

Terrorism Monitor

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Nigeria's Ansaru Raises Profile on al-Qaeda's Media Agenda

Jacob Zenn

After several years of a media hiatus following Boko Haram Shekau faction's and Islamic State in West Africa Province's (ISWAP) attacks, al-Qaeda's de facto Nigerian branch known as Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis-Sudan (Ansaru) reemerged in October 2019 with a photograph of three fighters in a forest ([HumAngle](#), January 20, 2020; [Twitter.com/@caleb_weiss](#), January 17). This was in northwestern Nigeria, where Ansaru had relocated to escape the Shekau faction and ISWAP in northeastern Nigeria ([Terrorism Monitor](#), July 28, 2020). Ansaru also began linking with bandits to conduct attacks against Christian villages and

government officials while continuing to fight rogue marauders as part of the group's Muslim civilian-centric ideology ([DailyTrust.com](#), October 6, 2021).

More recently, on January 15, the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), which has long published al-Qaeda propaganda and issued the October 2019 photograph, announced that it would begin exclusively distributing Ansaru's messages ([Twitter.com/@jihadoScope](#), January 15). This was Ansaru's highest profile media endorsement since the group's formation in 2012, which involved YouTube videos and occasional statements posted on jihadist web forums ([Youtube](#), July 9, 2012). Without delay, on January 16, for the first time in Ansaru's history, GIMF released photographs of an attack executed by the group. It involved Ansaru detonating improvised explosive devices

(IEDs) against “apostate gunmen,” who were likely Nigerian soldiers or their allied vigilantes on motorcycles ([Twitter.com/@calibreobscura](https://twitter.com/@calibreobscura), January 16).

Two weeks before Ansaru’s integration with GIMF, on January 3, the group also announced it had pledged loyalty to al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) ([Twitter.com/@G88Daniele](https://twitter.com/@G88Daniele), January 3). This was nearly ten years after AQIM approved Ansaru’s split from Boko Haram due to Shekau’s “deviance and excesses” ([al-Andalus](https://www.al-andalus.com), March 2017). Thus, Ansaru’s place within al-Qaeda’s affiliate and media system is becoming more evident. In addition, its operational profile is on the rise, given the support of GIMF, al Shabaab and other affiliates that are also reporting on Ansaru ([Calamada.com](https://www.calamada.com), January 22).

Despite this, Ansaru is not in the clear yet. Its rivals in Boko Haram had begun expanding into northwestern Nigeria well before an ISWAP offensive led to Shekau self-detonating a suicide bomb in May 2021. However, Shekau loyalists remain active in the region even after their leader’s death, and are still raiding northwestern Nigerian villages (punch.ng, January 16). Boko Haram’s longstanding animosity toward Ansaru stems from two issues: first, it resents the group for separating from Shekau in 2011; and second, for its decision to avoid the declaration of *takfir* (excommunication) on Muslims for not waging jihad. This implies Boko Haram will be among the forces to target Ansaru and spoil its attempted “comeback” in northwestern Nigeria. Altogether, this pressure on Ansaru will exist alongside the ongoing pursuit of it by Nigerian soldiers and vigilantes, who also are seeking to root out this militant group from its forest bases.

Jacob Zenn is the Editor of Terrorism Monitor.

Islamic State’s Surprise Prison Break in Hassaka, Syria

Jacob Zenn

On January 20, Islamic State (IS) carried out a major prison break in Hassaka, Syria to free around 800 of its soldiers who had been detained since the collapse of IS’ caliphate in 2019. IS, therefore, fulfilled one of its major obligations to free captive co-fighters, which it has promised in numerous videos and publications. In addition, IS showed that it was waging a strategically patient insurgency, and that it could field 80 fighters and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (IEDs) for the prison break despite little activity in Hassaka in the previous several years.

However, the Kurdish-led Syrian Defence Forces (SDF), which guard the al-Sina prison in Hassaka, denied any IS members escaped (sdf-press.com, January 20). The media also produced videos of more than 100 IS prisoners who escaped being recaptured by the SDF, although this presents the possibility that not all IS prisoners were recaptured ([Twitter.com/@mutludc](https://twitter.com/@mutludc), January 21). Moreover, the attempted prison break operation demonstrated the U.S. ability to coordinate with the SDF to execute the U.S.-led Operation Inherent Resolve guaranteeing a “death sentence” for the IS fighters involved in the prison break ([Twitter.com/@CJTFOIR](https://twitter.com/@CJTFOIR), January 23).

SDF resources to thwart the IS operations in and around the prison are also limited due to the unit’s continued combat with Turkey, which considers the SDF a terrorist group. Turkey, for example, launched attacks on the SDF as the counter-prison break operations were underway ([hawarnews.com](https://www.hawarnews.com), January 21). Even if the prison break is ultimately thwarted, IS’ capture of at least a dozen SDF fighters means the organization will have a

bargaining chip if it seeks to negotiate the release of some IS prisoners and the safe return of the its fighters to their hideouts ([Twitter.com/@spriter99880](https://twitter.com/@spriter99880), January 24).

Questions will linger after this prison break operation, which has led to the deaths of at least 22 IS prison escapees and similar numbers of SDF fighters (npasyria.com, January 23). First, given that IS was not known to have a base in Hassaka, how did the group manage to pull off such a large-scale operation without the SDF, the U.S., or other intelligence agencies noticing beforehand? This points toward continued IS sophistication in counter-intelligence and high-level prison break operational capabilities. Prison breaks have historically marked turning points in the group's rise, and this event, if successful, would have been no different.

Whatever the ultimate result of the fighting in and around the prison will be, the IS prison break will serve as a morale booster for IS fighters in Syria and Iraq and supporters in affiliated provinces around the world. An Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) video released on January 18, for example, revealed ISWAP child soldiers watching a video of IS fighters in Hajin, Syria during their 'last stand' battle against the US and SDF forces in 2019 ([Telegram](https://t.me/Telegram), January 18). Likewise, IS supporters around the world will view the prison break as another demonstration that the organization's caliphate remains and that its commitment to imprisoned fighters has not been forgotten.

Jacob Zenn is the Editor of Terrorism Monitor.

Is Afghanistan Still a Safe Haven for the Pakistani Taliban? Assessing the Mysterious Assassination of Mohammad Khorasani

Farhan Zahid

Since the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan and the fall of Kabul to the Afghan Taliban on August 15, 2021, the security situation for Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in Afghanistan has considerably improved. The TTP had established its bases in eastern Afghan provinces after the commencement of Operation Zarb-e-Azb by the Pakistani military in June 2014, and faced an onslaught by the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), U.S. forces, and the Pakistan military on the other side of the border as soon as it was initiated. ([Terrorism Monitor](https://terrorism-monitor.com), July 10, 2015). Many TTP high-ranking militants were killed in U.S. drone strikes or arrested by the Afghan intelligence organization, the National Directorate of Security (NDS).

However, after the liquidation of Afghan forces in August 2021 along with the withdrawal of U.S. troops, TTP has had virtually no security threats endangering its safe havens in Afghanistan, and has already started perpetrating terrorist attacks inside Pakistan. Amid these prevailing conditions, unknown assailants assassinated former TTP spokesperson Mufti Khalid Balti, known by his nom de guerre Mohammad Khorasani, on January 9, 2022, in Nangarhar province, Afghanistan ([Dawn](https://dawn.com), January 10). This event shocked TTP leadership and rank-and-file, who have been safely living under Afghan Taliban rule and enjoying the safe havens permitted by the Taliban authorities.

Why Was Khalid Balti Assassinated?

Contrary to the notion that TTP is overwhelmingly Pashtun-focused, it is pertinent to note that some high-profile TTP leaders hail from non-Pashtun ethnic groups in Pakistan. Khalid Balti, for instance, belonged to the Gilgat-Baltistan region, which is a disputed territory between India and Pakistan and has been subject to United Nations resolutions since the end of its colonial rule. Not much is known about Balti except that he was an adherent of the ultraorthodox Deobandi cleric. This unnamed cleric, who was in his mid-fifties and born in Gilgat district, joined Tehreek-e-Nifaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM), which itself was part of TTP umbrella groups in 2007. TNSM also fought against Pakistani security forces during the Islamist insurgency in the Swat district of the Malakand division ([Business Standard](#), January 11).

Later, the cleric established a TTP terrorist training camp in the Miramshah area of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province (KPK). After the defection of former TTP spokesperson Shaikh Maqbool (alias Shahidullah Shahid) to Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP) in 2014, Balti was placed in charge of TTP media ([Al-Jazeera](#), January 11). Because of his comparatively better educational background, he was then designated as the head of the TTP media committee and became the TTP spokesperson by virtue of this position.

In December 2014, after the attack on the Army Public School in Peshawar by the TTP Fazalullah faction, Balti claimed responsibility. He stated, "We targeted the school because the army targets our families. We want them to feel our pain" ([Al-Arabiya](#), December 16, 2014). A total of 144 school children were killed by the six-member TTP *Fidayeen* (self-sacrifice) squad during the storming of the school. Apart from his media responsibilities, Balti

also masterminded terrorist attacks and remained an active member of TTP central *shura* (consultative council) in addition to playing crucial roles in the selection of new TTP emirs after their predecessors' killings in U.S. drone strikes. Balti was, therefore, included on the list of United Nations designated global terrorists and an enemy of Pakistan ([Geo News](#), January 13).

Who Assassinated Balti?

Balti was originally arrested by the Afghan security forces in 2015, and since then, had been languishing in Afghan prison. After the fall of Afghanistan to the Afghan Taliban and the establishment of the second Afghan Taliban regime six years later, at least 2,300 hardcore militants were freed by the Afghan Taliban, included Balti. After his release, he continued to live in Nangarhar province ([India Today](#), August 18).

However, on January 9, 2022, some unknown assailants targeted Balti outside his residence at an undisclosed location in Nangarhar province, and he died on the spot. It is still unknown who was responsible for the assassination because no group has claimed responsibility for his killing. However, ISKP is active in those areas and therefore may have conducted the assassination.

Another explanation is that he could have been targeted by rogue Pakistani elements as well because he was active alongside TTP Emir Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud. As far as the factional fighting among TTP is concerned, the issue could be considered as a cause of the assassination, but this likelihood is remote, as Mehsud has resolved TTP issues related to infighting and emerged as a more unifying leader than his predecessors. TTP was shocked at Balti's assassination, and his funeral was held in Kunar province, Afghanistan, where he is now buried. According to the TTP's new spokesperson, the organization is

seriously looking into the assassination and investigating it with the utmost care ([Al-Jazeera](#), January 11).

Conclusion

After its assumption of power in Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban have given a carte blanche to TTP. Despite repeated Pakistani requests, the Afghan Taliban has not taken any significant actions against TTP militants in Afghan Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. The Pakistani government managed to hold talks with the TTP through the Afghan Taliban's mediation, but this only resulted in utter failure after a month-long ceasefire ended on December 9, 2021 ([theprint.in](#), December 10, 2021).

TTP, moreover, seems quite comfortable in Afghanistan. They have cordial relations with the Afghan Taliban, whom they also provided safe havens to in Pakistani tribal areas during their times of despair after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. The assassination of Khalid Balti must, therefore, be a matter of grave concern for TTP's high command as this shows that TTP leadership is not, in fact, fully safe in Afghanistan even after the withdrawal of U.S. forces and the takeover of Afghanistan by the Afghan Taliban.

TTP, therefore, will reassess its current status in Afghanistan while the Pakistani authorities will draw alternate plans for tackling the TTP after the failure of talks in December 2021 and the resumption of terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The recent surge of terrorist activities in Pakistan is also pivotal for the future relationship between Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban.

Farhan Zahid completed his Ph.D. in Counter Terrorism (Topic: Al-Qaeda-linked Islamist violent Non-State Actors in Pakistan and their relationship with Islamist Parties) at Vrije University

Brussels, Belgium. He writes on counter-terrorism, al-Qaeda, Pakistani Al-Qaeda-linked groups, Islamist violent non-state actors in Pakistan, militant landscapes in Pakistan and the Afghan Taliban.

India's Armed Forces Special Powers Act Comes Under Scrutiny After Nagaland Killings

Sudha Ramachandran

On December 4-5, 2021, an Indian Army Special Forces unit gunned down 14 civilians at Oting village in the northeastern Indian state of Nagaland. Mistaking six coal miners returning home from work for insurgents, the security forces shot them dead. Eight other civilians were killed in clashes that erupted between the forces and local villagers soon after the shooting ([Times of India](#), December 6, 2021).

The incident has ignited angry protests in Nagaland against the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), which vests extraordinary powers in the armed forces deployed in areas deemed "disturbed." This has renewed heated discussion in India, with people in India's conflict zones and rights activists calling for AFSPA's repeal. However, the armed forces underscore the importance of the legal cover this law provides to their functioning in India's insurgency-wracked regions.

So, what is AFSPA and why is it controversial?

AFSPA's Extraordinary Powers

AFSPA grants the armed forces "certain special powers" to maintain public order in "disturbed areas." These include the right to:

- “Arrest without warrant” a person who, “on reasonable suspicion,” has committed or is “about to commit a cognizable offense”;
- Raid and destroy any property that is “likely” to be used by insurgents for training or attacks; and
- “Fire upon or otherwise use force, even to the causing of death [of] any person who is acting in contravention of any law or order.”

Besides conferring extensive powers to the armed forces, AFSPA provides them immunity from prosecution. [1]

As an emergency law that was enacted in 1958 to deal with the Naga insurgency, AFSPA was first imposed on the Naga Hills and was intended to be in force for one year. However, it remains in force to date more than sixty years later. Indeed, in the six decades thereafter, its writ has extended not only to all of Nagaland but also to “disturbed areas” in all of Northeast India’s seven states.

The law was further applied to Punjab and Chandigarh from 1983, and in Jammu and Kashmir from 1990. As those insurgencies were quelled, however, AFSPA was withdrawn from Punjab in 1997, Tripura in 2015, and Meghalaya in 2017. Today, it is in force in all of Nagaland, Assam and Manipur (excluding parts of Imphal), parts of Arunachal Pradesh, and in Jammu and Kashmir.

Demands for AFSPA’s Repeal

Calls for AFSPA’s repeal have grown louder in the weeks since the Oting killings. However, such calls are not new. Opposition to the legislation is, in fact, almost as old as the law itself. This time around, however, the anti-AFSPA sentiment is so high that the Nagaland government was pushed to support the

public demand by passing a resolution calling for the legislation’s repeal ([Times of India](#), December 20, 2021).

AFSPA’s critics point out that it has encouraged the armed forces to act with impunity ([The Wire](#), December 6, 2021). The incident at Oting is not a one-off incident, “an exception or a mistake,” but part of, “a general pattern of civilian killings that have been taking place in the Northeast since AFSPA was imposed,” they claim ([The Hindu](#), December 15, 2021). According to a Naga human rights activist, the, “sweeping powers and protection,” that AFSPA provides the armed forces, “lies behind the countless extra-judicial killings, rapes and incidents of torture,” in the Northeast. [2]

AFSPA’s critics also argue it is, “a blot on India’s democracy,” and that it undermines “the established procedures of rule of law and other principles of democratic governance, especially transparency and accountability” ([Imphal Free Press](#), December 12, 2021; [Deccan Herald](#), January 3).

Arguments for AFSPA

Indian Army personnel describe AFSPA as an “enabling legislation” that assists the armed forces to, “function effectively in securing stability,” in disturbed areas ([Deccan Herald](#), December 11, 2021). They point out that the armed forces are called in to deal with situations that are, “so out of control,” that neither the local police nor the central armed police forces are able to deal with them. In the, “extraordinary,” circumstances in which they have to operate, they need, “additional powers.” Not enabling the armed forces with these powers to fight well-armed and trained militants, whether in the Northeast or Kashmir, would, according to them, have, “serious consequences” for India’s national security ([Salute](#), November 2, 2015).

Armed forces personnel further assert that AFSPA has played a significant role in the,

“normalization of the situation in many parts of the country,” whether in Mizoram and Tripura, the Cachar Hills of Assam, the Tirap, Changlang and Logding districts of Arunachal Pradesh, or in the areas south of the Pir Panjal range in Jammu and Kashmir. They say the armed forces, “couldn’t have done this without the legal provision for their deployment in counter-insurgency areas” ([The Hindu](#), December 17, 2021).

Lt. Gen. (retired) Raj Kadyan, a former vice-chief of army staff, who was involved in counter-insurgency operations in Northeast India for several decades, attributed the ceasefire agreement reached between the Indian government and the National Socialist Council of Nagalim-Isak Muivah (NSCN-IM) on August 1, 1997 to AFSPA. This is because it provided the troops with the, “protective umbrella,” that, “brought the rebels to their knees.” [3] The ceasefire, which survives to date, has normalized the situation in Nagaland. Whereas there were hundreds of insurgencies in Northeast India and Nagaland previously, now militancy is under control, with virtually no major militant attacks conducted over the last two decades.

Indeed, from the peak in the 1980s and 1990s when multiple insurgencies wracked Northeast India, the security situation in the region has improved remarkably. Except for a small number of insurgent groups, most others have entered into ceasefire or “Suspension of Operation” agreements with the central or state governments or are engaging in talks or have completely disbanded. There has also been a reduction in violent incidents in the region ([Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses](#), July 8, 2020).

The Way Forward for AFSPA

AFSPA’s critics remain unconvinced. Pointing to the roughly 32 militant outfits

still active in Manipur, they assert that legislation, “has not succeeded in its mission of containing insurgents” ([The Hindu](#), December 17, 2021). Besides this, AFSPA has harmed the Indian state’s interests in conflict zones by, “deepening anti-India feelings in the Northeast and Kashmir, rather than mitigating the political problems” the Naga activist said, adding that insurgencies, “have not been resolved.” [4] As Kadyan noted, “solving an insurgency in a democracy is not the responsibility of the military.” What the armed forces can do in the Indian context, he believes, is, “to keep the insurgency down to a level where the civil administration can carry out its functions. And for that to be achieved AFSPA is essential.” [5]

Responding to the loud calls for AFSPA’s repeal following the Oting killings, the central government has announced a high-level committee to examine the possibility of withdrawing this legislation in Nagaland. This is not the first time that a committee has been constituted to look into AFSPA. In the wake of the huge protests in Manipur following the 2004 rape and killing of a 32-year-old woman, Thangjam Manorama, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government constituted the Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee to review AFSPA.

The committee recommended AFSPA’s scrapping and its suggestions aimed at reducing militarization and restoring power to the civilian administration in conflict zones. However, these recommendations were never implemented ([Gateway House](#), January 9, 2013). The committee appointed now by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is unlikely to go even as far as the UPA did because political solutions to insurgencies and mass grievances have proven to be anathema to the BJP.

However, the BJP government is under pressure. The Naga peace talks, which had hit an impasse long before the Oting

killings, are in jeopardy now. The BJP government cannot afford to have these talks collapse. It will, therefore, likely opt for a few cosmetic steps to roll back the protests over the Oting killings and, at most, it could withdraw AFSPA from a few areas. However, it will not repeal or even reform AFSPA. As in the past, the protests will subside but simmering anger with AFSPA and the Indian state will continue. This anger will explode in angry protests when another case of rape or extra-judicial killing by the armed forces inevitable ignites the Northeast again.

Dr. Sudha Ramachandran is an independent researcher and journalist based in Bangalore, India. She has written extensively on South Asian peace and conflict, political and security issues for The Diplomat, Asia Times and Geopolitics.

Notes

[1] Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958, Act no. 58 of 1958, September 11, 1958.

[2] Author's Interview, Naga human rights activist based in Kohima, Nagaland, India. Interviewed on January 7.

[3] Author's Interview, Lt. Gen. (ret.) Raj Kadyan, former vice-chief of the Indian Army, Interviewed on July 1, 2015.

[4] Naga human rights activist, n. 2.

[5] Lt. Gen. Raj Kadyan, n. 3.

Direct Action Cells: Greece's Fourth Generation of Post-Junta Urban Guerrillas

Tom Lord

On May 15, 2021, a new anarchist organization, that four months earlier had been calling itself the Direct Action Cells (DAC), released a claim taking responsibility for multiple arson attacks across Athens and Thessaloniki. Of the twenty attacks included in the claim, all but four targeted active or retired high-ranking Hellenic police officials, government property, or in one case Hellenic Armed Forces residences adjacent to a NATO base at the Greek border with North Macedonia. The claim further proposed the establishment of a leaderless, "network of revolutionary violence," comprised of anarchist militants throughout Greece with international aspirations of forming a broader network of individuals and cells of urban guerrillas. [1]

The DAC's attacks have involved Molotov cocktails and a unique improvised incendiary device (IID) constructed from butane gas canisters ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), November 11, 2021). Their stated aim is to destabilize and ultimately overthrow the existing capitalist order. However, their more immediate goal, and the original reason for forming the DAC, is to increase the organized anarchist military capability relative to that of previous urban guerrilla organizations versus the post-1974 Junta Greek state. They also stated that they want to make the anarchist movement in Greece once again, "politically dangerous," for the established order. [2]

A New Network of Urban Guerrillas Emerges on Greece's Streets

Since the fall of Greece's military dictatorship in 1974, there has been a sustained lineage of urban guerrilla groups operating in the country. The first generation of these guerrillas was ideologically Marxist-Leninist, and possessed impressive military and clandestine capabilities ([CIA profile on Richard S. Welch](#), Publication Date Unknown). Consecutive generations have been influenced by various forms of anarchism, with the third generation breaking from leftism altogether and embracing an anti-civilizational, post-left "anarcho-nihilist" worldview.

The current fourth generation, to which the DAC belongs, leans back towards left-libertarianism, apparently in an attempt to unite a broader network of anarchist and hard-left militants. Their *Public Proposal* to establish a, "network of revolutionary violence," describes the concept of the DAC as an, "anti-capitalist-anarchist movement" ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), May 20, 2021). [3] The DAC's formation coincided with the 2021 hunger strike of the imprisoned point-man of the Revolutionary Organization "17 November" (17N), Dimitris Koufodinas. 17N was the infamous terrorist group for which the first generation of post-Junta urban guerrillas remains well-known.

The DAC's first claim of responsibility in May 2021 cited the Koufodinas hunger strike as the motivation for its initial cluster of incendiary attacks, which targeted a tax office, an economic think-tank, the home of a government official, and a police patrol vehicle. [4] The DAC's subsequent communiques continued to locate Koufodinas' hunger strike at the center of their own struggle with the ruling New Democracy (ND) party. Implementation of the ND's policy to crack down on anarchists in Greece included an aggressive campaign

of squat evictions across the country, a new law on the possession of Molotov cocktails leading to prison sentences, and the reintroduction of police to Greek university campuses for the first time since the 1973 Polytechnic Uprising ([Ekathimerini](#), November 11, 2021; [Greek Reporter](#), November 17, 2021). The DAC's attacks and accompanying communiques have cited these policies as motivation.

Network, Targets and Methods

The DAC's sixth and most important communique is the *Public Proposal*, in which they claim twenty attacks across Athens and Thessaloniki, as well as consolidate smaller anarchist cells that existed prior to its publication ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), May 20, 2021). Though they have yet to achieve their international aspirations of broadening their network, DAC cells in Greece have been active in the mainland cities of Athens, Thessaloniki, and Volos. The Thessaloniki cell, the Organization of Anarchist Action (OAA), was particularly active throughout 2021, but it began claiming attacks as early as April 2018. [5] After aligning itself with the DAC, the OAA began stepping up attacks against former and active high-ranking members of the Hellenic Police, releasing the names and addresses of 21 police officers last summer and declaring a war on the police in December 2021 ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), July 17, 2021; [The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), December 6, 2021). The OAA briefly diverted from this campaign to attack the home of an alleged drug dealer, who lived close to the childhood home of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which is now the Turkish consulate and in a neighborhood with a heavy 24-hour police presence. [6]

In terms of target-selection, most of the DAC's attacks have focused on the police, corporate property, government property, and those politically connected to ND.

Attacks targeting the homes and property of police have commonly included those of Brigadiers and Lieutenants Generals. More recently, the DAC carried out a Molotov raid against a police substation in Zografou, Athens ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), November 11, 2021).

However, none of the DAC's attacks have been lethal, and most have been either in word alone or true motivation reaction to ongoing government policies, as with the decision to deny Dimitris Koufodinas a prison transfer. Other attacks have drawn upon older grievances, such as the August 2021 AFET power plant attack in Volos ([Twitter.com/@Potempkinbrain](#), August 30, 2021). A group of anarchists calling themselves the, "Vassilis Mangos Cell," detonated an IID constructed from four jerry cans full of gasoline on an exterior structure of the power plant. The attack was in solidarity with a young environmental activist who died a month after being beaten and detained by police in 2020 while protesting a rubbish-burning scheme at the plant ([YouTube.com/Perseus999](#), July 13, 2020).

All DAC attacks have either employed the use of Molotov cocktails or the placement of one or multiple IIDs. These are most often constructed from butane gas canisters, which when properly detonated result in significant structural damage to buildings and property, and lead to secondary-fires. Such attacks have expanded in target selection to include corporate property, as well as the Athens home of a well-known Greek journalist and TV personality ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), July 12, 2021; [The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), July 28, 2021).

It is worth mentioning that the DAC's frequency of attacks appears to be outpacing those of the predecessor generation, such as the Conspiracy Cells of Fire (CCF). However, the DAC has until now revealed a downgraded military capability, which has not expanded beyond the use of

their late-night IID attacks. CCF, for example, quickly graduated from such attacks to a parcel bombing campaign that targeted heads of European states, as well as armed robbery and the use of sophisticated bombings from 2009 until 2020, if one includes the escapades of CCF member and multiple escapee, Yannis Michailidis (alias "The Syntagma Archer") ([Proto Thema](#), January 30, 2021). Also unlike CCF, the DAC seems to have successfully built the substrate of its revolutionary network—at least at home. Attacks from affiliated groups are claimed monthly, often in batches, and many of the cells claiming the attacks are enduring.

Conclusion

The DAC are inheriting a withered but nonetheless strong tradition of anti-authoritarian militancy in Greece. An ongoing string of high-profile arrests and counter-terror operations leading to large seizures of small arms and explosive materials are indicators of the eroding landscape, which has until recently been remarkably permissible for guerrilla activity ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), August 9, 2021; [ekathimerini](#), March 19, 2021; [ekathimerini](#), September 13, 2020; [Twitter.com/@war_noir](#), September 25, 2020).

Nevertheless, the grievances between the government and the extra-parliamentary left in Greece are mounting. Key points of brewing conflict include the reintroduction of police to university campuses, the evictions of squatters, heavy-handed policing, and the construction of a metro station in the center of the Exarcheia neighborhood, which has long been an anti-authoritarian enclave in Athens ([The WannabeWonk Newsletter](#), November 11, 2021; [The National Herald](#), February 19, 2021).

Greece's enduring vulnerability to another exogenous shock, such as it experienced in

2009 when global financial markets tumbled into chaos, opens it up to another period of possible mass-mobilization on the streets. When normal life in Greece is again upended, there will be no shortage of militant and organized discontent. Having thus far suffered no losses to arrests or otherwise, the DAC is positioned to remain at the forefront of these militants.

Tom Lord is a researcher focused on political violence and "street militancy". He is also a co-founder of militantwire.com. He can be found on Twitter [@potempkinbrain](https://twitter.com/potempkinbrain).

Notes

[1] "Direct Action Cells: Report and Public Proposal for the Establishment of a Network of Revolutionary Violence—Report on the first cycle of incendiary propaganda and call for mobilization in the Direct Action Cells" [Greek], Direct Action Cells, May 2021.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] "Incendiary Barrage in Solidarity with the Hunger Striker Dimitris Koufodinas," Direct Action Cells, February 2021.

[5] "Thessaloniki-Arsons at the Homes of Special Investigator Ant. Varela and the Former President of the Court of Appeals Th. Stavropoulos," Organization of Anarchist Action, April 2018.

[6] "Organization Anarchist Action: Either with the Narco-Culture or with the Resistance-There is No Middle Ground," Organization of Anarchist Action, October 2021.