

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

Resurgence of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)

On May 19, 2010, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) ambushed a government vehicle, killing two local officials and their driver in South Sudan’s Western Equatoria State. This incident comes amid a string of larger-scale attacks in retaliation for the failure of Operation Lightning Thunder, a joint mission to dismantle the LRA launched in December 2009 by Uganda, Congo, and Southern Sudan, with logistic support from U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). Peace talks between the LRA and the government collapsed in September 2008.

In December 2009, the LRA killed 321 civilians and kidnapped more than 250 people, including 80 children, from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). This was followed by the massacring of 100 civilians in February.

The most recent attack took place in Western Equatoria State, where the rebel group is alleged to be setting up a base. The road where the attack occurred links Yambio, the capital of Western Equatoria State, to Tambura, Sudan’s border town with the Central African Republic

(CAR). The LRA is also recorded to have been terrorizing Tambura, where it recently killed 36 people. The LRA has increasingly been wreaking havoc across the borders of CAR, the DRC, and Sudan.

These rampant attacks have only contributed to the chaos of the region, already heightened by disputes in southern Sudan over the April election results. On May 25, the United Nations evacuated 10 aid workers from Jonglei state after the central government clashed with the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), a militant group allied with David Yauyau, a parliamentary candidate and member of the United Democratic Front party.

Yauyau accused the incumbent Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) of fraud and intimidation during the vote. According to SPLA, Yauyau attacked an army base killing one soldier and wounding three others. The SPLA are also responsible for capturing three LRA rebel in Jonglei’s neighboring Western Equatorial State.

Last year, AFRICOM hosted a training exercise to help Ugandan and other African armies better prepare for fighting the heavily armed LRA. On May 12, 2009, American lawmakers passed the LRA Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act of 2009, increasing AFRICOM’s resources to combat the LRA. However, this legislation comes in light of DRC president Joseph Kabila’s demand for withdrawal of the Blue Helmets and an end to the UN mission in Congo.

AQIM and the Polisario Frente

In May, the European Strategic Intelligence and Security Center published a report about the growing links between the Polisario Frente and Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM). Polisario is a militant group demanding independence for the Western Sahara, previously a Spanish colony annexed by Morocco in 1976.

Founded in 1973, Polisario was psychologically and financially exhausted at the turn of the millennium, but has since been invigorated by the 9/11 attacks. AQIM has illustrated particular interest in the group because it represents a potential source of recruits.

Polisario runs refugee camps in Tindouf, Algeria, that became breeding grounds for terrorism in the 1980s. According to Michael Braun, a former director of operations of the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Polisario training camps consist of socially and economically marginalized youth with few future prospects. He also commented that “powerful terrorist organizations like AQIM are expert at detecting persons showing signs of vulnerability. Thus, the camps of Tindouf represent a potential gold mine for recruiters from groups like AQIM.”

In July 2008, the Algerian daily *El Khabar* confirmed the presence of new recruits arriving from the Western Sahara to AQIM training camps near the border with Mali. Concurrently, the Moroccan press published an article stating that AQIM came to Polisario camps in search of new recruits, estimating that 265 former Polisario fighters joined AQIM. In 2009, the *Algeria Times* reported that “former members of the Polisario...were running logistical networks in Spain” and that Polisario had recruited more than 200 “young European, American, and Canadian Muslims to be sent to training camps of al-Shabaab.”

Links between the two organizations trace back to an attack on June 4, 2005, by GSPC (Algerian Salafist Group for Prayer & Combat) against a base used by Mauritanian security forces in Lamghiti, killing 15 people. Led by Mokhtar Belmokhtar, the future emir of AQIM, the attack used vehicles belonging to the Polisario. Moreover, according to many witnesses, some of the attackers spoke Hassani, a dialect common in Mauritania and in the Western Sahara.

In 2008, two factors caused AQIM to shift its operational activities south toward the lawless Sahel:

First, Algeria’s 2008 crackdown on terrorism and its resultant high civilian death toll prompted a public backlash against the government; second, AQIM moves freely and operates essentially with impunity because of the region’s porous borders, vast open spaces, and lack of cooperation among neighboring states.

In November 2009, AQIM claimed responsibility for the abduction of three Spanish humanitarian aid workers in northwest Mauritania. The actual attacks were conducted by Omar le Sahraoui, a former leader of the Polisario Front. In February 2010, le Sahraoui was arrested in Mauritania near the border with Mali and charged with the abduction of the Spaniards. However, le Sahraoui was not motivated by ideological reasons; rather, he was hired by Belmokhtar because of his expertise in trafficking. Some 20 other members of the Polisario have also been arrested in connection with the abduction of the Spaniards.

The Polisario is notorious for exploiting the instability in the Sahel to incubate its own drug trafficking network. The region has morphed into a producer of and transit point for cocaine originating in Latin America and destined for Europe in order to skirt conventional border control mechanisms.

This March, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton led 54 U.S. senators, including the chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Dianne Feinstein, in calling attention to the “growing instability of the [Western Sahara] and disturbing tendencies which might feed terrorism.”

Al-Qaeda Movements in Iran

At first glance, an Iran-al Qaeda connection scarcely seems plausible given the sectarian chasm between the groups. A closer examination, however, strongly suggests that Iran and al-Qaeda (AQ) have looked past their theological differences and have established links that go as far back as the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The prime suspect of the attacks, Saif al-Adel, is believed to have received training from Iranian-backed Hezbollah.

In the three years leading up to the 9/11 attacks, there is evidence that Iran “facilitated the travel of AQ members through Iran on their way to and from Afghanistan,” according to the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States (the 9/11 Commission).

Since the beginning of U.S.-led military operations in Afghanistan, al-Adel and a number of senior AQ leaders have sought refuge in Iran. Some of the AQ personalities believed to be in Iran include AQ spokesman Suleiman Abu Ghaith and Mustafa Hamid, who served as AQ's tactics trainer and has been identified by the U.S. Treasury Department as the liaison between AQ and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Osama bin Laden's son, Saad, was reported to have spent significant time in Iran; his present whereabouts are unknown, but it is believed that he is currently back in Pakistan and reunited with AQ's core members.

On May 22, 2003, Iranian authorities admitted that they were holding AQ "under loose house arrest." Iran has since refused U.S. calls for the extradition of these individuals. It is widely believed that Iran's detention of this group does not hamper AQ operations in Iran, and that Iran maintains the AQ presence there as a form of political hedge against Washington.

Tehran has maintained the delicate political balance of allowing AQ members in Iran a measure of operational freedom while periodically and symbolically detaining a small number of junior AQ personalities during periods of increased political pressure. As recently as March of this year, Iran has been cited in official testimony as still adhering to this approach; Gen. David Petraeus, before the Senate Armed Services Committee said:

Additionally, al-Qaeda continues to use Iran as a key facilitation hub, where facilitators connect al-Qaeda's senior leadership to regional affiliates. And although Iranian authorities do periodically disrupt this network by detaining select al-Qaeda facilitators and operational planners, Tehran's policy in this regard is often unpredictable.

Violence in the Northern Caucasus

On May 26, a bomb killed six in Stavropol, a state in Russia's volatile Northern Caucasus region. This incident occurred just days before an EU-Russia summit was to convene in the neighboring region of Rostov-on-Don. According to Dmitry Trenin of the Moscow Carnegie Centre, "The explosion may have been aimed at frightening the Europeans and at showing the poor state of security in the North Caucasus and the neighboring regions. The timing and the place is clear."

In January, Russian president Dmitry Medvedev created a North Caucasus Federal District to stem growing

instability by addressing local grievances. This district encompasses volatile states such as Stavropol, Chechnya, Dagestan, and Ingushetia. Aleksandr Khloponin, a former businessman, has been appointed as special envoy to the district and has promised to expedite development through large-scale targeted investment. To maximize this capital influx and minimize the costs of local bureaucracy and corruption, Moscow streamlined decisionmaking, increasing Khloponin's executive powers.

As of May 14, Khloponin had sole authority to appoint and dismiss local officials and monitor the allocation of federal funds. It remains to be seen if the district can rapidly deliver on its promises of economic development and, in the long term, reconcile a much deeper fracture between Russia and the Caucasus: the population's feelings of disenfranchisement.

Stavropol was a key battleground in Russia's first war against Chechen separatists in 1995. Chechen militants seized hundreds of hostages in a hospital in the town of Budyonovsk in the region in 1995. More than 100 died in the attack and subsequent raid by the Russian military. The Stavropol bombing is the most recent attack since the twin Moscow subway bombings in March. The attack was reminiscent of the second Chechen conflict in 2003 and 2004 because it mimicked the "Black Widow" technique, the use of female suicide bombers.

Regional Security

Stalemate over Nepalese Constitution

Nepal was on the brink of instability as its constitution was set to expire on May 28, 2010; crisis was averted as the Nepalese government reached an eleventh-hour accord with the Unified Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) to extend the current government for a year. Despite the agreement, the underlying political conflict between the two parties has yet to be resolved.

On May 1, the Maoists led a weeklong strike, crippling the economy but failing to pressure the governing coalition to step down. During the strike, small clashes broke out between the Maoists and the businessmen protesting the strike, leading to several casualties. On May 21, the Young Communist League (YCL), notorious for its use of violence and intimidation, was accused of attacking Nepali Congress party activists.

According to the YCL, the police fired bullets and tear gas canisters into a crowd of peaceful demonstrations.

A 2006 peace agreement ended a decade-long guerilla war and marked the Maoists' entrance into the political sphere. Although a major player in Nepal's political arena, the Maoists are on the U.S. list of foreign terrorist organizations. The Maoists are divided among those who advocate for revolution through a peaceful political process, as championed by party leader Prachanda, and those who subscribe to a more violent agenda.

A new constitution restructuring the government is the last step in the process of reconciliation. After the 2006 agreement, Nepal replaced its feudal monarchy with a Constituent Assembly and discarded its title as a Hindu kingdom in order to become a secular state. A fragile democracy is now in place.

The Maoists won a plurality in the first assembly elections in May 2008, but withdrew from the government nine months later. That decision was triggered by differences between the Nepalese Congress Party and the Maoists over the integration of the rebel army with the official Nepalese military. The two armies fought as enemies for 10 years, and now the rebels have been cordoned off in the barracks, with an unfulfilled promise of integration.

Since walking out of Parliament, the Maoists have spent the ensuing months seeking to destabilize the governing coalition. For now, the political crisis has been averted, but the parties remain deadlocked over how to structure a permanent constitution for Nepal. Whether this temporizing measure will substantially advance the peace process remains to be seen.

Presidents of Paraguay and Brazil Meet

On May 3, 2010, the presidents of Paraguay and Brazil met in Pedro Juan Caballero, a remote town on the Paraguay-Brazil border. The talks between President Fernando Lugo of Paraguay and his Brazilian counterpart, Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, involved a number of bilateral issues; one key area of focus pertained to border security efforts aimed at reducing the flow of narcotics between the two South American neighbors.

Paraguay has long struggled to stem the drug trade within its borders. Shortcomings in the country's law enforcement capacity, the porous nature of the 500-mile Paraguay-Brazil border, and the growing drug demand

in Brazil fueled by the country's rapid economic growth all contribute to the suite of factors that has attracted drug trafficking organizations to the region.

According to a United Nations Office of Drug Control (UNODC) estimate, as much as 40 tons of Colombian, Peruvian, and Bolivian cocaine passes through Paraguay annually. In addition to Paraguay's role as a major drug transshipment center, the UNODC believes that 5,900 tons of marijuana a year, or 15 percent of the world's total estimated marijuana production, are grown within the country. Paraguay's rural poor have increasingly turned to the cultivation of illicit crops, primarily cannabis, given its financial advantage over subsistence agriculture.

Further compounding Paraguay's drug-related difficulties, President Lugo faces a growing leftist insurgency in the form of the Paraguayan People's Army (EPP). The EPP is believed to finance their war against the Paraguayan landowners by drugs, akin to the FARC of Colombia, and is also suspected of being more of a narco-trafficking criminal syndicate than an armed force for social justice. This threat, coupled with the minimal resources that the Lugo administration is able to budget for counternarcotics operations, is a main impetus behind the Lugo-da Silva dialogue.

Thus, Asunción has turned to its far wealthier neighbor in an effort to collaboratively address border issues. Brasilia has agreed in kind, stating that it regards stability in Paraguay as an important matter. Brazil's vested interests in Paraguay can be clearly seen not only in the realm of counternarcotics, but also in other joint-venture economic development enterprises such as the Itaipú hydroelectric complex.

Since the Lugo-da Silva meeting, the Brazilian Congress has pledged to increase cooperation between the Brazil Federal Police and the Paraguayan law enforcement agencies, and has authorized the donation of three Brazilian air force aircraft to Paraguay.

Insurgency in Baluchistan

A doctor was shot dead on May 22, 2010, by the Baluchi Liberation Army in the Tea Cross area of Sirki Road in Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan. Since January 2010 there have been 90 fatalities in the province, and this death is only one in a string of shootings and bomb explosions. There has also been a steady stream of rocket attacks on critical infrastructure, including gas pipelines, railway tracks, power

transmission lines, and bridges, as well as on military and government facilities. Insurgents reacted against government crackdowns by targeting vulnerable, non-Baluchi “settlers,” such as Shi‘as, Punjabis, and Muhajirs. This is exemplified by the murder of the Muhajir professor Nazima Talib of Quetta University on April 27 in a drive-by shooting.

Lines amongst the different separatist groups are blurry, but there are at least six active insurgencies in Baluchistan. Among the most radical are the Baluchistan Liberation Army and the Baluch Liberation Front. Another radical group, the Baluch Liberation United Front, gained notoriety with the February 2009 abduction of John Solecki, the U.S. head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees agency in Baluchistan.

Baluchi nationalists continue to wage a low-intensity insurgency and carry out almost daily acts of sabotage in all 26 districts of the province. The central government struggles to execute law and order, and legal courts are not considered a reliable outlet for public dispute resolution.

Baluchi demands for autonomy have become a significant factor for violence in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. According to U.S. ambassador Anne Patterson, the lawless province and tenuous Durand Line provide the Quetta Shura, the leadership of the Afghan Taliban, with a safe haven and make it difficult for the United States to wage war in neighboring Afghanistan. The bulk of U.S. supplies are routed through Pakistan, with 34 percent of these shipments traveling through the Chaman Gate in Baluchistan. The anarchy created by the Baluchi insurgents has also permitted the Pakistani Taliban to harass this vital logistical pipeline. In 2009 alone there were 12 attacks on oil tankers and trucks ferrying NATO supplies to Afghanistan.

Insulated from the world by its tribal culture and outdated infrastructure, Baluchistan’s volatility also hinders modernization projects such as the Gwadar port and the Karakoram Highway that could boost the region’s economic integration. The Baluch constitute less than 4 percent of Pakistan’s 173 million people, but Pakistan’s copper, uranium, natural gas, and potential oil reserves are concentrated in this province. A long-time ally of Pakistan, China has a vested interest in Baluchistan’s stability because of its \$200 million investment in Gwadar. This port is also envisioned as a

gateway to the landlocked and hydrocarbon-rich nations of Central Asia.

Gwadar’s success is contingent upon the central government’s ability to extend its authority into the region. However, the 2006 killing of Akbar Bugti, a prominent Baluchi leader, precipitated a wave of violence that persists today. This dissent is compounded by a history of economic and political marginalization that has plagued the region.

Drug Trafficking

Colombian “Narco-Queen” Arrested

Angie Sanclemente Valencia, a Colombian model accused of leading a drug trafficking gang, was arrested in Argentina on May 26 after evading police for five months. Valencia was notorious for using attractive young women to smuggle cocaine to Mexico.

The hunt for Valencia was launched in December, when a young Argentine woman was arrested at the Ezeiza international airport with 55 kilograms of cocaine in her baggage. Police proceeded to arrest six people, including Valencia’s boyfriend and his uncle. Valencia was detained in Buenos Aire’s chic Palermo neighborhood, where she had been living under a false identity.

Valencia, 30, who has been working as an actor in Mexico, told the press that she was framed by relatives of her Argentine boyfriend. She is pleading innocent and her attorney has refuted all accusations.

Cyber Security

Cyberspace and Thai Politics

During the recent political unrest in Thailand, technology was wielded as a weapon by the government, and its political opposition, the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD), commonly known as the Red Shirts.

The government trailed behind the UDD in its use of information technology. For instance, it had sought to block UDD websites via the traditional URL filtering approach. However, the UDD thwarted these efforts because its applications used internet multimedia streaming, not the same general ports commonly used

by internet browsers. The government's filtering technology is also relatively amateurish, given that it could block the main page of a Web site but subsequent pages were still accessible.

Moreover, the UDD developed a browser toolbar that enabled its supporters to circumnavigate the usual typed URL approach and facilitated access to the movement's internet radio, TV broadcasts, and chat rooms. The Red Shirts also employed cloud computing, whereby information was provided to computers on demand, as comparable to an electricity grid.

In light of these developments, the government is considering establishing a cyber security intelligence team to address these gaps in cyber capability.

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