

TRANSNATIONAL THREATS UPDATE

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“Globalization has broadened the number of threats and challenges facing the United States ... The nation requires more from our Intelligence Community than ever before and consequently we need to do our business better, both internally, through greater collaboration across disciplines and externally, by engaging more of the expertise available outside the Intelligence Community.”

—The Honorable J. Michael McConnell, Director of National Intelligence, Statement for the Record to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, February 27, 2008

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Terrorism

Pakistani Minister Alleged to Have Funded Afghan Terrorism

The newest wrinkle in the ongoing Pakistani investigation of Minister of State Abdul Raziq has taken a dark turn as newly uncovered evidence suggests that Raziq may have laundered billions of Pakistani rupees (PKR) to Taliban-controlled areas in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Raziq, who is tasked with governing the Kashmir and northern regions (including the Taliban-controlled Federally Administered Tribal Areas), is alleged by Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officials to have funneled between PKR 15 and 20 billion (about \$185 million to \$245 million) through his Forex corporation to 21 different accounts. About 80 percent of this amount is believed to have gone either to Afghanistan or Taliban-controlled regions in Pakistan, but what percent of that ended up in the Taliban’s pockets is as yet unknown.

This development prompted Rauf Klasra, a writer for the Pakistani newspaper *The News*, to label the Raziq affair a “serious national security threat,” and it’s not hard to see why: Pakistani officials estimate the Taliban’s annual earnings in Pakistan at PKR 4 billion. If a significant fraction of even the lowest estimate of Raziq’s illegal

transfers to Taliban territory found its way into their coffers, it would more than double their earnings for 2009. At higher estimates, Taliban funding from Raziq’s transfers could mean a 50 percent increase over annual profits from “taxes” the Taliban levies on the Afghan opium trade that currently account for 85 to 90 percent (\$400 million) of the organization’s funding.

Though corruption is relatively common among the Pakistani ruling class, cash transfers on this scale to Taliban-controlled regions are both rare and dangerous. One of the Taliban’s primary uses for its income is recruitment and retention of gunmen who, though not necessarily committed to the Taliban’s theocratic political vision, are willing to fight for it in exchange for ample financial compensation. The Obama administration’s new strategy in Afghanistan aims to break off this sort of soldier from the Taliban army to foster an Afghan equivalent of the Sunni Awakening in Iraq, but that task could become more difficult if the Taliban ended up with a substantial portion of Raziq’s illegal transfers.

Kenya and al-Shabaab at Crisis Point

Rising tensions between Kenya and the Somalia-based jihadist movement al-Shabaab are threatening to escalate to full-blown military conflict, as Kenyan troops mass on the Somali border in response to threats from al-Shabaab leaders. The buildup began on June 25, after al-Shabaab reportedly threatened to destroy a bridge in Kenya necessary for both civilian and military movement into northern Kenya. The threat was meant to deter Kenyan intervention in al-Shabaab’s conflict with the official Somali government, but seems to have had the opposite effect. Taken together with threats against Nairobi, the prospect of a bridge attack convinced a number of Kenyan MPs that al-Shabaab requires “drastic action” in response,

and the military began massing troops at Kenya's northern border with Somalia.

Sheikh Abdulgani Mohamed Yusuf, the leader of the hard-line Somali coalition that al-Shabaab dominates, responded on June 30 with what amounts to a declaration of war against Kenya and Ethiopia, which led a U.S.-backed intervention against Somali jihadists and temporarily beat them back in 2006. Yusuf sought to "encourage the Muslim Somali people and the fighters to get ready for attacks against Kenya and Ethiopia...we are going to take the jihad to their houses before they come to ours." This unprecedented threat to carry out attacks on civilians inside Kenyan and Ethiopian borders has brought tensions to a breaking point, and though no incident has yet sparked direct conflict, the Kenyan press is rife with speculation and debate about the possibility and desirability of any Kenyan intervention in the war between al-Shabaab and Somalia's transitional federal government.

Analysts have long been worried about al-Shabaab's ability to inflame regional tensions. A committed jihadi organization with links to al Qaeda, al-Shabaab became a powerful force in Somalia after the 2006 war with Ethiopia when it took control of the militant opposition from the now-defunct Islamic Courts Union with whom it was previously allied. The organization's increased prominence prompted worry about its leadership's intentions with respect to the region at large, which until now had not been demonstrated. The crisis with Kenya is al-Shabaab's first effort to exert influence outside Somalia and is a significant test of both the organization's influence and regional aspirations.

Fighting Displaces Thousands in Mindanao

The humanitarian crisis in the Mindanao region of the Philippines is worsening nearly a year after the most recent round of violence flared up between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the Filipino government. The most recent fighting began last August after the Philippine Supreme Court blocked the government from implementing its agreement with MILF rebels to establish an autonomous Muslim region in Mindanao. Outraged elements of the MILF responded by attacking Christian villages in regions under their de facto control, prompting a brutal response from government forces that displaced tens of thousands of people.

The government blames Ameril Umbra Kato, commander of the MILF's 105th Base Command, for the attacks. The *Mindanao Examiner* adds, "aside from Kato, security forces are also pursuing Abdurahman Macapaar and Sulayman Panglian, who were also tagged as involved in

the attacks in North Cotabato, Lanao del Norte, Sarangani and Maguindanao that killed dozens of innocent civilians."

The MILF maintains that the government's backtracking from the agreed on peace deal provoked the bloodshed and accuses the government of responding with disproportionate force that did serious harm to civilian populations. Mohagher Iqbal, a MILF leader, admitted that "our forces started the whole fighting [in response to the government's annulment of the agreement]." However, other MILF leaders stress that they condemn the attacks against Christian civilians and maintain that the perpetrators were "rogue" factions of MILF. Moreover, Iqbal says that regardless of who started the most recent bloodletting "[MILF] asked our commanders to go back to their bases [after the attacks] and they went back. But what the government did after that initial fighting and during the counterattack, has caused so much suffering and hardship in Mindanao."

Stephen Anderson of the World Food Program believes the damage caused by the most recent violence to be dramatic: "according to the government figures, close to 100,000 people have been freshly displaced." These new displacements are making an already bad situation worse, driving the total number of displaced persons in the region as high as 500,000 by some estimates. The *Mindanao Examiner* estimates that "at least 120,000 people are believed to have died in the 40-year-long insurgency in resource-rich Mindanao." Even worse, while "Manila [says] it would only resume peace talks with the MILF if it surrenders the three wanted rebel leaders [and turns in its] weapons," MILF refuses and says "it will not resume peace talks unless [Filipino president] Arroyo honors the aborted homeland deal."

Yemen on the Brink

Yemen's central government, long under siege by al Qaeda, is now facing a number of new, and potentially more destabilizing, challenges. Although Osama Bin Laden's father was born in Yemen, and al Qaeda has carried out numerous attacks there, two unrelated problems threaten to do even more harm to the nation: the deadly, if intermittent rebellion from the Huthi tribe in the north and the existential threat from renewed tension in its secessionist south.

As the International Crisis Group describes it, "latent religious, social, political, and economic tensions" erupted into conflict after the central government tried to arrest former member of parliament Husein al-Huthi, head of the influential Huthi clan, in 2004. He and his tribe are Zaydis Shi'a, an offshoot particular to Yemen whose adherents had ruled for 1,000 years before the 1962 revolution.

Zaydi resentment since the monarchy's deposal has spiraled, exacerbated by the rise of a radical form of Sunni Islam, Wahhabism, in neighboring Saudi Arabia and the Saudi government's assistance of efforts to spread Wahhabism in Yemen. The Huthi clan has thus been able to rally the sizable Zaydi minority in Yemen to its side by accusing the government of anti-Zaydi discrimination.

The northern rebellion entered a more dangerous phase in mid-June, when three foreign female hostages were murdered in the Huthi stronghold of Saada. This marks a shift in Huthi policy, which had previously eschewed killing non-Yemeni nationals. Numerous foreigners had been kidnapped earlier in 2009 but were always released quickly. Taken together with an al Qaeda campaign that targeted foreigners, killing more than a dozen Spanish, Belgian, and South Korean tourists since 2007, these Huthi attacks could scare away enough potential visitors to collapse Yemen's fragile tourism industry altogether.

Yemen is already the poorest nation in the Middle East. Its economy is dependent on maintaining and profiting from its 300,000 b/d oil production capacity, but Yemen's declining oil resources and the drop in global oil prices make the sector, which accounts for two-thirds of the government's income, unreliable. Given these challenges, it is unclear if the central government can survive any further loss in revenue from a dramatic drop-off in tourism.

Perhaps even more threatening is the possibility of renewed civil war in the rebellious south. Formerly known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the Communist south was an independent country for more than 20 years, and it appears that some of its residents may wish to break its newfound ties with the central government. Former military personnel and civil servants who lost their jobs after reunification in 1990 have been demanding better pay and benefits for years, and the government's failure on these fronts have recently pushed them toward advocating outright secession.

Thousands of demonstrators calling for reparation from the north began taking to the streets on April 27, 2009, and at least 15 people were killed in clashes with the police over the course of the next six weeks. These large protests and violent crackdowns could spiral out of control, especially because the central government is in a weaker position than it was in 1994 when it suppressed the last major southern uprising with military force. The ability of President Ali Abdullah Saleh's central government to defeat another southern rebellion if the protests escalate given additional pressure from the Huthi clan and al Qaeda is thus seriously in doubt.

China Claims Language Policy a Counterterrorism Success

Can Mandarin lessons help deter terrorism? According to the Chinese government, the record of its language program in the Xinjiang province says yes. The large western region bordering Afghanistan and Pakistan is home to the Uighur minority, an ethnically distinct, primarily Muslim people who feel alienated by the privileged position occupied by Han Chinese. This discontent fueled the creation of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a radical Uighur separatist group that aims to create a state called East Turkestan in Xinjiang.

Worried about the influence of ETIM and foreign jihadist groups, the Chinese government initiated a program in 2002 that would provide bilingual education in schools that previously only taught the Uighur language aimed at better integrating the Uighur population into Chinese society. Now, according to Nur Bekri, the region's chairman, the program is starting to show results: "Terrorists from neighboring countries mainly target Uighurs that are relatively isolated from mainstream society as they cannot speak Mandarin. They are then tricked into terrorist activities." Since more Uighurs are now familiar with Mandarin, the government argues, support for ETIM and other terrorist groups ought to have been diminished.

The Uighur community has long been agitating for increased access to Mandarin education in their own schools. Many Uighurs believe that the lack of Mandarin education in Uighur schools is part of a deliberate government policy to ensure Han economic dominance, while the Chinese government has argued against expansion of Mandarin programs on the grounds that it would be perceived internationally as an attempt to stamp out Uighur culture. The justification of expanded education on counterterrorism grounds suggests that the Chinese government's concern about extremism in the Uighur community may trump both other considerations.

Whether this fear is justified is far from clear. Though ETIM and similar groups were responsible for around 160 dead and 440 injured between 1990 and 2001, some experts believe that the organization disappeared. Others believe that intelligence gathered from Uighur prisoners in Guantanamo Bay suggests that the group is still operational and has a presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan and connections to al Qaeda. These allegations are difficult to confirm, and many believe official U.S. statements about ETIM to be more part of a strategy to improve U.S. relations with China rather than judgments based on actual evidence. One such critic, U.S. Congressman Bill Delahunt, recently held a hearing to

assess whether ETIM ought to retain the classification as a terrorist organization given to it by the United States in 2002.

African Chiefs Develop Counterterrorism Strategy

On June 17, the African Centre for Studies and Research on Terrorism (CAERT) hosted a three-day conference with the objective of preparing an action plan that would provide African heads of state with a concrete counterterrorism strategy for 2010–2013. In addition to members of CAERT, the UN antiterrorism coordinator, the European Union antiterrorism coordinator, and Algerian military officials were also present.

Gilles de Kerchove, counterterrorism coordinator with the European Union, reiterated the EU's support for the African Union (AU) in the fight against terrorism, reminding those present that his organization has contributed 1 million Euros to help the CAERT. De Kerchove outlined the European strategy for combating terrorism in northern Africa, emphasizing the importance of the rule of law and respect for human rights. Mike Smith, the antiterrorism coordinator at the United Nations, noted that 24 UN agencies aid African nations in the fight against terrorism.

This conference came in wake of the murder of British tourist Edwin Dyer by al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Dyer's murder further highlighted al Qaeda's presence and danger in Northern Africa. After the Algerian Islamist militia the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) allied itself with al Qaeda and deployed across the Sahel, CAERT director Boubacar Gaoussou Diarra argues, terrorism became the primary threat to the African continent's security and stability, and the conference was an attempt to coordinate a regional response.

Apparently, African leaders are listening. Within the month, a number of African nations are expected to sign a treaty that would ban the financing of terrorism through ransom payments made to terrorist groups holding hostages, currently the most lucrative source of revenue for local terrorist organizations.

i-Counterterrorism

At the rate technology is developing today, it is no great surprise that, according to *Forbes* magazine, artificial intelligence (AI) applications in the battle against terrorism are among the fastest growing components of security programming for both government and corporate entities. As *Forbes* says, the "practical applications of AI are limitless," and vital to American security and interests.

One of these applications is the processing of information. Though it is undeniable that terrorists cannot be fought solely through action, the key to effective action is arguably top quality intelligence and analysis. That's where AI comes in. AI computer programs have the ability to collect and sort millions of pieces of data, comparing and analyzing them. When these processing programs are used in conjunction with physical surveillance, they have the ability to weed out suspicious behavior.

While these systems are highly efficient and useful, they still do not match up to their human creators. Juval Aviv of *Forbes* magazine gives an example: "a person standing a couple of feet from his or her suitcase for more than a few minutes at an airport could set off an alert with an AI-monitored camera system, whereas a human being looking at the same scenario would know that there is not yet a cause for concern."

Further, the programs and their subsequent analysis and actions are only as good as the intelligence they receive. A second problem is that the programs are based on pattern recognition algorithms and, unlike a human, cannot simply detect new behavior and make a thought out decision with regard to the threat.

There is no doubt that AI technology is, and will continue to be, a key point in our battle against terrorism. It is also important not to forget that there are contexts in which human insight simply cannot be replaced.

Drug Trafficking

Drugs, Organized Crime, and Terrorism Converge in West Africa

In what they described as a "wake-up call," members of a subcommittee of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee heard sobering testimony June 23 from a panel of experts detailing "the exploding drug trafficking problem in West Africa." The experts testified that "the State Department, the Defense Department and the Drug Enforcement Administration [DEA] agree on the seriousness of the threat," and are concerned that an "unprecedented rise in drug trafficking ... [a]nd the growth of organized crime in Africa is an increasing national security threat as evidenced by the assimilation of South American drug trafficking networks with African and European buyers and distributors."

South American drug lords seek to move their cocaine to buyers in Europe, and there is no shortage of middlemen available in West Africa. These so called drug mules infiltrate Europe illegally using many of the same routes that ferry illegal immigrants. According to the panel, the potential for terrorists to exploit this situation is clear:

anyone who can bring migrants and drugs into Europe illegally could theoretically help terrorists and weapons enter as well.

Even worse, no one knows exactly which groups are operating these West Africa–Europe smuggling routes, how many people use them each year, and what exactly those entering Europe bring with them. The International Assessment and Strategy Center’s Douglas Farah said, “I think it is inevitable that these groups operating in the same permissive environments will eventually come to know each other and come to work together because each has what the other one needs.” He said that Hezbollah controls the aforementioned smuggling routes.

Former Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) officer Michael Braun echoed that assessment, saying “those folks are meeting as we speak, in the same seedy bars, the same seamy brothels and the same dingy hotels almost every evening. What are they doing? They are talking business.” Braun highlighted the threat from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) as his primary concern. Finally, the panel unanimously singled out Guinea Bissau as a “place with weak law enforcement and a weak judicial system,” warning that it has become “Africa’s first narco-trafficking state” and could be the perfect locale for the hodgepodge of international criminal organizations, drug gangs, and terrorist groups mentioned above to coordinate their nefarious activities.

Mexico’s Drug War Imperils Central America

There was a time when South American cocaine traveled through Mexico into the United States, primarily by way of the Pacific Ocean or the Caribbean Sea. That time is over. While “less than 1 percent of the 600 to 700 tons of cocaine estimated to flow from South America to the US in 2006 transited through Central America,” counternarcotics officials today believe that “land-based shipment of cocaine through Central America appears to have ballooned.” This shift has had deadly consequences for Mexico’s weaker neighbors, which officials say “have very little institutional capacity to deal with [such] significant challenges.”

The criminal migration to Central America ironically seems to be rooted in two “successes”: 1) increasingly effective aerial and maritime drug interdiction efforts; and 2) Mexico’s more forceful response to the drug war raging on its soil. True success has proven illusory as the drug cartels have adjusted quickly and changed their tactics. In fact, apparent successes may well be pyrrhic victories; according to Mexican attorney general Eduardo Medina Mora, “[Mexico’s] victory may very well mean that Central America becomes a hell of its own.”

The two Central American nations closest to meltdown seem to be Guatemala, Mexico’s southern neighbor, and Panama, Colombia’s northern neighbor. As the only land connection between Colombian cocaine and the Costa Rica–Nicaragua–Honduras–Guatemala land route up to Mexico, Panama has now become a central focus of both sides in the war on drugs. Heavily armed criminals are showing up there in increasing numbers, overwhelming the country’s small police force. With no standing army to call in for reinforcement, there is little stomach in Panama for the kind of savage fight that would be necessary to repel the drug invasion.

The situation in Guatemala is even worse. Traffickers and gang members getting pushed out of Mexico, such as the former Mexican special forces turned drug lords known as the Zetas, are taking refuge in Guatemala, where they are using their military training and heavy weaponry to dominate large swaths of their southern neighbor. And their violence is not only directed against government security forces; these groups kill any civilians who oppose them, and their intergroup rivalries wreak havoc on entire communities caught in their turf warfare. With more than 6,000 violent deaths recorded last year, and violence increasing this year, the nation of Guatemala is being pushed to the brink.

Human Trafficking

AU Implements Antitrafficking Initiative

On June 16, the African Union launched a new program named the AU Commission Initiative against Trafficking, which is focused on combating and deterring human trafficking on the continent. The initiative coincides with the adding of six more African countries (Chad, Eritrea, Niger, Mauritania, Swaziland, and Zimbabwe) to the blacklist of countries suspected of involvement in human trafficking.

Bience Gawanas, the AU’s commissioner for social affairs, claimed that the program “is really aimed at galvanizing support against trafficking but also for the implementation of those instruments that have been adopted whether it is at national, regional, continental or international level.” Though the fight against human trafficking was never prominent on the agenda of the African Union, Gawanas believes the measures of prevention and methods of prosecution have been greatly improved and need only the momentum provided by the initiative to take effect, although she failed to specify precisely what existing tools have been underutilized and how the initiative can assist in their use.

There is some evidence to back up Gawanas's claims. Some countries that made combating human trafficking a priority, Nigeria being the case par exemple, have begun to show vast improvement. In a little less than five years, Nigeria has sprung from the human-trafficking black list to having one of the best records on human trafficking in the continent. Since 2008, Nigeria has convicted 23 human traffickers, more than twice as many as the previous year's totals. While this number may seem small, it undercounts the significant assistance that the Nigerian government has provided to countertrafficking efforts globally since it began to provide specialized training to law enforcement officials. Last year, the Nigerian government assisted in the arrest of 60 Nigerian trafficking suspects in Europe alone. Taken together with its domestic successes, the Nigerian model shows that the initiative's strategy of helping African countries implement tried and true strategies that they currently are not employing may turn out to be a significant contribution to the effort to eradicate human trafficking.

Piracy

Kenyan Piracy Tribunal Hits Russian Iceberg

A proposal to try suspected Somali pirates captured by international forces in Kenyan courts has run into difficulties as Russia, a contributor to the antipiracy taskforce, has declared it will not participate. The announcement came after Russian forces captured 29 men, believed to be responsible for a raid on a Russian oil tanker, aboard a pirate ship in late April, leaving Russian prosecutors with the decision as to how and where they ought to be tried. Though the suspected pirates have now spent more than two months in Russian custody, the only legal decision that has been made is ruling out Kenyan courts.

According to Deputy Prosecutor-General Alexander Zvyagintsev, Kenyan courts have proven to have "serious problems" prosecuting pirates. The difficulty is exacerbated by the sheer number of suspects dumped in Kenyan courts, leading Russian officials to argue for some alternative to Kenyan trials. Though Zvyagintsev ruled out prosecution on Russian soil for reasons mentioned in last month's *TNT Update*, he did say Russia would be open to the creation of an international tribunal on Kenyan territory with authority independent of the local government.

This recent announcement is in keeping with previous Kremlin statements on policy. President Dmitry Medvedev has been arguing for an international tribunal since Russia captured its first pirates, and it seems the rejection of the Kenyan option advocated by several other members of the

antipiracy coalition is merely the latest volley in Medvedev's broader campaign.

The Russian government's push for an international tribunal is strange given its general resistance to uses of international law that could be seen as violations of sovereignty. This may indicate that the Russians believe antipiracy efforts to be valuable enough, given piracy's economic costs, to justify measures that they ordinarily might not endorse.

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