



TRANSNATIONAL THREATS UPDATE

Center for Strategic and International Studies ■ Washington, D.C.

Volume 4 • Number 1 • December 2005

“Defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government. Today, that task has changed dramatically. Enemies in the past needed great armies and great industrial capabilities to endanger America. Now, shadowy networks of individuals can bring great chaos and suffering to our shores for less than it costs to purchase a single tank. Terrorists are organized to penetrate open societies and to turn the power of modern technologies against us.”

President George W. Bush, 2002 National Security Strategy

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Terrorism

Taliban Expanding Its Militant Capabilities

The Taliban has announced that it has around 200 rebel fighters who are willing to become suicide attackers against the United States and its allies in Afghanistan. Commander Mullah Dadullah said via satellite that the Taliban will “continue jihad until Americans and all of their Muslim and non-Muslim allies are pulled out of the country.” However, Afghanistan’s Defense Ministry has dismissed this announcement as mere propaganda, stating that the use of suicide attacks is a sign of the weakening capabilities of an isolated, powerless group.

But others are not as certain that the Taliban is powerless. Afghan government officials have warned that the Taliban has convinced farmers to grow more opium crops. These crops will then be used to buy weapons and ammunition for use against U.S. and NATO troops. Amadullah Rezai, head of counter-narcotics in the Nangahar Province, believes that

farmers will continue to be threatened and aid the Taliban unless NATO intervenes.

But even more alarming are reports by Pakistani intelligence sources that the Taliban is acquiring weapons, financed through sales of heroin from the increasing opium crops, from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) by way of al-Qaeda. Links between the LTTE and al-Qaeda began after the attack on the USS Cole in 2000. Al-Qaeda leaders thought the attack on the ship was unsuccessful and sought advice and training from the LTTE, who have had previous experience in maritime operations from their battles with the Sri Lankan government.

The LTTE has longstanding relationships with international arms cartels, a network linking arms dealers, ships, and ports. Pakistani security officials believe that drugs and cash from the Taliban are being funneled through al-Qaeda to the LTTE, who then provide weapons such as surface-to-air missiles to the Taliban. *(Combined dispatches)*

Small Militant Group Thwarting Government Efforts to Curb Terrorism in Philippines

A recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) indicates that a small group of militant Islamic converts in the Philippines is effectively working against government efforts to reduce terrorism and broker peace deals with other terrorist groups. The report highlights the significance of the Rajah So-laiman Movement (RSM), a small group of individu-

als that the ICG believes is establishing new relationships between the Philippines' three most dangerous terrorist groups: the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG).

The RSM are based in Manila and the northern regions of Luzon Island. The ICG believes that the RSM is helping members of ASG and JI to move into the urban heartland of the Philippines, spreading from bases in Mindanao. More militant members of MILF, unhappy with the group's impending political settlement with the government, are also working with the RSM to reestablish relations with ASG and JI. In this sense, the Philippine government's successes with the current leadership of MILF could only incite further disillusionment by hard-line members. The ICG has also indicated that the government is fueling Islamic militancy in the country through human rights violations and the subordination of procedural justice when apprehending possible terror suspects.

However, Ricardo Blancaflor, chief of the Anti-Terrorism Task Force (ATTF), has rejected the accusation of the ICG report, saying that the government has always followed due process when convicting terrorists and does not violate human rights in the process. Blancaflor said the ICG had basis for its conclusions, but added, "...what I would like to point out is that the achievements, in terms of neutralized terrorists for the past two years, was not touched on by the report." The ATTF had arrested, captured, or killed 193 local and foreign terrorists since its creation in March 2004.

The military has also indicated that RSM had only around 20 members, and since the arrest of its leader Hilarion Santos in September, the group would effectively be inactive. (*Combined dispatches*)

Al-Zarqawi Support Network Found in France and Belgium

Antiterrorism officials in France and Belgium have found that terrorist networks in their countries have links to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi's network in Iraq. In France, information obtained from the questioning of 25 suspects from the Paris suburb of Clichy-sous-Bois led to the capture of a cache of weapons in the area. Officials believe these arms were used to carry

out armed robberies across France to finance jihad. Some of these funds were directed towards al-Zarqawi's insurgency in Iraq.

Among the weapons found in a garage in Clichy-sous-Bois were several kilograms of TNT, 19 sticks of dynamite, detonators, AK-47 and Famas assault rifles, revolvers, ammunition, balaclavas, and bullet-proof vests. Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy expressed his concern that the network had obtained Famas rifles, since they are the same ones used by the French army. Sarkozy also indicated that this network had links with Algerian and Chechen organizations. While French officials have found no evidence that the group collecting these weapons had plans to carry out its own attacks, British intelligence officials believe that al-Zarqawi may use his base in Iraq to begin planning and conducting attacks in Europe.

In Belgium, the federal police arrested 14 suspects in an attempt to disrupt a network that recruited suicide bombers for attacks against U.S. forces in Iraq. The raid was conducted in the cities of Brussels, Charleroi, Antwerp, and Riemst. This was part of a joint effort with Belgium, the European Union, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to identify and disrupt terrorist cells that are using Belgium for recruitment and logistical bases. The Belgian federal police believe that the country is known by terrorists to be a place to obtain false identity papers rather easily.

Those arrested were allegedly connected to a Belgian woman who conducted a suicide attack against U.S. forces in Baghdad in November 2005. The police also believe that recruitment was not limited to Belgium, since this group was actively seeking volunteers across Europe. (*Combined dispatches*)

Somalia's Increasing Vulnerability to Extremism

The world's reluctance to aid Somalia's redevelopment as a nation means that it is a breeding ground for Islamic extremism. United States General James L. Jones, commander of U.S. forces in Europe, believes that all of Africa is susceptible to breeding extremism through its strategic location to Europe. He also believes that the size of the continent means that future terrorist organizations could use it as a training

ground and go undetected with their operations. While Jones acknowledged that the U.S.-led Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI) has been successful in the training of African troops among eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the continent is still far from secure.

Somalia is a country where Islamic militants thrive because of lawlessness and disorder. The International Crisis Group (ICG) has also cautioned that the international community must make the stabilization of Somalia a top priority for antiterror efforts. However, the ICG has noted that while militant Islamic groups have allied themselves with al-Qaeda, they receive little support from the population. Somalis distrust and do not appreciate the words and restrictions of radical Muslim clerics among fundamentalist militias. However, fear remains that moderate and radical Islamic groups may soon combine forces if the international community does not support Somalia's transitional government.

In contrast to Jones and the ICG, the governor of Lower Shabelle in Somalia has announced that at the very least, this region is not susceptible to terrorism or criminal activities, and invited international inspectors to draw their own conclusions. The region has also worked to protect the distribution of humanitarian aid, fight against piracy, and resist terrorism and drug trafficking. Governor Sheikh Yusuf Mohammed Siad explains, "The regional administration assured peace and stability which allowed humanitarian organizations to operate in the region. Presently, there are many foreign personnel working peacefully in different parts of the region." (*Combined dispatches*)

Maritime Security

Nigeria and Kenya Increase Maritime Patrols

In response to the piracy incidents off the Somali coast, Nigeria and Kenya have stepped up efforts to make sure their territorial waters are secure. Kenya is especially concerned that the waters off Somalia might be declared a war risk zone, as some maritime unions have suggested. If this designation is placed on the region, the Kenyan government believes insurance rates will skyrocket, resulting in fewer vessels visiting ports and a reduction in commerce.

As a result, Kenya has offered to provide security to any ships that enter its waters. The Department of Defense has placed naval ships along the coastline, and has asked cruise ship officials to inform security agents of arrivals, so that the navy can escort cruise ships in and out of Kenya's waters. This action is in direct response to the attack on a cruise ship passing through Somalia's waters in early December.

Nigeria is also wary of pirates, especially those targeting the country's oil industry. Vice Admiral Ganiyu Adekeye of the Navy indicated that there should be constant patrols of the Niger Delta area. To address the need for security from piracy, the navy carried out "Operation Igbochi" in mid-December to test the efficiency of naval vessels and servicemen in their ability to deter and ward off pirate attacks and crude oil thieves. The exercise involved operations such as gunnery, damage control, defense against nuclear and biological attacks, and fire fighting. It is the first exercise in at least 10 years. (*Combined dispatches*)

Trafficking

Portugal and Spain: Gateways for Drugs into Europe

Portugal and Spain's ties to Latin America can be attributed to the large amount of cocaine and hashish seized over the past year. Jose Braz, assistant director of the Department of Narcotics Traffic of Portugal, explains that drug trafficking in the two countries follow a cyclical pattern. "When Spain steps up its prevention and repression, traffickers choose Portugal more often and vice versa." Seizures of cocaine in Portugal have jumped from around 3 tons in 2000 to over 17 tons in 2005. This large increase could be due to the discovery of around 6.1 tons of cocaine in a warehouse outside of Lisbon, seized in November. The value of the cocaine is estimated at \$250 million dollars.

The U.S. State Department declared in March that most of the cocaine entering Portugal comes from Colombia. A large portion of cocaine shipments travel through Brazil, a former Portuguese colony, and Venezuela, where a large Portuguese population resides. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime claims that Portugal's 1000-mile coastline is difficult to secure.

Once traffickers have breached the borders of one European Union (EU) country, travel between other EU countries becomes substantially easier. But Jose Braz was quick to point out that intelligence sharing among European police forces has improved greatly, as evidenced through the apprehension of Dutch, Romanian, French, and Colombian citizens in Portugal and Spain.

Along with historical ties to Latin America, Spain's proximity to Morocco is also a major reason why hashish and cocaine are smuggled into the country. Police recently arrested 80 people and seized drugs in two separate operations; two groups were involved in the trafficking of over 30 tons of hashish, and the other group was involved with cocaine. The latter group was led by Colombian nationals and used Spanish couriers to smuggle cocaine into Spain, Senegal, Colombia, Argentina, and Venezuela. (*Combined dispatches*)

Organized Crime

Mafia Crackdown Across Europe

Police across Europe have disrupted at least two different Mafia-style smuggling rings. Italian police arrested 80 people in connection with an arms, drugs, and prostitution ring that crossed six European countries, with arrests in Italy and Albania, and detentions for suspects in Germany, Ukraine, Kosovo, and Croatia. The criminal network was operated by the Ndrangheta, an organized crime group based in the southern Italian province of Calabria. The police believe that this is a large blow to the group, as drugs have been seized in each of the countries listed above. The Ndrangheta is believed to have trafficked women from Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, and Romania, forcing them to work as prostitutes in Italy.

A separate migrant smuggling ring was halted by police conducting raids in Britain, Italy, France, Greece, and Turkey. Fifty-three people were arrested in connection with a ring that took willing migrants from the Middle East and transported them to Britain and France aboard boats and trucks. Police believe the operation was set up five years ago by an Iraqi Kurd known as Arsalan, who lived in Rome. It is believed that 5,000 migrants paid up to \$15,000 for passage to Italy via Greece. Paris Prosecutor Jean-Claude Marin

praised the dismantling of one of the most important "clandestine immigration networks in France," and British Immigration Minister Tony McNulty praised the level of cooperation between British and European Union authorities in breaking up this smuggling ring.

However, these successes are not putting others at ease. David Johnston, commander of the London Metropolitan Police for specialist crime, believes that there is a rise in crime from Eastern Europe, and the country is being threatened by "entrepreneurial and dynamic criminals." Gangsters from former Iron Curtain countries are trafficking guns, prostitutes, and drugs into Britain, taking advantage of lax border controls, and are enticed by the fact that British police do not carry weapons. Authorities point to the evidence that the population of eastern Europeans in British jails has risen 130 percent in five years. (*Combined dispatches*)

Australia Tackles Transnational Crime

The Australian government is taking an active role in reducing the amount of transnational crime across its borders. In order to disrupt the amount of crime domestically, Australia has recently decided to take the initiative to deter potential criminal threats overseas. This policy is designed to anticipate activities through working with other countries and their police forces and intelligence services. The most important policy shift for the government is the emphasis on intelligence sharing and coordination with other countries as well as within Australia's law enforcement and intelligence services. The government is also placing a premium on human intelligence, remarking in an Australian federal police annual report from 2004-2005 that a human source "can negate the need for many months of investigation and the deployment of expensive specialist equipment."

The new policy changes have already proved to be effective in reducing heroin shipments into the country, but have not yet been successful in reducing ecstasy and crystal methamphetamines. The government has also made money laundering and human trafficking high priorities in its fight against transnational organized crime.

Australia has also targeted criminals and terrorists using fake passports and forged identity documents. In 2004, the Department of Foreign Affairs opened a passport fraud center, and is working with New Zealand, the United States, and Interpol to exchange information about lost and stolen passports. Andrew Metcalfe, Secretary of the Department of Immigration, believes that “document fraud is an enabler of crime.” Authorities have pointed to the need for vigilance over identity fraud, as evidenced by the ease of travel of the 9/11 hijackers and members of Jemaah Islamiyah. (*Combined dispatches*)

Antiterror Measures

EU Discusses Plans to Deploy Surveillance System

The European Union (EU) has recently discussed its intentions to build a new electronic surveillance system along the Mediterranean. The EU is expecting to spend around €800 million for the plan that was first proposed by Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero. A similar but smaller form of this system is currently in use in the Strait of Gibraltar.

The method has proven effective in tracking the movements of individuals attempting to cross the border, even though large-scale assaults on the borders of Spain have occurred in the past year. Indeed, Spain and other members of the EU were surprised that as many as 12,000 migrants from West and East Africa sought to cross into Spain in 2005.

European Commission Vice President Franco Frattini believes that “professional and violent criminal gangs” were waiting to smuggle as many as 30,000 more people from Africa into the EU. Perhaps in response to this, Switzerland has adopted the use of unmanned aircraft (drones) to patrol its borders and stem the tide of smuggling and illegal immigration across its borders. The Swiss border guards will begin using this system in January 2006. The use of these drones has brought forth some legal debate. Federal Data Protection Commissioner Hanspeter Thur believes that the drones offer better border security surveillance, but that they could also spy on people inland from a large distance. The drones will still be deployed on schedule and Thur has indicated that they will observe and not record any movements near

the borders. The Swiss government and Parliament will be asked to form new laws with regard to the use of the drones in the near future. (*Combined dispatches*)

TNT Digest of Major Trends in Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism in 2005

This digest reviews some recurring trends from the *Transnational Threats Update* that occurred over the past year. Terrorism has remained the most prevalent concern to the world, with al-Qaeda at the forefront of the struggle. The group has established a presence in the Balkans as well as in Africa, with Nigeria, Mauritania, Somalia, and Kenya as prime areas. North Africa has also proven to be a major source of Islamic extremism, with threats emanating from Morocco and Algeria.

A more disturbing trend is the establishment of terror cells throughout the world, which ally themselves with al-Qaeda, but do not appear to have financial support from the group. The danger of militant Islamists taking action on their own has resulted in European law enforcement and intelligence being more vigilant. Homegrown terrorism has become a worrisome issue not only for governments in Europe, but also in Southeast Asia, with the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, and Australia all similarly concerned with the emergence of extremists within their Muslim populations. Furthermore, these countries are focusing particular attention on the movements of Jemmah Islamiyah and the Abu Sayyaf Group, with the fear that these groups are working together to train and plan attacks in the region.

The war in Iraq has resulted in a recruitment network in Europe, which many experts believe was pioneered by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, and France have been identified by authorities as areas where recruitment networks exist.

The Internet has become a source for online jihadism—a “virtual caliphate”—providing information such as how to make suicide bomb vests and develop chemical agents; details on how to conduct kidnappings and plan attacks; locations in Iraq where jihadis report for duty; and eulogies for suicide bombers. It also contains a limitless source of jihadi-

related videos, photos, handbooks, and articles. An estimated 4,000 pro-al Qaeda Web sites exist today, and this number will continue to increase.

The effectiveness in curbing terrorist financing is difficult to determine. The United States maintains that terrorist funding has been reduced significantly, but reports from Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Europe show that terrorists have been able to maintain funding channels. Reports of counterfeit goods linked to terrorist financing have been made, but since demand for fakes has not subsided, it appears that terrorists continue to profit from this venture.

Just as the International Maritime Bureau announced that ship hijackings were down in the first part of 2005, piracy off the coast of Somalia increased dramatically. As a result, maritime security has become a concern for many African nations. Likewise, the number of piracy incidents in the Strait of Malacca has resulted in combined patrols by Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand.

The fight against organized crime has had some success with the breakup of several cases of organized criminal activities across Europe, the extent of which has not yet been determined. However, the most prevalent threat from these groups involves narcotics and human trafficking. Organized crime is still a problem in Central and Eastern Europe, with groups in Poland, Russia, Albania, and Bosnia still remaining powerful.

Cocaine supplied from South America and the Caribbean is still causing problems for the United States and Europe, where the number of seizures has increased. Heroin production in Afghanistan is still not under control and is also increasing, despite concerted efforts by the United States and NATO members to provide incentives for Afghan farmers to grow alternative crops.

Cybercrime, which includes extortion, identity theft, fraud, money laundering, and phishing (obtaining personal financial information) is still a growing threat. Despite mild successes against some major criminal groups such as Shadowcrew, there is an increase in the use of cybercrime by organized criminal groups in Russia, Nigeria, and the United States. Furthermore, groups and individuals participating in this

type of crime are believed to have links with terrorist organizations, to provide them with funds and information.

This past year has also seen a large increase in the number of antiterrorism agreements among nations, highlighted by cooperation over information sharing, combined military patrols and forces, and other preventative measures. Further measures such as implementing biometric passports has been proposed and tested by several countries in Europe to stem the tide of illegal travel.

While law enforcement and intelligence services have been effective in 2005, criminals and terrorists are still finding ways to operate within a seemingly limited environment. Greater cooperation among all countries will be essential to meet these global threats. (*Mike Brizendine*)

This update is produced by the Transnational Threats Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and provides monthly news on terrorism, drug trafficking, organized crime, money laundering, and other transnational threats. The *TNT Update* draws on several U.S. and international media sources, including the Associated Press, ITAR-TASS, Agence France Presse, Reuters, Xinhua News Agency, World Tribune, Afghan News, and others.

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