



COMBATING TERRORISM CENTER AT WEST POINT

# CTC SENTINEL

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## Contents

### FEATURE ARTICLE

- 1 The Renewed Threat of Terrorism to Turkey**  
By Stephen Starr

### REPORTS

- 4 The Local Face of Jihadism in Northern Mali**  
By Andrew Lebovich
- 10 Boko Haram's Evolving Tactics and Alliances in Nigeria**  
By Jacob Zenn
- 16 A Profile of Khan Said: Waliur Rahman's Successor in the Pakistani Taliban**  
By Daud Khattak
- 19 Tweeting for the Caliphate: Twitter as the New Frontier for Jihadist Propaganda**  
By Nico Prucha and Ali Fisher
- 23 Rebellion, Development and Security in Pakistan's Tribal Areas**  
By Hassan Abbas and Shehzad H. Qazi
- 26 Peace with the FARC: Integrating Drug-Fueled Guerrillas into Alternative Development Programs?**  
By Jorrit Kamminga

- 29 Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity**  
**32 CTC Sentinel Staff & Contacts**

## About the CTC Sentinel

The Combating Terrorism Center is an independent educational and research institution based in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, West Point. The CTC Sentinel harnesses the Center's global network of scholars and practitioners to understand and confront contemporary threats posed by terrorism and other forms of political violence.

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

# The Renewed Threat of Terrorism to Turkey

By Stephen Starr



People of Reyhanli chant slogans as riot police block them during the funerals of the victims of the May 11 car bombs. - STR/AFP/Getty

FOR THREE DECADES, Turkey's terrorist threat has been viewed largely through the lens of Kurdish militancy. Yet just as one front closes down,<sup>1</sup> a new hazard has emerged, primarily as a result of the current war in Syria. On May 11, 2013, Turkey suffered the deadliest terrorist attack in its modern history when 52 people were killed in twin car bombings in Reyhanli, a town in Hatay Province close to the Syrian border.<sup>2</sup> The attack was not broadly reported or analyzed by Turkish media outlets<sup>3</sup> following a

court-enforced blackout, but Turkish authorities arrested nine Turkish men—believed to be linked to Syrian intelligence groups—for their role in the attacks.<sup>4</sup>

Mihrac Ural, an Alawite Turk from Hatay Province who has been an important pro-Damascus militia figure in the conflict in Syria, has been widely blamed for the bombings. Operating from Syria, where he commands a *shabiha*<sup>5</sup> militia group, Ural presents a real and pressing threat to Turkey's security today. This article analyzes the background and activities of Mihrac Ural,<sup>6</sup> the recent anti-Turkish

1 Constanze Letsch, "Kurds Dare to Hope as PKK Fighters' Ceasefire with Turkey Takes Hold," *Guardian*, May 7, 2013.

2 Matthew Weaver, "Turkey Blames Syria over Reyhanli Bombings," *Guardian*, May 12, 2013.

3 Karabekir Akkoyunlu, "Driven to Distraction," *The Majalla*, May 16, 2013; "Bombings Receive Scant Coverage in Turkish Media, Fueling Anger," *Wall Street Journal*, May

22, 2013.

4 Kareem Fahim and Sebnem Arsu, "Arrests and Calls for Calm in Turkey," *New York Times*, May 12, 2013.

5 *Shabiha* are Alawite militias that fight on behalf of the Syrian state.

6 Known in Syria by the name Ali Kyali, more informa-

operations of the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), and the effects of the Syria conflict on the security of the Republic of Turkey. It finds that the increasing destruction of the Syrian state will likely contribute to new terrorist threats against Turkey, forcing Ankara to recalibrate its security and counterterrorism policies.

### Syria Violence Spilling into Turkey

The Turkish government's open financial and political support for the Syrian political opposition and rebels fighting the Bashar al-Assad regime has angered many Turks, with opposition political parties and religious minorities the most critical of these voices. Among the latter, Turkey's estimated 400,000 ethnic Arab Alawite population—which shares the same religious beliefs as the ruling al-Assad family—is an important constituency, as many support the Syrian regime.<sup>7</sup>

Although the economy in Turkey's Hatay Province has largely managed to absorb the effects of the war over the border in Syria,<sup>8</sup> sectarian and religious hostility is a major source of discord. Festering unease between the mostly Sunni refugees fleeing from Syria's Aleppo and Idlib provinces and the Alawite communities in Turkey's Hatay Province have pitted Alawite and Alevi Turks living in Hatay and other southern Turkish provinces against both Syrian refugees and rebels.<sup>9</sup> In September 2012, for example, the mostly Alawite community of Samandag in Hatay

forced its largely Sunni, pro-revolution refugee population from their town.<sup>10</sup> An International Crisis Group report from April 2013 further identified the numerous points of contention between refugees and rebel fighters and the resident population in Hatay. "Several camps and the areas around them are frequently used by Syrian opposition fighters, in large part Sunni Muslim, as off-duty resting places to visit their families, receive medical services and purchase supplies," the report stated. "This is exacerbating sensitive ethnic and sectarian balances, particularly in Hatay Province, where more than one third of the population is of Arab Alevi descent [Turkish Alawites] and directly related to Syria's Alawites."<sup>11</sup>

In an attempt to ease tensions, on May 25, two weeks after the bombings, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Reyhanli, stating: "We have not been, are not, and will not be abandoning you as a government or as a state. I simply have this favor to ask of you: do not give a premium to those organizations exploiting this situation trying to create discord amongst us."<sup>12</sup>

In spite of Erdogan's request, there remains a feeling of historical discrimination against Turkish Alawites by elements of the Turkish state, which under the specter of war in Syria has pulled the community toward the al-Assad regime and away from Ankara's own policies and goals.<sup>13</sup> One key Turkish dissident who has capitalized on these tensions is Mihrac Ural.

### The Case of Mihrac Ural

Although Turkey detained nine Turkish citizens following the Reyhanli bombings, one figure, Mihrac Ural, has emerged as a primary suspect.<sup>14</sup> A number of sources have claimed that Ural, a Turkish Alawite who fled to Syria in the early 1980s

before reportedly being offered citizenship by the Syrian government, planned the attack.<sup>15</sup> According to the Turkish newspaper *Zaman*, he bribed Adana prison guards to win his freedom in 1980 before fleeing to Syria.<sup>16</sup> When Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan was exiled in Syria between 1980 and 1998, he and Ural were reportedly acquaintances, sharing a common enemy in the Turkish state.<sup>17</sup>

Mihrac Ural is the current leader of the Urgent Ones (Acilciler),<sup>18</sup> a splinter group from the Turkish People's Liberation Party/Front (THKP/C).<sup>19</sup> Acilciler formed in 1975 seeking the

## "The threat to Turkey's southern regions will increase the longer the war in Syria continues."

return of Hatay Province to Syria.<sup>20</sup> Inside Syria today, Ural is believed to be the commander of the "Syrian Resistance"—an Alawite militia based along the Alawite-dominated western coast.<sup>21</sup> This militia has been blamed for a number of massacres in Sunni villages in Syria's coastal regions, with Ural threatening to "cleanse" at least one of the towns.<sup>22</sup>

tion on his background is available at Joshua Landis, "Do the Massacres in Bayda and Banyas Portend to Ethnic Cleansing to Create an Alawite State?" SyriaComment, May 13, 2013.

7 Turkey's Alevi population number around 10-15% of the population and are distinct from Turkish Alawites, the latter being Arab and not Turk. Turkish Alevis and Turkish Alawites (who are ethnic Arabs) share similar belief systems. See Soner Cagaptay, "Are Syrian Alawites and Turkish Alevis the Same?" CNN, April 17, 2012.

8 Didem Collinsworth, "Hatay: The Syrian Crisis and a Case of Turkish Economic Resilience," *Turkish Policy Quarterly* 12:1 (2013): pp. 119-124.

9 "Alawite Turks" are Turkish nationals, but they are ethnic Arabs. Turkish Alevis and Alawite Turks have similar belief systems but they are different in a number of other ways. Both communities are in conflict with fleeing Syrian refugees and rebels in Hatay Province. See Khairi Abaza and Soner Cagaptay, "Alawites and Alevis: What's in a Name?" Fikra Forum, October 11, 2012.

10 William Booth, "In Turkey, Alawite Sect Sides with Syria's Assad," *Washington Post*, September 14, 2012.

11 "Blurring the Borders: Syrian Spillover Risks for Turkey," International Crisis Group, April 30, 2013.

12 "Prime Minister Erdogan Visits Bomb-Hit Reyhanli-UPDATED," WorldBulletin.net, May 25, 2013.

13 Stephen Schwartz, "Erdogan, Iran, Syrian Alawites, and Turkey Alevis," *Weekly Standard*, March 29, 2012.

14 Selcan Hacaoglu and Dana El Baltaji, "Turkey Arrests Nine in Deadly Bombings Blamed on Syria," Bloomberg, May 12, 2013.

15 Landis; Ismail Saymaz, "Head of Accused Group Denies Responsibility, Blames Israel for Reyhanli Bomb Attack," *Hurriyet*, May 14, 2013.

16 Aydin Albayrak, "Mihrac Ural, a Man with a Long History of Terrorism," *Today's Zaman*, May 14, 2013.

17 Ibid.

18 Abdullah Bozkurt, "Role of Iran and Syria in THKP/C Terrorism Against Turkey," *Today's Zaman*, September 21, 2012.

19 The Turkish People's Liberation Party/Front (THKP/C), also known as the similarly-named Turkish People's Liberation Front, is a communist/socialist militia group that was influential among Turkish leftists in late 1960s/early 1970s. It is viewed as a founding organization for a series of leftist splinter groups, including the DHKP/C, although it is no longer thought to be an active organization in Turkey.

20 For a brief background with context of the Syrian conflict, see Hugh Eakin, "Will Syria's Revolt Disrupt the Turkish Borderlands?" *New York Review of Books*, June 24, 2011.

21 Albayrak; Hacaoglu and El Baltaji.

22 "Assad Massacres are an Ethnic Cleansing Strategy, Says Turkey," *Times*, May 10, 2013.

Ural has also been blamed for instigating unrest between Syrian refugees and Alawite populations in Hatay Province by organizing rallies in support of al-Assad and against Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).<sup>23</sup> Most recently seen at the funeral of Syrian state TV journalist Yara Abbas in Damascus on May 28, 2013,<sup>24</sup> Ural has been noted among Syria's fearful coastal Alawite communities as having oratory skills akin to that of a prophet or visionary.<sup>25</sup>

In May, Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said he believed the same individual responsible for the massacre in Baniyas on May 3 was responsible for the bombings in Reyhanli, a subtle reference to Ural.<sup>26</sup> Ural, however, blamed Israel for carrying out the Reyhanli attacks, and in September 2012 said he had not been to Hatay for 32 years.<sup>27</sup>

Despite his denials, Ural gave an interview with BBC Turkish in September 2012 saying that he had been fighting for the al-Assad regime in Syria.<sup>28</sup> More recent videos posted to the internet appear to support that claim.<sup>29</sup>

#### Recruiting Alawite Turks for Assad?

In his interview with the BBC in September 2012, Ural claimed that young people from the Adana, Hatay and Mersin regions in southern Turkey have fought on the Syrian government's side inside Syria, although he claimed

23 Recai Komur, "Hatay Rally Supporting Assad is Work of Syrian Organization," *Sabah*, September 3, 2012.

24 For details, see this unverifiable image taken from Twitter and posted May 30, 2013, available at [www.twitter.com/DarthNader/status/340004621550493696/photo/1](http://www.twitter.com/DarthNader/status/340004621550493696/photo/1).

25 Landis.

26 "New Announcement on the Reyhanli Attacks by Foreign Minister Davutoglu," *Sabah*, May 22, 2013.

27 Saymaz.

28 Mahmut Hamsici, "Suriye'de isyancılara karsı savasan Türkiyeliler," BBC Turkce, September 2, 2012.

29 There are a host of videos uploaded to YouTube and other video websites in recent months purportedly showing Ural speaking Syrian Arabic, dressed in military fatigues and boasting the strength and resilience of the al-Assad regime. Here, he refers to the "Syrian resistance" as taking "revenge on every oppressor" from across the Turkish border, naming Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and "neo-Ottomans" as having sent the unnamed "oppressors": [www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4dD2oW4nao](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P4dD2oW4nao).

he was not involved in recruiting or encouraging Alawite Turks to do so.<sup>30</sup> "We did not make such a call," Ural said. "They come here looking to join in the thousands. The boundaries of our region are separated by artificial boundaries. This map is not a realistic map. This map is not possible to live [with]."<sup>31</sup> Ural was referring to Hatay Province, which was annexed by Turkey in 1939.<sup>32</sup> In the interview, Ural also said there were 2,000 Turkish militiamen operating inside the Syrian border along the southern point of Hatay Province, with forces in the towns of Idlib, Serkin and Kassab.<sup>33</sup>

Ural is now infamous for his alleged involvement in massacres in the Syrian towns of Bayda and Baniyas in May 2013. The deaths of hundreds of people, mostly civilians including women and children, were recorded by anti-Assad activists, including the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.<sup>34</sup> Some civilians in the towns were executed in groups, while others were stabbed or set on fire.<sup>35</sup> In a video posted to YouTube that was purportedly filmed before the massacres, Mihrac Ural was filmed saying:

Baniyas is the only passage to the sea for those traitors. Jableh cannot be a passage or a dwelling for the enemies, but Baniyas can be. We must quickly besiege it, and I mean it, and start the cleansing... The Syrian resistance's banner is cleansing, and we don't have any political or authoritarian ideology; as long as there is a government there is authority... And we will go to the battlefield in Baniyas this week, if we have to, and fulfill our national duty.<sup>36</sup>

30 Hamsici.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Anne Barnard and Hania Mourtada, "An Atrocity in Syria, With No Victim Too Small," *New York Times*, May 14, 2013.

35 "Pro-Regime Militant Speaks of 'Cleansing' Baniyas," NOW, May 6, 2013.

36 Such video footage cannot be independently verified, but that presented in the following link was uploaded to the internet on May 5, 2013, two to three days after the massacres at Baniyas: Lauren Williams, "Alawite Turk Urges Bania Cleansing," *Lebanon Daily Star*, May 9, 2013.

#### The Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/ Front (DHKP/C)

Mihrac Ural is not the only threat to Turkey. Various leftist and anti-Ankara terrorist groups sought refuge in Syria and fostered ties with the Syrian regime under Hafiz al-Assad during the closing decades of the last century. In efforts that were typical of the al-Assad regime's attempts to play opposing sides off each other, the elder al-Assad courted the PKK until the threat of war

**"Syria's slide into a widening sinkhole allows individuals such as Ural or groups like the DHKP/C to plot and plan long-term attacks on the Turkish state with impunity."**

with Ankara reached a zenith in 1998.<sup>37</sup> Although ties were not of the same importance as with the PKK, both Hafiz and Bashar al-Assad's myriad security forces kept links with the DHKP/C.<sup>38</sup>

Besides Mihrac Ural's militant group, the DHKP/C is the most prominent other Turkish group supporting al-Assad, and it has been suggested recently that the DHKP/C and Ural are coordinating their activities in Syria against Turkey and Syrian rebel groups.<sup>39</sup> Acilciler, which is headed by Ural, and the DHKP/C had largely been cooperating separately with Syrian security agencies—the DHKP/C through its ties with the PKK,<sup>40</sup> and Acilciler/Ural through links with the Alawite/Hatay THKP/C.

Haber 7, a Turkish news agency, reported in March 2013 that the popular newspaper *Sabah* uncovered a DHKP/C training camp in northwest Syria close

37 "World: Turkey Losing Patience with Syria," BBC, October 4, 1998.

38 "Terrorist Organization Profile: DHKP/C," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), undated.

39 "Iste DHKP-C'nin Suriye üssü," Haber 7, March 31, 2013.

40 Paul Cruickshank and Tim Lister, "Turkish Attack a Reminder of Cold War Dynamics," CNN, February 3, 2013.

to the Turkish border and next to a Syrian government military complex.<sup>41</sup> According to the report, pictures of the training camp in Latakia Province were recovered by Turkish intelligence agencies who reported that 200 people were in the facility, one of whom was believed to be Mihrac Ural.<sup>42</sup>

The DHKP/C has been responsible for terrorist attacks on government and Western targets inside Turkey, as well as criminal enterprises, since 1994. The U.S. government designated it a foreign terrorist organization in 2005.<sup>43</sup> One of the group's public attacks in Turkey include Ugur Bulbul's suicide attack on a police station at Taksim Square in Istanbul in September 2001, which killed two police officers and a civilian.<sup>44</sup> More recently, Turkish authorities blamed the DHKP/C for the suicide attack on the U.S. Embassy in Ankara in February 2013.<sup>45</sup> The group claimed responsibility for that attack, saying that it was an "act of self-sacrifice" against the United States, the "murderer of the people of the world."<sup>46</sup> In January 2013, 21 members of the group were arrested, among them lawyers, who were suspected of leaking state secrets to the Syrian and Greek governments.<sup>47</sup>

Since the uprising in Syria took hold in March 2011, the fraying of the Syrian state has created the ideal climate for militancy and non-state terrorism to thrive. The Syrian regime has, for the most part, lost favor with Syrian Kurds because of the ongoing war and as a result of a PKK-Ankara cease-fire. In response, Damascus appears to be cultivating links with other non-Syrian, anti-Ankara elements—groups with which it can deny association. Its relationship with the DHKP/C can be construed in this way: supporting a group willing to terrorize Ankara and leveraging it to its own benefit.

41 "Iste DHKP-C'nin Suriye üssü."

42 Ibid.

43 "Terrorist Organization Profile: DHKP/C."

44 "Three Die in Istanbul Suicide Bomb," BBC, September 10, 2001.

45 Mike Giglio, "What's Behind the Turkey Bombing? A Look at the DHKP/C," *Daily Beast*, February 2, 2013.

46 "DHKP-C Group Claims US Embassy Suicide Blast in Ankara," BBC, February 2, 2013.

47 Ibid.

### Conclusion

The cease-fire between Ankara and the PKK and the growing threat from Syria mean that the Turkish state's security focus must now undergo a recalibration. The threat to Turkey's southern regions will increase the longer the war in Syria continues. Syria's slide into a widening sinkhole allows individuals such as Ural or groups like the DHKP/C to plot and plan long-term attacks on the Turkish state with impunity.

In addition to Ural's activities in Syria, there is also an emergent threat from Alawite insurgents inside Turkey who support the al-Assad regime because of perceived shared communal and religious identities. The bombing on the Turkish side of the Cilvegozu-Bab al-Hawa border crossing in February 2013, which apparently targeted Syrian opposition figures, is only one example of the Turkish state's loss of control over security in the border region. The Reyhanli bombings in May marked the deadliest manifestation of this development.<sup>48</sup>

Reyhanli, six miles from the Turkish border station of Cilvegozu, has been swamped by Syrian refugees fleeing the war. Although Turkish authorities are attempting to close the crossing,<sup>49</sup> other parts of the border remain porous. As a result, terrorist elements—and Syrian rebels—will continue to enjoy easy access to both countries. Figures such as Mihrac Ural will continue to thrive and prosper—and Turkey's national security will waver—as the fighting and sectarian unrest continue in Syria.<sup>50</sup>

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48 Matthew Weaver, "Three Opposition Leaders Narrowly Missed Bomb Attack," *Guardian*, February 12, 2013.

49 "Turkey to Build 2.5 Kilometre-Long Wall on Syria Border," *Hurriyet*, May 23, 2013.

50 Moreover, if an Alawite "statelet" is created in Syria's west—where Ural has lived since the early 1980s—it would also grant him a refuge from where he could continue terrorist plotting against Turkey.

## The Local Face of Jihadism in Northern Mali

By Andrew Lebovich

IN APRIL 2012, the fall of northern Mali to a mixture of jihadist groups and irredentist Tuareg rebels caught the international community by surprise.<sup>1</sup> Two months later, the three jihadist rebel factions expelled the Tuareg separatist National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) from the Malian city of Gao and many of the north's towns and villages. This marked a peak period of dominance for jihadist groups in Mali, who evolved in a matter of months from living in desert hideouts to controlling northern Mali's cities, with leaders establishing operations in former Malian administrative buildings, including a mansion once owned by deposed Libyan leader Colonel Mu`ammar Qadhafi.<sup>2</sup>

Once it became clear that Mali's army was not capable of reconquering the north and a foreign intervention was months away, neighboring countries, as well as Malian actors,<sup>3</sup> began multiple processes of mediation to arrive at a political solution to the conflict. At the

1 In March 2012, disgruntled army officers overthrew the democratically-elected government in Mali. Capitalizing on confusion in the wake of the coup, Islamist militants—belonging to three groups, al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa and Ansar Eddine—managed to take control of northern Mali. In early 2013, the French military intervened to stop an Islamist push south, and the three Salafi-jihadi groups lost control of the north.

2 Drew Hinshaw, "In Gadhafi's Timbuktu Villa, an al Qaeda Retreat," *Wall Street Journal*, February 4, 2013; Laurent Touchard, Baba Ahmed, and Cherif Ouazani, "Aqmi: un tueur nommé Abou Zeid," *Jeune Afrique*, October 3, 2012.

3 One such initiative was led by the head of Mali's High Islamic Council, Mahmoud Dicko, who was officially mandated by the government to lead negotiations. Another involved notables from northern Mali's three main cities, organized in part by Malian politician (and current negotiator with northern armed groups) Tiébilé Dramé as the "Coalition for Mali." See "Crise malienne: quand Mahmoud Dicko entre en scène," *Jeune Afrique*, July 26, 2012; Paul Mben, "Tiébilé Dramé, Vice-Président de la Coalition pour le Mali: 'La voie est ouverte, le gouvernement doit bouger,'" *22 Septembre*, August 30, 2012; "Missions dans les Régions de Kidal, Gao, et Tombouctou du 17 au 24 Août 2012, Rapport de Synthèse," Coalition for Mali, August 27, 2012.

heart of these negotiations was an idea that “local” actors—specifically, the MNLA and the largely Malian Tuareg Salafi-jihadi group Ansar Eddine, founded by longtime powerbroker and rebel leader Iyad ag Ghaly—could be separated from the presumably more radical “global jihadist” groups, such as al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and its splinter group, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).<sup>4</sup>

It was believed by many, however, that the three jihadist groups occupying northern Mali—including Ansar Eddine—cooperated closely, sharing space and sometimes personnel. Their joint offensive toward the central Malian city of Konna in January 2013, which prompted the successful French intervention just days later, put to rest the idea that Ansar Eddine as a whole could be easily separated from AQIM and MUJAO.<sup>5</sup>

Yet a more fundamental problem with the “local” vs. “foreign” distinction is that all of northern Mali’s jihadist groups recruited locally in Mali and the broader Sahel, both from Mali’s arid

north as well as from the more heavily-populated south. This article—based in part on interviews conducted in Senegal, Mali and Niger in 2013—explores the local face and context of jihadism in Mali, focusing largely on AQIM and MUJAO.<sup>6</sup> It finds that the lines between “local” and “foreign” are often blurry in the Sahel, and that isolating one group of militants in favor of others will be difficult to achieve.

#### Mali’s Jihadists

For nearly a decade before the fall of northern Mali in early 2012, AQIM and its predecessor, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), worked to establish itself within local social and economic structures in the region, including trafficking and other business networks.<sup>7</sup> These efforts included providing assistance and money to local populations (and even sometimes offering assistance to local security officials),<sup>8</sup> and marrying into local communities.<sup>9</sup> As described by the

International Crisis Group in a report from July 2012, these connections meant that AQIM represented “a political and social object, not a pathology,” one that only survived in the Sahel and particularly in Mali through “the gradual construction of social arrangements at local, national, and international levels.”<sup>10</sup>

This strategy of local emplacement did not only involve the recruitment and promotion of fighters from neighboring Sahelian countries.<sup>11</sup> Although Mauritians began joining the GSPC in large numbers in 2004 and 2005 after a series of crackdowns by Mauritanian authorities, these new recruits also included a significant number of Malians. According to the Institute for Security Studies, for example, a list of 108 top terrorists operating in the Sahel-Sahara region compiled by the Algerian government in 2011 included 21 Malians.<sup>12</sup>

The most notable (and well-known) Malian recruits to jihadist organizations in the years before the 2012 occupation were, perhaps unsurprisingly, from the country’s north, where various reformist religious movements, including Tablighi Jama`at, had made limited inroads for several decades.<sup>13</sup>

4 Through the fall of 2012, many commentators and influential Malian political and religious leaders, as well as the MNLA, considered MUJAO to be a “local” group. MUJAO’s increasing public enforcement of *hudud* punishments and active cooperation with AQIM, however, eventually made this position untenable, leading to a shift in how Malian and international observers alike characterized the group and whether or not it could participate in negotiations. See, for instance, “Mahmoud Dicko dit stop aux négociations avec le Mujao,” *Jeune Afrique*, October 10, 2012. MUJAO was born ostensibly out of internal discord within AQIM. Mauritanian newspaper editor and AQIM expert Mohamed Mahmoud Abu al-Ma`ali best described this explanation for MUJAO’s origins, portraying its split from AQIM as the result of ethnic tension and a failure by AQIM’s Algerian leadership to appoint Mauritanian and other Sahelian Arabs as commanders in their own right. See Mohamed Mahmoud Abu al-Ma`ali, “Al-Qaeda and its Allies in the Sahel and the Sahara,” al-Jazira Center for Studies, May 1, 2012.

5 In late January 2013, Ifoghas Tuareg notables associated with Ansar Eddine split off to form the Islamic Movement for Azawad (MIA). It is difficult to say definitively, however, how many of Ansar Eddine’s fighters joined the MIA, whether this shift toward the MIA was out of dissatisfaction with Ansar Eddine or simply a desire for self-preservation after the French intervention, or how many newly-minted MIA fighters maintain loyalty to Ansar Eddine leader Iyad ag Ghaly and the ideals he publicly espoused in founding the group.

6 During the occupation of northern Mali, jihadist groups roughly divided the area among themselves, with Ansar Eddine taking control of Kidal, AQIM taking control of Timbuktu under the auspices of Ansar Eddine, and MUJAO taking control of Gao. While there is little dispute about the radicalism of Ansar Eddine founder Iyad ag Ghaly, it remains unclear to what extent Tuareg recruitment to the organization stemmed from religious ideology, local conflict and tensions among various Tuareg tribes and factions, or some combination of the two and other local factors. For an analysis of the relationship among the groups (including Ansar Eddine’s radicalism) see Derek Henry Flood, “Between Islamization and Secession: The Contest for Northern Mali,” *CTC Sentinel* 5:7 (2012).

7 Most analysts trace the presence of Algerian militant organizations to the 2003 kidnapping in southern Algeria’s Illizi Province of 32 European tourists by Amar Saifi, known as Abderrazak el-Para in reference to his former service as an elite Algerian paratrooper. There are, however, indications that Algerian militants, including the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), had operated in northern Niger and northern Mali as early as the late 1990s, forging occasional business and other ties with local rebel groups and attempting to raise money. These details are based on: personal interview, former European intelligence analyst, June 2013.

8 Personal interview, former Malian customs official, Bamako, Mali, February 2013.

9 Former AQIM commander and head of Katibat al-Mulathimeen (Veiled Brigades) Mokhtar Belmokhtar reportedly married into at least one local family, a Bérabiche Arab family from Timbuktu. Another AQIM commander, Abu Zeid (killed in February 2013 in northern Mali), also reportedly married into local families along with

other AQIM fighters. This practice reportedly continued under the 2012 occupation. See Tanguy Berthemet, “Comment l’Aqmi a pris place dans le désert malien,” *Le Figaro*, September 22, 2010; “Exclusif: reportage à Tombouctou au nord du Mali,” Radio France Internationale, December 7, 2012.

10 “Mali: Avoiding Escalation,” International Crisis Group, July 18, 2012; Rukmini Callimachi and Martin Vogel, “Candy, Cash – al-Qaeda Implants Itself in Africa,” Associated Press, December 4, 2011.

11 Scholars and observers began noting the importance of this trend several years ago, as well as its possible impact on AQIM. See Jean-Pierre Filiu, “Could Al-Qaeda Turn African in the Sahel?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 2010.

12 Mohamed Fall Ould Bah, “ECOWAS Peace and Security Report Issue 2: The Political Economy of Conflicts in Northern Mali,” Institute for Security Studies, April 2013.

13 Scholar of northern Mali Baz Lecocq traced this history in Kidal, where Tablighi Jama`at notably garnered followers among the Ifoghas Tuareg tribe. One of the early adherents to Tablighi Jama`at’s more rigorous—though non-violent—philosophy was Iyad ag Ghaly. See Baz Lecocq and Paul Schrijver, “The War on Terror in a Haze of Dust: Potholes and Pitfalls on the Saharan Front,” *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25:1 (2007); David

This occurred at a time when religious groups were growing throughout Mali, causing ongoing changes in the dynamics around religious politics and overt religious practice in the country.<sup>14</sup>

As early as 2010, one of AQIM's units known as a *suraya*<sup>15</sup> fell under the command of Hamada ag Hama, an Ifoghas Tuareg from Mali's Kidal region, who is also known as Abdelkrim el-Targui, Abdelkrim Taleb, or Malik Abou Abdelkrim. Ag Hama, whose unit was comprised largely of Tuareg from Mali and Niger,<sup>16</sup> was behind the 2010 kidnapping and later purported execution<sup>17</sup> of French aid worker Michel Germaneau,<sup>18</sup> as well as the November 2011 kidnapping of French citizens Philippe Verdon and Serge Lazarevic in the Malian village of Hombori.<sup>19</sup> Ag Hama is also the cousin of longtime Tuareg powerbroker and Ansar Eddine founder Iyad ag Ghaly.<sup>20</sup> While Ag Hama or his unit were believed to be behind the reported execution of Verdon in March 2013,<sup>21</sup> he was rarely seen in the north during the occupation, despite

Gutelius, "Islam in Northern Mali and the War on Terror," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 25:1 (2007).

14 For a detailed explanation of these dynamics after the advent of democracy in Mali, see Benjamin Soares, "Islam in Mali in the Neoliberal Era," *African Affairs* 105:418 (2005).

15 AQIM operations in both northern Algeria and the Sahel were conducted by brigades believed to be comprised of around 100 members (*katibat*) under an *amir*, or commander, as well as smaller units (*surayat*) believed to contain around 40 fighters. For a description of the organization in the Sahel, see "Organisation al-Qa'eda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), AV Signatures, a Brief Study, Chapter 1," Geneva Centre for Training and Analysis of Terrorism, January 13, 2013.

16 Al-Ma'ali.

17 While AQIM claimed to have executed Germaneau days after a Franco-Mauritanian raid in northern Mali in September 2010, other sources indicated that Germaneau may have died as a result of his advanced age, medical conditions, and the harsh environment of his detention. See Jean-Dominique Merchet, "AQMI: l'otage Michel Germaneau est mort de maladie, faute de médicaments," *Marianne*, January 10, 2011.

18 Thierry Oberlé, "Mali: La Tentation salafiste des 'hommes bleus,'" *Le Figaro*, April 3, 2012.

19 "Enlèvements au Mali: la piste Aqmi croise celle des ex-combattants touaregs de Kaddafi," *Jeune Afrique*, December 8, 2011.

20 "Derrière les groupes Islamistes du Nord-Mali, Aqmi tire les ficelles," *Jeune Afrique*, July 20, 2012.

21 Tanguy Berthemet, "Aqmi revendique l'assassinat d'un otage," *Le Figaro*, March 20, 2013.

his significant pre-rebellion role in the organization.<sup>22</sup>

This was not the case for other Malians involved in jihadist activity in the region, who would serve as key commanders and the public faces of these militant groups during the occupation of northern Mali.

One notable figure was the Bérabiche<sup>23</sup> Arab Oumar Ould Hamaha,<sup>24</sup> a colorful and seemingly omnipresent figure who became a favorite of Western journalists looking for insight into jihadist goals and operations. Although Hamaha was, after April 2012, publicly identified as a senior leader in Ansar Eddine, MUJAO, and a supposedly new Arab jihadist group called Ansar al-Shari'a,<sup>25</sup> he was first and foremost a longtime AQIM figure close to Mokhtar Belmokhtar,<sup>26</sup> and possibly Belmokhtar's father-in-law.<sup>27</sup> Born in Kidal and educated in Timbuktu,<sup>28</sup> it is unclear when Hamaha

22 In November 2012, AQIM announced the promotion of several new leaders and the creation of new units, including the primarily Tuareg Yusuf bin Tashfin Brigade, led by a Tuareg reportedly from the Kidal area, known as Abou Abdelhamid al-Qairouani. See Stéphanie Plasse, "Nord-Mali: le jeu trouble du djihadiste algérien Mokhtar Belmokhtar," *Slate Afrique*, January 19, 2013; Jemal Oumar, "Al-Qaeda Creates Touareg-led Brigade," *Magharebia*, November 30, 2012.

23 Bérabiche are predominantly Hassaniya-speaking Arab communities primarily found in northern Mali and Mauritania, and are ethnically and linguistically distinct from nomadic and semi-nomadic Tuareg populations.

24 For a concise profile of Hamaha, see Boris Thioly, "Mali: le djihad du 'Barbu Rouge,'" *L'Express*, October 4, 2012. Also see Julius Cavendish, "Destroying Timbuktu: The Jihadist Who Inspires the Demolition of the Shrines," *Time Magazine*, July 10, 2012.

25 Ethman Ag Mohamed Ethman, "La nouvelle qatiba 'Ansar Echaria,' un nouveau projet djihadiste conduit par l'homme à la barbe rouge," *Sahara Medias*, January 11, 2013.

26 Adam Thiam, "Iyad Ag Ghali - 'Ansar dine ne connaît que le Mali et la charia,'" *Jeune Afrique*, April 8, 2012.

27 "'Ansar Dine' se démarque des menaces de mort des otages français préférées par Ould Hamhou," Agence Nouakchott d'Information, October 15, 2012.

28 While various sources claimed that Hamaha was from Ber or Arouane, both villages north of Timbuktu, Hamaha said he was born in Kidal. The discrepancy may be due to members of Hamaha's family being from the Timbuktu region, or the fact that Hamaha grew up and was educated largely in Timbuktu. See Diossé Traoré and Bokari Dicko, "Le Chef d'état Major Général du MUJAO se confie à la radio 'Nièta,'" *Maliba Info* [Bamako], October 5, 2012.

joined AQIM, although he led the 2008 kidnapping of UN diplomat Robert Fowler and his adjunct Louis Guay in Niger,<sup>29</sup> as well as other kidnapping and military operations.<sup>30</sup> Long before that, however, Hamaha was known for his charismatic, prolific, and rigorous

## **"Malians played key roles in implementing jihadist groups' attempts at governance and control in the north. The use of Malians allowed AQIM and MUJAO to hide their actions behind those of Ansar Eddine."**

preaching of the Qur'an. Hamaha claims to have traveled the world studying and preaching before coming back to the Sahel, and a former Malian police officer stationed in the northern city of Kidal recalled hearing of Hamaha's local preaching more than a decade earlier.<sup>31</sup>

Another key local Malian figure and longtime jihadist was Sanda Ould Bouamama, also known as Sanda Abou Mohamed. Ould Bouamama, a Bérabiche Arab born in or near Timbuktu<sup>32</sup> into the Ould Ich tribe,<sup>33</sup> became the public face of Ansar Eddine in Timbuktu, both during the occupation and after the French intervention. He was frequently interviewed, met

29 On the kidnapping and Hamaha's role, see Robert Fowler, *A Season in Hell: My 130 Days in the Sahara with Al Qaeda* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2011).

30 Hamaha was reportedly behind the 2009 kidnapping of three Spanish aid workers in Mauritania, and he claimed to have fought in Libya in 2011 against Mu'ammarr Qadhafi's regime. In 2012, he was reported killed after clashes with Nigerien armed forces, only to re-emerge soon after. See Bokari Dicko, "Le Chef d'état major Général du MUJAO se confie à 'MALI DEMAIN': 'Nous pouvons marcher sur Bamako en 24 heures,' dit Oumar Ould Hamaha," *Mali Demain*, September 4, 2012.

31 Personal interview, former Malian police officer, May 2012.

32 "Révélations sur Les Hommes qui sèment la terre au nord Mali," *La Dépêche* [Toulouse], January 9, 2013.

33 Personal interviews, Malian Tuareg and Arab contacts in the United States, Senegal, and Mali, July 2012, February-June 2013.

with the city's "crisis committee," and coordinated governance and the distribution of aid and other materials.<sup>34</sup> Despite publicly being identified with Ansar Eddine, Ould Bouamama was also a longstanding GSPC and AQIM member. He was arrested in 2005 in Mauritania amid accusations that he had participated in a GSPC attack that year on the Mauritanian garrison at Lemgheity.<sup>35</sup> He was arrested in Bamako in 2010 before being released quietly in January 2011, possibly as part of an exchange for hostages held by the group.<sup>36</sup>

Bouamama also reveals the significant involvement of local militants as well as local intermediaries in the governance of northern Mali in 2012. While it is often unclear to what extent new recruits and cooperating notables and other interlocutors were motivated by ideology or by more basic needs for income or self-preservation, Malians played key roles in implementing jihadist groups' attempts at governance and control in the north. The use of Malians allowed AQIM and MUJAO to hide their actions behind those of Ansar Eddine, while also tapping into local religious, ethnic, and cultural divides to fuel support and recruitment.<sup>37</sup>

#### All Politics (and Militancy?) is Local

AQIM, MUJAO, and Ansar Eddine were also able to draw a range of local recruits into their fold while other Malian members publicly emerged. The Malian members provided a local face to these groups in Timbuktu and Gao in particular.

34 Personal interview, local official from the Timbuktu region, Bamako, Mali, February 2013. Also see Baba Ahmed, "Mali: les fantômes de Tombouctou," *Jeune Afrique*, May 25, 2012.

35 May Ying Welsh, "Making Sense of Mali's Armed Groups," al-Jazeera, January 17, 2013; "Démantèlement d'un trafic de drogue lié à AQMI: Un espagnol arrêté à Bamako," Agence France-Presse, October 20, 2010.

36 Baba Ahmed, "Silence, on négocie: Libération en catimini du présumé complice d'AQMI," *Le Combat* [Bamako], February 2, 2011.

37 For more on the need to understand the local context of militant activities in Mali, see Caitriona Dowd and Clionadh Raleigh, "The Myth of Global Islamic Terrorism and Local Conflict in Mali and the Sahel," *African Affairs*, May 29, 2013.

In Timbuktu and elsewhere, Ansar Eddine and AQIM<sup>38</sup> drew Malians from north and south into their ranks.<sup>39</sup> The head of the Islamic police in Timbuktu, for instance, was a Kel Essouk Tuareg named Mohamed ag Moussa from the village of Aglal to the east of Timbuktu.<sup>40</sup> Although he was not a visible member of AQIM before the occupation, Ag Moussa, who developed a particular reputation for cruelty toward women,<sup>41</sup> was far from unknown. Having reportedly picked up more hard line attitudes after spending time in Saudi Arabia, Ag Moussa established a mosque in the city and preached on Mali's official television station after returning to Mali around 2007.<sup>42</sup> According to press accounts, many in the city disliked Ag Moussa for his "foreign" views and discourse.<sup>43</sup>

While many local imams and notables fled or refused to cooperate with AQIM and Ansar Eddine, others such as the teacher Mohammed bin Hussain (known as Houka-Houka) served in key positions in the Islamic police in the city.<sup>44</sup> Some religious leaders even cooperated in the city's governance.<sup>45</sup>

38 Given the close and documented relationship and interaction between AQIM and Ansar Eddine, it is difficult to disassociate the two movements, even though there were clear divisions along ideological and ethnic/tribal lines within Ansar Eddine.

39 In the years before the fall of northern Mali, Malian press accounts suggested that AQIM had recruited from throughout Mali, and that their ranks included members who spoke all of Mali's languages, including Bambara, found primarily in the country's south. While these accounts cannot be confirmed, they coincide with other anecdotal accounts from northern Malian notables. Interview subjects in Bamako reported the arrival in Timbuktu of a number of Bambara-speaking Malians as well as recruits from Senegal in spring 2012. Also see "Région de Tombouctou: AQMI en terrain conquis," *Lafra Révélateur* [Bamako], May 26, 2011.

40 Adam Thiam, "La galaxie Aqmi à Tombouctou: ses hommes et ses problèmes," *Le Republicain* [Bamako], November 5, 2012.

41 Michèle Ouimet, "Crise au Mali: La Terreur de Tombouctou," *La Presse*, February 5, 2013.

42 "Mali: Une délégation du MNLA reçue par Paris," Radio France Internationale, November 26, 2012.

43 Personal interview, European journalist and former Timbuktu resident, March 2013.

44 Mary Fitzgerald, "Timbuktu: 'Anyone Can be a Victim in a War Like This,'" *Irish Times*, April 5, 2013.

45 "Le cadé de Tombouctou à Sahara média: 'Les choses ont changé beaucoup depuis l'arrivée des moudjahidines dans la ville,'" Sahara Medias, July 9, 2012.

According to one local official, some imams also helped recruit for AQIM and Ansar Eddine in Timbuktu and other parts of central and southern Mali, even as others refused.<sup>46</sup>

Others, largely Arabs and Tuaregs from Timbuktu, also joined AQIM and Ansar Eddine in the city or returned once Timbuktu fell in April 2012 after years spent with AQIM in the desert.<sup>47</sup> It does appear, however, that divisions based on race or ethnicity may have also played a role in the organization, with black recruits sometimes reportedly subjected to menial duty, or left behind in Timbuktu after other jihadists had pulled out of the city.<sup>48</sup>

A similar (although not identical) pattern emerged in Gao, which was controlled exclusively by MUJAO after June 2012. MUJAO reportedly started as a spin-off of AQIM led largely by Mauritians and Malian Arabs from the Gao region (notably the Lamhar or al-Amhar tribe, reputed to be heavily involved in the drug trade in northern Mali).<sup>49</sup> The group's leaders, the Mauritanian Hamada Ould Kheiru and the half-Tuareg, half-Arab Malian Sultan Ould Badi,<sup>50</sup> had extensive histories with AQIM and the GSPC (in Kheiru's case), while the group's supposed military leader, another Arab from the Gao region known as Ahmed el-Tilemsi, had also reportedly been involved with AQIM (and particularly with Belmokhtar) for several years.<sup>51</sup> While their recruiting

46 Personal interview, Malian official from the Timbuktu Region, Bamako, Mali, February 2013.

47 Thiam; Rémi Yacine, "Serge Daniel. Spécialiste du Sahel: 'Il faut arrêter de payer les rançons,'" *El Watan* [Algiers], April 25, 2012.

48 Tiékorobani, Abdoulaye Guindo, and S. Touré, "Fuite ou stratégie? Les Islamistes d'AQMI quittent la ville de Tombouctou," *Procès-Verbal*, December 10, 2012.

49 See, for instance, Wolfram Lacher, *Organized Crime and Conflict in the Sahel-Sahara Region* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012).

50 Al-Ma'ali. This author has argued elsewhere that MUJAO marked something more akin to a "managed separation" from AQIM, rather than a strict dissidence. For details, see Andrew Lebovich, "AQIM and its Allies in Mali," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 5, 2013.

51 "Terrorist Designations of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, Hamad el Khairy, and Ahmed el Tilemsi," U.S. State Department, December 7, 2012; "Mali: le chef militaire du Mujao est un Malien," *Jeune Afrique*, July 27, 2012. Belmokhtar made his home in and

base quickly diversified, drawing in Africans from a variety of countries in the sub-region, the group appears to have had significant success picking up local recruits, notably among Songhai and Peul communities.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, the head of the Islamic police

## “While Malians from Gao and its environs joined MUJAO for diverse reasons, it is equally clear that the group appealed to religious leaders and local ‘notables,’ both Arab and Songhai, for support.”

in Gao was a Songhai and former merchant, who maintained his role with the organization throughout the occupation and has even spoken for the group after the French intervention,<sup>53</sup> months after it became clear how international the group’s leadership had become.<sup>54</sup>

around Gao during much of the occupation, and various reports suggested that Belmokhtar played a key role in founding and managing MUJAO. See Jade Haméon, “Exclusif: Au Mali, dans la maison du djihadiste Mokhtar Belmokhtar,” *L’Express*, February 9, 2013.

52 There are an estimated 30 million people of Peul ethnicity spread across West Africa, with many involved in transnational commerce and semi-nomadic herding, which has at times and in certain areas put some Peul in conflict with other semi-nomadic populations, such as Tuareg. Personal interviews, local residents, journalists, and Western and African security officials, Bamako, Mali, February 2013 and Niamey, Niger, April 2013. Also see Hannah Armstrong, “Winning the War, Losing the Peace in Mali,” *New Republic*, February 28, 2013; Peter Tinti, “The Jihadi From the Block,” *Foreign Policy*, March 19, 2013; Rémi Carayol, “Planète peule: rencontre avec un peuple sans frontières,” *Jeune Afrique*, March 18, 2013.

53 “Un cadre de Mujao revendique les attentats dans le nord du Mali,” *Radio France Internationale*, May 11, 2013; Cheick Tandina, “Application de la charia: Occupants étrangers, islamistes locaux,” *Le Prétoire* [Bamako], August 13, 2012.

54 “Nord Mali: Les islamistes gouvernent Gao par un conseil exécutif de cinq ministres,” *al-Akbar* [Nouakchott], December 18, 2012.

It is difficult to estimate the numbers of recruits or their motivations for joining militant groups, especially in an environment of extreme poverty and one where religious ideology competes and sometimes overlaps with tribal and ethnic identity, tension and insecurity. MUJAO made carefully calibrated pitches meant to appeal to these populations, preaching religious values while also portraying themselves as defending the local population in Gao (a city dominated by Songhai) against the mostly Tuareg MNLA.<sup>55</sup> MUJAO statements and videos appealed to Songhai symbols,<sup>56</sup> and sometimes referenced conceptions among some sedentary communities of Tuareg as racist.<sup>57</sup> It appears that local conflicts, such as the one between the Peul and Bella (often referred to as “black Tuareg”) communities, or between

55 Largely sedentary Songhai populations have long been dominant in the Gao region, the site of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century Songhai empire founded by Askia Mohamed. Songhai communities have long lived in proximity to nomadic and semi-nomadic Tuareg populations in the area, although there has always been tension between some Tuareg and Songhai communities related to economic competition, slavery, and other issues. After several years of Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali during the 1990s, influential Songhai merchants and army defectors, with assistance from Mali’s military and intelligence services, created a sedentary militia known as the Ganda Koy (Masters of the Land). The Ganda Koy were involved in a series of tit-for-tat killings of Tuareg civilians and clashes with Tuareg armed groups, and spawned another largely Songhai militia, the Ganda Iso (Sons of the Land). See Andrew McGregor, “The Sons of the Land’: Tribal Challenges of the Tuareg Conquest of Northern Mali,” *Terrorism Monitor* 10:8 (2012). Starting in August 2012, MUJAO’s relationship with local populations began to sour, as the group cracked down on opposition and began more aggressively instituting punishments including amputations and public whippings. Still, the public appeals and recruiting continued, and it was not until the French intervention in January 2013 that MUJAO left Gao. For an example of the hyper-local image presented by the group in Gao, see “Azawad News Agency Presents a New Video Message from Jama`at at-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad Fi Gharb Ifriqiyya: ‘Eyes on Azawad #2,’” *Jihadology.net*, January 17, 2013. Also see “Azawad News Agency Presents a New Video Message from Jama`at at-Tawhid wa-l-Jihad Fi Gharb Ifriqiyya: ‘Eyes on Azawad #1,’” *Jihadology.net*, August 12, 2012.

56 “À Gao, les Islamistes victorieux et ‘populaires au sein de la population,” *France 24*, June 28, 2012.

57 “To the People of the Cities of Northern Mali About the Reason for Its Fight with the MNLA (the Secular Movement),” *Majlis Shura al-Mujahidin* in Gao, November 27, 2012, available at *Jihadology.net*.

Lamhar and Kounta Arabs, may have played a significant role in influencing MUJAO actions and recruitment in Gao as well as in places like the key crossroads town of Douentza.<sup>58</sup>

While Malians from Gao and its environs joined MUJAO for diverse reasons, it is equally clear that the group appealed to religious leaders and local “notables,” both Arab and Songhai, for support.<sup>59</sup> The group also specifically recruited from “Wahhabi” villages, by-products of a strong reformist movement that had existed and grown in the Gao region since the late 1960s.<sup>60</sup> After the intervention in Mali, attention focused on one Wahhabi village just outside of Gao, Kadji, where MUJAO recruited fighters and which may have been used by MUJAO to stage subsequent infiltrations into the city.<sup>61</sup> Yet this recruitment went beyond Kadji, focusing in part on other villages in the Gao area known for years for their strict religious practices and isolation from other communities.<sup>62</sup>

58 For instance, MUJAO’s first amputation for theft may have been linked to local conflicts between Peul and Bella over access to pastureland, while killings of Kounta leaders allegedly committed by MUJAO fighters may have had more to do with longstanding inter-Arab conflict than jihadist militancy. See Abdoulaye Ouattara, “Amputation de la main d’un homme par le MUJAO à Ansongo: L’association TITAR dénonce un règlement de compte,” *Le Républicain*, August 14, 2012; Oumar Diakité, “Suite à son refus de suivre le MUJAO: Alwata Ould Badi a été tué avec la complicité d’Arabes de Tarkint,” *Le Combat*, March 11, 2013; Oumar Diakité, “Douentza: le nouveau chef des ‘fous de Dieu’ lance une vaste campagne de recrutement de jeunes djihadistes,” *Le Combat*, December 11, 2012.

59 “Les notables de la région de Gao, nouveau canal de négociation avec les islamistes,” *Radio France Internationale*, August 16, 2012.

60 Organized reformist and more hard line thought and practice in this region was centered around local religious leader Seydou Idrissa, who founded the group Jama`at Ansar al-Sunna (Community of Helpers of the Sunna). See R.W. Niezen, “The ‘Community of Helpers of the Sunna’: Islamic Reform Among the Songhay of Gao (Mali),” *Journal of the International African Institute* 60:3 (1990).

61 David Lewis, “Insight: Islamist Inroads in Mali May Undo French War on al Qaeda,” *Reuters*, May 13, 2013; “Les soldats français et maliens traquent le Mujao à Kadji, près de Gao,” *Radio France Internationale*, March 1, 2013.

62 Sidi Haidara, “Golea dans la commune rurale de Bourra: Village pro-islamiste dans le cercle d’Ansongo,” *Le Reporter* [Bamako], March 21, 2013.



This process of working through and recruiting local religious leaders and notables also extended beyond northern Mali's main cities. While some small villages appear to have escaped daily scrutiny by jihadist groups,<sup>63</sup> local imams and traditional *marabouts* (Muslim holy men) in places such as Goundam and Gossi were also reportedly involved in governance and assembling fighters for northern Mali's jihadist groups.<sup>64</sup> Indeed, the push by Ansar Eddine, AQIM, and MUJAO toward central Mali in January 2013 was led by a local *marabout* from the area around Konna, Amadou Kouffa, whose beliefs and preaching had reportedly grown more radical in recent years.<sup>65</sup>

Interaction with specific religious communities, the enforcement (for a time) of justice and the provision of assistance, opposition to the MNLA, and interaction with local notables and religious leaders all contributed to a level of local support for MUJAO in Gao. This sympathy became apparent even in interviews with members of Gao's *Comité des Sages*, who served as interlocutors between Gao's population and MUJAO during the occupation. In interviews with several members of the committee, they strongly denied allegations of active support for and collaboration with MUJAO, although they all expressed more favorable opinions of MUJAO than the MNLA.<sup>66</sup> Interestingly, those interviewed repeatedly referred to MUJAO as "the mujahidin," consciously or unconsciously adopting MUJAO's characterization of itself.<sup>67</sup>

63 Personal interview, Malian official from the Timbuktu region, Bamako, Mali, February 2013.

64 M. Maïga, "État des lieux sur l'occupation dans le Cercle de Goundam," *Le Scorpion* [Bamako], September 26, 2012; Abdoulaye Diarra, "Nouvelles révélations dans le démantèlement d'une cellule du MUJAO à Bamako: Les sept personnes arrêtées sont originaires de Gossi et disciples de l'imam Ahmed Yaya Diallo," *L'Indépendant* [Bamako], April 30, 2013.

65 Adam Thiam, "Affrontement armée-jihadistes: Konna, la tragédie en sursaut," *Le Républicain*, January 11, 2013; Tanguy Berthemet, "Mali: la guerre en visite guidée pour la presse internationale," *Le Figaro*, January 28, 2013.

66 Personal interviews, Songhai and Arab members of Gao's Comité des Sages, Bamako, Mali, February 2013.

67 Ibid.

### The Costs of Local Recruitment

The overwhelming displays of joy in villages and cities of northern Mali after their liberation by French forces provide some testament to the overall unpopularity of these groups (although the MNLA was no more popular, and in many areas was more hated than the jihadist groups). The period of occupation saw protests against jihadist rule in each of northern Mali's three cities as well as in smaller towns and villages. The jihadists' rush to impose Shari'a and *hudud* punishments—including stonings, amputations, and public whippings—even embarrassed AQIM's leadership in northern Algeria, prompting a strong, private rebuke from the group's leader, Abdelmalek Droukdel (also known as Abu Mus'ab al-Wadud).<sup>68</sup> Yet ironically, in many areas the local nature of Mali's jihadist groups appears to have hindered, rather than helped, their cause.

Secondary reporting and interviews conducted in Mali, Senegal, and the United States suggest that it was local radicals and local conflicts that drove some of the most egregious actions in northern Mali since April 2012. In turn, these abuses reduced support that may have otherwise existed for these groups for their role in providing security and a measure of economic protection and aid.<sup>69</sup>

In Timbuktu, where Malians and specifically Timbuktu locals were in part responsible for the city's governance, key representatives such as Mohamed ag Moussa were widely feared and reviled for their harsh treatment of populations.<sup>70</sup> In other cases,

68 Rukmini Callimachi, "In Timbuktu, al-Qaida Left Behind a Manifesto," Associated Press, February 14, 2013.

69 For instance, MUJAO in Gao provided various forms of economic aid, both direct and indirect, to keep vital city functions like electricity and water flowing and to keep the price of basic food staples in check. In Timbuktu, AQIM and Ansar Eddine notably paid for a time to keep the city's electrical generators and water pumps operating at some capacity, although they later reportedly destroyed the city's electrical network. On Gao, see Serge Daniel, "Mali: Gao, KO Debout," *Jeune Afrique*, August 8, 2012; "Exclusive AFP – Nord-Mali: à Gao, les habitants abandonnés doivent s'accommoder des islamistes," Agence France-Presse, July 18, 2012. On Timbuktu, see "Plus d'eau ni d'électricité à Tombouctou," Agence France-Presse, January 24, 2013.

70 Ouimet.

locals involved in the city's Islamic police turned a blind eye to residents' complaints about *hudud* punishments and the destruction of cherished shrines, tombs, and mausoleums.<sup>71</sup>

In Gao, meanwhile, it was local recruits who often proved the most hard line in their interpretations and enforcement of Shari'a. While non-Malians certainly played key roles in these endeavors, it was recruits from the Gao region who often played out local conflicts and took out their own frustrations on local populations, especially local women, and who "exhausted the population" in the words of a Malian NGO figure who made repeated trips to Gao during the occupation.<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, Abdel Hakim, a non-Malian (sources disagree on whether he is from Algeria or Morocco) jointly charged with administering the city, developed a positive reputation among many residents for his attempts to provide security and assistance to the local population,<sup>73</sup> even as he was deeply involved in the harsh aspects of MUJAO's rule.<sup>74</sup>

### Conclusion

Militancy is often a minority phenomenon. Jihadist militancy is not mutually exclusive to other endogenous factors, whether they are economic, social, tribal, or intensely personal. In Mali, these factors came together over a number of years to produce a small but important cadre of fighters that came from a cross-section of the country, from Tuaregs, to Arabs, to Songhai, to southern Malians.<sup>75</sup> This is not to mention the involvement of jihadists from other Sahelian countries, where business and blood ties often straddle borders, and populations can easily move back and forth—a blurring of lines that makes the very act of defining "local" or "national" a difficult enterprise.

71 See, for instance, Lydia Polgreen, "Timbuktu Endured Terror Under Harsh Shariah Law," *New York Times*, January 31, 2013; "À Tombouctou, les islamistes détruisent les mausolées musulmans," *Le Monde*, June 30, 2012.

72 Personal interview, Gao resident and NGO representative, Bamako, Mali, February 2013.

73 Personal interview, Gao notables, Bamako, Mali, February 2013. Also see Armstrong.

74 "Mali: le Mujao met au pas les imams de Gao," Radio France Internationale, August 11, 2012.

75 "Mali: Sept Membres du Mujao se Rendent," Xinhua, April 21, 2013.

While this turn toward militancy in no way represents all or even most of Malian society, it still demonstrates the importance of these fighters in jihadist governance in northern Mali, as well as the fact that it is not always “foreign” fighters who are the most radical. Additionally, the history of the last 18 months shows the imprint of radical ideas on small parts of Mali, at a time when religious leaders and movements from a host of backgrounds become more important in Malian politics.<sup>76</sup>

Mali faces a series of security, political, and governance challenges in the future. Despite promises of cash and external support from foreign partners, many Malian state institutions, from the armed forces to governance structures, will need to be revamped at the same time that the government and external players look for solutions to problems of underdevelopment, separatist sentiment, and instability in the country’s north.<sup>77</sup> Yet the presence of Malians among jihadist groups in the Sahel is a real cause for concern that could resonate in the country for years to come.

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## Boko Haram’s Evolving Tactics and Alliances in Nigeria

By Jacob Zenn

SINCE BOKO HARAM’S<sup>1</sup> first attack on Bauchi prison in September 2010, the group has adopted increasingly sophisticated tactics to advance its goal of carving out an Islamic state in some parts or all of northern Nigeria. In the lead-up to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan’s inauguration in May 2011, the group employed motorcycle drive-by assassinations against religious and political leaders. In June and August 2011, it conducted vehicle suicide bombings at the Federal Police Headquarters and UN Headquarters in Abuja. In November 2011 and January 2012, it executed coordinated attacks involving more than 100 militants and suicide bombers in urban centers such as Damaturu and Kano. By early 2013, groups of 200-300 militants raided border towns in Borno State using pickup trucks equipped for desert fighting.<sup>2</sup>

Continuing on this evolution, one of Boko Haram’s latest tactics is kidnapping. Perhaps less sophisticated than other tactics, kidnapping has become one of the group’s primary funding sources, a way to extract concessions from the Nigerian state and other governments, and a threat to foreigners and Nigerian government officials.<sup>3</sup> Before Boko Haram adopted the tactic in February 2013, kidnappings, especially involving foreigners, were rare in northern Nigeria and almost unheard of in Boko Haram’s main base in Borno.<sup>4</sup> From

February to June 2013, however, more than 20 Nigerian government officials and civilians and seven foreigners were kidnapped in Borno.

This article analyzes Boko Haram’s motives for kidnapping and its two claimed operations between February and June 2013, the more than a dozen other kidnappings in Borno that the group did not claim, and whether the kidnappings provide evidence that members from the splinter group Ansaru<sup>5</sup>—known for its kidnapping operations—are reintegrating into Boko Haram. Finally, the article discusses how kidnappings may undermine local and international initiatives to counter the “socioeconomic malaise”<sup>6</sup> and security crisis in northern Nigeria and be a harbinger of greater collaboration between Boko Haram, Ansaru, and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).<sup>7</sup>

The article presents evidence that Ansaru may be operating with Boko Haram in Borno and that Ansaru has benefited from Boko Haram’s control of territory, manpower and grassroots connections, while Boko Haram may be benefiting from the networks and skills that Ansaru’s members developed from training and operating with al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and MUJAO members in the Sahel.

### Kidnapping Motives and Operations

#### *Motives*

Boko Haram’s decision to carry out kidnappings, particularly of women and children, possibly came in response to the Nigerian government’s detention

which was claimed by AQIM, but carried out by a cell connected to Ansaru; and a kidnapping of a French engineer in Katsina by Ansaru in December 2012, who was likely transferred to Niger or Mali. See “Kaduna Kidnap - How Canadian Was Rescued,” *Daily Trust*, May 1, 2009. For details on the other kidnappings, see Jacob Zenn, “Cooperation or Competition: Boko Haram and Ansaru After the Mali Intervention,” *CTC Sentinel* 6:3 (2013).

5 Ansaru also refers to itself as JAMBS, the acronym for Jama`at Ansar al-Muslimin fi Bilad al-Sudan. In Arabic, this means “Supporters of the Muslims in the Land of Black Africans.” For more details on Ansaru, see Zenn.

6 On “socioeconomic malaise” in Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon, see Uyo Salifu, “Border Porosity and Boko Haram as a Regional Threat,” Institute for Security Studies [Pretoria], May 28, 2012.

7 In Arabic, MUJAO’s name is Jama`at Tawhid wa’l-Jihad fi Garbi Afrika.

76 For a thorough assessment of the growth and status of “Islamist” and other religious movements and leaders in Mali, see Alex Thurston, “Towards an ‘Islamic Republic of Mali?’” *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 37:2 (2013).

77 “Niger: les attentats d’Agadez et d’Arlet ont-ils été planifiés au Mali?” Radio France Internationale, May 30, 2013.

1 Boko Haram means “Western education is sinful” in the Hausa language. The group prefers to be known as Jama`at Ahl al-Sunna li al-Da`wa wa al-Jihad, meaning “People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet’s Teachings and Jihad” in Arabic.

2 “Boko Haram Leaders Flee Hot Mali to Nigeria,” *The Nation*, January 31, 2013; Sudarsan Raghavan, “Nigerian Islamist Militants Return from Mali With Weapons, Skills,” *Washington Post*, May 31, 2013.

3 Heather Murdock, “Boko Haram’s Funding Remains ‘Elusive,’” *Voice of America*, May 22, 2013.

4 There was one kidnapping of a Canadian researcher in Kaduna in 2009, who was rescued after two weeks; no kidnappings of foreigners in 2010; one kidnapping of a British and Italian engineer in Kebbi in May 2011; a kidnapping of a German engineer in Kano in January 2012,

of Boko Haram family members. In 2012, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau repeatedly accused the Nigerian government of “kidnapping” the wives of Boko Haram members and threatened to kidnap the wives and children of government officials in response to the “mistreatment” of women.<sup>8</sup> Shekau’s spokesman also threatened that Boko Haram would kidnap the family members of government officials if the government continued to arrest relatives of Boko Haram members who were not engaged in the “ongoing jihad.”<sup>9</sup>

This specific issue likely resonated with Boko Haram because many of the women and children detained by the security forces in 2012 were related to high-ranking Boko Haram members, including Shekau’s wife and children.<sup>10</sup> While Boko Haram offered money to *al-majiri*<sup>11</sup> youths to track the movements of the security forces, transport guns,

8 Abubakar Shekau, *Message to President Jonathan 1, Abubakar Shekau*, January 11, 2012, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNg73vN86K8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNg73vN86K8); Abubakar Shekau, *Message to President Jonathan 2, Abubakar Shekau*, January 26, 2012, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUdOVcs8Tm4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUdOVcs8Tm4); Abubakar Shekau, *Message to the World, Abubakar Shekau*, September 30, 2012, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=txUJCOKTIuk&sns=em](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=txUJCOKTIuk&sns=em).  
9 James Bwala, “We May Start Kidnapping Govt, Security Officials’ Relations - Boko Haram,” *Nigerian Tribune*, January 30, 2012.

10 This also included the wife and five children of the group’s captured commander for Kano, the wife of the captured commander for Sokoto, the wife of the vehicle suicide bomber who attacked *This Day* media house in Abuja, and more than 100 other women and children. See Njadvara Musa, “JTF Releases Shekau’s Wife, 22 Others in Yobe,” *The Guardian* [Lagos], June 14, 2013; “Kabiru Sokoto’s Wife Delivers Baby in Police Cell,” *Vanguard*, April 6, 2013; Yusufu Ideg, “Boko Haram: Wife of Suspected ThisDay Bomber Arrested,” *The Nation*, May 20, 2012; Kolade Adeyemi, “Yoruba Boko Haram Leader, Wife, Kids Arrested,” *The Nation*, May 12, 2012; Taiwo Adisa, “Shekau, Boko Haram Leader, Escapes Arrest in Kano - Wife Arrested,” *Nigerian Tribune*, March 5, 2012; Adelani Adepegba and Jude Owuamanam, “SSS Arrests Boko Haram Leader’s Wife, Son,” *Punch*, December 15, 2011; Ike Abonyi, “Abu Qaqa: Boko Haram Members Marry Wives of Suicide Bombers,” *This Day*, February 14, 2012.

11 *Al-majiri* (literally meaning “migrants,” derived from the Arabic word *muhajir*) are Islamic students who beg for alms in return for shelter and Qur’anic lessons from local leaders. There are millions of *al-majiri* students in northern Nigeria, with many in Kano and Borno. See “Al Majiri Education: Journey to Nowhere,” *Vanguard*, April 19, 2012.

and burn down schools and churches, there is little evidence that Boko Haram employed women in operations.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, many of the detained women were likely taken into custody to put pressure on their husbands or male relatives in Boko Haram.<sup>13</sup>

#### Claimed Operations

Boko Haram did not act on its kidnapping threats until February 19, 2013, when it kidnapped a seven-member French family in northern Cameroon and transferred the family to Boko Haram-controlled areas in Borno. On March 19, in the second video showing the family, Shekau said, “We are holding them hostage because the leaders of Cameroon and Nigeria detained our women and children under inhumane conditions.”<sup>14</sup> One month later, on April 19, after secret negotiations between Shekau and the Cameroonian government (through intermediaries), Boko Haram released the family near the Cameroonian border in exchange for a \$3 million ransom and the release of 16 Boko Haram prisoners held in Cameroon.<sup>15</sup>

Boko Haram carried out its second claimed kidnapping on May 7, when it captured 12 women and children from a police barracks after a battle with the security forces in the border town of Bama.<sup>16</sup> On May 14, Shekau appeared in a split-screen video showing the hostages and warned that if the security forces “do not release our wives and children, we will not release theirs,” and that the hostages would become his “servants.”<sup>17</sup> Nine of the hostages

12 Yusuf Alli, “We Were Paid N5,000 to Burn Schools - Freed Boko Haram Kids,” *The Nation*, June 1, 2013; “Nigerian Troops Arrest Boko Haram Recruiter, Nab 49 Suspected Terrorists in Yobe-The Nation Newspaper,” *Sahara Reporters*, June 5, 2013.

13 “Nigeria Detains Widows of Boko Haram Fighters,” *al-Jazira*, August 2, 2009; “Cameroonian Among Women Captured During Kano JTF Raid,” *Premium Times*, May 1, 2012.

14 Hamza Idris, “Why We Abducted French Nationals - Shekau,” *Daily Trust*, March 19, 2013; Tansa Musa, “Kidnapped Family of Seven Released in Cameroon,” *Reuters*, April 19, 2013.

15 “Nigeria’s Boko Haram ‘Got \$3m Ransom’ to Free Hostages,” *BBC*, April 26, 2013.

16 Ola Audu, “Nigerian Military to Continue Sambisa Forest Operation after Killing over 20 Boko Haram Suspects in Raid,” *Premium Times*, May 17, 2013.

17 “Nigeria Islamist Video Claims Attacks, Shows Hostages,” *Agence France-Presse*, May 13, 2013.

were either released by Boko Haram or, according to official reports, “rescued” by the security forces on May 24, one day after President Jonathan issued a directive that 90 women and children “in detention on suspicion of involvement” with Boko Haram would be freed from prison.<sup>18</sup> Like Shekau’s negotiations for the release of the French family, there are suspicions that he may have negotiated with the Nigerian government for an exchange.

#### Unclaimed Kidnappings

The dozens of other kidnappings in Borno from February 2013 until June 2013 went unclaimed, but were carried out according to a pattern. Virtually all of the kidnapping victims were mid-level officials, or their relatives, who were not wealthy enough to have security details, but could afford modest ransoms of about \$10,000.<sup>19</sup> They included the manager of the Maiduguri Flour Mills, a lecturer at University of Maiduguri, a customs officer and six members of his family, a local government chairman, a divisional police officer, a criminal investigator, the manager of the Borno Water Board and his Christian friend who was beheaded, the brother of the shehu of Bama, the mother of a Borno House of Assembly member, the parents of a Borno House of Parliament member, and the father of the Borno commissioner for women affairs.<sup>20</sup> The highest-profile

18 Chris Okocha et al., “Women, Children Detainees to be Released First, Says FG,” *This Day*, May 23, 2013; Senator Iroegbu, “JTF: ‘We’ve Rescued 9 Hostages Held by Boko Haram,’” *This Day*, May 25, 2013.

19 By virtue of the victims’ connection to a government that, in Shekau’s words, “rejects the Qur’an, the Prophet, and the religion of Allah in public life,” they were legitimate targets. See a sermon of “Mallam Abubakar Shekau” from before July 2009, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eQY4GLtzLdU).

20 Njadvara Musa, “Gunmen Kill Four, Kidnap Flour Mills’ Manager in Borno,” *The Guardian* [Lagos], February 13, 2013; Ndahi Marama, “Gunmen Kidnap Senior Lecturer in Maiduguri,” *Vanguard*, February 24, 2013; David Molomo, “Dead or Alive? Customs Officer, Wife, Five Kids, Cousin Missing for 22 Days,” *Sun News*, April 29, 2013; Kareem Ogori, “Gunmen Kidnap Ex-Borno LG Boss, Demand N50m,” *Blueprint*, April 8, 2013; Njadvara Musa, “Gunmen Kidnap Ex-Council Chairman, Reject N10m Ransom,” *The Guardian* [Lagos], April 13, 2013; Maina Maina, “Gunmen Kidnap DPO in Bama, Set Town on Fire in Borno,” *Daily Post*, April 25, 2013; Yahaya Ibrahim, “Borno Water Board GM Kidnapped,” *Daily Trust*, April 29, 2013; “Kidnapped Policeman Killed by Abductors in Borno,” *Vanguard*, May 1, 2013; Ola Audu, “How

incident was the kidnapping of 92-year-old Ali Monguno, a Borno Elders' Forum member and father of a senior general in the Nigerian army, who was seized outside a mosque in Maiduguri and released three days later near the Cameroonian border after a ransom of \$320,000 was paid.<sup>21</sup>

The series of kidnappings started when some Boko Haram members, including Chadians and Nigeriens, returned to Borno after the French military intervention in Mali in January 2013 and brought with them newly acquired pickup trucks, heavy weapons, bomb-making expertise and combat experience in desert warfare.<sup>22</sup> Within weeks, Boko Haram attempted to overrun border towns in Borno. The group raided and stole weapons from a military barracks in Monguno on March 3, fought the Nigerian army in a two-day battle in Baga that left more than 185 people dead on April 16, destroyed most government buildings, schools, hospitals and telecom towers in Marte on May 3, and broke into a prison in Bama, freeing 50 members, on May 7.<sup>23</sup> These attacks forced local officials to leave their posts in more than 10 Local Government Areas of Borno bordering Cameroon, Chad, and Niger, which enabled Boko Haram to become the de facto authority.<sup>24</sup> Boko

Haram recruited and taxed locals, set up roadblocks, replaced Nigerian flags with Islamic ones, used schools as headquarters, and received weapons, such as anti-aircraft guns, with the help of corrupt customs officials, while the kidnappers were able to hold their hostages in the border region without government interference.<sup>25</sup>

Boko Haram did not claim the kidnappings of government officials in Borno, but Nigerian intelligence officials believed the kidnappers of Ali Monguno and the other incidents were likely Boko Haram members, while Nigeria's Joint Task Force said Boko Haram resorted to kidnapping-for-ransom because it is more lucrative and less dangerous than bank robberies.<sup>26</sup>

#### Ansaru's Possible Reintegration

Although Boko Haram did not claim responsibility for many of the kidnappings, the reliance on Boko Haram-controlled areas in the border region for holding the hostages and the fact that Boko Haram never issued a statement to disassociate itself from them suggest that the group was complicit and possibly provided the kidnappers with protection in return for a share of the ransoms.<sup>27</sup> This would resemble the agreement that Shekau may have made with AQIM-linked operative Khalid al-Barnawi and the AQIM-trained Boko Haram commander for Kaduna, Abu Muhammed.<sup>28</sup> According

to that past agreement, al-Barnawi and Abu Muhammed reportedly agreed to carry out kidnappings of foreigners in Nigeria in return for protection from Boko Haram.<sup>29</sup> The funding for these kidnappings likely came from AQIM-affiliated Algerian militants, who offered Boko Haram men, arms, and training to "defend" Muslims in Nigeria—as promised by AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel (also known as Abu Mus`ab al-Wadud) to Boko Haram in 2010—in exchange for Boko Haram transferring the foreigners to the Algerians.<sup>30</sup>

Abu Muhammed went on to command—against Shekau's orders—the Boko Haram breakaway cell "al-Qa`ida in the Lands Beyond the Sahel."<sup>31</sup> The cell kidnapped a British and Italian hostage in Kebbi in May 2011 and killed the two hostages during a rescue operation in Sokoto in March 2012. This was one month after Ansaru—widely speculated to be under the leadership of Khalid al-Barnawi—announced its formation (possibly on the advice of Droukdel to obscure its ties to AQIM by not including "al-Qa`ida" in its name).<sup>32</sup> It

Boko Haram Turned to Kidnapping to Raise Funds in Borno," *Premium Times*, May 20, 2013.

21 Yusuf Alli, "Boko Haram Kidnaps 92-yr-old Ex-Minister Ali Monguno," *The Nation*, May 4, 2013; Ndahi Marama, "Kidnapped Monguno Regains Freedom After Payment of Ransom," *Vanguard*, May 7, 2013.

22 "Boko Haram Leaders Flee Hot Mali to Nigeria"; Sudarsan Raghavan, "Nigerian Islamist Militants Return from Mali with Weapons, Skills," *Washington Post*, May 31, 2013; Kingsley Omonobi, "State of Emergency: More Nigeriens and Chadians Among Arrested Insurgents," *Vanguard*, May 31, 2013; Kingsley Omonobi et al., "Military Bombards Terrorists' Camps," *Vanguard*, May 17, 2013; Kingsley Omonobi, "Boko Haram Seeks Help From Afghanistan, Others; Claims Victory over JTF," *Vanguard*, May 28, 2013; "Islamic Terrorists Furious Over Recent Defeat," Strategy Page, June 2, 2013.

23 Ola Adu, "185 Killed in Borno Town, Baga, as Soldiers, Boko Haram Fight," *Premium Times*, April 22, 2013; Ndahi Mara, "Gunmen in 50 Hilux Vans Destroy Buildings, Telecom Masts in Borno," *Vanguard*, May 3, 2013; Kareem Ogori, "Boko Haram Raids Army Barracks, Kills 22," *Blueprint*, March 4, 2013; Kingsley Omonobi, "Bama Attack: Boko Haram Plans to Overrun Barracks," *Vanguard*, May 8, 2013.

24 "Boko Haram Paralyzes 10 Local Governments In Borno," *The Nation*, April 20, 2013.

25 Ibid.; Chris Agbambu, "How Boko Haram Declared No Fly Zone in Borno - Troops Foil Terrorists' Attempt to Regroup," *Nigerian Tribune*, May 28, 2013; Gbenga Akingbule Ijagba, "JTF Arrests Customs Officer Over Aiding Arms' Importation," *Daily Newswatch*, May 29, 2013; "Army Confirms Boko Haram Fire At Military Aircraft," Channels TV, May 17, 2013; "Army Destroys Boko Haram's Anti-Aircraft Guns In Borno," Channels TV, May 17, 2013.

26 Ola Adu, "48hrs After Kidnap: Boko Haram Reportedly Change Monguno's Location," *Premium Times*, May 5, 2013.

27 Videos have emerged of up to 30 Boko Haram members driving in a convoy with the French family in the border region and up to 50 Boko Haram members training in the border region with heavy weapons. Given the reports about Boko Haram occupying and infiltrating villages throughout the border region and exercising de facto authority, it seems likely that any consistent illicit activity, from kidnapping to arms trafficking, would become known to Boko Haram in the border region and would require their consent.

28 Abu Muhammed, like another U.S.-designated ter-

rorist and Boko Haram member, Abubakar Adam Kamar, trained under Khalid al-Barnawi in an AQIM-run camp in Algeria. See "Barnawi, Kamar: Qaeda-linked Militants with Boko Haram Ties," Agence France-Presse, June 21, 2012; Omololu Ogunmade, "Military Lays Claim to Killing Boko Haram Kingpin," *This Day*, June 7, 2013. Kamar was reportedly killed by Nigerian security forces in Kano in August 2012.

29 "Barnawi, Kamar: Qaeda-linked Militants with Boko Haram Ties." That article stated, "Under the alliance, [Abu] Mohammad and his group were to carry out abductions for ransom, part of which would go toward financing Boko Haram operations. Boko Haram would in turn provide security cover for Mohammad's group."

30 "Boko Haram Gets N40Million Donation From Algeria," Sahara Reporters, May 13, 2012; "North Africa Qaeda Offers to Help Nigerian Muslims," Reuters, February 1, 2010.

31 "Barnawi, Kamar: Qaeda-linked Militants with Boko Haram Ties"; Yusuf Alli, "Kabiru Sokoto Names Boko Haram's Leaders," *The Nation*, February 14, 2012; Jide Ajani, "Horror in Sokoto - Al-Qaeda-Funded Group Killed Hostages," *Vanguard*, March 11, 2012.

32 Confidential letters written by Droukdel to Islamist militants in Mali, which were uncovered in Timbuktu by the Associated Press, said, "Better for you to be silent and pretend to be a 'domestic' movement...There is no reason for you to show that we have an expansionary, jihadi, al-Qaida or any other sort of project." See "Al-Qaida's Saharan Playbook," Associated Press, February 15, 2013; "Boko Haram: Splinter Group, Ansaru Emerg-

seems likely that Abu Muhammed's and Khalid al-Barnawi's splinter groups disagreed with Boko Haram about how to share funds from the Algerians, as well as Shekau's acceptance of civilian deaths, preference for attacking Nigerian targets (rather than international ones), and possibly his favoritism of Kanuris (Borno's main ethnic group).<sup>33</sup>

The French-led invasion of northern Mali may have compelled Ansaru to rejoin Boko Haram, which could explain why Ansaru has not conducted any attacks since February 2013. As a result of the intervention, AQIM-affiliated Algerian commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar has been in hiding and possibly retreated toward southern Libya, while another AQIM Algerian commander, Abu Zeid, was killed in northern Mali.<sup>34</sup> Both commanders trained and carried out attacks with Nigerians who later became Ansaru members.<sup>35</sup> Authorities also killed or arrested the couriers from Ansaru

and Boko Haram in Nigeria to AQIM and MUJAO in Mali.<sup>36</sup> Ansaru's vital connections to AQIM and MUJAO members may have been severed.

Now that Ansaru is increasingly isolated from AQIM and MUJAO, the group would logically benefit from kidnapping-for-ransom in Borno—which is Khalid al-Barnawi's native state<sup>37</sup>—to sustain itself financially. The security of Boko Haram's safe havens would also reduce Ansaru's paranoia about Nigerian or European security forces raiding its hideouts, as occurred in Kaduna, where Abu Muhammed was killed, as well as in Sokoto, Kano, and, according to Ansaru, almost again in Bauchi in February 2013.<sup>38</sup> Since many foreign employees left northern Nigeria after Ansaru killed seven foreign engineers that it kidnapped in Bauchi in March 2013,<sup>39</sup> Ansaru may have few options but to kidnap Nigerians in Borno, as opposed to its preferred target: foreigners.<sup>40</sup>

### Evidence of Ansaru's Presence in Borno

There are several signs of a new Ansaru focus on Borno, and they suggest that Ansaru members might be reintegrating into Boko Haram. First, in Ansaru's only statement about an attack that it did not claim, the group "condemned the massacre of 300 Muslims" during Boko Haram's battle with the Nigerian security forces in Baga, Borno State, on April 16, and called for revenge on the "crusaders and the United Nations."<sup>41</sup> Second, in Boko Haram's proof-of-life video with the French family, who were in Cameroon because the father worked for an engineering firm, an Arabic-speaking militant said that the operation was retaliation for the president of France's "war on Islam" in Mali. This is a theme, language, and kidnapping victim profile associated with Ansaru, not Boko Haram.<sup>42</sup> Third, Nigeria's Joint Task Force said in April 2013 that Boko Haram tasked a "special kidnapping squad" to carry out kidnappings of government officials, foreigners and wealthy individuals in Borno.<sup>43</sup> The knowledge transfer from Ansaru members to Boko Haram could explain the emergence of this group, since Boko Haram did not carry out any kidnappings until this "special kidnapping squad" was formed. Fourth, Ansaru's areas of operations have been converging with Boko Haram's since late 2012 and could have reached Borno. Ansaru's attack on a prison in Abuja in November 2012, ambush of Nigerian

es," *Vanguard*, February 1, 2012; Adam Nossiter, "New Threat in Nigeria as Militants Split Off," *New York Times*, April 23, 2013. Similarly, as stated by Andrew Lebovich, "Belmokhtar and other elements of [AQIM] made the conscious decision to tone down their rhetoric [about Libya]." Belmokhtar feared the French were "desperate" to pull AQIM into a war that was not a priority of AQIM. See Andrew Lebovich, "AQIM's Mokhtar Belmokhtar Speaks Out," al-Wasat blog, November 21, 2011.

33 Tobi Sonyi et al., "Kabiru Sokoto Trial - Sharing of Funds Split Boko Haram," *This Day*, May 10, 2013; Yusuf Alli, "How Bombers are Chosen, by Boko Haram Suspect," *The Nation*, February 9, 2012; Godwin Tsa, "How We Did It, Kabiru Sokoto Tells Court," *Sun News*, May 14, 2013.

34 "Judge's Absence Stalls Trial of Mali-based Boko Haram Suspect," *Premium Times*, May 8, 2013; "Ansar Dine Pursues Peace Talks, Mujao Names New Chief," *LeMag*, January 3, 2012; "Mali: un Béninois à la tête d'une unité combattante, une katiba, dans le Nord," *Radio France Internationale*, December 28, 2012; "Mali: retour sur les événements de la journée du 14 janvier," *Radio France Internationale*, January 14, 2013; "Bilal Hicham, rebelle du nord du Mali," *Radio France Internationale*, August 4, 2013; "Mali: à Gao, les islamistes recrutent en masse de jeunes Africains," *Le Parisien*, July 7, 2012; "Niger Police Arrest 5 Suspected Boko Haram Members," *Vanguard*, September 27, 2012; "Report of the Assessment Mission on the Impact of the Libyan Crisis on the Sahel Region," UN Security Council, December 7-23, 2012.

35 "Exclusif...Mort des deux otages occidentaux tués au Nigeria: Une source d'AQIM livre quelques détails," Agence Nouakchott d'Information, March 10, 2012; Nossiter.

36 "Judge's Absence Stalls Trial of Mali-based Boko Haram Suspect."

37 Al-Barnawi's *nisba* of Barnawi (The Bornoan) indicates he is either from Borno or his descendants are from Borno. A *nisba* identifies a person's place of origin, tribal affiliation or ancestry, and although it is traditionally an Arabic practice, it has been adopted by Muslims from West Africa to South Asia. Abubakar Shekau is also sometimes referred to as "ash-Shekawi" in Boko Haram videos, signifying that his *nisba* is to the village of Shekau in Yobe State. Most reports say al-Barnawi is from Nigeria, but some reports suggest he is from Niger. It is also unclear whether he is a Shuwa Arab of Borno, Kanuri, or another ethnicity.

38 "Nigerian Extremists, Ansaru, Claims it Killed Seven Foreign Hostages Abducted in Bauchi," *Premium Times*, March 9, 2013.

39 "The Kidnap Fear," *Economist*, February 23, 2013. According to that article, "The kidnapping is rattling foreigners working in Nigeria's north. Total, a French oil company, has transferred the families of its staff from Abuja, Nigeria's capital, to Port Harcourt in the south... 'Any company operating in northern Nigeria will now be considering if it can have any expatriates working there,' says a Western security expert." Also see Heather Murdock, "Islamist Attacks Leading Northern Nigeria to Economic Disaster," *Global Post*, February 26, 2013; "Setraco Shuts Down Operation in Bauchi," *The Guardian* [Lagos], February 19, 2013.

40 Suzan Edeh, "Bauchi Deadly Kidnapping: Gaping Bullet Holes in Expatriates' Live Camp," *Vanguard*, February 23, 2013; Moses Alao, "Islamist Group Kills 7 Foreigners Kidnapped in Bauchi," *Nigerian Tribune*, March 10, 2013.

41 "Ansar al-Muslimeen Condemns Massacre in Baga, Calls for Revenge," SITE Intelligence Group, May 3, 2013.

42 All of Ansaru's kidnapping victims have worked for engineering companies. Ansaru said, for example, its kidnapping of a French engineer in Katsina in December 2012 was in response to France's role in planning the intervention force to drive out AQIM and MUJAO from northern Mali and "the stance of the French government and the French people on Islam and Muslims," in particular a law banning the use of headscarves. See "New Sect Claims Abduction of Frenchman in Katsina," *Peoples Daily* [Abuja], December 25, 2013; "French Family Kidnapped in Cameroon," February 26, 2013, available at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq4H4wAnSOM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xq4H4wAnSOM). Also see the claim of MUJAO spokesman Abu Walid Sahraoui for the suicide bombings in Agadez and Arlit, Niger: "We attacked Niger Republic because of its co-operation with France in the war against Sharia." For details, see John Alechenu, "New Terror Group Emerges," *Punch*, May 26, 2013.

43 Audu, "How Boko Haram Turned to Kidnapping to Raise Funds in Borno."

troops preparing to deploy to Mali in Kogi State in January 2013, and killing of seven foreigners in Bauchi State in February 2013 show that Ansaru cells moved toward Boko Haram's bases in northeastern Nigeria.<sup>44</sup>

Finally, despite past disagreements between Ansaru's suspected leader Khalid al-Barnawi and Shekau, mid-level members still operate between both groups and have put aside Ansaru's and Boko Haram's ideological differences.<sup>45</sup> In June 2012, Ansaru's spokesman confirmed that Ansaru "complements" its "brothers" in Boko Haram and that they have the same mission and ideology—but with different leaders—and the same enemies: Nigerian security officials and Christians.<sup>46</sup> In addition, in November 2012, Ansaru showed it shared Boko Haram's core grievances when it attacked the Special Anti-Robbery Squad prison in Abuja, freeing dozens of Boko Haram members, and stressed that one of them was a "woman who was detained for six months."<sup>47</sup> Shekau has also repeatedly distanced himself from Ansaru's claims that Boko Haram kills Muslim civilians, by blaming the Nigerian government for civilian deaths.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, although Boko Haram is Borno-focused and

Ansaru is Sokoto Caliphate-focused,<sup>49</sup> on the international level they both see themselves as pillars in the international jihad, with separate references to al-Qa`ida in Iraq's late *amir*, Abu Mus`ab al-Zarqawi, the "powerless" jihadists in Syria against "the enemy Bashar," and Muslims fighting against America's "Crusader War."<sup>50</sup>

There may also be new factions emerging in Borno, which are loyal to Shekau and comprised of members of Ansaru, Boko Haram and other militants who returned to Nigeria from northern Mali. For instance, the raid on the barracks in Monguno, also in Borno, on March 3, employed pickup trucks and rocket-propelled grenade launchers, which are characteristic of militants who fought in Mali, and eight motorcycles, which are typical of Boko Haram.<sup>51</sup> The raid in Monguno, which was similar to MUJAO's suicide operation using pickup trucks on a military barracks in Agadez, Niger, on May 23, 2013, was claimed in a video featuring 50 militants, including a veiled Hausa and Arabic-speaking leader, who displayed weapons he claimed were stolen from the barracks and said the militants would attack more barracks. The leader, however, did not identify himself as a member of Boko Haram or Ansaru, but as a new group, Nassiruddeen Li Ahlil Jihad Alal Kitab Was Sunna (Islamic Victors Committed to the Qur'an and Sunna). He called on "Muslim youths" to fight not "in the name of any sect, clan, or country," but to "impose Islam over unbelievers," and referred to Shekau's leadership at the end of the video.<sup>52</sup> Three weeks later,

49 The Sokoto Caliphate lasted from 1804 until the British abolished the caliphate in 1903 and established the Northern Nigeria Protectorate. It was one of the largest states in Africa spanning most of modern-day northern Nigeria (with the exception of Borno), Burkina Faso, Cameroon, and southern Niger and influencing Islamic states in Senegal, Mali, Chad, and elsewhere. See Helen Chapin Metz ed., *Nigeria: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C.: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1991).

50 "Innocence of the Mujahidin From the Blood of the Innocent Muslims," Sanam al-Islam Network, May 14, 2013; "Boko Haram Denies Losing Nigeria Battle," al-Jazeera, May 30, 2013.

51 Aminu Abubakar, "Twenty Islamists Killed in Northeast Nigeria," Agence France-Presse, March 3, 2013.

52 "Boko Haram Militants Shows Off Weapons 'Captured' From An Army Baracks," Sahara TV, April 29, 2013; "Twenty Islamists Killed in Northeast Nigeria:

Shekau claimed the attacks in Baga and Bama in the name of Boko Haram and said that "our members went to Monguno and easily invaded the army barracks."<sup>53</sup>

The distinction between Ansaru and Boko Haram may be increasingly less defined given that Ansaru was defined by its connections to AQIM and MUJAO, and Boko Haram gained similar connections while its members were in northern Mali.<sup>54</sup>

### Specter of Boko Haram Hangs Over Northeast Nigeria

Even with heavy weapons, combat experience, and millions of dollars in ransom money, Boko Haram cannot withstand the more powerful Nigerian army's offensive that accelerated with President Jonathan's declaration of a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states on May 14, 2013. Boko Haram's leaders and most-skilled members will retreat to other states in Nigeria or to neighboring countries in the Sahel, where they may find the support of militants with whom they fought in northern Mali in 2012.<sup>55</sup> The Ansaru and Boko Haram members who

Military"; "New Boko Haram Sect Emerges, Shows Off Large Cache Of Arms And Ammunitions," *Information Nigeria*, May 2, 2013.

53 "Boko Haram Claims Responsibility For Attacks In Baga, Bama; Promises More On The Way," Sahara Reporters, May 13, 2013; "Boko Haram Latest Threats: Maiduguri JTF Spokesperson, Sagir Musa Responds," Sahara Reporters, May 20, 2013.

54 Zenn.

55 "Close Associate of Boko Haram Leader, Shekau, Found Dead - Nigerian Military," *Premium Times*, May 29, 2013; "Insurgents Regroup in Adamawa Mountains," *Punch*, May 21, 2013; "JTF Claims Arrest of 49 Boko Haram," *Vanguard*, June 5, 2013. A Nigerian Defense Ministry statement said, "All the camps of the terrorists in the area [Yobe] had been dislodged as some of the insurgents fled towards Niger." The Nigeria Television Authority news also reported on June 5, 2013, that five Nigerian nationals were arrested at Mallam Fatori in northern Borno while trying to flee into Niger in Toyota Land Cruisers. See "Suspects Charged in Nigeria Bombing," al-Jazeera, December 25, 2011. Boko Haram leaders also fled to neighboring countries after the security force crackdown on Boko Haram in July 2009. See "Seven Foreigners Among Captured Insurgents," *Daily Trust*, May 31, 2013. As stated by Reuters, "But as before, the Islamists have packed up and fled across borders with Niger, Chad and Cameroon or melted away into the civilian population..." See "Nigerian Islamists Retreat, Apparently to Fight Another Day," Reuters, June 7, 2013.

44 "Taking the Hostage Road," *Africa Confidential*, March 15, 2013; "FG Places N50m Bounty on Boko Haram Leader," *Punch*, November 24, 2012. Similarly, Boko Haram increasingly attacked Kano, Kaduna and Sokoto in 2012 and Katsina in 2013, and had a commander for Sokoto who was trained under al-Barnawi. This shows that Boko Haram has moved toward the core areas of the Sokoto Caliphate that Ansaru focuses on both ideologically and operationally, with its first cells based in Kaduna, Kebbi, and Sokoto.

45 Nossiter. An Ansaru member said in an interview, "Whenever we hear of oppression, we do operations together."

46 "Security Officials and Christians Are Enemies of Islam and Muslims, We Will Target and Kill Them - Says Spokesman of Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina fi Biladi Sudan, Abu Ja'afar," *Desert Herald*, June 5, 2012.

47 *Declared of Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fibiladis sudan Garki II Abuja*, November 30, 2012, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_1m5-zV3zfU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1m5-zV3zfU).

48 Shekau said, for example, after the battle with the security forces in Baga, Borno, on April 16, 2013, that, "It was you, the security agents that went into town the following day and burnt homes and killed people at will." See Michael Olugbode, "Boko Haram Calls JTF a Liar," *This Day*, March 12, 2013; "Boko Haram Claims Responsibility for Baga, Bama Attacks," *The Sun*, May 14, 2013.

trained or fought with MUJAO and AQIM members in Algeria, Mali and other Sahelian countries will likely serve as a bridge between Boko Haram's grassroots members and MUJAO in Niger, especially new recruits who joined Boko Haram as a result of the Nigerian army offensive in Borno.<sup>56</sup> This could lead to the further regionalization of Boko Haram and allow its members to train and carry out operations while they are based outside of Nigeria. Since MUJAO and AQIM members were key forces behind Boko Haram's first attack on an international target—the UN Headquarters in Abuja on August 26, 2011—they could work with Boko Haram to orchestrate a similar attack.<sup>57</sup> MUJAO

56 Amina Mohammed, "Orji Kalu Blames JTF for Baga Killings," *Premium Times*, April 23, 2013; "Baga Killings, Cut In The Soul Of Nigeria, Says ANPP," Sahara Reporters, April 24, 2013; John Ameh et al., "Outrage Over Baga, Borno State Massacre," *Punch*, April 24, 2013; "Governors Forum Urges Government To Ignore Emergency Call in Borno, Yobe," Huhu Online, May 13, 2013.  
57 One of the three masterminds of the August 26, 2011, UN Headquarters attack in Abuja was Babagana Ismail Kwaljima (also known as Abu Summaya). He was arrested in Kano in 2007 after returning from training with AQIM in Algeria on suspicion of plotting attacks against U.S. targets in Nigeria. He was released from prison in 2007, however, to "placate Muslim groups," but was rearrested again one week before the UN Headquarters attack in August 2011, on suspicion of helping to mastermind "an attack," which turned out to be the UN Headquarters attack one week later. One of the leading recruiters for AQIM in 2007, when Abu Summaya as well as Khalid al-Barnawi were in Algeria (or operating with AQIM), was Hamada Ould Kheiru, who became the minister of justice in MUJAO-controlled Gao, Mali, in 2012. The chief mastermind of the UN Headquarters attack in Abuja was the Cameroonian Mamman Nur, who also has links to AQIM and al-Shabab. The UN Headquarters attack in Abuja resembled AQIM's attacks the same day against Algeria's premier military academy on August 26, 2011, and also AQIM's attack on the UN Headquarters in Algiers in 2007 and al-Qaeda in Iraq's (AQI) attack on the UN Headquarters in Baghdad in 2003. Meanwhile, Ansaru has specifically referenced the United Nations in its statements. In addition, the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi, Libya, was "commended" in a statement by an unknown group in Kano calling itself "Jama'atul Qat'lul Kafir fi Sabilillahi," which may have been Ansaru, since Ansaru's motto is "Jihad fi Sabilillahi." Finally, Boko Haram member Adam Kambar may have been the key link between Boko Haram, AQIM and al-Shabab before he was killed by Nigerian security forces in August 2012. On June 16, 2011, one day after Boko Haram warned that its members arrived from Somalia "where they received real training on warfare," Boko Haram also carried out its first suicide car bombing at the Federal

could also benefit from connections to Boko Haram in Borno's border region to expand southward toward Chad to exact revenge for Chad's role in Mali and the killing of Abu Zeid.<sup>58</sup>

With Boko Haram's safe havens in Borno now under government control, Ansaru, which like MUJAO has no established geographic base, may move into hostile terrain in predominantly Christian southern Nigeria or, more likely, live up to its name and launch operations in "Black Africa" with MUJAO. MUJAO threatened to expand into Benin, Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal on May 24, 2013, after it carried out suicide attacks on a French uranium mine in Arlit, Niger, and on the military barracks in Agadez, Niger, jointly with Belmokhtar's forces in retaliation for Abu Zeid's death and Niger's support of France's "war on Shari'a" in Mali.<sup>59</sup>

The June 1, 2013, attack on a prison in Niamey, Niger's capital, that freed 22 prisoners, including a long-time AQIM member, and may have intended to free several detained Boko Haram members, was the type of attack that Boko Haram has carried out dozens of times in northern Nigeria and could have been the first sign of collaboration between Boko Haram, Ansaru and MUJAO.<sup>60</sup> The imprisonment of Boko Haram members with MUJAO and AQIM members could also help to integrate their groups if members are released from prison or in hostage exchanges, or by prison breaks.

Police Headquarters. See Omololu Ogunmade, "Military Lays Claim to Killing Boko Haram Kingpin," *This Day*, June 7, 2013; "Another Islamist Sect Surfaces In Kano, Threatens To Bomb Radio Station," Sahara Reporters, September 12, 2012; Jemal Oumar, "AQIM Link to Abuja Suicide Bombing," *Magharebia*, September 9, 2011; "US Places \$23m Reward for Boko Haram Leader, Shekau, 4 Others," *Vanguard*, June 3, 2013; "Nigerian Islamists Vow 'Fiercer' Attacks," *Agence France-Presse*, June 15, 2011.

58 "Bellawar revendique les attentats du Niger," *Agence Nouakchott d'Information*, May 24, 2013.

59 "Le Mujao revendique le double attentat et promet qu'il y en aura d'autres," *Radio France Internationale*, May 24, 2013; "Cote d'Ivoire: France Warns Nationals in Côte d'Ivoire of Terror Threat," *Radio France Internationale*, June 1, 2013; Cyril Bensimon, "Côte d'Ivoire: un rapport de l'ONU riche en revelations," *Radio France Internationale*, October 6, 2012.

60 Niger: Boko Haram Prisoners Tried to Escape," *Associated Press*, June 2, 2013.

Within Nigeria, the recent kidnappings in Borno may further deter foreign governments from establishing consulates in northern Nigeria, especially given AQIM's role in attacks on the U.S. Consulate in Benghazi in September 2012,<sup>61</sup> the French Consulate in Algiers in January 2013, and the UN Headquarters in Abuja in August 2011.<sup>62</sup> NGOs in northern Nigeria will also likely be deterred, especially since Boko Haram-inspired militants killed nine anti-polio workers in February 2013.<sup>63</sup> Western multinational corporations are scaling back operations in northern Nigeria because of the kidnapping threat, while a series of robberies and murders of Chinese, North Koreans, Indians and Nepalese in Kano and Borno may deter Asian entrepreneurs from investing in the north.<sup>64</sup> The oil resources on Borno's border with Lake Chad could be a source for Borno's development, but will likely remain untapped because of Boko Haram's presence in the region.<sup>65</sup> Other projects in the Lake Chad region may also be threatened by Boko Haram, Ansaru and MUJAO, such as locally controversial Chinese oil operations in Diffa, Niger, which is located five miles

61 "U.S. Commander Says Benghazi Attacks Linked to al Qaeda in Maghreb," *Reuters*, November 14, 2012; "AFRICOM Chief Gen. Carter Ham Says Some of Benghazi Attackers had al Qaeda 'Linkages,'" *CBS*, November 14, 2012.

62 Camilus Eboh, "U.S. to Nigeria: Develop North to Beat Boko Haram," *Reuters*, March 5, 2012.

63 "Nigeria Polio Vaccinators Shot Dead in Kano," *BBC*, February 8, 2013; "Travel Warning U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs: Nigeria," U.S. State Department, June 3, 2013. According to the U.S. State Department warning: "In 2013, extremists have also targeted both Nigerians and foreign nationals involved in polio eradication efforts in northern Nigeria. Several agencies that have partnered with the United States government in the field of public health development in northern Nigeria have curtailed their activities in response to these threats." Also see "Doctors Without Borders' Shut Borno Clinic," *Daily Independent*, May 24, 2013.

64 "India Warns Citizens Against Travelling to 3 Nigerian States," *The Hindu*, June 6, 2013; Aminu Abubakar, "Three N. Korean Doctors Slain in Northeastern Nigeria," *Agence France-Presse*, February 10, 2013; Njadvara Musa, "Gunmen Kill Two Indians, Injure Others in Borno," *The Guardian* [Lagos], July 26, 2012; "Gunmen Kill Two Chinese Workers in Northeast Nigeria," *Reuters*, November 8, 2013; "The Ansaru Debacle," *The Source*, March 25, 2013.

65 Hamisu Muhammad, "FG Orders Speedy Exploration of Oil in Chad Basin," *Daily Trust*, September 10, 2012.

from Borno's border.<sup>66</sup> Diffa is also where the majority of the 9,000 refugees from Borno, including possibly some Boko Haram members, are fleeing.<sup>67</sup> Finally, southern Nigerians will be hesitant to conduct business in northern Nigeria because of the Boko Haram-inspired suicide vehicle bombings of Lagos-bound transportation in Kano's Christian neighborhood in March 2013 and other attacks on Christian traders in Borno.<sup>68</sup> The government's strategy to "cripple" Boko Haram has also affected infrastructure in Borno, with the closure of roads, border posts and telecom systems, and the banning of commercial trucks—which are all vital to the business community.<sup>69</sup>

### Conclusion

The security crisis in northern Nigeria is one that the Nigerian government and northern Nigerians will have to minimize by addressing certain root issues, such as the *al-majiri* students and other unemployed youths who are prime recruits for Boko Haram; the policy of detaining women relatives of Boko Haram members, which triggers a backlash from Boko Haram that may resonate with northern Nigerians; Ansaru's and Boko Haram's ideology, which seeks to delegitimize the Nigerian state and Islamic leaders who cooperate with the "Christian" government and promises to "restore the dignity" of Nigerian Muslims in an Islamic state; tactics to engage Boko Haram militarily in the small towns of Borno without causing significant collateral damage, which alienates the population, regardless of whether the military or Boko Haram was responsible;

66 "Diffa: La peur de Boko Haram se répand dans plusieurs villages frontaliers avec le Nigeria," Presse en ligne du Niger, April 21, 2013; "Insécurité à Diffa: Des bandits armés venus du Nigeria frappent aux portes du Niger," *ActuNiger*, February 3, 2013; Yushua Ibrahim, "6,000 Borno Refugees Seek Shelter in Niger," *Daily Trust*, May 28, 2013; "Calm Returns to Niger Town After Days of Violence Linked to Chinese Firm," Radio France Internationale, April 29, 2013.

67 Ibid.

68 "Kano Blast: Nigeria Bus Station Bomb Toll Rises," BBC, March 19, 2013; Yinka Fabowale, "Boko Haram Kills Four Yoruba Produce Buyers in Borno," *The Sun*, May 8, 2013.

69 "Military's Shutdown of NE Nigeria Telecoms Disrupts Trade," IRIN, June 11, 2013; James Bwala, "Roads Leading to Boko Haram Hideouts in Borno Remain Closed - JTF," *Nigerian Tribune*, June 12, 2013.

and, finally, when to end the state of emergency.

Regional cooperation, however, may be a complex issue for Nigeria, since West African countries historically have resisted allying with a regionally dominant Nigeria and now worry that Boko Haram will retaliate against them if they cooperate with Nigeria, as Boko Haram has done in Cameroon and Niger.<sup>70</sup> Chad also has memories of 2008, when 1,000 militants in a convoy of 300 vehicles—not much larger than Boko Haram's current forces—coming from Darfur almost reached N'Djamena, which is only 60 miles from Borno. Chad's President Deby now sees a dual threat from Boko Haram and militants in northern Niger, while Niger's President Mahamadou Issoufou and President Deby have both expressed concerns about training camps in southern Libya, where Sahelian militants are "regrouping."<sup>71</sup> Until a coherent local, sub-regional, and regional strategy is developed and implemented, Boko Haram and allied militant groups will likely continue to exploit the porous borders and leadership vacuum in West Africa.

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70 "Boko Haram Kills Cameroon Mayor," *The Sun*, October 20, 2012; Yuh Timchia, "Boko Haram 'Informant' Killed in Cameroon," *Africa Review*, January 21, 2013.

71 Mike Pflanz and Tom Chivers, "Chad Rebels Forced Out of N'Djamena," *Daily Telegraph*, February 4, 2008; Claude Angeli, "Three Centers for Intensive Training in International Jihad," *Le Canard Enchaîné*, June 5, 2013; "Libya Accused of Destabilising Region," News24 Nigeria, May 31, 2013; "Tchad: Boko Haram présent à N'Djamena?" *Africa Times*, February 14, 2013; Tanguy Berthmet, "Deby: 'Libya Is On the Verge of Exploding,'" *Le Figaro*, June 8, 2013. Deby said, "...the war in Mali comes from Libya and it is regrouping in Libya and this is a matter for the entire international community because the connection can be quickly made between Boko Haram in Nigeria and the groups in northern Niger. This is not encouraging and we are not prepared for this type of situation. Terrorism can strike when it wants, even in Chad." See Francois Soudan, "The New Targets of Al-Qa'ida: In Truth: 'Wild Wild South,'" *Jeune Afrique*, June 10, 2013.

## A Profile of Khan Said: Waliur Rahman's Successor in the Pakistani Taliban

By Daud Khattak

ON MAY 29, 2013, just before dawn, villagers in North Waziristan Agency heard the sound of a drone aircraft, quickly followed by a large explosion.<sup>1</sup> Minutes later, they watched as a convoy of armed Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants rushed to a training compound recently established by mid-ranking TTP commander Fakharul-Islam in Chashmapul village, less than six miles from Miran Shah.<sup>2</sup> It emerged that a U.S. drone strike killed TTP commander Fakhar-ul-Islam, and two other militants, Naseer-ud-Din and Aadil, both believed to be ethnic Uzbeks.<sup>3</sup>

For the first few days after the bombing, there were questions about the identity of a fourth body found in the compound, which was quickly recovered by the TTP and moved to an undisclosed location. The fourth body was later revealed to be the second-in-command of the TTP and chief of the TTP's South Waziristan faction, Waliur Rahman Mehsud.

This article examines Waliur Rahman and his TTP faction, profiles Rahman's successor, and reveals the implications of his death. It finds that Rahman's death marks a victory for the United States, as his successor may not be as popular or effective among TTP rank-and-file. Nevertheless, Rahman's successor is perceived as less moderate and is a proven military commander, and he may usher in a new wave of violence against the Pakistani state.

### Commander Waliur Rahman's TTP Faction

Waliur Rahman Mehsud, 42-years-old, was popularly known as "maulvi" or "mufti" because of his formal education at a *madrassa* (religious seminary). After the death of the TTP's founder, Baitullah Mehsud in August 2009, it

1 These details are drawn from an account provided to this author from a resident of Chashmapul village, who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.; Shaan Khan and Joe Sterling, "Top Militant Killed in Pakistan Drone Strike," CNN, May 29, 2013.



was assumed that Rahman would be his replacement.<sup>4</sup> The TTP's main *shura* (council), however, instead approved the younger Hakimullah Mehsud to be the TTP's top leader, and Rahman was appointed as Hakimullah's deputy.<sup>5</sup> This leadership dispute marked the beginning of a purported rivalry between the two commanders, who belonged to the same tribe but different sub-tribes.<sup>6</sup>

Rahman belonged to the smaller Malkhel sub-tribe of the Mehsuds in Ladda sub-division of South Waziristan Agency.<sup>7</sup> His formal religious training at Jamia Islamia Imdadia in Faisalabad,<sup>8</sup> role as a military strategist, and leadership charisma earned him respect among TTP fighters, especially among Mehsud tribe militants.<sup>9</sup> Rahman was an inspiration for young TTP recruits, and a number of youth joined the movement specifically because of his leadership.<sup>10</sup>

Rahman cultivated close relations with the Haqqani network, played a role in ending the TTP's differences with pro-Pakistan militant leaders such as Hafiz Gul Bahadar and the late Maulvi Nazir, and reached out to local tribal elders in attempts to earn

their support.<sup>11</sup> According to several sources, he also dialogued with the Pakistani government over peace terms in the region.<sup>12</sup> Some attributed his government outreach to his past role as a junior-level local leader for Maulana Fazlur Rahman's Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam-Fazlur (JUI-F) political party.<sup>13</sup>

Rahman also diversified the TTP's funding streams by establishing a fundraising network in Pakistan's commercial hub of Karachi.<sup>14</sup> In

### **“Rahman was an inspiration for young TTP recruits, and a number of youth joined the movement specifically because of his leadership.”**

Karachi, cells that report to Rahman's faction engage in kidnap-for-ransom and extortion schemes, bank robberies, and collect *bhattas* (an illegal tax) from wealthy citizens.<sup>15</sup>

The U.S. government had offered a \$5 million reward on information leading to the location of Rahman,<sup>16</sup> as they accused him of planning the attack on the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad

in September 2008,<sup>17</sup> as well as helping to plot the attack on the CIA's Camp Chapman in Khost Province in Afghanistan that killed seven CIA personnel in December 2009.<sup>18</sup>

Once Rahman's TTP faction acknowledged his death, their *shura* announced that Khan Said, Rahman's second-in-command, would be the new chief of their faction and thus the new second-in-command of the TTP—a decision that seemingly occurred without consultation with the TTP's central *shura* body.<sup>19</sup>

#### **Rahman's Successor: Khan Said**

Rahman's successor, Khan Said, is often referred to as Sajna, which is Punjabi for “close friend.” Among younger TTP members, the 36-year-old Khan Said is popularly called “Uncle” in English.<sup>20</sup> Initially, it was suggested that Khan Said may have been injured in the same drone strike that killed Waliur Rahman, but it was later claimed that he was in Afghanistan at the time of the attack.<sup>21</sup>

Khan Said belongs to the Shabikhel clan of the Mehsud tribe and was a resident of Dwa Toi village in South Waziristan.<sup>22</sup> The Shabikhel is a bigger sub-tribe than Rahman's Malkhel. According to one source, Khan Said had two wives; one is alive while the other is dead, and he has two sons and two daughters.<sup>23</sup> His father's name was Muhammad Shabikhel.<sup>24</sup>

4 Baitullah Mehsud was also killed in a U.S. drone strike.

5 After Baitullah's death, a number of TTP leaders wanted Rahman to become his successor. This was mainly due to Rahman's close ties to Baitullah, his religious knowledge and age. The TTP's central *shura*, however, instead decided that the younger Hakimullah Mehsud would be the TTP's new leader. See Reza Jan, “The King is Dead, Long Live the King: Hakimullah Mehsud Takes Power in the TTP,” American Enterprise Institute, September 8, 2009; Mukhtar A. Khan, “A Profile of the TTP's New Leader: Hakimullah Mehsud,” *CTC Sentinel* 2:10 (2009). For more on the rivalry, see “Waliur Rehman: From Madrassa Teacher to Taliban Commander,” *Express Tribune*, May 30, 2013.

6 Ibid.

7 Personal interview, Lal Wazir, journalist based in North Waziristan Agency, May 2013.

8 He also served as a *madrassa* teacher after finishing his religious education in 1996. See Mansur Khan Mahsud, “The New, New Face of the Pakistani Taliban?” *The Af-Pak Channel*, April 30, 2010.

9 Ibid.

10 Personal interview, Umar Daraz Wazir, Bannu-based journalist, May 2013; personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

11 Mark Mazzetti and Declan Walsh, “Pakistan Says U.S. Drone Killed Taliban Leader,” *New York Times*, May 29, 2013; personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013.

12 Personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013; personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

13 Soon after the May 11, 2013, election in Pakistan, the TTP reciprocated with a positive statement in response to an offer of peace talks by leaders of different political parties. The mainstream party of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif requested Maulana Fazlur Rahman for help in approaching the TTP. Waliur Rahman was previously a local leader of Maulana Fazlur's JUI-F party.

14 Mahsud.

15 Zia Ur Rehman, “The Pakistani Taliban's Karachi Network,” *CTC Sentinel* 6:5 (2013).

16 Ismail Khan and Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud, “Hints of a Rift After Pakistani Taliban Deputy's Death,” *New York Times*, May 30, 2013.

17 Ibid.; Abubakar Siddique, “The Potential Fallout Of A Pakistani Militant's Death,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 17, 2013.

18 “Waliur Rehman Dead: Pakistan Taliban No. 2 Reportedly Killed In U.S. Drone Strike,” *Associated Press*, May 29, 2013.

19 Khan and Mehsud.

20 Personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.; Nasir Khan, “Waliur Rehman Killing Confirmed! TTP Names Khan Said New Chief in S. Waziristan,” *News Tribe*, May 30, 2013.

23 Personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013.

24 Ibid.

Khan Said was previously the TTP's commander in Miran Shah, the headquarters of North Waziristan Agency.<sup>25</sup> He was Rahman's close friend, and the deputy of his faction. He was the senior-most member of the four-member *shura* that decides on the affairs of Rahman's TTP faction. The other three members of the *shura* include Haq Yar, Mufti Noor Wali and Sher Azam, all residents of South Waziristan.<sup>26</sup>

Besides playing an active role in fighting in Afghanistan, Khan Said is also a leading member of the Baitullah Karwan, a group named after the late TTP founder Baitullah Mehsud and responsible for the recruitment and training of suicide bombers.<sup>27</sup>

Unlike Rahman, Khan Said has no formal schooling or religious education, and he is thought to be illiterate.<sup>28</sup> He is, however, well-versed in matters relating to tribal customs and traditions, and familiar with the tribal *jirga* system.<sup>29</sup> An experienced fighter, Khan Said is

**“An experienced fighter, Khan Said is considered extreme when it comes to his ideological and tactical orientations.”**

considered extreme when it comes to his ideological and tactical orientations.<sup>30</sup> Unlike Rahman, who tended to pursue a more “middle path,” Khan Said has been called “merciless,” an accusation that grew from a comment he made in which he said he would kill four people for every one Taliban fighter killed.<sup>31</sup>

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

29 “Sources: Pakistani Taliban Chooses New Second-In-Command,” Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, May 30, 2013.

30 Personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013.

31 Ibid.

Khan Said is the mastermind behind the 2012 jailbreak in northern Pakistan where the TTP freed 400 inmates, and he was also involved in planning the 2011 attack on a key naval base in Karachi.<sup>32</sup>

**Implications for the Future**

If TTP chief Hakimullah Mehsud is best known for his ruthless attacks inside Pakistan, Waliur Rahman's image was of a leader who focused more on Afghanistan and remained flexible about peace talks with Pakistani authorities.<sup>33</sup> Among Pakistani government circles, this earned him the distinction of being relatively “moderate.” As a result, Pakistan's government might consider Rahman's death a setback. In the wake of his killing, for example, the TTP withdrew their offer of peace talks and warned that they would avenge Rahman's death. This increases the risk of an escalation of violent attacks in Pakistan.

Rahman's death will likely mark a serious blow to the TTP, despite his faction's occasional differences with Hakimullah Mehsud. Rahman was able to rally the Mehsud Taliban, and his faction developed a fundraising network in Karachi.<sup>34</sup> While Khan Said will likely keep these operations in place, it is unclear whether his lack of formal education and literacy will have a detrimental effect on some of the faction's more sophisticated operations.<sup>35</sup>

The appointment of Khan Said by the four-member *shura* of Mehsud Taliban without consultation with the central TTP leadership might also be a sign of internal differences between the two factions. When TTP spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan confirmed Rahman's death, he said that the TTP's 40-member *shura* body—which is distinct from the Rahman faction's smaller *shura*—was in the process of appointing a new deputy to Hakimullah Mehsud. This could

32 “Sources: Pakistani Taliban Chooses New Second-In-Command”; “Pakistani Taliban Appoint New Deputy after US Drone Strike,” *Guardian*, May 30, 2013.

33 Personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013; personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

34 Rehman.

35 Personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

mark a possible source of tension, as the Mehsud Taliban who operated under Rahman already announced that Khan Said “automatically replaces Waliur Rahman after the latter's killing on May 29.”<sup>36</sup> Ehsan, however, did not mention the decision of the four-member *shura*.

Nevertheless, the Pakistani government is unlikely to find an ally in Khan Said. According to one source close to the TTP, Khan Said, unlike Rahman, is believed to be against peace talks with the Pakistani government, which is more in line with Hakimullah's position.<sup>37</sup>

**Conclusion**

Waliur Rahman's death might mark a significant blow to the TTP. He was a veteran strategist, an experienced commander and popular among his colleagues and young Mehsud militants. His knowledge of Islamic teachings and past relationship with TTP founder Baitullah Mehsud earned him the respect of fellow militants. Although his faction has attempted to maintain continuity by quickly appointing a successor, it may be difficult for the illiterate Khan Said to fill Rahman's shoes.<sup>38</sup>

If the TTP's central *shura* supports the appointment of Khan Said, which appears likely, then the Taliban's continuity will likely be maintained in the near future. Only time, however, will reveal whether Khan Said proves to be just as effective as Waliur Rahman.

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36 Personal interview, individual with knowledge about the Taliban who asked to remain anonymous for security reasons, May 2013.

37 Ibid.; personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

38 Personal interview, Sailab Mehsud, journalist, May 2013.

## Tweeting for the Caliphate: Twitter as the New Frontier for Jihadist Propaganda

By Nico Prucha and Ali Fisher

ALMOST ALL FORMS of online media allow, enable and empower users to generate their own content and interact by posting comments, questions or responses. Online media platforms facilitate a blend of audiovisual media interspersed with writings that further sanction and explain specific ideological dimensions of jihadist activity.<sup>1</sup> As the range of online platforms has expanded, jihadist groups have increasingly used sites such as Twitter,<sup>2</sup> Facebook, YouTube,<sup>3</sup> and Tumblr.<sup>4</sup> The role of the “media mujahidin” has been approved,<sup>5</sup> sanctioned<sup>6</sup> and encouraged with the release of suggested strategies,<sup>7</sup>

1 The persistent as well as ideologically cohesive presence of jihadist propaganda online, framed as authoritative rulings and determinations, has become an open sub-culture. The jihadist narrative, enforced by audio and visual elements, strengthens in-group cohesion and affects mainstream Muslim culture, the main targeted audience.

2 For an introduction to the jihadist presence on Twitter as well as the social media strategy deployed since the outbreak of violence in Syria, see Ali Fisher and Nico Prucha, “Jihadi Twitter Activism – Introduction,” *Jihadica.com*, April 27, 2013.

3 Cori E. Dauber, “YouTube War: Fighting in a World of Cameras in Every Cell Phone and Photoshop on Every Computer,” U.S. Army War College, 2009.

4 Tumblr is a microblogging platform and social networking website. According to Rüdiger Lohlker, it “looks like a hybrid between blogging and Facebook. It’s in a layout similar to a blog, but it has all sorts of sharing features you may meet on Facebook. On tumblr, you will post text, photos, quotes, links, music, and videos from wherever you happen to be in a tumblelog.” See Rüdiger Lohlker, “Tumbling Along the Straight Path – Jihadis on tumblr.com,” University of Vienna, August 2012.

5 “Al-Manhajiyya fi tahsil al-khibra al-i’lamiyya, Mu’assasat al-Furqan & Markaz al-Yaqin, part 1,” Markaz al-Yaqin and al-Furqan, May 2011.

6 The sanctioning of jihadist activity is related to the existing core *fatawa* (authoritative rulings and ideological decrees). Thus, any local jihadist, al-Qa`ida-affiliated action is placed under the virtual umbrella, increasing the appeal. See Prem Mahadevan, “The Globalisation of al-Qaedaism,” Center for Security Studies, March 22, 2013.

7 Discussed in Fisher and Prucha, “Jihadi Twitter Activism – Introduction”; Nico Prucha, “Online Territories of Terror – Utilizing the Internet for Jihadist Endeavors,” *Orient* 4 (2011). Members of the Ansar al-Mujahidin forum and Shumukh al-Islam have posted advice encour-

although not all jihadists have perceived the move away from the traditional discussion forum websites as positive.<sup>8</sup>

The classical jihadist discussion forums remain the vital hub for authoritative and cohesive propaganda online.<sup>9</sup> The importance given to Twitter by jihadist groups, however, was highlighted in the 11<sup>th</sup> issue of *Inspire* magazine, which was released by al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in May 2013.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, within the complex network

aging fellow users to develop social media profiles to disseminate their message to a wider group of users. See for example: “The Twitter Guide // the Most Important Jihadi Users and Support Accounts for Jihad and the Mujahideen on Twitter,” available at [www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=192509](http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=192509); “Selected Tweets from Twitter,” available at [www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=192509](http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=192509).

8 The jihadist success in using Twitter has had its impact on leading jihadist writers such as Abu Sa`d al-`Amili to highlight the shift of “major [jihadi] writers and analysts,” lamenting the general decline in participation in jihadist online forums. Furthermore, al-`Amili issued a “Call (*nida*) to the Soldiers of the Jihad Media” demanding that they “return to their frontiers (*thughur*)” elevating their status. Al-`Amili himself is a high profile cleric, but is also quite active on twitter under @al3aamili. Also see Cole Bunzel, “Are the Jihadi Forums Flagging? An Ideologue’s Lament,” *Jihadica.com*, March 20, 2013.

9 Twitter has become an addition to the classical forums but is attracting more interaction among members subscribed to the jihadist worldview. Within the “jihadiscape” on Twitter, members re-publish and disseminate “official” al-Qa`ida content, upload their personal files, such as pictures via their mobile phones, or link to extremist content on YouTube. Twitter has become the new beacon for jihadist propaganda and, more importantly, a free zone for extremist users online. The jihadist forums, however, are the first place where new jihadist core content is injected and then promoted by initiated users. On the importance of online forums, see Evan F. Kohlmann, “A Beacon for Extremists: The Ansar al-Mujahideen Web Forum,” *CTC Sentinel* 3:2 (2010).

10 “AQTwets,” *Inspire* 11 (2013): p. 17. The cover story and a colorful picture commemorating Tamerlan Tsarnaev elaborated the “AQTwets” section. In the picture, the Boston bomber is depicted as sending an SMS from paradise to his mother: “My dear mom, I will lay down my life for Islam. I’m gonna die for Islam Inshaa Allah.” Reactions taken from Twitter include the user Abu Shamel, who stated: “Allahu Akbar, I feel so happy, only 2 soldiers of Allah defeated America, it’s army & #intel America can never stop the decree of Allah.” The magazine took credit for having successfully inspired not only the Boston bombers, but also the Woolwich assailants, in a reasoning phrased as an “eye for an eye,” revenge for the occupation of Islamic countries and the deployment of unmanned drones.

of interconnecting sites, Twitter has become the main hub for the active dissemination of links guiding users to digital content hosted on a range of websites, social media platforms, and discussion forums.

This article discusses the emergence of jihadist social media strategies, explains how the Syrian jihadist group Jabhat al-Nusra (JN) has used Twitter to disseminate content, and analyzes content shared by JN. Using an interdisciplinary approach to the analysis of jihadist propaganda, this article demonstrates how jihadist groups are using Twitter to disseminate links to video content shot on the battlefield in Syria and posted for mass consumption on YouTube. Data for this article is derived from analysis based on more than 76,000 tweets, containing more than 34,000 links to web-based content. Through the mining of this data, this article identifies a content sharing network of more than 20,000 active Twitter accounts and a collection of YouTube video files that have been viewed nearly 450,000 times.<sup>11</sup>

### Twitter: The New Beacon for Jihadist Activity Online

Recent martyr biographies reveal that the growth in social media use has led to a new generation of jihadists. These jihadists decided to engage in physical violence after being active within the virtual dominions of al-Qa`ida where exposure to the media had an impact on their personal lives and understanding of religious conduct.<sup>12</sup> This trend reflects to a great extent a specific *zeitgeist*, a contemporary as well as generational

11 Solely appearing in this list of users should not be considered evidence of jihadist affiliation. For example, academics and commentators writing about the phenomena may also appear in this list of 20,000.

12 Recent martyr biographies—such as Abu Qasura al-Gharib, a 19-year old Libyan fighting for Jabhat al-Nusra—outline how the internet and the regular consumption of ideological materials have impacted a new generation. The biography, a eulogy written by one of his brothers in arms published on the Shumukh al-Islam forum, highlighted how Abu Qasura (Muhammad al-Zulaytni) used his iPad to improve his knowledge, embrace al-Qa`ida ideologues, and remain active online within the jihadist spheres while he fought in Syria. The virtual footprint of real-life martyrs and their internet habits is part of the advocated role model. He was killed on January 4, 2012. For details [www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=193834](http://www.shamikh1.info/vb/showthread.php?t=193834).

shift from texts and scripts to a “visual literacy.” Ideology is presented by iconographic, habitual, and rhetorical means. Elements shown in jihadist videos are thus most appealing to initiated consumers who can read and identify the greater ideology at work.<sup>13</sup> The most prominent visual element is the use and role of the specific black banner crafted by the Islamic State of Iraq, which today is the most credible identity marker for pro-al-Qa`ida jihadist groups.<sup>14</sup>

The main al-Qa`ida forums have adopted this trend and are active on Twitter, promoting their official Twitter accounts on the main jihadist web forum pages.<sup>15</sup> Jihadist media activists and fighters on the ground use Twitter on a regular basis to upload their personal pictures and videos that were made with their cell phone cameras. This material enters the jihadist online sphere where it is immediately used and re-used to strengthen the worldview of al-Qa`ida and affiliated groups. As a result, new communication channels have emerged through which the new generation of activists and fighters, including those working for, or on behalf of, al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), AQAP, al-Shabab, and JN, can interact with potential influence multipliers and sympathizers.

<sup>13</sup> On the strategy and tactic of how the primarily Arabic language ideology is conveyed by individual preachers and activists, in this case for Germany and Austria, see Nico Prucha, “Die Vermittlung arabischer Jihadisten-Ideologie: Zur Rolle deutscher Aktivisten,” in Guido Steinberg ed., *Jihadismus und Internet: Eine deutsche Perspektive* (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2012), pp. 45-56.

<sup>14</sup> See also Rüdiger Lohlker, “Religion, Weapons, and Jihadism Emblematic Discourses” and Philipp Holtmann, “The Symbols of Online Jihad,” in Rüdiger Lohlker ed., *Jihadism: Online Discourses and Representations* (Göttingen: Vienna University Press, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> The Ansar al-Mujahidin network, a tier-one jihadist forum, for example, advertises its Twitter account (@as\_ansar) on its main page. The lesser renowned al-Minbar al-I'lami al-Jihadi forum does the same (@alplatformmedia). When the Shumukh al-Islam forum was down recently, a forum member active on Twitter cheered in appraisal with a picture of the forum after it went back online. The caption, in “Twitter-speak,” read: “all praise be God, #shabakat shumukh al-Islam has returned back working, may God reward those who set it up good and maintain it pure for the media of Jihad.”

Groups such as the Somalia-based al-Shabab rely on Twitter to publish pictures, statements, and links to YouTube jihadist videos primarily in Arabic and English. Al-Shabab used Twitter to update their followers regarding the failed French operation to free Denis Alex, who had been taken hostage by the group in 2009.<sup>16</sup> Pictures of an alleged dead French soldier and his gear were posted on Twitter and Facebook,<sup>17</sup> with the al-Shabab Twitter account (@HSMPress) claiming that they executed one of the French hostages in revenge for the raid.<sup>18</sup>

The Afghan Taliban (@ABalkhi), AQIM’s media department al-Andalus (@Andalus\_Media), and the Islamic State of Iraq’s (AQI) al-Furqan media branch (@abo\_al\_hassan<sup>19</sup>) all have Twitter accounts and frequently publish and disseminate new and old content. AQAP, for example, recently resorted to using Twitter to link to official statements.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> “Denis Alex: French Agent ‘Killed’ by Somalia al-Shabab,” BBC, January 17, 2013.

<sup>17</sup> Al-Shabab circulated the Facebook link to its Arabic account on Twitter to increase awareness.

<sup>18</sup> This “press release,” claiming the execution of Denis Alex, went online on January 16, 2013, four days after the French attempt to free the hostage. It further stated, “the death of the two French soldiers pales into insignificance besides the dozens of Muslim civilians senselessly killed by the French forces during the operation. Avenging the deaths of these civilians and taking into consideration France’s increasing persecution of Muslims around the world, its oppressive anti-Islam policies at home, French military operations in the war against Islamic Shari’ah in Afghanistan and, most recently, in Mali, and its continued economic, political and military assistance towards the African invaders in Muslim lands, Harakat Al-Shabaab Al Mujahideen has reached a unanimous decision to execute the French intelligence officer, Dennis Alex.”

<sup>19</sup> He updated his profile after announcing the merger of Jabhat al-Nusra with the Islamic State of Iraq, claiming to be the media account for the “Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham [Syria].”

<sup>20</sup> At the end of January 2013, AQAP disseminated three statements via Twitter. A high profile jihadist Twitter user, @STRATEAGY, “retweeted” these. A member of the Ansar al-Mujahidin forum posted a screenshot of the subsequent “retweets” on the forums, to gain more attention for AQAP. See “Urgent – Three New Statements by AQAP,” available at [www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=79875](http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=79875).

These “official” media channels facilitate active communication with sympathizers and followers on Twitter. For example, an official al-Qa`ida user on jihadist web forums advertised for AQIM’s al-Andalus Media’s Twitter account.<sup>21</sup> Four days later, on April 1, 2013, an “open interview” was announced via the forums with “Shaykh Ahmad Abu `Abd al-Ilaha, the head of the Media Board for al-Andalus,” setting a time window for individuals to ask him questions on Twitter using the al-Andalus account.<sup>22</sup> On April 18, the Twitter account posted a link to a PDF document containing all of the shaykh’s answers to the questions.<sup>23</sup>

The use of twitter by jihadist media activists was further highlighted by the “AQ Tweets” section in the recent edition of AQAP’s English-language *Inspire* magazine, which highlighted tweets about the Boston bombings of April 2013.<sup>24</sup>

#### Jabhat al-Nusra on Twitter

Following the outbreak of fighting in Syria, Syrian non-violent activists used, and continue to use, Twitter as a medium to document human rights abuses and war crimes committed by the Bashar al-Assad regime. Jihadists, however, soon adapted that content and the platform for their own propaganda purposes. By rebranding and reframing the content created by civil society activists, jihadists used these grievances to support a key jihadist theme: the obligation to defend and protect the Sunni population in Syria.

The primary jihadist rebel group in Syria, which maintains active links to al-Qa`ida, is JN. Although JN’s official Twitter account, @jbhatalnusra, has been quiet since April 10, 2013, there has been a steady increase in their followers.<sup>25</sup> In addition to collecting and

<sup>21</sup> “Statement Regarding the New Twitter Account,” available at [www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85175](http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85175).

<sup>22</sup> “Now the Open Interview with Shaykh Ahmad Abu `Abd al-Ilaha, the Head of the Media Board for al-Andalus,” available at [www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85501&highlight=andalus\\_media](http://www.as-ansar.com/vb/showthread.php?t=85501&highlight=andalus_media).

<sup>23</sup> The questions and answers, in Arabic, can be accessed here: <http://ia801703.us.archive.org/11/items/answersI1/answersI.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> “AQ Tweets,” *Inspire* 11 (2013): p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> At the time of writing, @jbhatalnusra has just over 60,000 followers, a 33% increase since April 3, 2013, and

analyzing tweets posted by @jbhatalnusra, the authors also identified and analyzed influential users,<sup>26</sup> the most shared links and the content to which those links directed users. A total of 76,000 tweets containing JN related content were captured over 50 days from January 27, 2013, to March 18, 2013.

JN disseminates content using the hashtag #جبهة\_النصرة, the original short version of the name in Arabic for which the group has become known. Through an analysis of the tweets containing the Arabic hashtag for Jabhat al-Nusra, the network of users sharing content via Twitter was identified.<sup>27</sup> The following is a list of users who frequently tweeted using the #جبهة\_النصرة hashtag during the 50-day period: @Nasser1437: 1,257 tweets; @zhoof21: 593 tweets; @al\_khansaa2: 363 tweets; @qmzp1434: 359 tweets; @alshohdaa: 300 tweets; @az\_241: 287 tweets; @Jalaaad\_alshi3a: 265 tweets; @SaifAlbayan: 254 tweets; @shame210: 230 tweets; @ROOH\_GNAN: 223 tweets.

Active users are defined as those who share a lot of content, but it does not indicate whether other users read or followed their content. To determine whether a user can be considered “influential,” the most frequently “mentioned”<sup>28</sup> users in tweets containing #جبهة\_النصرة were identified. Over the 50 days of data collection, users sharing tweets containing the #جبهة\_النصرة tag created 45,959 connections<sup>29</sup> among 20,459 users. A total of 96.5% of these users were part of a single intercon-

6.5% since May 7, 2013.

26 “Influential users” were determined by those posting content using the Jabhat al-Nusra hashtag.

27 Analysis of the first two weeks of aggregated data, previously published on Jihadica.com, identified a network of 12,253 connections between 7,051 accounts that were either actively sharing content via retweet or were mentioned in a tweet containing #جبهة\_النصرة. 95% of the users formed a single interconnected information sharing network. Only 352 of the 7,051 users observed tweeting using #جبهة\_النصرة did not interact with at least one member of this network. See Nico Prucha, “Jihadi Twitter Activism Part 2: Jabhat al-Nusra on the Twittersphere,” Jihadica.com, May 13, 2013.

28 On Twitter, “mentioning” another user is when one individual tweets another individual’s username in a message.

29 For the purposes of this study, a “connection” is made when one user retweets or mentions a second user on Twitter.

nected network.<sup>30</sup> The most influential users are those who have been most frequently mentioned. Those Twitter users are as follows:

- @JbhatALnusra;
- @Jalaaad\_alshi3a;
- @zrgahalyman;
- @Wesal\_TV;
- @Ahraralsham;
- @ezaah1;
- @1AbualWalid;
- @the\_free\_army;
- @zhoof21;
- @omarz7.

The two most influential Twitter accounts using the JN hashtag are @jalaaad\_alshi3a, who appears to be an extremist al-Qa’ida follower probably based in northern Syria, and @Wesal\_TV, the “official account of the [Saudi] Wesal [satellite] Television Network.”<sup>31</sup>

Wesal TV is a particularly important node in this network. In addition to airing recruitment videos for the Free Syrian Army<sup>32</sup> on television, Wesal TV disseminates links to JN and other jihadist groups on YouTube to its 290,000 Twitter followers.

This highlights a key finding: twitter has become the main hub for the active dissemination of links directing users to digital content hosted on a range of other platforms.

#### Links on YouTube

To further investigate the use of Twitter to disseminate links, all shortlinks found in the dataset were identified.<sup>33</sup> After the shortlinks only shared once were discarded, the remaining shortlinks had been shared 34,850 times. Each individual link

30 A smaller version of this network can be seen at Prucha, “Jihadi Twitter Activism Part 2: Jabhat al-Nusra on the Twittersphere.”

31 The Saudi satellite TV station Wesal, a global television network with more than 290,000 followers on Twitter, is essential for Jabhat al-Nusra propaganda-wise. @Wesal\_TV actively addresses the ongoing fighting against the al-Assad regime, calling for financial, material, and personal support for the Sunnis in Syria. For a full discussion, see Prucha, “Jihadi Twitter Activism Part 2: Jabhat al-Nusra on the Twittersphere.”

32 See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIFW-YFuIDE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mIFW-YFuIDE).

33 URL shortening services save space in microblogs, such as Twitter, due to character limits.

was shared a mean of 6.4 times, with a median of three. The top 10 most shared shortlinks were as follows: <http://t.co/uBFlnQZOYU>: 245 times; <http://t.co/MYkNDkYI>: 200 times; <http://t.co/zSyRYqdzC4>: 197 times; <http://t.co/pXjBzxJy>: 180 times; <http://t.co/JeqZAmqs>: 150 times; <http://t.co/EjGyfCxmgo>: 133 times; <http://t.co/OpWK6S7WwZ>: 129 times; <http://t.co/EYMjObQ9>: 129 times; <http://t.co/Mzh1SBHPsC>: 118 times; <http://t.co/PJ2YFiiNoW>: 117 times.

Of the 20 most shared shortlinks, 80% lead to YouTube videos, while the other shortlinks direct to pictures shared via Twitter or Facebook. The most frequently shared shortlinks to YouTube content lead to 15 video files that have been watched a total of 440,200 times, although one video file accounted for 250,000 of those views. These videos are on average 273 seconds in duration and have an average Twitter “rating” of 4.9 out of 5.

Three of the video files had more than one shortlink associated with them, meaning that they were hosted on multiple websites. These video files are:

- *The Moment of Attaining Martyrdom by One Member of JN* (23,599 views, shared twice);
- *JN: The Biggest Martyrdom Operation in al-Sham [Syria]*, March 11, 2013 (241,551 views);
- *The Martyr Khalid Abu Sulayman al-Kuwayti of JN* (41,622 views).<sup>34</sup>

#### The Visual Literacy of Role Models, Indoctrination & Radicalization

The metadata from YouTube for the video files to which the most shared shortlinks lead was also collected. Seven shortlinks were duplicates, or triplicates, in the sense that more than one shortlink leads to the same video

34 These reflect the number of views per link, not in total. All numbers correspond to the number of views on YouTube, as of May 30, 2013. Three links regarding the “martyr” from Kuwait, Khalid Abu Sulayman, were shared, of which two are identical. The third video is a eulogy in the form of a rhyme with various pictures of the fighter whose real name was given as Khalid bin Hadi al-Dihani al-Mutayri. This video has 9,617 views and includes screen grabs of Twitter where JN sympathizers propagated his “martyrdom.” See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b0a661vKNs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b0a661vKNs).

file.<sup>35</sup> This process resulted in the identification of 12 unique YouTube video files among the shortlinks disseminated prominently via Twitter. Although detailed analysis will only be provided for one of the video files, all 12 clips were in Arabic, with one exception that was in Turkish.<sup>36</sup> All the videos related to Syria. The video file most frequently shared within the authors' Twitter dataset had more than 17,000 views on YouTube. It showed "the capture of one of the officers of Assad's army by the heroes of the Free Syrian Army and JN."<sup>37</sup>

The second most shared video file demonstrated vividly the multilayered and multifaceted dimension of jihadist video culture on the internet. It had more than 10,000 views and consisted of a short sequence from another video, *The Sincere Promise*, published by JN's media department, al-Manarat al-Bayda',<sup>38</sup> on al-Qa`ida web forums and other jihadist outlets online. The original one-hour video was published on May 22, 2012,<sup>39</sup> and is available as a full high definition version. It was a classical jihadist video but seemed influenced by AQI, resembling the general layout, the quality, as well as the military operations common to that organization.

35 The author's use of "video file" means a file stored on the YouTube system with a specific ID to distinguish it from two visually similar "videos" that have separate video IDs. Despite the colloquial use of "video," users actually share, view and comment on specific video files.

36 A 14-minute video showed the radical pro-Chechnya emirate, anti-Russian and anti-Assad demonstration by "Garip-Dar" in front of the Russian Embassy in Ankara, Turkey. It was uploaded on January 27, 2013, by the user "ömer onur belül" who has only posted this one video on YouTube. It received much less traction, with about 2,500 views by February 25, 2013. The clip showed a speaker and his followers holding a "press conference," held in Turkish. This may be the reason for the difference in views. While the majority of Arabic-language Twitter users reposted this clip in support of the jihad in Syria, it was of lesser importance due to the language barrier. See *Garib-Der Rusya Büyükelçiliği Basın Açıklaması*, available at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVr4OGB6xGY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wVr4OGB6xGY).

37 According to the video description, the officer, also named a *shabiba*, was captured and interrogated in the countryside of Homs. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lsPYCahn5o&feature=g-subst-u](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9lsPYCahn5o&feature=g-subst-u).

38 Aaron Y. Zelin, "The Rise of Al Qaeda in Syria," *Foreign Policy*, December 6, 2012.

39 Sidq al-Wa'd, *The Sincere Promise*, can be retrieved on "Jihad Archive" at [www.jarchive.net/details.php?item\\_id=7528](http://www.jarchive.net/details.php?item_id=7528) as well as on other jihadist forums.

The video began by showing abuse and torture conducted by the Syrian regime, and then JN pledged a "sincere promise" to seek revenge and restore the dignity of Sunnis in Syria.

While one may expect that the most bloodiest and brutal scenes of the film would be chosen for the Twitter clip—such as the testimonies of the portrayed martyrdom operatives (*istishbadiyyun*), the executions of captured soldiers, or sequences showing the torture of civilians by al-Assad's *shabiba* militias—the sequence instead highlighted the moral actions of JN, such as moving a civilian out of the line of fire and aborting an improvised explosive device (IED) attack to prevent collateral damage. The first part of the sequence allegedly showed JN fighters engaged in Syria's northeastern city of Idlib. During a firefight between JN and government forces, one mujahid took care of a civilian, shielding him behind a wall. A grey arrow highlighted "safeguarding Muslims" to counter any possible discrediting of JN, a lesson learned from Iraq and Algeria<sup>40</sup> where al-Qa`ida affiliates indiscriminately bombed targets resulting in the deaths of scores of Sunni civilians.<sup>41</sup> The scene is further detailed on JN's official forum, describing themselves as the "mujahidin who are the ones bringing death to the *shabiba*. In another place the mujahidin bring humanitarian aid."<sup>42</sup>

The later sequences showed planned IED attacks on cars, minivans, and buses purportedly carrying troops loyal to Bashar al-Assad. In another scene, a pedestrian was branded as "Muslim" by a grey arrow, as the targets (marked as "targets") passed by, with JN deliberately aborting the operation to avoid a civilian casualty. One of the mujahidin said off-camera, "we did not

40 For a case on how the leadership of AQIM justified two major suicide bombing operations in the capital of Algeria in 2007 after being criticized by sympathizers on the jihadist forums, see Nico Prucha, "A Look at Jihadists' Suicide Fatwas: The Case of Algeria," Research Institute for European and American Studies, 2010.

41 Scott Helfstein, Nassir Abdullah and Muhammad al-Obaidi, *Deadly Vanguard: A Study of al-Qa`ida's Violence Against Muslims* (West Point, NY: Combating Terrorism Center, 2009).

42 For details, see [www.jalnosra.com/vb/showthread.php?t=138](http://www.jalnosra.com/vb/showthread.php?t=138).

blow the car up as Muslims are here. We ask God that He may protect us, sparing their blood."

In this case, JN is implementing lessons learned from past conflicts and has adopted its ideology in coherence with messaging from al-Qa`ida's senior leadership.<sup>43</sup>

Within a few days, the sequence uploaded on YouTube under the title *Jabhat al-Nusra Forbids the Carrying Out of Operations Due to the Presence of Civilians*<sup>44</sup> was viewed about 10,000 times. In general, the comments were positive, admiring the professionalism, implementation of their ideology, and pledge to fight for the defense of Sunni Muslims. The proper operationalization of the propagated ideology was applauded by the member "soraqh," who stated that "the jihad of our brothers in JN is [based] on the correct creed, and the blood of any Muslim is without doubt forbidden (*haram*)."

#### Conclusion

Twitter functions as a beacon for sharing shortlinks to content dispersed across numerous digital platforms. Videos shot on the battlefield in Syria are being uploaded onto YouTube and shared with followers via Twitter. Today's social media *zeitgeist* facilitates emergent behavior producing complex information-sharing networks in which influence flows through multiple hubs in multiple directions.<sup>45</sup>

Within this *zeitgeist*, new jihadist files show ideological coherence, while individual consumers are able to seek guidance or further explanation should decisions, actions or deeds seem unclear. With the density of jihadist, al-Qa`ida-dominated material online, local groups such as JN or AQIM seek to frame their actions as part of this global war under the ideological umbrella of al-Qa`ida. Understanding what aspects are most appraised allow governments or analysts to potentially

43 See, for example, Charles Lister, "Jabhat al-Nusra - a Self-Professed AQ-Affiliate," *Jihadica.com*, May 8, 2013.

44 For details, see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByRY4bxyZjM&feature=youtu.be](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByRY4bxyZjM&feature=youtu.be).

45 Ali Fisher, *Collaborative Public Diplomacy: How Transnational Networks Influenced American Studies in Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012).

rate and measure elements most vital for radicalization processes in general.

While the technology can be disruptive for authorities, these platforms can also be empowering for those seeking to understand user behavior within these complex digital environments. Social media platforms produce vast quantities of data. This creates the opportunity to leverage genuine interdisciplinary approaches, which combine in-depth knowledge of big data techniques and network analysis, with rich multilingual understanding of the ideological, religious, and cultural foundations of jihadist propaganda. Ultimately, “the potential in the era of big data comes not from drowning in a sea of data but navigating the most useful ways to derive insight and develop innovative strategies.”<sup>46</sup>

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## Rebellion, Development and Security in Pakistan's Tribal Areas

By Hassan Abbas and Shehzad H. Qazi

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM SUGGESTS that international development helps defeat militancy, create stability, and promote U.S. security. Stability through development has emerged as a principle of U.S. policy in the fight against militancy in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The United States pledged \$750 million of development aid to Pakistan between 2007 and 2011, and various U.S. and UK agencies continue to support the implementation of development projects in the region with the objective of helping the Pakistani state establish its presence and improve economic activity in the area, both of which would enhance its capability to defeat al-Qa`ida and the Pakistani Taliban.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of development as a cure to militancy contends that providing economic opportunities and delivering services to civilians dis-incentivizes rebellion by increasing its opportunity cost, while simultaneously allowing the Pakistani government to co-opt tribes and segments of certain warring factions. This article argues that such a straightforward relationship between development and stability does not exist in Pakistan. A look at the Pakistani Taliban's recruitment drivers reveals that not all militants are motivated solely by financial incentives. Moreover, development and security have a paradoxical relationship, as development efforts are often thwarted by the very insecurity they are meant to remedy. Between 2006 and 2012, for example, attacks on schools caused the partial or complete destruction of 460 educational facilities in FATA.<sup>2</sup> Thus, while development will be crucial in bringing stability to the tribal areas in the long-term, it remains fundamentally dependent first on the provision of security.

1 “Why Development and Diplomacy Matter in National Security,” USAID, November 4, 2011.

2 Michele Langevine Leiby, “Bombings Have Lasting Impact on School Systems,” *Dawn*, May 20, 2012; Ashfaq Yusufzai, “School's Out for Pakistan Children Trapped Between Militants and Military,” *Guardian*, January 14, 2013.

### How the Pakistani Taliban Recruit

The major assumption undergirding the case for development is that those who rebel or support militancy are overwhelmingly poor or that the financial benefits provided by insurgents outweigh what the Pakistani government offers, which in most cases is very little.<sup>3</sup> Both assumptions, however, are misleading and have not only been challenged by economic modeling, but also rejected by evidence from Pakistan and cross-national analysis.<sup>4</sup> While no large-scale studies exist on the Pakistani Taliban's recruitment, available information from the tribal agencies and adjoining areas reveals that their tactics are variegated—sometimes even within the same locale—and financial incentives are one of several inducements used to conscript fighters.<sup>5</sup>

First, Pakistan's Taliban insurgency is a complex conflict featuring not just anti-state conflict, but inter-tribal warfare as well. For example, Waziri and Mehsud tribal groups have a long

3 Graeme Blair et al., “Poverty and Support for Militant Politics: Evidence from Pakistan,” *American Journal of Political Science* 56:3 (2012), also challenge the link between poverty and militancy. In that journal article, the authors stated, “These arguments are reflected in both Pakistani and Western discourse. On the Pakistani side, officials called for a Pakistani version of the Marshall Plan. On the Western side, see the 9/11 Commission's claim that ‘Pakistan's endemic poverty, widespread corruption, and often ineffective government create opportunities for Islamist recruitment.’”

4 For example, poor Pakistanis have been found to be 23 times more negative toward militants than their middle-class counterparts. See Blair et al.; Will Bullock, Kosuke Imai, and Jacob N. Shapiro, “Statistical Analysis of Endorsement Experiments: Measuring Support for Militant Groups in Pakistan,” *Political Analysis* 19:4 (2011); Eli Berman et al., “Do Working Men Rebel?” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 55:4 (2011); James Fearon, “Economic Development, Insurgency and Civil War,” in Elhanan Helpman ed., *Institutions and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008). Field experiments from Afghanistan reveal that provision of goods and services through development projects can improve attitudes toward the government, but only where a certain level of security already exists. See Andrew Beath, Fotini Christia and Ruben Enikolopov, “Winning Hearts and Minds Through Development,” MIT Political Science Department Research Paper No. 2011-14, April 13, 2012.

5 Shehzad H. Qazi, “Rebels of the Frontier: Origins, Organization and Recruitment of the Pakistani Taliban,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 22:4 (2011).

46 Ali Fisher, “Everybody's Getting Hooked Up: Building Innovative Strategies in the Era of Big Data,” *Public Diplomacy Magazine* Summer (2012): pp. 43-54.

history of mutual distrust, battles and assassinations. Taliban factions that recruit heavily from these tribes inherit this rivalry and animosity. As a result, the Taliban recruit often based on tribal identity. Mehsud representation in Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), for example, is quite significant, and as a counter the Pakistani government has been trying to build bridges with Waziri tribesmen to squeeze

**“Pakistan’s Taliban insurgency is a complex conflict featuring not just anti-state conflict, but inter-tribal warfare as well.”**

the Mehsuds. In some cases, this was attempted through economic blockades and road construction in Waziri areas so that the Waziri tribe could bypass Mehsud areas, lessening their dependence on the latter.<sup>6</sup> The Pakistan Army has also armed militants of the small Bhattani tribe, who are despised by the Mehsuds,<sup>7</sup> in areas leading to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province (KP) to discourage Mehsud incursions.<sup>8</sup> Thus, this aspect of Pakistan’s counterterrorism model inadvertently empowers tribal identity and helps the targeted group in its recruitment drive.

Second, rebels attract potential recruits through access to social networks and provision of social prestige. Recruiters have been reported to invite young men for informal conversations and offer them company. The interaction is used to glorify war and martyrdom, while gradually giving the individual a sense of belonging to a peer group and ultimately convincing them to volunteer for jihad.<sup>9</sup> In Swat, militants

6 Ismail Khan, “Army Close to Winding Up First Phase of Operation,” *Dawn*, November 5, 2009.

7 The Mehsuds and Bhattanis have a long history of rivalry due to land disputes and especially because of Bhattani control of road access in and out of Mehsud territory (in the Waziristan region).

8 “Tackling the Other Taliban,” *Economist*, October 15, 2009.

9 Owais Tohid, “Pakistani Teen Tells of His Recruit-

ment, Training as Suicide Bomber,” *Christian Science Monitor*, June 16, 2011; personal interview, Imtiaz Gul, June 16, 2010.

recruited young men by offering them the opportunity to ride in pickup trucks and hold weapons. These acts conferred social prestige and authority upon them, while political backing from the TTP offered clout.<sup>10</sup> Finally, in recent months the TTP has attempted to use Facebook as “a recruitment center” for media work as well, organizing a virtual community of radicals.<sup>11</sup>

Revenge and reaction is a third driver of recruitment. Contrary to general assumptions about the Taliban’s worldview,<sup>12</sup> they smartly employ the elements of classic Pashtunwali code that suit their recruitment objectives. On both sides of the Durand Line, for example, the Taliban have exploited the notion of *badal* (revenge) to recruit new fighters after civilian deaths caused by military strikes and drones.<sup>13</sup> Taliban militants reportedly regularly visit refugee camps and recruit those wanting to avenge the death of family members killed by the Pakistani military or frustrated by the government’s lack of basic human facilities in these camps.<sup>14</sup>

Fourth, forced conscription is also a recruitment tactic. For example, when militants gained control of a portion of Tank District in 2007, they forced schoolchildren to join their ranks, and they also abducted 30 children for suicide bombing missions.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in Swat militants kidnapped boys from schools, and coerced some to join from *madrasas* they visited or with

10 Asad Qureshi and Ahmed Jamal, *Sabaon: Umeed ki Aik Kiran (A Ray of Hope)*, 2011. This is the Urdu-language version of the documentary *Defusing Human Bombs*.

11 “Pakistani Taliban Recruits via Facebook,” *Express Tribune*, December 7, 2012.

12 It is generally perceived that Taliban are motivated solely by extremist religious zeal and that they transcend tribal and ethnic norms.

13 “Expert: Afghan War Needs New Strategy,” United Press International, May 21, 2007; Hassan Abbas, “Are Drone Strikes Killing Terrorists or Creating Them?” *The Atlantic*, March 13, 2013.

14 Aamir Latif, “Taliban Finds Fertile Recruiting Ground in Pakistan’s Tribal Refugee Camps,” *U.S. News & World Report*, February 9, 2009.

15 “Taliban Turn Children into Live Bombs,” *Daily Times*, April 23, 2009; Musa Khan Jalalzai, “The Import and Export of Suicide Bombers,” *Daily Times*, April 21, 2011.

which they were affiliated. Many may have also joined in compliance with the TTP’s mandate that locals either provide monetary support or volunteer a male member of the household to the movement.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, the Taliban also provide financial incentives to recruits in direct and indirect ways. Interviews with law enforcement and government officials in FATA and KP suggest that the TTP makes regular payments ranging from \$250 to \$500 to their core membership; in Swat, some families volunteered their children for compensation of approximately \$93 a month.<sup>17</sup>

The same officials explained how the TTP’s indirect provision of financial benefits comes from partnering with local criminal networks and profit sharing. In practice, this amounts to sheltering criminal activities in return

**“Development projects are intended to create stability, but in practice they often do not reach areas that need them most in Pakistan.”**

for a financial cut for this service. For example, in Khyber and Orakzai agencies there is a clearly defined commission system in place for the drug trade and kidnapping-for-ransom activities to reward local commanders and other fighters.<sup>18</sup> This new reality of the militant-criminal syndicate was captured quite accurately by the *New York Times*’ Declan Walsh, who reported that “the business is run like a mobster racket. Pakistani and foreign militant commanders, based in Waziristan, give

16 Qazi, “Rebels of the Frontier: Origins, Organization and Recruitment of the Pakistani Taliban.”

17 Shehzad Qazi, *A War Without Bombs: Civil Society Initiatives Against Radicalization in Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, 2013).

18 These details are based on interviews conducted by Hassan Abbas in Pakistan during July 2012 and January 2013 with mid-ranking police and other law enforcement officials in Peshawar and Islamabad.



the orders, but it is a combination of hired criminals and 'Punjabi Taliban' who snatch the hostages from their homes, vehicles and workplaces."<sup>19</sup> The work is distributed to various groups as per their expertise, knowledge of the area, and capacity to move victims to the tribal areas without detection.

These opportunities attract many young men to the Taliban's cause, while allowing them to maintain some independence from any strict religious discipline that the Taliban may impose on their fighters. This approach has helped the TTP expand from FATA to parts of KP and even in far off Karachi.<sup>20</sup>

Moreover, this collaboration between organized crime and militant groups is a potent factor behind increased violence in Pakistan in recent months, although the TTP had officially sanctioned kidnapping as a legitimate weapon for their cause as early as March 2008.<sup>21</sup> Annual crime trends in Afghanistan indicate that this financing tool is becoming popular among the Afghan Taliban as well, and the TTP may have learned about its utility from them.<sup>22</sup>

#### The Development-Security Paradox

The development "cure" is further weakened by the paradoxical relationship that exists between development and security. Development projects are intended to create stability, but in practice they often do not reach areas that need them most in Pakistan.

The primary challenge development efforts face in places such as FATA is the safety of development workers. Heavy militant activity and instability in FATA disrupts and impedes development efforts.<sup>23</sup> USAID's Livelihood Development Program for

the southern agencies of FATA, which seeks to provide economic and social stabilization to counter extremism and terrorist groups, is an apt example. As an audit revealed, in 2009 and 2010 the program was largely unable to implement projects and achieve its key targets as a result of increased militant attacks in the region and security threats to project staff, including kidnappings, harassment, and the assassination of two key personnel.<sup>24</sup>

These challenges also resulted in relaxing program targets, not an uncommon practice when security is a problem. This too is problematic because even if a project meets its targets, the artificially low indicators may result in making little to no progress in achieving the desired end-state outcome of stability.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore,

**“The journey to stability through the path of development is fraught with challenges and not nearly as straightforward as conventional wisdom suggests.”**

insecurity has also made it difficult to monitor development programs in FATA, and as a result performance and impact are difficult to scientifically measure, which casts doubt as to whether program objectives were ever even achieved.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, security threats pose an even more fundamental challenge to development in FATA: the inability to access information for needs-assessment, planning, and implementation. Judith Kent, an official of the UK's Department for International Development (DfID), pointed this out,

*24 Audit of USAID/Pakistan's Livelihood Development Program for the Lower Region of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Washington, D.C.: Office of Inspector General, 2010).*

*25 Ibid.*

*26 Combating Terrorism: Planning and Documentation of U.S. Development Assistance in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas Need to Be Improved (Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, 2010).*

explaining that difficulty accessing these areas makes it tough to reach the people of the region and understand the dynamics of conflict. This can exacerbate the situation if money is then channeled to the wrong people, which is often the result of poor understanding of the local areas. Without access it is also difficult to estimate how much reconstruction and development is necessary and the scale of investment needed to assist the local economy. This lack of information only increases the likelihood of flawed policy planning and an improper investment of resources.

In short, the journey to stability through the path of development is fraught with challenges and not nearly as straightforward as conventional wisdom suggests.

#### Conclusion

While development is key to creating stability when an environment is conducive for reconstruction and sociopolitical reform, it is not an effective first response to the insurgency in Pakistan. This article's argument is perhaps best summarized by the words of Judith Kent, who in reference to development projects in FATA said, "While development is of course good, and something which we all want, we should nevertheless be careful about making assumptions that development is the answer to the insurgency."<sup>27</sup> As stated previously, the TTP does not recruit solely on the basis of financial incentives, and development projects are unable to reach the very non-permissive environments they seek to stabilize due to instability.

The objective is not to understate the value of development or overplay security considerations. Development and service delivery are indeed necessary in providing stability, establishing the authority of the local government, including FATA in the national mainstream through constitutional measures, and extending the writ of the state, but this can only be achieved once an area has been cleared of militants or when the military at least has dominant control over it. For example, the Pakistani Army has established

*27 Quoted in Judith Kent, "Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas: How Can the UK Support Development?" World Security Network, February 6, 2009.*

<sup>19</sup> Declan Walsh, "Taliban Gaining more Resources from Kidnapping," *New York Times*, February 19, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Zia Ur Rehman, "The Pakistani Taliban's Karachi Network," *CTC Sentinel* 6:5 (2013).

<sup>21</sup> Ashraf Ali, "Pakistani Criminals, Taliban Find Easy Cash in Kidnapping," *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 13, 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Sami Yousafzai, "For the Taliban, a Crime that Pays," *Daily Beast*, September 5, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> This has also been the case with U.S. development efforts in Afghanistan. See *Afghanistan's Security Environment* (Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, 2009).

control in certain parts of FATA, which made the recent election campaign possible in that area. Nevertheless, given the geographic considerations, significant development work cannot proceed without security of the main communication routes throughout FATA.

Ultimately, better law enforcement will not only increase security and improve governance, but also create more space for development projects to be implemented and help stir economic growth. A secure environment can allow development organizations to conduct needs-assessments and channel scarce resources toward initiatives that are most desired. Moreover, access to local information can also help explain how to build support for basic public goods such as education, which itself is a crucial driver of development and establishing peace, or polio vaccinations, and also help create local ownership of programs—crucial to sustainable development.<sup>28</sup> If insecurity reigns, however, development projects are doomed to being misguided, ineffective, and unsustainable.

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## Peace with the FARC: Integrating Drug-Fueled Guerrillas into Alternative Development Programs?

By Jorrit Kamminga

AS A RESULT of more than a decade of violence, forced displacement and self-organization of farmer communities, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were born in 1964. Driven by a Marxist-Leninist ideology, the guerrilla movement started fighting for social, political and economic equality and justice for the peasant communities of Colombia. That initial struggle resulted in more decades of violence, with the FARC involved in an ugly campaign of bombings, killings, kidnappings, extortion and the trafficking of arms and illicit drugs.

Half a century later, the FARC has been weakened considerably by years of a strong military counteroffensive, high rates of desertion and demobilization, loss of local support, and the killing of some of their top leaders.<sup>1</sup> Part of the decline of the FARC has inherently resulted from its flawed tactics: the violent methods and partial shift from a leftist ideological organization to a money-making machine have decreased its credibility and local support base.<sup>2</sup> At the moment, the illegal armed group has around 8,500 combatants.<sup>3</sup> While heavy fighting continues, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos announced a preliminary agreement for peace talks with the FARC in August 2012. In October, this led to an official peace dialogue that took place first in Oslo, Norway, and it is currently being held in Havana, Cuba. The agenda of the peace dialogue revolves around five issue areas: agricultural (land) reforms, drug trafficking, political participation, ending the armed conflict, and the

rights and rehabilitation of victims of the conflict. The peace negotiations have been both applauded and heavily criticized.<sup>4</sup>

This article focuses on the nexus between two items on the peace agenda: land reforms and drug policy. It first discusses how a peace agreement could benefit the country's fight against the supply of illicit drugs within the framework of the government's national policy of territorial consolidation.<sup>5</sup> Second, it explores what the FARC demand in return for peace in those territories where it currently has a presence. Lastly, it argues that some of the demobilized guerrilla fighters could play an active role in counternarcotics alternative development programs.

The article finds that reaching a peace agreement with the FARC could boost the government's national strategy of territorial consolidation. In addition, the government could even include part of the demobilized FARC fighters in its alternative development programs, thus linking disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) with a counternarcotics strategy.

4 Some critics such as former Colombian President Álvaro Uribe simply argue that you should not negotiate with terrorists. Others say that some points on the agenda (e.g., land reforms, drug policy and the rights of victims) should be regular (public) policies of the state, which should not have to be negotiated with an illegal armed group.

5 After a pilot program that started in the region of La Macarena in the department of Meta in 2007, the Colombian government implemented the National Plan of Territorial Consolidation (PNCRT) in 2009. The national strategy focuses on priority areas with high levels of illegal armed groups, violence and illicit drug cultivation, and a weak state presence. Some areas have traditionally seen no state presence because of the conflict's remoteness or because of the difficult geography (e.g., mountains and jungle with few access routes). The idea is that a general improvement in the security situation allows the state to move (back) in, start providing basic services to the local communities and strengthen local institutions. In turn, this allows for social and economic development programs (including policies aimed at alternative development or illicit crop substitution) to be implemented through and with the local communities.

1 FARC leader Raúl Reyes was killed in 2008, commander Mono Jojoy was killed in 2010, and commander Alfonso Cano was killed in 2011. In addition, commander and co-founder Manuel Marulanda died in 2008 of a heart attack.

2 See, for example, Adam Isacson, "The Death of Raúl Reyes," Colombia Program of the Center for International Policy, March 1, 2008.

3 Juan Carlos Monroy Giraldo and Jorge Iván Posada, "Aunque lo nieguen, las FARC pasaron de euforias a realidades," *El Colombiano*, October 21, 2012.

28 "Education: Overview," World Bank, undated.

### The Peace Talks and Coca

The ongoing peace dialogue between the Colombian government and the FARC may not only put an end to the longest running civil war in Latin America, but it also offers the Colombian government a unique window of opportunity to solve part of the country's illegal drug economy.

Regardless of its political rhetoric and propaganda, the FARC could be considered a prime example of a guerrilla movement that has (partly) shifted from grievances to greed to motivate its struggle against the Colombian government.<sup>6</sup> Its involvement in the illicit drug trade, generating an estimated annual income of at least \$204 million,<sup>7</sup> may indeed have become an independent motivational force in itself. If one compares a map of FARC presence with a map of illicit coca cultivation in Colombia, they are almost identical.<sup>8</sup>

Paradoxically, the FARC's massive involvement in the illegal drug trade could mean that the current peace dialogue might have a positive spillover effect: peace with the FARC allows the government to make an important dent in the illegal coca economy. The problem is where to draw the line in the peace dialogue. The government is already negotiating with a group that is both nationally and internationally labeled a terrorist organization. Granting them any special rights in terms of territories or territorial benefits may be a bridge too far.

At the end of May 2013, a partial agreement was reached in Havana on the agricultural reforms, the first concrete result after six months of negotiations.

6 See, for example, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56:4 (2004): pp. 563-595.

7 Given the logical problems of establishing an accurate estimate, the author prefers to depart from this rather conservative 2003 estimate taken from: *El conflicto, callejón con salida. Informe Nacional de Desarrollo Humano Colombia - 2003* (Bogotá: UNDP, 2003), p. 285. Some more recent estimates are at least five times this number, but they do not seem to reflect that much of the added value of the illegal coca economy has in recent years disappeared to the coffers of Mexican drug cartels.

8 Compare, for example, the maps on pages 15 and 70 of *Colombia. Monitoreo de Cultivos de Coca 2009* (Vienna: UNODC, 2010).

The details of the agreement, however, have not been released and the outcome depends on the broader agreement on all five points of the agenda.

### Territorial Consolidation and Drug Control

The basis of the current Colombian national policy of territorial consolidation is territorial security. It requires security—established by the Colombian military—before the state establishes a permanent presence in an area and starts to deliver basic services. An effective state presence has now more structurally become a precondition to counternarcotics and general (rural) development strategies. A government representative explained the strategy

**“The FARC could be considered a prime example of a guerrilla movement that has (partly) shifted from grievances to greed to motivate its struggle against the Colombian government.”**

as follows: “Illicit cultivation is closely related to the issue of territorial insecurity. Where there are illegal armed groups, there are illicit crops. So, as the state is regaining these zones in terms of security, the illicit crops start to decline and the state starts to establish a presence.”<sup>9</sup>

This is exactly where peace with the FARC would provide a strong boost. It would increase the security situation in parts of the country that are strongly affected by illicit coca cultivation. As such, it would allow the government to initiate the process of territorial consolidation in strategically important areas with illicit coca crops that, for the moment, can only be reached by much criticized aerial spraying campaigns. As said by one farmer, “What use is it to us if they are helping us with projects related to [agricultural] production, when at the same time they are attacking us from the air with glyphosate? The

9 Personal interview, representative, UACT regional office, Villavicencio, Meta, Colombia, May 10, 2013.

glyphosate arrives and kills the cocoa that we are sowing.”<sup>10</sup> Territorial consolidation could mean that, if still needed, more manual crop eradication could take place.

An agreement with the FARC would not mean that all illicit coca cultivation would disappear from Colombia. Besides the FARC, there are simply too many other groups involved in the illegal trade.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, some FARC members will probably continue their involvement in the illegal coca economy regardless of any political agreement. Past demobilizations in Colombia have shown that 10-15% of demobilized fighters continue with criminal activities afterward.<sup>12</sup> Regardless, demobilizing the FARC would allow the government to incorporate some former FARC fighters into its alternative development programs.

### From Waging War to Bargaining for Territory

Demobilizing and reintegrating most of the FARC's fighters into Colombian society would entail focusing on rural areas. The FARC's fighters mostly come from agricultural backgrounds, and their skills are most suited for the countryside. They would have a difficult time finding a job in the urban cities, hence the old adage that the FARC's members are “afraid of concrete.”<sup>13</sup>

In general, the government's policy is keeping people in rural areas through alternative development programs. One project beneficiary in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountain range explained: “It is about finding ways for the farmer to stay on his plot of land, that he can be productive, that he can

10 Personal interview, project beneficiary, Community Council ACAPA, Tumaco, Nariño, Colombia, May 2, 2013.

11 Both the armed forces of the left-wing Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) and the right-wing paramilitary organization Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) are directly and indirectly involved in Colombia's illegal coca economy. In addition, around the country, several *bandas criminales* (BACRIMs), often with connections to paramilitary groups, are fighting a turf war for control over the illegal drug trade. At the moment, the most important gangs are Los Rastrojos and Los Urabeños.

12 Daniel Rivera Marín, “Gran reto del proceso de paz: tener un buen proyecto de reinserción,” *El Colombiano*, October 29, 2012.

13 Personal interview, government representative in La Macarena, Meta, Colombia, May 11, 2013.

associate himself with others, that he is familiar with his surroundings, finds alternatives and can educate his children.”<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, many families are still selling their properties (if any) and leaving for the city, some of them forced to return afterwards after realizing that the city has nothing to offer them, and obliged to work as even poorer land laborers for other farmers.<sup>15</sup>

Yet simply reintegrating FARC members in the respective regions from where they came does not seem to be an item on the agenda. Instead, the FARC demand special territories with a certain level of autonomy. In the early stages of the peace dialogue, farmer cooperatives were mentioned as a possible way of satisfying the guerrilla movement’s demands in the negotiations.<sup>16</sup> Now, the debate revolves around entire territories, known as the *Zonas de Reserva Campesina* (ZRC), created in the past by the Colombian government as part of an effort to provide vulnerable farming communities with limited resources access to and ownership over state-owned territories.<sup>17</sup>

Without knowing the details of the partial agreement on agricultural land reforms, the big question remains whether the FARC demand territory for the rural communities they say they represent or for their own (demobilized) fighters. If the FARC could use the peace agreement to indirectly improve the living conditions for farmers in some of the rural areas, they could win back part of their lost credibility. They could probably even use that as a basis for establishing a legitimate political party in Colombia focused on agricultural reforms and the protection of rural communities. Alternatively, if it becomes clear that they are mainly interested in their own position and in formalizing control over their

territories, there is a huge chance that there will be no peace agreement at all.

The FARC is currently demanding 59 ZRCs with a total of nine million hectares across the country.<sup>18</sup> In addition, similar to the designated territories for indigenous and afro-descendant communities in Colombia, it wants these territories to have a degree of political, administrative, economic, social, environmental and cultural autonomy, with justice administered through mechanisms of communal justice. At least on paper (and in the eyes of most Colombian media), that would mean creating small semi-independent republics (or *republicuetas* according to former Agriculture Minister Juan Camilo Restrepo<sup>19</sup>) within Colombia.

The latter seems to be politically unacceptable, especially after the earlier Caguán peace process (1999-2002), when the FARC turned the 26,000 square mile territory it received as part of peace negotiations into a safe haven to both regroup its forces and strengthen its participation in the illegal drug economy by actively promoting coca cultivation and processing in the area.<sup>20</sup> As a consequence, the current Colombian government cannot risk that (former) FARC members could formalize their control over part of the illicit drug trade through these newly granted territories. Besides, creating semi-autonomous regions is completely at odds with the government’s strategy of integrating all remote or isolated areas within the state structure through territorial consolidation. Nevertheless, the ZRCs are said to be among the six themes currently agreed upon within the agricultural (land) reforms.<sup>21</sup>

### Forest Warden Families Programs for the FARC?

Independent of how the agricultural reforms develop, it is interesting to explore the ways in which demobilized FARC fighters could effectively participate in alternative development programs. That would combine a strategy of DDR with a development-oriented counternarcotics policy. In fact, the FARC has already expressed an interest in promoting alternative (rural) development.<sup>22</sup> One model could be the Forest Warden Families Program.

Since 2003, the Colombian government has implemented the Forest Warden Families Program to boost integrated rural development while fostering a culture of lawfulness.<sup>23</sup> The program creates alternative livelihoods that are linked to the preservation of natural resources or the protection of the environment. For example, reforestation is an important component, as well as some initial linkages with the international market for carbon credits.<sup>24</sup> Program beneficiaries have become forest wardens, agro-forestry producers (e.g., banana, cacao, coffee, palm oil or rubber) or even service providers in ecotourism (as tourist guides or owners of ecological lodges).

The program further promotes the ownership of the land, and strengthens the social cohesion of the rural communities. It is not limited to the agricultural production of the individual families, but also aims to provide benefits to the broader community in terms of education and public health. As such, it combines technical assistance related to agro-forestry with broader capacity building, including, for example, literacy, bookkeeping,

<sup>22</sup> While negotiating peace, the FARC has ironically developed its own proposals to end the illegal drug problem. They are proposing a dual counternarcotics policy. On the one hand, it focuses on alternative development (the substitution of drug producing crops) and rural development in general. On the other hand, it favors the legalization of cannabis, opium and coca cultivation for medicinal, industrial and cultural purposes.

<sup>23</sup> All information about this program is based on the field research conducted by the author in the departments of Nariño, Magdalena and Meta in May 2013.

<sup>24</sup> USAID has started promoting linkages between agro-forestry and the international market for carbon credits through its Bioeadd+ program.

<sup>14</sup> Personal interview, beneficiary Red Ecolsierra, as-sociation Guardabosques de la Sierra, Vereda La Esmeralda, Colombia, May 6, 2013.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Rivera Marín, “En El Laguito cubano, Gobierno y FARC sacan sus cartas,” *El Colombiano*, November 4, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> ZRCs were created in Colombia through Law 160 (1994) to help protect vulnerable farming communities, especially those affected by the conflict or in the peripheries of the country.

<sup>18</sup> “Farc aspiran a multiplicar zonas de reserva campesina en Colombia,” Agence France-Presse, March 19, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Juan Camilo Restrepo, “Republicuetas, no; zonas de reserva campesina, sí,” *El Tiempo*, March 23, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> “Colombia’s Elusive Quest for Peace,” International Crisis Group, March 26, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>21</sup> While the details are under embargo until the end of the peace process, other themes negotiated so far are a fund for land distribution, formal land titles, the management of the advance of the agricultural frontier, and increasing the state presence in remote rural areas.

socio-organizational and socio-entrepreneurial skills. In many regions, the programs have already resulted in higher living standards and the creation of thousands of alternative livelihoods within the legal economy.<sup>25</sup>

This program could provide an interesting model for the demobilization and reintegration of some of the FARC fighters. For the moment, it is unclear to what extent this program is part of the negotiations in Cuba, but President Santos has mentioned on several occasions that he would welcome working with the FARC on ways to reduce illicit coca cultivation and promote alternative development.<sup>26</sup> The previous Caguán peace process, however, has undoubtedly made the government wary about involving the FARC as a partner in alternative development.<sup>27</sup>

Linking these programs with the DDR process of the FARC could be a possibility. It could even generate more international support if these programs were linked directly to objectives of protecting the tropical forests and rich biodiversity of Colombia.

### Conclusion

Signing a peace agreement with the FARC will not end Colombia's illegal coca economy. It will not even end the role of all FARC fighters in the drug trade. Yet it will increase the government's territorial control over important areas of the country where currently a substantial part of illegal coca cultivation occurs. As

25 In May 2013, the author visited several alternative development projects in the departments of Nariño, Magdalena and Meta, interviewing project beneficiaries. While there are clear socioeconomic (and some cultural) benefits for the participating families, not all families of local communities can be integrated into the programs. Those who benefit have seen their living conditions improve, for example, on the basis of agricultural, agro-forestry and fish production, but often still require better services in the community (e.g., investments in education and healthcare). Another question is whether all these projects prove to be sustainable once the government withdraws its technical assistance and (price) support.

26 "Santos sugiere acuerdo con las Farc sobre cultivos de coca," *Vanguardia Liberal*, December 13, 2012.

27 William L. Marcey, *The Politics of Cocaine. How U.S. Foreign Policy Has Created a Thriving Industry in Central and South America* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2010), p. 233.

security conditions improve in the former FARC strongholds, it would provide the government with an excellent opportunity to expand its policy of territorial consolidation and simultaneously rein in part of the supply of illegal drugs.

Turning FARC fighters into some kind of local counternarcotics agents may be a bridge too far. Yet reintegrating their members into programs similar to the Forest Warden Families Program may be an option to explore. It could match the skills and rural background of demobilized FARC fighters with attractive alternative livelihoods related to the preservation of Colombia's natural resources and biodiversity. The key question is whether the FARC would accept the offer. For the moment, its exorbitant demands suggest it is bargaining for much more than merely alternative livelihoods.

Not signing the peace agreement would likely mean a continuation of the status quo, with heavy fighting and limited possibilities for the government to structurally address the problem of illegal coca cultivation through economic (alternative) development in many areas of Colombia. A peace arrangement could change this, but the key questions at the moment are whether it can be worked out before the end of the year (the tight deadline set by the government) and what price President Santos and the Colombian people will pay to solve this festering conflict.

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## Recent Highlights in Terrorist Activity

May 1, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): Afghan Taliban militants killed Malim Shahwali, a senior member of Afghanistan's peace council, in Helmand Province. Two of Shahwali's bodyguards were also killed. - *Reuters, May 1*

May 1, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated his explosives near a Pakistani election candidate in Sindh Province, injuring two bystanders. The election candidate, Mohammad Ibrahim Jatoi, was unharmed. - *AFP, May 1*

May 2, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): An improvised explosive device killed eight Afghan police in Logar Province. The Afghan Taliban claimed responsibility. - *AFP, May 2*

May 3, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A new public opinion poll from the Pew Research Center found that four in 10 Afghans believe that suicide bombing is justified "in order to defend Islam against its enemies." According to RFE/RL, "Out of 39 countries in the study, only Palestinians showed the same level of support for the idea that suicide attacks are sometimes justified." - *RFE/RL, May 3*

May 3, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants shot to death Awami National Party candidate Sadiq Zaman Khattak and his four-year-old son in Bilal Colony in Karachi. - *The Nation, May 4*

May 4, 2013 (MALI): Militants attacked a Malian army patrol in Gao, killing two soldiers. A suicide bomber attacked the soldiers while another group of gunmen in a car shot at the troops. Three militants were also killed. - *AP, May 4*

May 5, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb reportedly killed five U.S. troops in Kandahar Province. - *AFP, May 5*

May 5, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): An Afghan soldier shot to death two NATO soldiers in Farah Province. - *AFP, May 5*

May 5, 2013 (SOMALIA): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle attacked a convoy carrying a Qatari delegation in Mogadishu, killing at least eight people. Most of those killed may have

been innocent bystanders. Al-Shabab took responsibility, claiming that the attack killed six soldiers and that it was directed at the Somali interior minister. – *CNN, May 6*

May 6, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A bomb killed at least 25 people at a political rally for the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam (JUI) religious party in Kurram Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan claimed responsibility, and said that the bomb was intended for a lawmaker elected as an independent but allied to the outgoing government coalition in Kurram. The lawmaker was reportedly not injured in the attack. – *AFP, May 6; NBC, May 6; New York Times, May 6*

May 6, 2013 (LEBANON): Lebanese authorities arrested four members of a cell with suspected links to al-Qa`ida. The cell members—Lebanese and Syrian nationals—were detained for allegedly possessing explosives. The arrests occurred in a Beirut suburb. – *Lebanon Daily Star, May 10*

May 6, 2013 (PHILIPPINES): Suspected Abu Sayyaf Group militants ambushed and killed a Philippine Army major and a soldier in Basilan Province in the southern Philippines. – *Gulf Today, May 8*

May 7, 2013 (FRANCE): A leader in al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) urged Muslims worldwide to attack French interests in response to its military intervention in Mali. French President Francois Hollande later said that France is taking the threat seriously. – *AFP, May 7; Voice of America, May 7*

May 7, 2013 (TUNISIA): Tunisian armed forces were reportedly searching for more than 30 suspected al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb-linked (AQIM) militants close to the border with Algeria. – *Reuters, May 7*

May 7, 2013 (NIGERIA): Boko Haram group militants raided the town of Bama in northeastern Borno State, burning down the city's police station, military barracks and government buildings. An estimated 200 heavily-armed militants freed 105 prisoners in the pre-dawn raid, which lasted five hours. Approximately 22 police officers, 14 prison officials, two soldiers, four civilians and 13 Boko Haram members were killed. – *BBC, May 7; Telegraph, May 8*

May 7, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber detonated explosives near a vehicle carrying a political candidate from the Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam religious party in Hangu District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The explosion killed 12 people, although the candidate only received slight injuries. – *AP, May 7; AFP, May 7*

May 8, 2013 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle targeted Kurdish *peshmerga* security forces near Kirkuk, killing one of them. – *AFP, May 8*

May 8, 2013 (YEMEN): Suspected al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula-linked militants shot dead three Yemeni air force colonels from al-Anad air base in Lahij Province. – *AFP, May 8*

May 8, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber rammed an explosives-laden vehicle into a barrier outside a police station in Bannu District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, killing two people. – *AFP, May 7*

May 8, 2013 (INDONESIA): Indonesian counterterrorist forces killed seven suspects during coordinated raids on groups reportedly linked to Santoso, the country's most wanted terrorist. – *Australian, May 10*

May 10, 2013 (SPAIN): Police in Gibraltar deported Cengiz Yalcin, a suspected Turkish member of al-Qa`ida, to Spain. Yalcin was arrested in August 2012 along with two Chechen suspects, and they were accused of plotting bomb attacks. – *AFP, May 10*

May 10, 2013 (MALI): A suicide bomber in a vehicle attacked a camp of soldiers from Niger in Menaka, but the bomber was the only casualty. – *AFP, May 10*

May 10, 2013 (MALI): Four suicide bombers detonated explosives in Gossi, located in Timbuktu region, wounding two Malian soldiers. – *AFP, May 10*

May 11, 2013 (TURKEY): Two car bombs tore through the Turkish border town of Reyhanli, Hatay Province, killing 52 people. Authorities suspected that militants with links to Syria were responsible for the attack. The bombing was described as the “deadliest single act of terrorism ever to occur on Turkish soil.” – *Reuters, May 30; Hurriyet, June 20*

May 11, 2013 (EGYPT): The Egyptian Interior Ministry announced that they foiled a plot by an al-Qa`ida-linked cell to bomb the U.S. and French embassies and other targets in the country. The cell, which included three Egyptians, had already acquired explosives. – *Lebanon Daily Star, May 11; BBC, May 11; Reuters, May 15*

May 11, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber in an explosives-laden vehicle tried to assassinate the police chief for Baluchistan Province outside the officer's home in Quetta. The explosion killed at least six people, but the police chief survived the attack. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan later claimed responsibility. – *AFP, May 12; RFE/RL, May 14*

May 13, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A truck bombing killed three NATO troops in Helmand Province. The explosion targeted the entrance to the Georgian outpost in Musa Qala district. – *AP, May 13*

May 13, 2013 (IRAQ): A suicide bomber attacked an army checkpoint near Ramadi, Anbar Province, killing three Iraqi soldiers. – *AP, May 13*

May 14, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A roadside bomb killed three U.S. soldiers in Zhari district of Kandahar Province. – *Fox News, May 14*

May 16, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked a NATO military convoy in Kabul, killing at least 15 people. Among the dead were two U.S. soldiers, four civilian contractors, and nine Afghan civilians. Hizb-i-Islami, an insurgent group, claimed responsibility, and warned that the attack is part of a stepped-up campaign against foreign troops in Afghanistan. – *BBC, May 16; Reuters, May 16; Los Angeles Times, May 16*

May 17, 2013 (IRAQ): Two bombs exploded outside a Sunni mosque in Ba`quba, Diyala Province, killing at least 43 people. The bombs detonated just as worshippers left Friday prayers. – *Reuters, May 17*

May 17, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): Four insurgents on motorcycles assassinated an anti-Taliban police chief in Farah Province. – *Los Angeles Times, May 18*

May 17, 2013 (YEMEN): Gunmen shot to death a Yemeni intelligence officer in Mukalla, Hadramawt Province. - *AFP, May 18*

May 18, 2013 (YEMEN): A suspected U.S. drone strike killed four militants from al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula in Abyan Province. - *AP, May 18; AFP, May 18; AFP, May 20*

May 19, 2013 (TUNISIA): Supporters of the Islamist militia Ansar al-Shari`a clashed with police after the government banned the group's annual rally. Ansar al-Shari`a is considered the most radical of the Islamist militia groups to emerge in Tunisia since the revolution in 2011. - *Reuters, May 19*

May 20, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): The head of the provincial council in Baghlan Province was assassinated in a suicide bombing that left 12 others dead. The Afghan Taliban claimed responsibility. - *Washington Post, May 20*

May 20, 2013 (IRAQ): According to press reports, more than 60 people were killed in a series of car bombs targeting Shi`a across Iraq. - *Reuters, May 21*

May 20, 2013 (YEMEN): A suspected U.S. drone strike killed two alleged al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula militants in Bayda Province. - *AFP, May 20*

May 21, 2013 (RUSSIA): Russian security forces reportedly killed Dzhamaileil Mutaliyev, the deputy to the country's most wanted militant Doku Umarov, in Ingushetia. - *AFP, May 21*

May 21, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonated explosives near a vehicle carrying a candidate from the hard line Jamiat-i-Ulama-i-Islam religious party in Hangu District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. The candidate was not injured, but 12 other people were killed in the explosion. - *AP, May 23*

May 21, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A roadside bomb killed a local leader of the secular Pakistan People's Party in Lower Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Two of the leader's guards and two supporters were also killed in the explosion. - *AP, May 23*

May 22, 2013 (UNITED KINGDOM): Two men in a vehicle ran down an off-duty British soldier who was walking outside an army barracks in London and then proceeded to attack him with meat cleavers. The soldier was killed in the attack. When police officers arrived, they shot and wounded the two suspects, identified as Michael Adebolajo, a British citizen of Nigerian descent, and Michael Adebowale, also of Nigerian origin. British authorities later revealed that Adebolajo had ties to al-Shabab, an al-Qa`ida-linked group based in Somalia. - *New York Times, May 26*

May 22, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed Habibullah Khan, an anti-Taliban village elder, and six other people in Ghazni Province. The bomber was described as a teenager on foot. - *RFE/RL, May 22; AFP, May 22*

May 23, 2013 (NIGER): AQIM-linked militants executed two simultaneous suicide bombings against a military garrison and the French Areva uranium mine in Arlit, killing 25 people. Authorities claimed that the militants crossed into Niger from southern Libya. Both Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Signatories in Blood brigade and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) claimed responsibility, saying that the attacks were in response to France's military intervention in neighboring Mali. - *AP, May 28; al-Arabiya, May 24*

May 23, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A bomb planted in a three-wheeled auto-rickshaw exploded as a truck carrying Pakistani security forces passed by in Quetta, Baluchistan Province. The bomb killed 11 security force personnel and two civilians. The Pakistani Taliban claimed responsibility. - *Reuters, May 23*

May 24, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): Four Taliban militants attacked the International Organization for Migration office in Kabul, killing an Afghan police officer and two civilians. The attack involved a car bomb as well as militants wearing suicide bomb vests and armed with shoulder-fired grenade launchers. Ten international aid workers were in the office at the time, but the facility's Nepalese guards and then later Afghan security forces managed to kill all the militants. - *AP, May 26*

May 24, 2013 (NIGERIA): The Nigerian army said it has destroyed a number of camps used by the Boko Haram group in northeastern Nigeria. The army also claimed that its offensive in the northeast has resulted in the freeing of three women and six children who were abducted by Boko Haram on May 7. - *BBC, May 24*

May 25, 2013 (RUSSIA): A female suicide bomber detonated explosives in the central square of Makhachkala, the provincial capital of Dagestan. The bomber was identified as a "black widow," a term used in the region to describe the widows of male militants killed by security forces. According to the Associated Press, "Islamic militants are believed to convince 'black widows' that a suicide bombing will reunite them with their dead relatives beyond the grave... Since 2000, at least two dozen women, most of them from the Caucasus, have carried out suicide bombings in Russian cities and aboard trains and planes. All were linked to an Islamic insurgency that spread throughout Dagestan and the predominantly Muslim Caucasus region after two separatist wars in neighboring Chechnya." One person died in the attack. - *AP, May 25; AFP, May 26*

May 25, 2013 (KENYA): Al-Shabab militants killed six people, including two police officers, near the border town of Liboi in Kenya. The militants targeted two police outposts. - *AFP, May 25; Christian Science Monitor, May 30*

May 25, 2013 (PHILIPPINES): Philippine troops engaged in a firefight with Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) gunmen in Patikul, Sulu Province, in the southern Philippines. The goal of the military operation was to rescue six foreign and Filipino hostages and limit the ability of the group to conduct more kidnappings in the south. Seven Philippine soldiers and seven ASG fighters were killed in the confrontation. - *Philippine Star, May 29; New York Times, May 26*

May 26, 2013 (KENYA): Kenyan police killed a Muslim cleric accused of possessing explosives and radicalizing Kenyan youths into joining al-Shabab. Police confronted the cleric, Khalid Ahmed, at his home in Mombasa, resulting in an exchange of gunfire in which Ahmed was killed. Ahmed was a Somali with a Kenyan passport. - *Shabelle Media Network, May 27*

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not of the U.S. Military Academy, the Department of the Army, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

May 27, 2013 (IRAQ): A series of car bombs ripped through mostly Shi'a areas of Baghdad, killing at least 70 people. – *AP, May 27; AP, May 28*

May 27, 2013 (MALAYSIA): Police arrested two Malaysian men for suspected links to the Tanzim al-Qa`ida Malaysia group. One of the men, Yazid Sufaat, is a biochemist and a former army captain. In 2001, Sufaat was imprisoned for seven years after being accused of belonging to Jemaah Islamiya. – *Reuters, May 27*

May 29, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber attacked the office of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Province. A second militant then engaged in a two-hour firefight, in which seven ICRC staff members—all foreigners—were eventually rescued by Afghan security forces. One Afghan security guard and both militants were killed. The Afghan Taliban denied any role in the attack. – *AP, May 29; New York Times, May 31*

May 29, 2013 (AFGHANISTAN): A suicide bomber killed an anti-Taliban village elder in Ghazni Province. The explosion killed elder Habibullah Khan, two bodyguards and a civilian. – *AP, May 29*

May 29, 2013 (PAKISTAN): A U.S. drone strike killed Waliur Rahman, the second-in-command of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The strike, which killed six other people, occurred near Miran Shah in North Waziristan Agency of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The TTP later confirmed his death. – *Washington Post, May 29; Reuters, May 29*

May 29, 2013 (NORTH AFRICA): According to a purported al-Qa`ida document recovered by the Associated Press in Mali, al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) received \$1.1 million for the release of Canadian diplomats Robert Fowler and Louis Guay in 2009. Militants kidnapped the two diplomats in December 2008, and they were released in April 2009. The document, dated October 3, 2012, also revealed that AQIM's central leadership was upset that the cell in charge of the kidnapping, which was led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, only demanded \$1.1 million, and argued that the ransom should have been higher. After receiving the letter, Belmokhtar quit AQIM and

formed his own group, the Signatories in Blood brigade, which was responsible for the In Amenas hostage crisis in Algeria in January 2013. – *AP, May 29; Guardian, May 29*

May 30, 2013 (GLOBAL): The upcoming issue of al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula's (AQAP) *Inspire* English-language magazine praises the alleged Boston Marathon bombers as heroes and urges readers in the United States to carry out similar acts. The magazine argues that the Boston attacks show that "lone jihad" attacks can be effective in the United States. "Lone-Jihad is impossible to counter and stop, except when basic cooking ingredients and building material become illegal," an article from the magazine said. The latest issue of *Inspire* also has a section on the killing of a British soldier in London, which occurred on May 22. – *CNN, May 30*

May 30, 2013 (IRAQ): According to a Reuters report, an unnamed senior security official revealed that Iraqi security forces foiled an al-Qa`ida-linked plot to use tanker trucks loaded with explosives to blow up a key Baghdad oil facility. – *Reuters, May 30*

May 30, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) said that they will not participate in peace talks with the country's new government, and instead will seek "revenge in the strong way" for the killing of its deputy leader, Waliur Rahman, in a U.S. drone strike on May 29. The TTP also said that they will escalate attacks to avenge Rahman's death. – *Washington Post, May 30*

May 30, 2013 (PAKISTAN): Pakistani Taliban militants appointed Khan Said to replace Waliur Rahman, the latter of whom was killed in a U.S. drone strike on May 29. Khan Said served as Rahman's deputy. – *Reuters, May 30*

May 30, 2013 (TURKEY): Turkish authorities announced the arrests of 12 people suspected of being members of a terrorist organization. The police raids occurred in Istanbul, as well as in the southern provinces of Mersin, Adana and Hatay near the Syrian border. Authorities did not identify which terrorist organization was targeted in the raids. – *Reuters, May 30*