martyr Ahmad al-Sharif Battalion has built up considerable influence in the oil-rich areas around the strategic and important oil-producing city of Sabha in south-central Fezzan province. This is why the Southern Protection Force has advantages in the battle for control over Murzuq, which is near Sabha ([al-Ain](#), June 7; [Libo Press](#) [Tripoli], March 4). [4]

Further, Moussa reportedly has enmity toward Haftar because of the perception that the LNA is biased in favor of ethnic Arab units. Promoting ethnic Tubu strength and solidarity has been one of the key themes of Moussa's career, both before and since the Libyan revolution in 2011. [5] However, Moussa has reportedly played the "ethnic card" himself by recruiting Chadian Tubu fighters to join the Southern Protection Force ([al-Ain](#), June 7). [6] As a result of his opposition to the HoR and the LNA, in January 2019, prosecutors associated with the Tobruk-based government listed Moussa as a "Chadian national," and are seeking his arrest and expulsion from Libya ([RFI](#), January 11). Although a Libyan, Moussa can draw from a trans-national Tubu community, and his access to oil revenues through his force's participation in the Petroleum Guards bolsters his ability to recruit fighters.

Moussa, already one of the more prominent ethnic Tubu militant leaders in southern Libya, is becoming more powerful as a result of his association with the GNA and the possibility that he could become the powerbroker over some of Libya's best oil resources, which are located in this region. His association with the GNA is also important for the Tripoli-based government, as it has been seeking out local allies in southern Libya that can competently mobilize and deploy local security forces to take and hold oil resources and the oasis towns that are the main nodes in the trans-Saharan transit and smuggling routes

that run through Libya. Moussa, who has already developed a reputation as one of the more aggressive militant leaders in southern Libya, fits the model for the type of local leader with which the GNA is strenuously trying to network in this region. The relationship between the GNA and Moussa is symbiotic: he provides the Tripoli-based government with local muscle, and it provides him with legitimacy. Although Moussa's fortunes will depend on the degree to which the GNA can develop a network in southern Libya, the potential reward of having foreign patronage through the GNA, and the legitimacy to patrol and control trans-Saharan transit routes, makes Moussa a Libyan militant leader whose power could continue to grow.

Notes

[1] Jerome Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, Lost in Trans-Nation: Tubu and Other Armed Groups and Smugglers Along Libya's Southern Border, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, December 2018); Rebecca Murray, Southern Libya Destabilized: The Case of Ubari, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, April 2017).

[2] Jerome Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, Lost in Trans-Nation: Tubu and Other Armed Groups and Smugglers Along Libya's Southern Border, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, December 2018).

[3] Jerome Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, Lost in Trans-Nation: Tubu and Other Armed Groups and Smugglers Along Libya's Southern Border, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, December 2018); United Nations Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011), September 5, 2018; Rebecca Murray, Southern Libya Destabilized: The Case of Ubari, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, April 2017).

[4] United Nations Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011), September 5, 2018.

[5] Jerome Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, Lost in Trans-Nation: Tubu and Other Armed Groups and Smugglers Along Libya’s Southern Border, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, December 2018); Rebecca Murray, Southern Libya Destabilized: The Case of Ubari, (Geneva: Small Arms Survey, April 2017).

[6] United Nations Security Council, Final Report of the Panel of Experts on Libya Established Pursuant to Resolution 1973 (2011), September 5, 2018.

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Umm Umara—Al-Qaeda and Islamic State’s Mysterious Poetess and Jihadist Parenting Advisor

Halla Diyab

Background

The editor and occasional contributor to the al-Qaeda affiliated magazine *The Daughter of Islam*, Umm Umara al-Muhajirah, is carving out a new, female role within the terrorist movement through literature and art, since the launch of her magazine in September 2017. Umm Umara was once a member of Islamic State (IS), having signed a petition issued by “the jihadist Media Platform” in support of the hijra of IS poetess Ahlam Al Nasr ([Christian Dogma](#), November 11, 2014). Little is known about Umm Umara’s personal life; she was among IS’ first popular writers, but later turned to favor the group’s rival, al-Qaeda. She rose to prominence through the release of her book *Children in the Incubators of Jihad*, which provided a thorough insight into the jihadist perspective on child-rearing in the then-IS Caliphate ([Madamasr](#), October 20, 2017).

The Jihadist Educator

With an introduction written by the radical cleric Sheikh Omar Mahmood (a.k.a. Abu Qatada al-Falastini), Umm Umara’s book *Children in the Incubators of Jihad* highlights the crucial elements of the jihadist group’s perspective on raising children ([Bayaan](#), June 7, 2018). Umm Umara explains the necessity of militarizing children. This is done by introducing them to a system of all-encompassing militancy saying “their dreams, and conversations are militants, and their jokes are militant too” ([Madamasr](#), October 20, 2017). The children are to be taught the meaning of “martyrdom, death and paradise, and they will

be prepared for losing their fathers and one day to be orphans” ([Alhilalalyoum](#), August 7, 2018). Umm Umara then calls on mothers to be the “incubators of jihad” by raising the children. This role reflects Abu Qatada al-Falastini’s ideology on female jihadism, as he writes in the book’s introduction.

Umm Umara’s meticulously-crafted writing (in Arabic, of course) shows the transition of IS encouraging female militants to focus on waging violent jihad, towards pushing women to be intelligent educators who think thoroughly about the needs of child-rearing. For example, in her book, she records methods of raising children from age two until adolescence, giving tips on dealing with each stage’s challenges.

She gives an insurgent’s twist to modern insights into child education, warning mothers not to expose children from the age two until age three to “weapons, or pistols especially bombs and burning liquids.” She advises mothers to teach their children the English language, in order to learn the “language of the enemy.” Umm Umara then advises parents not to use violence towards their children even if they misbehave, garnering credibility and allowing her literature to be appealing to a wider audience, especially of Western-born jihadists.

Umm Umara’s books are believed to be part of the educational curriculum of IS schools (one of which was launched in southern Damascus, as announced by IS weekly *Al-Naba* in May 29, 2017) ([Aman-Dostor](#), February 1). Umm Umara has now adopted a role as a moderate educator who advises parents, especially mothers, not to expose their children to the horrific scenes of beheadings, and to make sure that weapons and explosions are out of children’s reach. This advice challenges hardcore militant educators, suggesting that she might be a Western-born jihadist who relocated to Syria to join the group.

Literary Couplings with World Renowned Militant Ideologues

Umm Umara’s collaboration with Abu Qatada al-Falastini in several publications reflects not only her prominent role within al-Qaeda’s ranks, but also her role as one half of an extremist team. Abu Qatada (born Omar Mahmoud Othman) is a renowned radical cleric who fought deportation from the United Kingdom to Jordan for eight years after being accused of being al-Qaeda’s spiritual propagandist. Despite his constant denial of any terrorist links, he was frequently imprisoned in the United Kingdom without formal charges. Abu Qatada is a significant figure within al-Qaeda who offered to free the British hostage Stephen Malcolm if the UK agreed to deport him to either a country of his choice or one of the countries that had witnessed the Arab Spring, but not to Jordan ([Sky News Arabia](#), April 30, 2012). Abu Qatada was finally flown out of the UK in July 2013 and later acquitted by Amman’s State Security Court of conspiracy to carry out terrorist acts ([YouTube](#), September 24, 2014).

By writing the introduction to Umm Umara’s book, Abu Qatada gives her an elevated significance within al-Qaeda. This kind of coupling has been a trend within IS as well, as can be seen with the poetess Ahlam al-Nasr and Mohamed Mahmoud (a.k.a Abu Usama al-Gharib). [1] These couplings are formed adopting an IS-approved template in which a woman will typically be paired with a more radical jihadist ideologist -- Abu Qatada, in the case of Umm Umara’s book. He also contributed to her latest magazine, *The Daughter of Islam*. The latest issue featured Umm Umara writing passionately about the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip being a part of a “generation of honor,” bringing into question whether she is Palestinian by origin or at least a passionate advocate of the Palestinian cause. Her constant association with Abu Qatada as part of one of

these ideological couplings to the Palestinian cause has allowed the reach of their voice and writing to rapidly gather global momentum (particularly on social media apps like Telegram), amassing their followers from across a vast variety of demographics.

Umm Umara's feminized approach enabled IS to garner a wider reach, particularly to women who can relate to the topics Umm Umara writes on. These topics range from beauty tips, to marriage, and to cooking. She advocates a morally humane ethic that is manifested in her writing, especially when it comes to parenting and civil matters related to punishment and reward, and the significance of dealing with its psychological impacts on children and teenagers. Umm Umara attempted to attract women to IS, arguing that they would perform a different kind of jihad at home that was as important as that done by men outside the household, by playing a significant role in child-rearing ([Ziber](#), October 2, 2017).

From IS to al-Qaeda

Umm Umara's apparent shift—taking place sometime in 2017—from dedicated IS propagandist to editor of an al-Qaeda-affiliated magazine provides deeper insight into her ideology. This decision could be seen not simply as a change in loyalty to another rival group. Instead, with the loss of the physical IS caliphate, the decision could be a pretext for Umm Umara to maintain her outreach to female jihadists, with the aim of giving them hope for the continuity of jihad beyond the dissolution of its territorial state. Abu Qatada -- who has been a critic of IS, describing the group as a “bubble soon to burst” during his appearance before the Jordanian court, may have enticed Umm Umara to switch to al-Qaeda ([YouTube](#), September 7, 2014).

Umm Umara often alternates between the language of an educator who gives tips on

raising children, to writing on the role of female jihadists and drawing parallels to the heroism and honor of Gazans. Umm Umara attempts to humanize female jihadists as mothers who are responsible for their children. She has taken on the role of a jihadist child education advisor, referencing the use of a non-violent approach to raising children and avoiding exposing them to terrifying images of beheading. The woman with a worldview saturated by the beliefs of Islamist extremism, started her path to radicalization by writing several books that stand as a guide to jihadist mothers and their hijra to the land of Islam (Syria). It is this uniquely manipulative rhetoric that made her an important female militant in the Islamic State organizational structure, and now makes her a valuable propagandist to al-Qaeda.

The Rising Genre of Militarized Jihadist Feminism

Umm Umara pioneered the writing of textbooks and educational materials for children raised in the Caliphate. However, with her turn to al-Qaeda, her writing has grown into the women's magazine *The Daughter of Islam*. Though this women-oriented magazine seemingly gives tips about beauty, parenting, marriage, cooking, etc., it is a feminine publication that is implicitly militarized. In some of its issues, especially in articles written by Umm Umara in the Ramadan issue, she relates the necessity of waging jihad during Ramadan to historical Islamic Muslim battles that took place during the same holy Muslim month (the 17th of Ramadan), during which the Battle of Badr took place. [2] She goes further to describe Ramadan as the month of battles and triumphs, in reference to the early wars with Mecca fought by the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, enticing jihadists to increase the number of suicide bombings ([Akhbarak](#), May 8).

Analyzing *The Daughter of Islam* could explain the IS and al-Qaeda's encouragement of women jihadists. The magazine—which is a high-quality production—attempts to embolden women to take on greater responsibilities within jihadist groups, such as becoming mujahideen and dealing with challenges in the jihadist refugee camps created following the fall of the Caliphate.

Most jihadist poetry is written by IS men and records their jihadist experience. *The Daughter of Islam*, however, allows women the chance to deconstruct and examine their role in jihadist organizations. The magazine has the further benefit of allowing for longer form content, unlike the compact tweets of jihadist brides and recruiters which were popular among IS foreign fighters.

Conclusion

Umm Umara's sudden shift from IS loyalist to a literary militant figure in al-Qaeda publications does not necessarily reflect a wider change of loyalty among the community of female insurgents. However, both groups are emphasizing their narrative through literary publications, in order to attract a greater number of sympathetic female militants, which would bolster their insurgencies. The publications, and the works of militants like Umm Umara, also provide hope to sympathetic audiences after the fall of the Caliphate's physical territory, as their own experiences can be reflected in an art form or in textbooks. This cements the ideology in their minds, adding to the influence of the terrorist group.

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Notes

[1] Ahlam al-Nasr is a Syrian revolutionary poetess turned Islamic State propagandist ([Jamestown Special Report - Women in Jihad](#), March 6).

[2] The Battle of Badr is a key battle in the early days of Islam and a turning point in the Prophet Muhammad's struggle with his enemies which has been considered a crucial victory in Islamic history, despite the few numbers of Muslims who fought in support of the Prophet.

An In-Depth Look at Hani Bin Burayk: The UAE's New Master of Aden

Rafid Jaboori

In August, Hani Bin Burayk, the Salafist cleric and militia commander from southern Yemen, called for the full mobilization of his troops in order to take control of the city of Aden, the seat of the internationally recognized government of Yemen since the Houthis pushed its forces out of the capital, Sana'a, in early 2015 ([Whatsnewsye](#), August 7). Bin Burayk, who is the deputy head of the largest southern secessionist group, the Southern Transitional Council (STC), which enjoys significant support from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), claimed that the guard of the presidential palace had opened fire on secessionist protesters. He led his men in the fighting that followed and lasted for several days. On August 11, the STC captured the presidential palace in the Ma'asheeq district, the last symbol of President Hadi's government in Aden ([AA](#), August 10). The STC's seizure of Aden is a significant turning point in the ongoing Yemen civil war as the southern secessionists have gained full control of the city, the capital of the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), or South Yemen. [1] The operation has also shown the power and influence of Bin Burayk, who has transformed the traditional Salafist movement in Yemen through controversial policies and made it—with the backing of the UAE—an essential component of the secessionist movement.

The STC takeover of Aden came just a few weeks after the UAE's surprise announcement of withdrawal from Yemen ([Adenalaan](#), June 28). It is still unclear if the UAE is going to leave behind some kind of residual military presence in Yemen, or withdraw its forces completely. Either way, the STC's undisputed control of

Aden puts both the UAE and STC in a stronger position to negotiate in the future. The recent events were considered an indication of serious divisions between the UAE and its ally in the Yemen war, Saudi Arabia. Yet Saudi forces did not interfere to stop the STC from gaining control of Aden. Instead, it called for negotiations and a ceasefire after Bin Burayk and his men gained full control of the city. A similar attempt to capture the city by Bin Burayk and the STC in February 2018 was stopped by a Saudi-UAE sponsored agreement ([Yemen Shabab](#), February 1, 2018).

Clash of Commitments

In his victory speech, Bin Burayk greeted the rulers of both Saudi Arabia and the UAE and emphasized his commitment to the Saudi-led coalition ([Nhadramout](#), August 11; [YouTube](#), August 11). [2]

That was expected from a man seeking greater recognition and a larger role for his movement, but the coalition he paid lip service to has significantly disintegrated since the UAE announced its withdrawal. Bin Burayk said that he still recognizes President Hadi as a transitional president, but he condemned the Islah party of the Muslim Brotherhood, which dominates Hadi's government. Exactly like their UAE backers, Bin Burayk and the STC at large despise al-Islah, although they have both been fighting the Iran-backed Houthis in the civil war. [3] The fall of Aden was not followed by a declaration of secession from Yemen, but the position of the STC and its deputy chief Bin Burayk is now more powerful than at any other moment in the four-year-old civil war. The group will be vital in any settlement of the Yemeni conflict.

Yemen has been one of the most important countries for the Salafi-jihadist movement. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which

has been based in Yemen since its inception in 2009 after the merger of the Yemeni and Saudi branches of al-Qaeda, is the group's most active branch anywhere in the world. Islamic State (IS) has also started a Yemeni branch in 2014. But Yemen had a significant traditional Salafist following before the beginning of the civil war, which was largely apolitical and therefore enjoyed significant support from the regime of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh. Hani Bin Burayk joined the Salafist movement in the 1980s after it was founded by Sheikh Moqbil al-Wada'ai. Along with thousands of Salafist students, he studied theology at the Ahl al-Hadeeth institute that was established in Dumaj in Sa'ada province. Dumaj was the hometown of Sheikh al-Wada'ai, but also the heartland of the Zaidi faith, the form of Shia Islam followed by the Houthis, and later the Houthi movement itself.

After the widespread upheaval of the 2011 Arab Spring, Yemen was plunged into civil war. Friction turned into hostilities between the Houthis and their neighbors. The Houthis, who gained a significant boost to their influence after the fall of Saleh, launched a siege on Bin Burayk and his fellow Salafists in Dumaj. The battle ended with the Houthis winning and forcing the Salafists out of the area completely, representing a major blow to the Salafist movement and a personal loss for Bin Burayk ([Alomanaa](#), August 25, 2016).

The siege of Dumaj was also a sign of the early break in relations between Bin Burayk and the Salafist movement. He had remained loyal to the traditional Salafist approach of not meddling in politics, but he was also known for his support for Yemeni unity despite being from the south. Bin Burayk would later abandon both the Salafist movement and his commitment to Yemeni unity, joining the southern secessionist movement. He quickly became one of its most prominent figures.

Following the loss of Dumaj, he returned to Aden and joined the southern resistance council, which the southerners started after the war broke out. The group could not stop the advance of the Houthi and Saleh alliance, which overran Aden in 2015. But Bin Burayk had managed to strike an alliance with the UAE. Abu Dhabi chose him and other secessionist figures as local partners in Yemen. He played a key role in the battle retaking Aden from the Houthis in July 2015 ([Al-Ain](#), June 2).

Securing Aden after its liberation was important. Bin Burayk formed the Security Belt, the militia that would prove itself to be so effective, which led the UAE to form similar regional militias in other parts of southern Yemen. In January 2016, Bin Burayk became a member of the Aden-based government's cabinet along with other UAE-backed members of the secessionist movement ([Aden-Time](#), January 9, 2016).

Assassinations of Salafists

As he consolidated his position in Aden, Bin Burayk needed full control of religious affairs in the city. The main obstacle, however, was apparently his own people. His ascendancy had already earned him the anger and condemnation of Salafist clerics, who issued a statement condemning him, his involvement in politics and his service to the enemies of Islam ([Hunaaden](#), October 29, 2017).

While that did not weaken Bin Burayk's authority, the enmity of other Salafists towards him grew stronger, as he was accused of ordering the assassinations of prominent Salafist clerics. After a series of assassinations and despite the criticisms, he gained control of the network of Salafist Imams in Aden ([Al-Jazeera](#), July 19).

As the power of the Security Belt grew, it also gained control of the strategic positions of Aden.

Bin Burayk was a member of the powerful secessionist group within the government. He formed an alliance with General Aidarous al-Zubeidi, the governor of Aden and Shalal al-Shaya'a, and together they were the real power on the ground in Aden. This lasted until April 2017, when Hadi removed both men from their positions, along with other secessionist senior officials ([Yemen Press](#), April 28, 2017).

The Formation of the STC

As a direct response to President Hadi's decision, Bin Burayk and al-Zubeidi formed the STC on May 4, 2017. Al-Zubeidi became head of the STC and Bin Burayk his deputy ([Almawqea Post](#), May 11, 2017). With significant UAE backing, the STC became the most powerful secessionist group. However, the STC has not yet fulfilled its goal of being the sole body that represents the secessionist movement. There are other secessionist groups and there are also many southern Yemenis who do not support secession.

It was always clear that the UAE had a different strategy in Yemen than Saudi Arabia. The UAE has always put its confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood, not only in Yemen but across the region, as a top priority. The UAE was never comfortable with the Islah party dominating President Hadi's government (See [Terrorism Monitor](#), April 23, 2018). That led to an important role for Bin Burayk in the UAE's strategy in Yemen. He has power and influence in the Salafist movement, which could be employed against jihadists and Muslim Brotherhood. He also has the power of his position in the southern secessionist movement, which represents the aspiration of many southern Yemenis to reclaim the sovereignty of the PDRY. Bin Burayk and al-Zubeidi became friends of Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed, the crown prince of Abu Dhabi and the minister of defense, frequently visiting him.

The STC control of Aden came as a strategic move in the period following the UAE withdrawal. But it is also important to note that Bin Burayk plays a role in setting the timing of events. Only a few days before he started the escalation in Aden, there were calls to hold him accountable for human rights abuses. His recent advances will make him more immune to accountability. ([Mareb Press](#), July 18).

Bin Burayk and al-Qaeda

Both AQAP and IS remain a threat. IS played a major role in inciting the recent events when, on August 2, it launched one of its most daring attacks on a police station, which killed 13 Aden police officers. This attack came the day after a Houthi missile strike killed 36 members of the Security Belt ([Al-Arabiya](#), August 2).

The coincidence of the two attacks was a reminder of how different conflicts in Yemen could correlate to cause greater crises. Just as Bin Burayk accuses his enemies of being members of the Muslim Brotherhood or jihadists, in their eyes he is a secret member of AQAP or IS. The rift between various groups in Yemen—including President Hadi's loyalists, al-Islah, and Bin Burayk's STC—will only give IS and AQAP more space to operate and possibly more opportunities to strike. The UAE strategy in Yemen was praised for working closely with local groups such as Bin Burayk's. However, there were reports in local and international media suggesting that some of the main battles against AQAP were never actually fought, but rather the UAE paid money and arranged tribal mediation to facilitate jihadist withdrawals and arrange local militia control ([Al-Araby](#), August 6, 2018).

Bin Burayk's recent victory in Aden was neither a move towards focusing attention on the jihadists nor a blow to the Houthis. The latter signaled that they would accept the STC as a partner in future national dialogue, a series of

negotiations mediated by the UN. It is helpful for the Houthis not to appear as the sole rebel movement challenging an internationally recognized government ([Masrawy](#), August 10).

Conclusion

Bin Burayk's relationship with the UAE will be very important too. In the past he managed to switch sides and change convictions, which led to his current position. In an environment like Yemen's, the UAE will need him in the future. But the UAE has its own agenda in Yemen, which includes dominating the port of Aden, the Socotra archipelago, and the maritime routes. If Bin Burayk does not deliver a continued containment of jihadists and continued confrontation with the Muslim Brotherhood on behalf of the UAE, his power will be questioned.

The capture of Aden did not lead to immediate secession, and Bin Burayk said in his speech that they would wait and be part of the transitional period until a settlement of the conflict is reached. The STC will now be under pressure to deliver something to the people of southern Yemen, who were promised that their land would prosper as a result of relations with the UAE.

The UAE will unlikely back full independence for the south. The current situation ensures that it has significant influence over the STC, but that could change if the south becomes a sovereign independent state. Bin Burayk has now recaptured his city twice in the war, once from the Iran-backed Houthis in 2015 and now from the Hadi government and its Islah partner. Bin Burayk and his STC are now the government, and delivering services and stability could well prove to be more difficult than defeating armies.

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several other events. He is an expert in militant groups in the Middle East.

Notes

[1] The PDRY was formed in 1967 after the end of the British colonial rule of Aden and neighboring protectorates in southern Arabian Peninsula. The PDRY was ruled by the Marxist Yemeni Socialist Party, which was backed by the Soviet Union. In May 1990, Yemeni unification was declared and the PDRY joined The Arab Republic of Yemen, or North Yemen, and Yemen thereby became one country under the rule of the north's President Ali Abdullah Saleh. In 1994, an attempt by the south to secede led to a civil war that Saleh won overwhelmingly with the help of al-Islah party.

[2] Bin Burayk forces captured Aden on the eve of Eid al-Adha festival, which is one of the most prominent occasions on the Muslim calendar. He dedicated the Eid al-Adha prayer and the speech traditionally attached to it to talk about the victory in Aden.

[3] The STC and southern Yemenis frequently stress that there was bad blood between them and al-Islah from the days of the 1994 civil war; when al-Islah forces, along with president Salhe's, invaded the south and reportedly committed atrocities.

[4] The Houthis, in their early stage as a merely Zaidi traditional religious group, enjoyed support from Saleh. But they launched an insurrection between 2004 and the end of Saleh's rein. Some historic accounts cite the Sunni Salafist institute in Saada as one of the reasons behind the rise of the Houthis and their militant brand of Zaidi Shia Islam.

Power and Rebellion in Chad: A Profile of Rebel Leader Mahamat Nouri Allatchi

Andrew McGregor

At 72 years of age, Chad's General Mahamat Nouri Allatchi has survived numerous battles, headed a series of rebel movements, and evaded repercussions for being a close associate of one of Africa's worst mass murderers. Now, however, this veteran soldier and politician is facing prosecution in France for alleged war crimes.

With nearly 200 ethnic groups and a roughly 60-40 split between Muslims and Christians, governing Chad is a formidable task. Since the murder of its first president in 1975, Chad's Christian south has played only a minimal role in national politics, which is now dominated by nomadic and semi-nomadic Muslims of Chad's north and east, particularly the Tubu, Tama, Arab, and Zaghawa peoples. The latter, despite representing only roughly 3% of the population, have become disproportionately powerful. [1]

Complicating the issue of governance is Chad's status as one of the most corrupt and impoverished nations on earth. The discovery of over one billion barrels of oil inside Chad has not eased a seemingly intractable humanitarian crisis – despite the best efforts of the World Bank, much of the money that has flowed through Chad's capital of N'Djamena has been spent on arms or disappeared into the accounts of the country's leaders. Most notable of these is Chad's president, Idriss Déby Itno, who has not relinquished power since seizing it in 1990.

In this stagnant political atmosphere, scores of rebel movements have emerged in the last three decades, though few seem to have any kind of plan other than to simply take power for themselves. As noted by one observer,

In Chad, armed violence is one of several modes of intervention in the political field. From the point of view of those who resort to such actions, engaging in politics by force of arms is neither more nor less commonplace than engaging in politics without arms, even if the results are not the same. [2]

Early Career

Mahamat Nouri was born in 1947 at Faya Largeau as a member of the Anakaza sub-group of the Gura'an, part of the larger Daza Tubu ethnic group.

Nouri worked in northern Chad as a postal official until sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s, when he joined a northern rebel movement fighting the southern-dominated government of François Tombalbaye, who was attempting to institutionalize the animist rituals of his southern Sara people (*Jeune Afrique*, February 11, 2008). Nouri served in the Second Army of the *Front de libération nationale du Tchad* (FROLINAT – National Liberation Front of Chad) alongside two future Chadian presidents, Goukouni Oueddei (Tumaghera clan of the Daza Tubu), and Hissène Habré (an Anakaza Gura'an, like Nouri). When a 1976 dispute between Oueddei and Habré shattered the movement's unity, Nouri followed Habré into a new group, the *Forces Armées du Nord* (FAN).

Tombalbaye was killed in a *coup d'état* led by southerner General Félix Malloum (Sara) in April 1975. Nouri was given the sensitive job of negotiating the Khartoum peace accord on behalf of FAN in 1978. The accord created a coalition government with General Malloum in which Habré was made prime minister and vice-president. Nouri's loyalty to Habré was rewarded by his appointment as interior minister in the new government. The coalition collapsed in February 1979; Malloum resigned in March and a new national unity government was formed with Goukouni Oueddei at its head.

Chad entered a period of multi-sided armed political struggle, with Oueddei and Habré as the main contenders. Oueddei appealed to Libyan leader Mu'ammarr Qaddafi for military assistance in December 1980, enabling the president to force Habré and his troops out of the capital. Eventually, the FAN returned and took control in 1982, installing Habré as president. Nouri was given the post of Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation. By 1984, he was a leading figure in Chad's sole legal political party. [3]

Nouri played a leading role as a military commander in the August 1987 Battle of Aouzou that helped end the so-called "Toyota War" (1986-1987) and expel Libya forces from northern Chad, where Qaddafi had tried to seize the allegedly uranium-rich Aouzou Strip (an International Court of Justice decision awarded Aouzou to Chad in 1994).

Nouri somehow evaded the consequences of his close association to the much-hated Habré. It is difficult to imagine that Nouri, Habré's confidant and defense minister, could have remained unaware and uninvolved in the Habré regime's reign of terror, during which some 40,000 people were executed or died in detention ([Le Monde/ AFP](#), May 17, 2013). Habré received a life sentence for various crimes against humanity from an African Union court in Senegal in 2016.

In Government

One of Habré's leading generals, Idriss Déby Itno (Bideyat Zaghawa), led a column of rebels across Chad from their Darfur base in December 1990, forcing Habré to flee the country, never to return. Displaying remarkable political survival skills, Nouri joined the new administration in several leading posts, including Minister of Health, Minister of the Interior, Minister of Livestock, and Minister of Defense from 2001 to 2003. After a bout of ill health, Nouri was made ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 2004 to 2006.

Nouri resigned his post in 2006 after a dispute over funding of the Chadian embassy and Nouri returned to the field as a rebel and leader of the newly founded and mostly Gura'an *Union des forces pour le progrès et la démocratie* (UFPD – Union of Forces for Progress and Democracy) ([Ejchos](#) [N'Djamena], May 11-14, 2006).

First Assault on N'Djamena, 2006

Desertion of officers and men from the *Armée nationale tchadienne* (ANT – National Army of Chad) together with their arms and equipment began to plague the army, with many joining the armed opposition. Supported by Sudan, which was feuding with the Déby regime, rebels of the *Forces unies pour le changement* (FUC – United Forces for Change) coalition led by Mahamat Nour launched a mass attack on N'Djamena in April 2006. Mahamat Nour (not to be confused with the subject of this profile) was the leader of the largely Tama *Rassemblement pour la démocratie et la liberté* (RDL – Assembly for Democracy and Liberty), which later became the core of the FUC.

The French garrison in N'Djamena provided Déby with important logistical and intelligence support that helped save the Déby regime. With support from Khartoum, the rebels formed a stronger coalition in October 2006, the *Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement* (UFDD - Union of Forces for Democracy and Development). The coalition included Nouri's own UFPD, part of the FUC and the *Conseil démocratique révolutionnaire* (CDR – Revolutionary Democratic Council), led by Acheikh Ibn 'Umar Sa'id (Awlad Rashid Arab and, like Nouri, a former minister in Habré's government) ([Le Figaro](#), October 15, 2007). Only hours after issuing its founding statement, 800 men and 70 vehicles left their bases inside Darfur and launched attacks in eastern Chad on Goz Beïda, the capital of Dar Sila, and Am Timan, capital of the Salamat department (Chad is divided by departments, similar to states or provinces in

other countries) (*Le Figaro*, October 26, 2006). The UFDD was a potent coalition, but failed to bring in many Tama and Bideyat rebels who remained loyal to Mahamat Nour.

The coalition soon expanded to a total of 3,000 men from a variety of ethnic groups, including the Gura'an, Arabs, Bideyat, and Maba. [4] Schisms in the rebel camp continued, however, and Acheikh Ibn 'Umar left in May 2007 with most of the UFDD's Arabs to form the UFDD-Fondamentale together with veteran Arab rebel 'Abd al-Wahid Aboud Makaye (Salamat Arab).

In November 2006, the UFDD was joined by Arabs of the *Concorde nationale du Tchad* (CNT - National Concord of Chad), led by Hassan Saleh al-Gaddam "al-Jineidi" (Hemat Arab) and Bideyat of the *Rassemblement des forces démocratiques* (RaFD - Assembly of Democratic Forces) to carry out attacks on the towns of Am Zoer and Biltine in eastern Chad. Nouri's forces went on to carry out a raid on Abéché, occupying the capital of Wadai province for 24 hours. [5]

The RaFD was a Bideyat rebel movement led by twin brothers Tom and Timan Erdimi, who are also cousins (sometimes described as nephews or even uncles of the president). The brothers were formerly close to Déby and held various cabinet posts and important posts before abandoning the government in favor of rebellion in December 2005. [6]

Khartoum continued to show confidence in Nouri by supplying his group with vehicles, arms and other war materiel. Nouri disclosed that the UFDD strategy would now involve attrition of the Chadian army through hit and run attacks, with a final assault on N'Djamena when the time was right. [7]

Peace talks were sponsored by Mu'ammar Qaddafi and mediated by Goukouni Oueddei. Nouri and other rebel leaders signed a peace agreement at Sirte in October 2007. The agreement was short-lived, however, with the

UFDD and three other rebel movements launching new attacks in eastern Libya in what was widely described as the worst fighting in Chad in over 20 years. Both sides suffered heavy losses and Nouri's UFDD, hit hard by heavy arms acquired with Chad's new oil wealth, was forced to withdraw and regroup (*AFP*, December 9, 2007).

Second Assault on N'Djamena, 2008

With Khartoum's encouragement, the UFDD, the FUC and the *Rassemblement des forces pour le changement* (RFC - Assembly of Forces for Change, the reorganized RaFD) of Timane Erdimi created a unified but ultimately three-headed command to mount a new assault on N'Djamena. The RFC's Zaghawa troops remained the object of suspicion by other rebels for belonging to the same ethnic group as the president and his closest supporters.

In late January 2008, the rebels set off from their bases in Darfur in three columns to depose the Déby regime, crossing 1,000 miles of desert with 2,000 men and approximately 300 vehicles. At Massaguet, 78 kilometers from N'Djamena, the rebels repelled an attack by the Chadian Army in bitter fighting that killed the ANT chief-of-staff, General Daoud Soumain. Fighters belonging to the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a Darfur rebel movement led by Zaghawa and supported by Chad, joined Déby's forces and withdrew into the capital with the defeated army. The Chadian rebels arrived in N'Djamena the next day, February 2, 2008, and quickly took most of the city.

The president was still unwilling to give up even though the battle reached the gates of the presidential palace on February 3. However, this did not prevent Nouri and Timane Erdimi from quarrelling in the midst of the unfinished battle over who would have supreme command over a new regime. This dissension at the top and an unwillingness by the rebels to take orders from anyone not belonging to the same movement

weakened the assault as French forces again supplied logistics and intelligence to the Déby loyalists. Chadian helicopters operated from the French-protected airport, using French targeting information and (allegedly) Algerian mercenary pilots to pound rebel positions, driving them out of the city ([TchadActuel](#), February 17, 2008). Chadian armor took a heavy toll on the lightly-armed rebels; Nouri later remarked: “Pick-ups can do nothing against a tank” ([RFI](#), February 2, 2009). Hundreds of dead civilians, rebels and soldiers covered the streets of the capital while hospitals tried to deal with thousands of wounded.

The failure of a UFDD column to arrive in time with ammunition and reinforcements due to JEM attacks also contributed to the collapse of the final push on the presidential palace ([Sudan Tribune](#), February 8, 2018). In August 2008, Nouri was one of 11 rebel leaders sentenced to death *in absentia* by the criminal court of N’Djamena for his part in the assault on the capital ([Le Monde/AFP](#), August 15, 2008).

The failure in N’Djamena prompted the formation of yet another rebel alliance with Nouri at its head – the *Alliance nationale* (AN). Joining the UFDD were the UFDD-F, the *Union des forces pour le changement et la Démocratie* (UFCD - Union of Forces for Change and Democracy, mostly Arabs from Wadai under Colonel Adouma Hassaballah Jedareb), and the *Front pour le salut de la République* (FSR - Front for the Salvation of the Republic), led by General Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane, an Arab of the Mahamid branch of the Rizayqat tribe. However, Adouma and many of the Arabs soon left the coalition to form yet another movement, the *Union des forces de la résistance* (UFR – Union of Resistance Forces) over concerns Nouri was too tightly controlled by Khartoum ([AFP](#), March 12, 2008).

Déby responded to the attack on N’Djamena by supporting a May 2008 JEM strike on Khartoum

that nearly toppled President Omar al-Bashir. When the attack failed, Chad moved half its army (9,000 men) and three Russian-built attack helicopters up to the Sudanese border in anticipation of a retaliatory attack by the SAF ([Le Monde](#), May 13, 2008).

Exile

Khartoum and N’Djamena finally tired of the very dangerous game they were playing and reached a rapprochement in 2010 that brought an end to support for cross-border insurgent groups. No longer needed, their leaders were sent away. Nouri was deported from Sudan to Qatar in 2010 and left for France a year later, where he was eventually joined by his deputy, Mahamat Mahdi ‘Ali. [8] Erdimi headed to exile in Qatar while many rebels headed north to lightly-governed southern Libya or south to join Muslim Séléka rebels in the northern Central African Republic (CAR).

Nouri criticized the conditions of his residence in France, noting that “although I am sentenced to death in my country, I am not entitled to political asylum [in France]. Proof that the relations between Paris and Déby are good!” ([Paris Match](#), April 23, 2016).

Nouri was one of four Habré associates for whom the Chadian Justice Ministry issued international arrest warrants in May 2013. The rebel leader protested (unconvincingly) that he had only dealt with international relations and managed Air Tchad, asking: “Where have I committed crimes?” ([Le Monde/AFP](#), May 17, 2013).

In 2015, Nouri sent Mahamat Mahdi ‘Ali to Libya to try to revive the UFDD. A member of the Kecherda sub-group of the Daza Tubu, Mahamat Mahdi recruited mainly from the Kecherda and the closely related Kreda, another Daza Tubu sub-group. With Nouri still in Paris, Mahamat Mahdi tried bringing the revived UFDD under his personal control, allowing

them to be used as mercenaries by Misrata Islamists, but bloody clashes with Nouri's Anakaza Gura'an supporters forced Mahamat Mahdi to leave the UFDD in March 2016 to form a new rebel group, the *Front pour l'alternance et la concorde au Tchad* (FACT – Front for Change and Concord in Chad). [9] Nouri responded negatively to the creation of FACT, describing it as nothing more than “a group of mercenaries in the pay of Misrata whose mission is to establish the power of Libyan Islamists in Jufra [central Libya]” ([Paris Match](#), April 23, 2016).

In a 2016 interview, Nouri noted that under existing conditions, another 2008-style drive on N'Djamena was unlikely. Bases in Sudan were no longer available and Libya was an unsuitable launching point. Nonetheless, he suggested Déby could count only on the Presidential Guard as “resistance” was growing in both civil society and the army ([Paris Match](#), April 23, 2016).

France imposed financial sanctions for a period of six months on Mahamat Nouri on January 19, 2017 under a provision of the French Monetary and Financial Code that allows for restrictions on financial assets belonging to “persons who commit, or attempt to commit, acts of terrorism” ([Le Monde](#), June 23). Nouri insisted he had no funds to freeze and claimed he was the victim of a “politico-judicial cabal assembled from scratch by the French authorities” designed to deliver him into the hands of Chadian authorities ([Al-Wihda](#) [N'Djamena], June 25, 2018).

Amid growing concern over the activities of Chadian mercenaries in Libya, Nouri was among 23 Chadians for whom the Libyan Attorney General issued international arrest warrants on January 3, 2019.

After Chadian authorities reported the defection of 400 UFDD fighters to the government in March, Nouri responded that the real figure was “85 to 86,” the rest being either artisanal gold miners responding to a new ban on such work in

northern Chad or army deserters turned rebel who wished to take advantage of an amnesty proclaimed in May 2018 ([Al-Wihda](#) [N'Djamena], March 14). Some of the defectors were ambushed by a Daju militia known as the “Toro Boro” near the point where they were to rendezvous with Chadian Army forces just south of the Libya-Chad border, suffering seven dead ([Al-Wihda](#) [N'Djamena], March 9). [NOTE: The Al-Whida link did not work.]

Arrest in Paris, 2019

Nouri was arrested by French police on June 17 after a two-year investigation by French prosecutors ([Le Monde](#), June 23). Fellow exiles Abakar Tollimi and 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abd al-Karim were arrested at the same time (the latter was subsequently released due to a lack of evidence).

Among other charges, Nouri was accused of the forced recruitment of combatants between 2005 and 2010, including minors ([RFI](#), June 22). When questioned by a French judge over claims in a UN report regarding the use of child soldiers, Nouri responded that the children depicted in the report's photos were actually southerners with no involvement in Nouri's northern rebel movement, basing his identification on the absence of the “finer nose” of the northern people. His lawyer, Elise Le Gall, appears ready to exploit the difficulty experienced by outsiders in understanding the complex structure and organization of Chad's rebel movements to move for a nullification of the indictment ([Le Monde](#), June 23).

The case is being handled by the *Office central de lutte contre les crimes contre l'humanité, les génocides et les crimes de guerre* (OCLCH – Central Office for Combatting Crimes Against Humanity, Genocide and War Crimes), which operates under universal jurisdiction, allowing it to arrest and try individuals on French territory for crimes committed elsewhere ([France24.com/AFP](#), June 17).

Conclusion

In early February, a column of UFR rebels (mainly Zaghawa and Tama) tried to cross through Tibesti into Chad after fighting as mercenaries in Libya's internal conflicts since 2013. From February 3 to 6, the column was struck 20 times by seven French Mirage aircraft working out of N'Djamena and Niamey. The attempt to reinsert the rebels into Chad was shattered and as many as 250 fighters were captured by ANT forces with the intention of trying them as terrorists (*Al-Wihda* [N'Djamena], February 9; [RFI](#), February 7).

Though the UFR forces did not include the UFDD, the message was clear: France, which is using N'Djamena as headquarters for its counter-terrorist Operation Barkhane, is not prepared to tolerate any armed challenge to the Déby regime, its major African military partner.

The ANT, with active deployments against Islamist militants and other groups in Chad, Niger, Cameroon and the CAR, is badly overstretched at the moment, leaving Déby's security reliant on the discreet support of the French. In this sense, Mahamat Nouri has become the victim of a greater struggle against Islamist terrorism in which Nouri and other Chadian rebel leaders have become disposable irritants.

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Notes

[1] The Zaghawa consist of four sub-groups: the Zaghawa Kobe, who live mostly in Chad and form the largest Zaghawa group; the Zaghawa Wogi, who are split between Chad and the Sudan; the Bideyat, who are concentrated in the Ennedi Massif of northeastern Chad; and the Borogat, who are a mix of Zaghawa and Gura'an Tubu.

[2] Marielle Debos, *Living by the Gun in Chad: Combatants, Impunity and State Formation*, Zed Books, London, 2016

[3] Samuel Decalo, *Historical Dictionary of Chad*, Scarecrow Press, 1987, p.236.

[4] Jérôme Tubiana, "La guerre par procuration entre le Tchad et le Soudan et la « darfourisation » du Tchad: Mythes et réalité," *Small Arms Survey*, April 2008, <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/HSBA-WP-12-Chad-Sudan-Proxy-War-french.pdf>

[5] *Ibid*

[6] For the Erdimi brothers, see: "A Family Affair: The Erdimi Twins and the Zaghawa Battle for Chad," *Militant Leadership Monitor*, July 30, 2010.

[7] Roy May and Simon Massey: "Chad: Politics and Security," *Writenet*, March 2007, <https://web.archive.org/web/20070612230327/http://www.unhcr.org/home/RSDCOI/46384cde2.pdf>

[8] For Mahamat Mahdi 'Ali, see: "Rebel or Mercenary? A Profile of Chad's General Mahamat Mahdi Ali," *Militant Leadership Monitor*, September 7, 2017

[9] Jérôme Tubiana and Claudio Gramizzi, "Tubu Trouble: State and Statelessness in the Chad-Sudan-Libya Triangle," *Small Arms Survey*, Geneva, 2017, <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/working-papers/SAS-CAR-WP43-Chad-Sudan-Libya.pdf>

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