Hizballah in Africa

Prof. Carl Anthony Wege

August 2012

Abstract

There is a gap in the existing literature on Hizballah which has rarely been examined: Hizballah and Iran’s recent roles in Africa. The African continent, particularly countries below the Sahara, is characterized by a large number of failed states and/or effectively ungoverned regions. Hizballah exploited the opportunity presented there to create strategic depth for the organization in Africa. Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC - Sepah-e Inqilal-e Islami, Pasdaran), allied with Hizballah, utilizes the strategic space Africa affords to advance Iranian national objectives. Given the expanding U.S. presence on the continent in pursuit of international Salafi jihadists affiliated to Al-Qaeda, it is worthwhile also to take note of the history of Hizballah’ role and recent activities and those of Iran in Africa.

About ISPSW

The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is objective and task oriented and is above party politics.

In an ever more complex international environment of globalized economic processes and worldwide political, ecological, social and cultural change, bringing major opportunities but also risks, decision-makers in enterprises and politics depend more than ever before on the advice of highly qualified experts.

ISPSW offers a range of services, including strategic analyses, security consultancy, executive coaching and intercultural competency. ISPSW publications examine a wide range of topics connected with politics, economy, international relations, and security/ defense. ISPSW network experts have worked – in some cases for decades – in executive positions and possess a wide range of experience in their respective specialist areas.
ANALYSIS

Introduction

Africa’s state system, exploited by Hizballah and Iran for a generation,[1] more recently became an arena in which transnational criminal organizations and international Salafi jihadists became globally relevant players. Africa has now also become an important area of operations for the United States which created an African Command in 2007 as part of the war against Al-Qaeda and in order to assist African security forces in their counterterrorism efforts.[ii] This has changed the operational opportunities for transnationally operating terrorist organizations in Africa in general and those of Salafist orientation in the Sahel in particular. The Sahel region transects Africa across the southern reaches of the Sahara and contains vast natural resources that, once developed, would offer revenue streams that could, if unchecked, be siphoned off by terrorist organizations.[iii] Islamist activists in multiple varieties – from the benign to globally dangerous jihadists – are the primary drivers of social mobilization across the Sahel. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active in the Sahel in Mali where an AQIM affiliate recently seized power in the northern half of the country and has also reached out to the Horn of Africa where al Shabab has emerged as an important Al-Qaeda affiliate in Somalia. Armed non-state actors and organizations that previously would have been isolated from one another such as Hizballah and AQIM are now more likely to interact with one another. However, the presence of the U.S. African Command (Africom) creates a series of “tripwires” or nodes across the continent, reaching from the Sahel’s Africom Ouagadougou base in Burkina Faso and to Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti.[iv] A secondary and originally unintended effect of this system of “tripwires” has been an increased awareness of, and potential engagement with, Hizballah and its state sponsor Iran.

The analytical approach taken here conceptualizes Hizballah and Iranian networks as a series of geospatial layers that overlap one another, creating a matrix in the African space. The layer that defines Hizballah’s network and creates revenue locates primarily in two spaces; one is an arc stretching from West Africa along the coast reaching down toward the Congo while the other is a circle encompassing the Horn of Africa which falls more under the operational control of Iran. Conceptually the Iranian geospatial layer can be visualized as a circle encompassing the Horn of Africa seeking to influence the Middle Eastern theater. Iranian arms smuggling infiltrations from that circle reach into Nigeria, Kenya, and the central African spaces. Add to that the counterterrorism mission of the U.S. Africom layer with a focal point in Djibouti with lesser nodes circling into the central African spaces and spread across the Sahel. If we think of these layers covering one another creating a three dimensional matrix, this can inform our thinking with respect to counterterrorism efforts in Africa.

Hizballah, though born in Lebanon and an increasingly dominant power at home, is not synonymous with the Lebanese state, being denied the overt governmental instruments of power.[v] In part as a consequence of this, Hizballah designed covert infrastructures, often anchored in Shi’a diaspora communities around the world, both to support Hizballah’s organization in Lebanon and at times also to act abroad in partnership with Iran. Hizballah has built such its covert infrastructure across Africa to provide the organization with financial and operational support but also to further its alliance with Iran. Hizballah’s African infrastructure consists of a relatively small number of genuine Hizballah operatives and large numbers of Hizballah associates and sympathizers engaging in activities that help sustain the organization in Lebanon from Africa.
Hizballah’s Support Infrastructure in Africa

Lebanese diaspora communities emerged in West Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were initially made up primarily of Lebanese Christian immigrants who were historically encouraged by British colonial policy to settle in places like Sierra Leone. Ultimately both Lebanese Sunni and Shi’a emigrants entered Africa’s diaspora communities in large numbers. The outbreak of Lebanon’s civil war in 1975 was concomitant with Shi’a immigrants of Lebanese extraction beginning to dominate the illegal diamond trade between Sierra Leone and Liberia. In West Africa, as in Lebanon, family and clan structures became the prevailing modality of social and business interactions.

In West Africa, the Lebanese Shi’a rival to the Hizballah (“Party of God”) was called the Lebanese Resistance Detachments (Afwaj al Muqawamah al Lubnaniyyah or AMAL); it initially controlled the illegal diamond trade Hizballah would ultimately dominate. The Sierra Leone born Shi’a Lebanese Nabih Berri assumed leadership of Lebanon’s AMAL party in 1980. He eventually became Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. Berri and Shahid Mohammed Jamil, an ally of Sierra Leone’s President Siaka Stevens (1971 - 1985), maintained a mutually beneficial political relationship. This liaison gave Lebanon’s AMAL militia an entrée into the Sierra Leonian Shi’a community which was to prove useful both for fundraising and for the smuggling of diamonds. AMAL associate Sayed Ali Ahmad, of the Lebanese Ahmad clan’s Sierra Leone branch, invested money for Berri at the Antwerp end of the diamond trade. This was done through a maze of front companies the Ahmad’s controlled, including Sierra Gem Diamonds, ASA International, and ASA Diam. The decade-long civil war that devastated Sierra Leone from 1991 until 2002 facilitated large-scale diamond smuggling with the assistance from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) backed by Liberia. However, that civil war weakened AMAL’s local advantage in West Africa, thereby increasing concurrently the opportunity for AMAL’s rival Hizballah to improve its position in the Shi’a community and eventually gain control of much of the illegal diamond trade. Hizballah and RUF cooperation in the illegal diamond trade has been documented by the U.S. Congressional Research Service.

In other parts of West Africa such as the Congo, other Shi’a traders in illegal diamonds became subjugated to Hizballah men through middlemen, broadening the revenue stream to finance the organization. Hizballah’s successful blended the illegal diamond trade with legitimate business enterprises; this also helped to disguise finances that supported Hizballah activities in Lebanon.

The flow of money to Hizballah from the Congo region made use of multiple corporate networks. The Shi’a Lebanese Tajideen network, for example, reportedly used corporations such as Tajco Ltd. and Ovlas Trading operated through Ali Husayn and Kassim Tajideen along with diamond and food trading enterprises in Gambia, the Congo and Angola to launder money for Hizballah. These Tajideen-linked corporations engaged in legitimate business but were also facilitating the movement of monies and goods to Hizballah and Hizballah-linked entities in Lebanon. Likewise they could provide cover in the form of employment abroad, establishing safe havens for Hizballah operatives on the run from security services in the Middle East.

Activities of Hizballah that are less often mentioned include Hizballah’s direct participation in organized crime to generate financial support for the organization. The two major elements of this type of criminality are Hizballah shakedowns of Lebanese merchants in the African diaspora and its cooperation with narco-trafficking organizations. A less significant factor is Hizballah’s involvement various fraud schemes.
Hizballah has institutionalized a framework for shaking down “donations” from Lebanese businessmen in the African diaspora. As described by Douglas Farah Lebanese-owned businesses across West Africa were assessed by Hizballah for a “contribution” on a yearly or semi-annual basis whereby the amount to be contributed was a defined fraction of revenue for any given Lebanese-owned business. Those contributions were collected, generally in cash, on a yearly basis by Hizballah bag men who often moved the monies to the Middle East by courier.[xvi] Some contributions were likely to have been genuine voluntary donations meant for political and social service organizations run by Hizballah, but many such contributions were little more than extortions.[xvii]

Some types of Hizballah-associated criminality required specific religious dispensation. A special fatwa issued by Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah in the mid-1980s, for example, gave Hizballah a spiritual imprimatur to engage in narco-trafficking.[xviii] The organization became involved in narcotics enterprises in several areas of the world, including both North and South America.[xix] In the Americas the increasing strength of Mexican drug cartels over the last decades precipitated a shift by South American drug traffickers toward Africa – very much to the advantage of Hizballah. West Africa became a storage and transshipment region used by transnational organized crime for major illicit narcotics shipments from Latin America to Europe as documented by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.[xx] A complex set of relationships emerged between Hizballah and other terrorist organizations and various transnational drug trafficking organizations as well as with local criminal organizations. Those relationships were based on critical services each could provide the others – with all parties making a profit.[xxi] The local West African model of organized crime (sometimes called the Nigerian model) is not hierarchical but is consists of “project based” networks that would coalesce and disintegrate as opportunities warranted.[xxii]

Guinea-Bissau for instance, could be described as a narco-state, and was one of the more significant drug trafficking hubs in West Africa. Bissau-based Lebanese working on behalf of Hizballah have directly engaged the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC) due in part to the geography of the ninety island archipelago.[xxiii] Narcotics could be moved from Guinea-Bissau to Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, and then transshipped to Northern Africa's Mediterranean coast and from there on to final destinations in Europe.[xxiv] The Liberian state under Charles Taylor (President 1997 - 2003) was a kleptocratic enterprise. Taylor’s Liberia used state institutions to protect and further the activities of favored criminal enterprises, cooperating with organized crime groups from multiple countries including Israel, as well as Al-Qaeda and Hizballah, operating in the same geographic space without much friction.[xxv] The aftermath of Taylor’s resignation ending a civil war in 2003 saw multiple claims to the Presidency although Ellen Sirleaf was ultimately elected President in two 2006. Nonetheless the status of Liberia as a major drug trafficking hub has persisted with Al-Qaeda and Hizballah essentially using the same Liberian smuggling networks through at least 2010.[xxvi]

Hizballah and Iran

Some elements of Hizballah’s African archipelago support radical Islamist groups at the behest of Iran. These groups are often Sunni but nonetheless share common interests with Iran and Hizballah in their opposition to Western interests. Iran’s interests in Africa have likewise changed over time with early revolutionary fervor devolving to the pursuit of more mundane national interests. Irrespective of the quite real Sunni-Shi’a jurispru-
dential differences, both Hizballah and Iran have proven quite adept at working with Sunni radicals when they share political interests.

The Nigerian case demonstrates how local grievances can potentially be exploited by Iran, Hizballah, or Al-Qaeda. While the geography of the state of Nigeria has been defined only since independence in 1960, Islam penetrated portions of that space very early. The borders of the modern Nigerian state are transected with Islamic influence defining the culture of Northern Nigeria and separating it from the non-Islamic South. The non-Islamic Southern regions of the countries are the basis for Nigeria’s oil-based wealth while the Islamic North is economically much less developed. That North-South divide is a rather fundamental one, strongly shaping Nigeria’s polity.

The geographic space that now includes the Northern portion of Nigeria boasts a history of Sunni Muslim activism dating from the ninth century. One consequence of that history of activism was that various Muslims sects from the Northern portion of the country ultimately came to dominate the Nigerian army. Shedrack Best [xxvii] has identified two significant Sunni Islamist movements in Northern Nigeria: (i) the Izala was a defined as a Da'wah type movement striving for spiritual purification and orthodoxy but with no explicit intent to establish an Islamist state (ii) the Maitatsine movement by contrast has engaged in ongoing, Islamist-inspired violence against the police and other symbols of the Nigerian state. Maitatsine terrorist operations however were less intended to build Islamist institutions as to target Nigerian state institutions.[xxviii] Nonetheless, as the twenty first century began, Sunni activists persuaded the Nigerian government in Abuja to allow twelve of its Northern states to make Shariah law the official standard for criminal procedures. Northern Nigerian states then saw the emergence of a Hisbah militia enforcing Shariah law.[xxix] More recently the Boko Haram, founded by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, has become more vociferous. Rabidly Islamist and engaging in widespread violence in the North of Nigeria Boko Haram is ideologically compatible with many of the Salafist groups or Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb affiliates. Boko Haram’s operational capacity is currently limited but has the potential to become much more challenging particularly if exploited by Iran.

In addition to potentially exploiting local Islamist radicals, Iranian assets have also tried to build an arms smuggling network in Nigeria and throughout Africa. In doing so it was not always successfully. Iran’s efforts to use Nigeria for covert arms distribution backfired in October 2010 when the Nigerian State Security Services, probably tipped by Western agencies, intercepted a ship in Lagos port of Apapa. The ship came from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and was operated through a French container company CMA CGM Group, carrying contraband freight consisting of thirteen containers of heavy arms with a listed destination of Banjul Gambia.[xxx] It became clear that an Iranian businessman Azim Aghajani who was managing the shipment in Nigeria was in fact a Iranian IRGC agent intending to forward the arms to support dissident factions in several countries, including Nigeria. It appears that part of the shipment was to be diverted to the Hisbah militia in Nigeria’s own North. A fraction of the shipment was going to support the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) rebel movement in Southern Senegal and part to rivals of Gambian President Jammeh.[xxx] Gambian President Yahya Jammeh had been a faithful ally of Iran for some years making a reasonable income buying arms from Tehran and reselling them [xxx] to Senegal and Gambia, both of whom previously reported good relations with Tehran, took umbrage at the Nigerian discovery and broke diplomatic relations with Iran in 2011. [xxxii]
Kenya, while having more developed security services, also offers rich opportunities for Iran. [xxxiv] Iran’s intent to use the opportunities Kenya presented was demonstrated in 2012. Kenyan police arrested Sayed Mansour Mousavi and Ahmed Abolfathi Mohammed, both Iranian nationals, for smuggling more than one hundred kilograms of cyclonite (RDX) to a warehouse in Mombasa, Kenya. [xxxv] The Iranians may have been attempting to strike back at Kenya due to the military incursion by to stabilize parts of the Jubaland area of Somalia ruled by al Shabab. [xxxv] Iran seems to prefer instability in the Horn of Africa, even under the auspices of Sunni Islamists like al Shabab, to gain and maintain Iranian influence in the region. The US government, through its embassy in Nairobi tries to acts as a counterpoint to Iran, deploying substantial resources to promote stability in Somalia. In addition, Manda Bay in Kenya serves as part of the Africom tripwire system for the United States. US Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) forces use a Kenyan military base to conduct stability operations across the Horn of Africa. [xxxv] While these operations are aimed primarily at Al-Qaeda affiliates functioning in the region they inevitably impact on Iran’s interests. Africom also utilizes facilities in Nzara (South Sudan). This might generate more alarm in the Iran’s IRGC Force’s North African Department.

While arms’ trafficking is a significant component of Iran’s West African efforts, the main focus of Tehran’s efforts has been the Horn of Africa given the proximity of the Horn of Africa to the Middle Eastern theater. This is also a focal point of Africom’s counterterrorism efforts through the vehicle of the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) which is based on the old French military compound at camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. While Western attention for the Horn has focused primarily pirates and on Al-Qaeda’s links with A-Shabab, Iran has quietly continued its long-term efforts to exploit conditions there to further its own interests. The center of Iran’s efforts in this regard has been Sudan and, to a lesser extent, Somalia. Iran’s efforts began a generation ago following the 1989 Islamist coup by Hassan Turabi’s National Islamic Front in Sudan. Iran traded money for influence in Khartoum and Sudan became a focal point for Iranian intelligence liaison with networks of Sunni Islamists. By 1999 the U.S. State Department’s Patterns of Global Terrorism referred to Sudan as a central hub for terrorist groups – from Lebanon’s Hizballah to Osama Bin Laden’s Al-Qaeda. [xxxvii]

Concurrent with Iran’s mentoring efforts with the Khartoum government, Tehran had established a Somali Revolutionary Guard in Sudan, trained under the tutelage of both Iranian and Hizballah personnel and intended to act as an Iranian proxy in Somalia. [xxxviii] However, Iran’s efforts to leverage its presence in Sudan to project influence into Somalia became problematic. Somalia had not retained a functional government since 1991, making the Somali geographic space a constellation of competing tribes, warlords, militia factions, and their affiliated criminal entities. When the Iranian-trained and Sudan-based Somali Revolutionary Guard was inserted into Somalia’s ungoverned spaces, its revolutionary pretentions dissolved into nothing. The Somali Revolutionary Guard became yet another faction fighting on Somalia’s battle ground. Iran and it’s al-Quds elements ultimately supported multiple factions in Somalia, including the Somali Islamic Union Party, a Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) then led by General Muhammed Abshir, and Adel al-Rahman Ahmed Ali Tur who controlled parts of the Somaliland area. While these factions never constituted any coherent fighting force or established any consistent form of Islamic governance, they did two things: they allowed Iran’s entrée into Somalia and they managed to stop the United Nations aid organizations from stabilizing the country thereby preventing establishment of any Somali government conflicting with Iranian interests. [xl]

The Islamic Court Union (ICU, also called Council of Islamic Courts), initially a device for local leaders to control small geographic areas under generic Shariah law, grew strong enough to assert control over Mogadishu and
the trade routes inland. A brief 2006 Ethiopian invasion of Somalia degraded whatever hope the Islamic Courts Union had for a government although a splinter faction of the ICU called al-Shabab under Mukhtar Robow Ali (Abu Mansur) continues the fight and lately has affiliated itself with Al-Qaeda. Consequently, al-Shabab is attracting significantly more U.S. attention ranging in the form of drone strikes to ground level support for Somali factions. The aforementioned Ethiopian incursion resulted in the creation of a Transitional Federal Government favored by the United States. That Transitional Federal Government created a Somali National Security Agency headquartered at the Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu. An Alpha Group within the Somali National Security Agency supported U.S. activity in Somalia with “snatch” operations, direct combat operations against al-Shabab, and interrogations of prisoners, some rendered from adjacent countries. In the Puntland region of Northeast Somalia U.S. JSOC personnel, sometimes flying directly from Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, have assisted Puntland forces in combating al-Shabab. In addition to Somali’s internal players, affiliates of Iran and allies of the United States as well as some Al-Qaeda elements are active in the Somali space.

Sudan, ruled by Omar Hassan al-Bashir has become a safe haven for some wanted Middle Eastern terrorists, allowing some of them to rejoin the struggle by going from Khartoum first to Iran and then infiltrating back into operational areas of the Middle East. In 2008 Sudan’s role in Iran’s arms smuggling networks was enhanced by a mutual defense agreement signed by the Defense Ministries of both countries. This expanded Sudan’s role as a regional center for larger Iranian arms trafficking operations. In these efforts Hizballah members, acting on Iran’s behalf and often with the cooperation of Sudan’s Abadba tribe, transported weapons north through Egypt and into the Sinai where Bedouin smugglers would move them on into Gaza. With both Sudan and Iran under international arms embargos, Jonathan Schanzer has argued in Foreign Policy that Iran might wish to shorten its supply chain supporting radical Islamists by manufacturing arms in the Sudan. Efforts to establish local arms production facilities by Iran in the Khartoum area of Sudan are a possible result of a secret codicil in the 2008 agreement. Sudan already had weapons production facilities operating under its Military Industrial Corporation that could be revamped under the tutelage of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps for Tehran’s designs in the region. Israel was concerned enough about the volume and quality of weapons moving north to risk an international incident by attacking a convoy ferrying Iranian weapons in 2009 that was en-route to the Gaza Strip via Egypt. At the end of the day, however, what remains is that a substantive Iran-facilitated arms smuggling network, aided by Hizballah operatives, which is moving large quantities of arms through Africa into the Middle East. Some of these arms are smuggled to Hizballah in Lebanon, some to Hamas in the Gaza, and some further Iranian interests in Africa.

This arms supply chain inevitably led to a confrontation with Egypt as Hizballah’s relations with Egypt, never good, began to degrade following the 2006 Israel-Hizballah Summer War in Lebanon. In November and December 2008 Egypt arrested 24 men accused of links to Hizballah and later expanded the search to 49 individuals. The political nature of Egypt’s charges against the men became evident early on with allegations shifted from financing Hamas to Red Sea shipping reconnaissance to operational preparations for an attack on Israeli tourists. The real confrontation between Hizballah and Egypt, however, involved Iranian facilitated arms smuggling networks that crossed Egypt on the way to Gaza.
Conclusion

With the revolution in Egypt and the ensuing internal power struggle, it is an open question how much and how fast things will change in which direction. The Egypt military establishments still depends on the United States while President Mursi is seeking to revive relations with Iran, planning a state visit to Tehran in August 2012. The outcome of the power struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood – and the Egyptian military as well as the outcome of the civil war in Syria will co-determine what opportunities are left or will open up for Hezbollah and Iran to meddle in African affairs.

***

Remarks:

Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.
The analysis has been published firstly in Perspectives on Terrorism, Volume 6, Issue 3, August 2012.

About the Author of this Issue

Carl Anthony Wege is a Professor of Political Science at the College of Coastal Georgia in Brunswick, Georgia. He has taught political science for twenty years and has published a number of articles on Lebanon’s Hezbollah and related topics. E-mail address: twege@ccga.edu
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Donovan, Chau C. “U.S. Counterterrorism In Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding Costs, Cultures, And Conflicts.” The Letort Papers U.S. Army War College 2008

Early, Bryan “Larger than a Party, yet Smaller than a State’ Locating Hezbollah’s Place within Lebanon’s State and Society’ World Affairs 168 (Winter 2006): 115-128.


Publication Record


**The Abu Nidal Organization** *Terrorism: An International Journal* Vol. 13, Number 6 (also Included in Bell and Howell's UMI University Microfilm Series and Annual Editions: Violence and Terrorism, Dushkin Publishing Group, 1992)


**Arab Intelligence Services** Electronic Format, *Intelligence Watch Quarterly*, a subsidiary of Janes Information Group, Fall 1996.


**Iran's Terrorist Asset: A History of Imad Mugniyah** *Terrorism Monitor* Volume 4, issue 17 (September 8, 2006)

Jamestown Foundation http://www.jamestown.org

**The Hizballah Security Apparatus** *Perspectives on Terrorism* Volume 2, Issue 7 (Spring 2008)

http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/

**Hizballah's Bekka Organization** *Perspectives on Terrorism* Volume 4, Issue 3 (July 2010)

http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/

**Hizballah North Korean Nexus** *Small Wars Journal* January 2011

http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2011/01/the-hizballahnorth-korean-nexus/

**Hizballah Syrian Intelligence Affairs: A Marriage of Convenience** *Journal of Strategic Security*, Fall 2011, v. 4, no. 3

**Hizballah and Hamas** *TRAC Terrorism Research & Analysis Consortium* Summer 2012


**Hizballah in Africa** *Perspectives on Terrorism* Volume 6, Issue 3 (August 2012)

Notes

[1] Hizballah (“the Party of God”) created a support infrastructure as far back as its first generation in West Africa. In the 1980s Hizballah cells provided logistical support for the organization by accessing French embassies in Guinea, Gabon, and Senegal through Lebanese Shi’a contract workers who stole French passports and identity cards that were sent to Lebanon. See “Hezbollah Seen Setting Up Terror Network in Africa” Los Angeles Times, 27 November 1989.

[2] Africom’s Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa symbolized the U.S. commitment to this program by moving nearly 2,000 men into the former French military base at Camp Lemonnier to deal with the especially difficult circumstances on the Horn of Africa. France also maintains the 13th Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion in Djibouti.

[3] Earlier efforts by the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (formerly the Pan Sahel Initiative) were ultimately of limited utility and demonstrated the need for the broader mission of Africom.


[5] Hizballah was created at the behest of Iran through the Sepah al-Quds element of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC or Pasdaran) in the midst of Israel’s 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Allied with Iran and facilitated by Syria, Hizballah eventually became the most significant actor in the Lebanese political system. Hizballah, as a non-state actor, became an amalgam of proxy and ally for Iran’s international ambitions.

[6] The West African Lebanese Diaspora near the turn of the 21st century included roughly 100,000 Lebanese in Cote d’Ivoire, 20,000 in Senegal and a few thousand left in Sierra Leone (from approximately 30,000 residents before Sierra Leone’s civil war).

[7] Sierra Leone’s Koidu region has the richest diamond deposits. Many of the Lebanese families in the diamond trade originate from the area of Nabatiyeh in South Lebanon.

[8] AMAL (Afwâj al-Muqâwama al-Lubnâniyya) and Hizballah were rival Lebanese Shi’a organizations who were shooting at one another in Lebanon in 1988-1989. Of the two, AMAL was the more secular in its orientation and more influenced by Syria while Hizballah was more Islamist and oriented towards Iran. In the 21st century there is much more cooperation between the former rivals although Hizballah is clearly the dominating party. Berri was elected head of AMAL in 1980 and became Speaker of Lebanon’s Parliament in 1992 while Hizballah currently holds several Ministerial posts.

[9] The RUF was neither revolutionary, nor unified, nor a front. It is best defined in terms of amorphous and shifting groups of criminals, sometimes with political pretensions, engaging in combinations of war crimes and common crimes spanning a couple of decades in the geographic region of Sierra Leone. RUF was best known for kidnapping children and amputating the limbs of its opponents and others who rossed their path. Today Sankoh, an illiterate photographer, and a couple of the original “members” spent time at Gaddafi’s “Revolutionary University” in Libya, providing the closest thing to a political pretension the group ever expressed. RUF’s primary impact was that of a destabilizing element in the larger civil conflicts that engulfed Sierra Leone. It should be noted that since West Africa is characterized by weak states and ungoverned spaces constellations of rival and affiliated militias interact without regard to unguarded national borders.


[12] Ibid., “Digging Up Congo’s Dirty Gems” Washington Post, 30 December 2001. Farah has elsewhere noted that the “blood diamond” trade at its peak in West and Central Africa ran at roughly $200 million per year but only a fraction of that amount would be supporting Hizballah. Hizballah’s involvement in drug trafficking is ultimately more lucrative for the organization.

[13] Conflict or “blood” diamonds are thought to account for only a few percent of a worldwide $10 billion diamond trade.


[15] A Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell that could have been helpful in this regard was located in Kisangani in the Democratic Republic of Congo. While underutilized by local services which it was originally intended to assist it might have been better utilized creating analytical products that monitored Hizballah-linked revenue streams.


[18] It should also be noted that during Lebanon’s civil war (1975-1989) many of Lebanon’s Maronite, Druze, and Sunni militias likewise ran shakedowns within their own ethnic communities in the diaspora. However, none of these were as well organized those of Hizballah.

[19] Fadlallah who died in 2010 is generally described as the spiritual guide of Hizballah although he was more closely associated with the Da’wah (Islamic Call group). Fadlallah never exercised direct control over Hizballah.
threats against Lebanese in the country and resulted in emergency evacuations of hundreds expatriate Lebanese back to
Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Ali Ajami, who for all intents and purposes was the Ambassador for Hizballah as well as Lebanon,
Nordic Africa Institute,
Policy Notes 2011/2. - The United States supported a counter organization called Alliance for the
University of Jos, Nigeria. www.unijos.edu.ng/cecomps/?q=node/4
Operation Mountain Express documented Hizballah affiliated trafficking of methamphetamine from Canada into the United
October 2011.
For example in operation Titan the DEA in 2008 shut down a drug smuggling and money laundering operation between
Columbian cartels and Hizballah which run through the Lebanese middleman Shukri Mahmud Harb. Likewise DEA’s 2009
operation Mountain Express documented Hizballah affiliated trafficking of methamphetamine from Canada into the United
[**] DEA News: Civil Suit Exposes Lebanese Money Laundering Scheme for Hizballah Press Release U.S. Drug Enforcement
[***] Antonio L. Mazzitelli "Transnational organized crime in West Africa: the additional challenge" International Affairs, 83
[****] Marco Vernaschi "Guinea-Bissau Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda and the Lebanese Connection" Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting,
19 June 2009. At one point in time the headquarters for this network was alleged to operate out of the Palace Hotel in Bissau
which was owned by the Lebanese financier Tarek Arezki. The Lebanese managed administration and finance for the drug
movement while Nigerian and local criminals operating under the supervision of alleged kingpin Bliri Augustus were responsible
for labour.
[*****] “Drug seizure in West Africa prompt fears of terrorist links”, Observer, 29 November 2009. The movement of illicit drugs out
of Guinea-Bissau into north Africa and Europe is thought to be facilitated in part by Al-Qaeda and its affiliate Al-Qaeda in the
Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
[******] "Al-Qaeda’s Growing Sanctuary", Washington Post, 14 July 2004. Leonid Minin, a Jewish arms dealer originally from
the Ukraine, and Aziz Nassour of Hizballah, for example, crossed paths in Liberia and elsewhere without difficulty.
[*******] Douglas Farah, "Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines and Criminalized States." Prism (2) 2011, pg. 22. These “shared services” are
obviously not secure from infiltration as they are anchored in profit but they are nevertheless not much more accessible to
intelligence agencies than they are to law enforcement. To the terrorist organization the shared services are useful as long as
their limitations are kept in mind.
[**][**] Prof. Best is a political scientist who served as the Director of the Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies at the
University of Jos, Nigeria. www.unijos.edu.ng/cecomps/?q=node/4
[**][***] Richard Laremont and Hrach Gregorian, "Political Islam in West Africa and the Sahel", Military Review 86 (January-
[**][****] Zachary Devlin-Folz “Africa’s Fragile States: Empowering Extremists, Exporting Terrorism” Africa Security Brief, No. 6,
August 2010.
[**][*****] "Iranian guns and a king in Banjul,” Africa Confidential, 3 December 2010.
[**][******] Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance is a faction seeking independence from Senegal. They were found to be
using some weapons of Iranian origin in 2011 when Senegalese soldiers were killed.
[**][*******] “Did Jammeh Sell Iranian Arms To Hezbollah?” Freedom Online, 26 February 2011. The story alleged that Jammeh worked
through a Lebanese businessman and General Counsel to Lebanon, Mohammad Bazzi, who was said to coordinates the
exchange. The arms were apparently stored at Kanilai Farms in President Hammeh’s home village. Bazzi used a bank he
created in Gambia, called Prime Bank, for the financing. Prime Bank was a subsidiary of the Lebanese Canadian Bank which
the U.S. Treasury listed in February of 2010 as a money laundering concern with links to Hizballah.
[**][********] Perhaps something in the winds of the Arab Spring was blowing against the fortunes of Hizballah in 2011. The Lebanese
Ambassador to Cote d’Ivoire, Ali Ajami, who for all intents and purposes was the Ambassador for Hizballah as well as Lebanon,
foolishly attended the swearing in of deposed and generally despised former President Laurent Gbagbo. This led to widespread
terrorism against Lebanon in the country and resulted in emergency evaucations of hundreds expatriate Lebanese back to
Lebanon. - See "1,000 Lebanese Evacuated from Ivory Coast" YauLiban 11 April 2011.
[**][*********] Kenya is particularly poignant for Americans with the Embassy in Nairobi one of the first successful attacks by Al-Qaeda
against the United States in 1998.
[**][**********] "Kenya police: Iranian terror suspects shipped 100 kg of explosive to hit Western targets” Washington Post, 10 July 2012. -
See also ‘Iranians were targeting British High Commission in Kenya’, The Telegraph, 3 July 2012.
[**][**************] Ibid., see also Saul Hay, Red Sea Terror Triangle.
[**][***************] Saul Hay, Somalia Between Jihad and Restoration, pp. 61-64.
[**][**************] M.A. Mohamed Salah, “Transnational Islamist (Jihadist) Movements and Inter-State Conflicts in the Horn of Africa”. The
Nordic Africa Institute, Policy Notes 2011/2. - The United States supported a counter organization called Alliance for the
Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism. That organization was unsuccessful.
[**][**************] Ibid. It should also be noted that this conflict as others nowadays is supported by a significant number of private military
companies. In this instance, Bancroft Global Development has also played an important role. See “U.S. Relies on Contractors in
[**][***************] “Obama’s Not-So-Secret Terror Wars”, The Daily Beast, 24 July 2012. Ironically, Puntland also became an area of influence
for the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), led now by Abdullahi Yusuf of the Darod clan which was at one time
supported by Iran.

Annette Hubschle. "Unholy alliance? Assessing the links between organized criminals and terrorists in Southern Africa." Institute for Security Studies (ISS Paper 93), October 2004, p. 9. Smuggling is sustained in part by tribal relationships and religious affiliations that are centuries old and stretch across a geographic arc from East Africa all the way to Pakistan.

"The Drones Club", Africa Confidential, 5 September 2008. In 2008, Sudan would see Iranian produced Ababil III UAV’s operating in the Dufar region, probably using Iranian technicians, while Sudanese personnel were attending Iran’s Military University.

Jonathan Schanzer, "The Islamic Republic of Sudan?", Foreign Policy 10 June 2010.

The facilities include the Alshagara and Yarmouk Complexes, the Zargaa Engineering Complex, the Elshaheed Ibrahim Shamseldeen Complex for Heavy Industries, and the Safat Aviation Complex.

"Israeli drones destroy rocket-smuggling convoys in Sudan", Sunday Times, 29 March 2009 and Chau Donovan, "U.S. Counterterrorism In Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding Costs, Cultures, and Conflicts." The Letort Papers, p. 18. - Israeli Air Force assets including Hermes drones out of Palmachim air base near Tel Aviv accompanied by Eitan UAV carried out at least two separate operations in January and February of 2009. They attacked two separate convoys carrying Fajr 3 rockets intended to be smuggled from Egypt for use by Hamas in Gaza. It appears that dozens of smugglers and Iranian escorts were killed in the operation. U.S. DOD Special Operations Task Forces (88/145) also covertly engaged Al-Qaeda across the Horn of Africa following the 1998 Embassy bombings.

The numbers themselves are a bit incredulous. Typical terrorist cells consist of 5-7 persons. Discovering a terrorist cell made up of 49 persons is unlikely.

Egypt Accuses Hezbollah of Plotting Attacks and Arms Smuggling to Gaza”, New York Times, 14 April 2009. Many of those arrested, including acknowledged Hizballah operative Mohammed Yusuf Mansour, would escape in a mass prison break in the midst of Egypt’s 2011 Revolution. The role of arms smuggling as the root of the episode was also confirmed by Salah Ghosh the head of the Sudanese Intelligence and Security Service.