

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**

**Recent FARC Activities Signal Urban Shift**

On January 1, 2010, the Colombian military launched offensives against two camps belonging to the FARC’s 43<sup>rd</sup> Front near the Vista Hermosa municipality of the Meta province, an area used by the FARC for cocaine production. Following an aerial bombardment of the camps, Special Forces from Task Force Omega, the showpiece of Colombia’s joint operations counterinsurgency force, surrounded the camps. During the operations, 25 FARC militants were killed, including three senior commanders, and weapons, explosives, combat materials, and intelligence were seized. Five suspected militants were also wounded and 15 others surrendered and were detained.

Current Omega operations are focused on finding the killers of Caquetá governor Luis Francisco Cuéllar Carvajal and on increasing pressure on Mono Jojoy, the FARC’s military commander believed to be at large in the eastern plains. On December 21, 2009, Governor Carvajal was kidnapped from his home by more than a dozen suspected FARC militants who were dressed as members of the elite GAULA anti-kidnapping unit. After detonating a grenade, which killed one of the governor’s bodyguards, they rejoined some 60 of their fellow FARC militants waiting in the suburbs of the city of Florence and fled with

the governor into the mountains of Caquetá. The next day the governor’s body was found in the rural area of Seastopol near Florencia in Caquetá.

The kidnapping and assassination, coming a week after the announced alliance between the National Liberation Army, another Colombian paramilitary group, and the FARC, marks a return by the FARC to high-profile urban activity in an effort to regain its stronghold in Colombia’s southern jungles. An early January 2010 raid led to the discovery of a document dated from June 2009 that carried the orders of FARC leader Guillermo Leon Saenz (aka Alfonso Cano) to recapture six strategic corridors that have been secured by the military in the past five years. Efforts by the FARC to regain the military initiative since its low point in late 2008 underscore fears that escalating activities constitute a proxy war to the benefit of Venezuela.

As *Jane’s Intelligence Weekly* put it, “Despite the success of [the January 1] operation...the year ahead is likely to show mixed results...with the guerillas consolidating a change of strategy involving renewed urban operations and greater use of ambushes and minefields.”

**Sri Lanka Releases 713 Former LTTE Militants**

The government of Sri Lanka released 713 rehabilitated militants on January 9 during a ceremony in Colombo, Sri Lanka. These prisoners were mostly young men and women who were apprehended because of their involvement with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during the civil unrest of the Eelam War IV, which ended in May 2009. Most were arrested for minor offenses and were held in internal displacement camps where Sri Lanka assessed them ready to be released to their families and no major threat to the stability of the

country. An additional 87 prisoners are to be released soon.

Sri Lanka's approach to rehabilitation falls into two categories. First, child soldiers are to be treated differently from their adult counterparts. LTTE is known for their wide use of child soldiers and there are hundreds of confirmed cases of children being forced to fight. The government of Sri Lanka has decided to treat the young people as victims and the reintegration process is handled extremely gingerly. Some of these children were forced to join and were abused in the process, while others volunteered for the sake of revenge. Either way, the reintegration process is incredibly complex. The children require psychological support to deal with the trauma of their experiences. To help with reintegration, the program also provides vocational training.

The second category of Sri Lanka's rehabilitation efforts is the de-radicalization initiative. Governments around the world are struggling to cope with the challenges of insurgency and terrorism. Efforts in Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and now Sri Lanka have had success in bringing the more moderate or marginally affiliated fighters back into society. It is widely known that many join insurgent or terrorist groups because of disenfranchisement and lack of economic opportunities. A big part of these efforts always involves practical vocational training and education. Saudi Arabia, which has been dealing with Salafi jihadists, also employs Islamic clerics who teach classes on interpreting the Koran in a non-violent, more moderate light.

### **Al Qaeda Offers Assistance to Nigerian Muslims**

Hard on the heels of the announcement by al Shabaab in support of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula came an announcement by al Qaeda in the Mahgreb (AQIM) pledging support for Nigerian Muslims in their fight against Christians. The statement came after a month of intense bloodshed between Muslims and Christians near Jos, which killed an estimated 326 people. Jos is located between Nigeria's predominately Muslim north and Christian south and has experienced religious clashes in the recent past.

Abu Mus'ab Abdel-Wadoud, a leader of AQIM, said on an Internet site, "We are ready to train your sons on using weapons, support them with men, weapons, ammunition and equipment to enable them [to] defend themselves." He encouraged the Nigerian Muslims by comparing their fight to their "brothers in Somalia who confront the Ethiopian Crusaders."

Terrorism experts have warned that such a link between al Qaeda and Nigerian Muslim groups could occur. In

testimony before the House Armed Services Committee on January 27, 2010, Juan Zarate, a terrorism expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former deputy national security adviser for combating terrorism, warned that "Al Qaida could take advantage of longstanding conflicts between Christians and Muslims...." Less than a week later, AQIM made the announcement.

The religious conflicts in Nigeria exacerbate a political crisis resulting from years of deteriorating governance, President Yar'Adua's lengthy hospitalization in Saudi Arabia, and questions about his ability to govern.

Nigerian police have responded to the Internet message by saying they are prepared to combat any threat to the region.

### **Increase in al Qaeda Activity in Turkey**

The year 2010 has already seen major action in Turkey's fight against al Qaeda. On January 20, 40 men were apprehended in Ankara and Adana, 25 of whom were eventually charged with membership in a terrorist organization. Then, before dawn on January 22, the police led massive coordinated raids in several cities across Turkey. One-hundred and twenty men suspected of al Qaeda ties were arrested and evidence in the form of documents, false identification, and weapons was seized. Turkish authorities claimed that several of the leaders, including the Turkish cell leader Serder Elbasi, were among those captured. A recruiter who worked at a university was also apprehended.

Unnamed officials from Turkey's police force said that they found plans to attack Turkish soldiers serving in Afghanistan or Turkish police. While these attacks appear to be successfully foiled, the raids apparently missed six men involved in the attack on the U.S. Consulate in Adana on February 4. No one was injured in that drive-by shooting and the men involved were quickly apprehended. Al Qaeda propaganda was uncovered when their residences were searched.

On February 22, Osama bin Laden's deputy, Ayman al Zawahiri, released an audiotape condemning Turkey's actions in Afghanistan. While this tape has not yet been formally authenticated, it appears to be the first message released by al Zawahiri in 2010. The message does not bode well for security in Turkey.

Turkey has a long history of terrorist violence. A Kurdish nationalist terrorist group known as PKK or Kurdistan Workers' Party has been active since 1978, and raids this year have resulted in 16 arrests in connection with PKK

activities. Turks volunteered for jihad in Afghanistan and Chechnya. Al Qaeda claimed responsibility for the November 15 and November 20, 2003, bombings in Istanbul that killed 57 and injured 700. Two synagogues, the British consulate, and a British bank were the targets of those attacks.

## Iranian Insurgent Apprehended

Iran arrested Abdolmalek Rigi, the leader of the Jundollah insurgency, in February after his flight was grounded by Iranian officials. A Sunni insurgent group in the majority-Shi'ite Iran, Jundollah was responsible for the October attack that killed 40 Iranians, 15 of whom were Revolutionary Guards. Iran accused Rigi of having ties to the American, British, and Pakistani governments, although these governments deny this.

The Iranian interior minister said Rigi had been arrested abroad and transported to Iran. The intelligence minister said they had “clear documents” proving the link between the insurgent leader and American, Israeli, and British intelligence services. The minister claimed that Rigi had been on a U.S. military base only 24 hours before his arrest and was carrying an American-issued Afghani passport. The intelligence minister also said he had been arrested onboard a plane that had been grounded in Iran while flying from Dubai to Kyrgyzstan, contradicting his colleague’s earlier statement.

Kyrgyzstan confirmed the intelligence minister’s statements a day later. According to Kyrgyz officials, Iranian jets had forced a Kyrgyz plane to land on Iranian soil and arrested two passengers. The Kyrgyzstani jet was en route from Dubai to Bishkek. After the forced landing, the plane was checked by Iranian security forces. The plane was grounded for three to four hours, Rigi and another, unknown person were detained, and the plane then continued on its way.

## Regional Security

### Finding the Yemen-Somalia Connection

Recently, there has been much speculation about the links between Islamic militants in Yemen and Somalia. In mid-January, there were reports that al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) had sent and received militants from al Shabaab in Somalia. Soon afterwards, al Shabaab confirmed that its fighters were aligned with al Qaeda’s global vision. The following week, AQAP called for

regional cooperation in closing the Red Sea to shipping, specifically requesting al Shabaab’s assistance.

Further illustrating the links between Yemen and Somalia, al Shabaab in Somalia proclaimed in early January 2010 that it would fight with its “brothers” in Yemen if the United States sent troops into the country following the Christmas Day attack by Yemeni-trained Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. In March 2009, a Yemeni suicide bomber killed four South Korean tourists. He was trained in Somalia, also indicating collaboration between AQAP and militants in Somalia. The *New York Times* reported in June of 2009 that fighters from Pakistan’s tribal areas were moving into Yemen and Somalia, and that militants in the three areas were making a concerted effort to coordinate activities. At a recent hearing of the House Armed Services Committee, Garry Reid, the deputy assistant secretary of defense for special operations and combating terrorism, testified that although al Shabaab was primarily a local organization, it had shown signs of spreading its operations “across Africa, into Yemen and further into Europe.”

Although there are conflicting reports as to whether Somali pirates and militant groups are linked, there seems to be a Somali-Yemeni piracy link. Robert Rotberg noted that alleged “Somali” pirates are based not only in the Somali coastal area of the Gulf of Aden but on the Yemeni coast. The UN also reports that pirates’ “mother ships” are based out of Northern Puntland, Mogadishu, and Al Mukallah and Al Shishr in Yemen.

Historically, the East African coast and the Arabian Peninsula have been very close. Not only has there been continuous trade between the two regions, but over the last 1,000 years large numbers of Yemenis migrated to Somalia, intermarried with locals, and established businesses, thus creating close ties that continue to the present. These familial ties provide the basis for the informal trade networks through which legal and illegal trade occurs. A UN report on the arms embargo to Somalia asserts that the infamous arms trade with Yemen is simply part of a larger illicit trade network that regularly smuggles fuel, endangered wildlife, drugs, ivory, and more. These same smugglers are engaged in trafficking humans and weapons. Goods and munitions fill the dhows from Yemen to Somalia, and humans, ivory, and endangered wildlife make up the cargo on the voyage back. The UN also alleges that there is a smaller flow of arms from Somalia to Yemen in support of the various insurgencies there. The main port of this illegal activity is Bossaso, in Somalia’s Puntland region, infamous for its piracy. Somali pirates also benefit from the flow of munitions, often using their ransom money to purchase better weapons. International

Crisis Group alleges that organized criminal gangs are behind most, if not all, of these activities.

Whether or not AQAP and al Shabaab formally continue their affiliation, it seems likely that some form of cooperation between destabilizing groups in both countries will continue. The historical and economic links between the two countries are too close to think collaboration will soon cease. Both profit from sustained chaos, as this allows continued trade in weapons, drugs, and other illegal goods that bring in money to economically impoverished areas. Historical interdependency between Yemen and Somalia will most likely continue, with or without formal declarations.

The Mozambique Channel between Mozambique and the giant island of Madagascar may prove to be the next hunting zone for pirates. Small wooden craft manned by heavily armed men have been spotted as they disappeared behind jungle foliage that concealed the entrance to mangrove swamps.

### **What Is Burma Doing?**

Two Burmese officials were sentenced to death for leaking information about government visits to North Korea and Russia. The two officials were also found guilty of leaking information about secret tunnels built in Burma by the North Koreans that are large enough to transport military supplies. And the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), a U.S. think tank, recently published a report indicating that North Korea and Burma could be working together to develop nuclear capabilities in Burma. Thus the question, what is Burma up to?

A former army major, Win Naing Kyaw, and Thura Kyaw, a clerk in Burma's foreign ministry, were the alleged sources of the leaks. In early January of 2010, they were convicted of disclosing information about visits by high-level Burmese officials to North Korea and Russia in 2006 and 2008.

They also disclosed information to a Norwegian broadcaster about a series of tunnels built with North Korea's help. There is some speculation about the purpose of the tunnels, but they appear large enough to accommodate heavy vehicles and have communications equipment like fiber-optic cables. Some of the tunnels were built in an area where the government has fought a long-running battle with insurgents, leading some to believe they were built as a military command center in case of a popular uprising.

In a potentially related report, the ISIS released a study about Burma's nuclear aspirations. The report says that

“the military regime’s suspicious links to North Korea and apparent willingness to illegally procure high-technology goods” is fueling speculation about the potential for a long-term nuclear program. However, the report also said Burma does not appear to be “close to establishing a significant nuclear capability.” It did go on to warn that if the international community does not pay closer attention to its activities, Burma could very well develop nuclear capabilities as did Syria, Iran, and Pakistan.

### **Iran Charges Mousavi Aide with Espionage**

Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence claimed that an aide of opposition leader Mir-Houssein Mousavi was involved in espionage and summarily arrested him, according to news reports from Tehran on February 2. A ministry official told reporters that the aide was in contact with European intelligence agencies and had confessed to the crime. The official claimed that the aide possessed equipment used to communicate with Western intelligence agencies. Officials have arrested 10 of Mousavi’s other aides in the wake of December’s protests.

In the same briefing, the Intelligence Ministry mentioned that two German diplomats were arrested for instigating violence by organizing a network of protestors. The ministry claimed that this network was affiliated with the German intelligence services. The Swedish chargé d’affaires was also held for 24 hours in connection with those protests, but was later released under the Vienna Convention protocols for treatment of diplomatic officers.

Iran has a history of arresting opponents on espionage charges. Journalist Roxana Saberi, three American hikers who inadvertently wandered into Iran, and seven leaders of the Baha’i faith were all accused this year of espionage by the Iranian government and summarily locked up.

The story about Mousavi’s aide was reported by Radio Zamaneh, an Iranian news agency based in the Netherlands, on January 27. In an added twist, days after it ran the story, the website was hacked by the “Iranian Cyber Army,” which warned “that ‘all treasonous mercenaries’ would be harassed.”

### **Russian Police Whistleblower Arrested**

Alexei Dymovsky, who gained recognition after denouncing the Novorossiisk Russian police force on YouTube in November, has been arrested on charges of fraud and corruption. If convicted, he will get a maximum of six years in prison.

In his video, Dymovsky alleged that he was “tired of being made to uncover crimes that do not exist,” and he was “tired of being told that these are the people who we need to go to jail.” He further claimed that his superiors forced policemen to arrest people to meet monthly quotas. He even appealed to Prime Minister Putin to reform the law enforcement agencies. The head of the Novorossiisk force countered that the allegations were false and could not be proved. Dymovsky was then fired for libel and for dishonoring the security forces.

A Russian Interior Ministry official admitted that corruption is a problem in the police force. Officers are poorly paid, which attracts generally low-quality recruits to the force. “Some of them don’t know the most basic of laws; some even consort with criminal gangs,” the official said.

A different interior minister had earlier vowed that any policeman caught committing a serious crime would face severe prosecution. Apparently accusing the Russian police force of corruption is a serious crime.

## Arms Trafficking

### Possible Kenyan Link to Southern Sudan

A Swiss research institute has identified Kenya as a conduit of arms to Southern Sudan. The institute, Small Arms Survey, cited as evidence satellite photos of Southern Sudan in which T-72 Soviet tanks, originally unloaded in Mombasa in 2008, were clearly visible. The report, titled *Supply and Demand: Arms Flows and Holdings in Sudan* (December 2009), noted that the tanks were part of three shipments, including 122-mm vehicle-mounted rocket launchers, 14.5-mm machine guns, 23-mm antiaircraft cannons, RPG-7 rocket launchers, and AKM assault rifles. The weapons originated in the Ukraine and were “ostensibly consigned to the Kenyan Ministry of Defense” but were under contract to the Autonomous Government of Southern Sudan, according to the report.

The Kenyan Minister of Defense spokesman, Bogita Ogeri, told the Voice of America in an interview that the report was mere “speculation.” Assistant Minister for Internal Security Joshua Orua Ojode told the *East African* that “the Kenya government does not trade in arms and respects the territorial integrity of other countries. But if there is evidence, we are ready to investigate.”

The shipment was facilitated by UK and German shipping companies, but was transported on a Ukrainian vessel, the MV *Faina*, which was hijacked by pirates off the coast of Somalia in 2008. In October 2009, Kenyan police arrested

the head of an East African seafarers association after he claimed that the ship was originally destined for Southern Sudan.

If these allegations about the shipment are true, Kenya would be in violation of the peace deal brokered between North and South Sudan in 2005. Analysts have warned that a buildup of arms is occurring on both sides. Tensions are increasing as Southern Sudan prepares for a 2011 referendum on independence. The U.S. envoy to the UN, Susan Rice, remarked that it is important to discern if this is an instance of small-arms trafficking similar to what takes place throughout Africa or if this is “a deliberate effort to sow instability.”

### TNT Update Update

In the last issue of the *TNT Update*, we reported on the massive arms bust made in Thailand. Some 35 tons of weapons were recovered from a cargo plane that was refueling in the Bangkok airport after a trip to North Korea. The cargo had been loaded onto the plane in North Korea, and several more stops were planned after Thailand, including in Sri Lanka and the United Arab Emirates. The plane’s captain claimed that the final destination would be the Ukraine. However, intelligence officials now claim that the cargo’s final destination was actually Iran, which Iran flatly denies.

Also, the Thai government has dropped charges against the crew of the plane and released them to their governments of Kazakhstan and Belarus. Both governments claim that the men will be investigated for their alleged involvement in arms smuggling. The Thai government still asserts that the five men who were aboard the plane are guilty, but has said that the move was to maintain good relations with the crew’s native countries.

## Cyber Crime

### China-Iran Hacker Wars

The ongoing tussle between Google and China dominated cyber security news during the month of January. However, China’s cyber drama did not stop with Google. Mid-January also saw a miniature cyber skirmish unfold between Chinese and Iranian “hacktivists.” While the attacks have ceased, they demonstrated the rapid escalation of cyber warfare and the threat that civilians can pose.

On January 12, the Iranian Cyber Army struck China’s Baidu website. For about four hours, the home page of China’s most-popular search engine displayed a black

screen declaring in English, “This site has been hacked by Iranian Cyber Army” and declaring in Farsi, “Cyber Iran to protest the intervention of foreign and Israeli sites in our internal affairs and distribution of false news.” The image also showed an Iranian flag and a broken Star of David.

Within minutes of the initial attacks, Chinese hackers, known as Honkers, were creating web forums and listing Iranian websites to hack. However, it appears that the Chinese hackers were choosing Iranian websites virtually at random, as the Iranian national wrestling website and the Ministry of Health and Education sites were among those targeted and attacked. The different sites displayed an array of bright red-and-yellow screens, all with English messages including: “The People's Republic of China long live ... Oppose splitting Safeguarding unity.”

All messages made it exceedingly clear that these Chinese hacktivists, as they are colloquially called, are determined not to be attacked on their own turf. They proved themselves able to organize and successfully hack foreign websites in a matter of minutes. While sensitive government websites are equipped to withstand thousands of hacking attempts per day, organized groups of hackers like the Honkers and the Iranian Cyber Army are a real threat to government cyber infrastructure.

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