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SOMALI CONFLICT SPILLS OVER INTO KENYA

Kenyan security agencies were put on high alert on October 30 in response to threats from Somalia’s al-Shabaab movement. Al-Shabaab leader Shaykh Mukhtar Robow “Abu Mansur” issued a threat in mid-October to begin “a jihadi war in Kenya” if Kenya did not cease military training for some 10,000 recruits belonging to the forces of Somalia’s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (Afrol News, October 16; Independent, October 17). An internal Kenyan government memo warned, “Information reaching our frontier control department indicates that al-Qaeda terrorist organizations under the leadership of one Harun Fazul [Fazul Abdullah Muhammad] are planning to attack vital installations and Western Interests in Kenya and Uganda” (*Nairobi Star*, October 31). In September there were fears Fazul Abdullah Muhammad (who is wanted for his role in the 1998 al-Qaeda bombings in East Africa) was planning attacks in the Ugandan capital of Kampala in retaliation for Uganda’s participation in the UNISOM peacekeeping force. Fazul was believed to be in the vicinity of the Kenyan town of Malindi at the time, where he evaded a security dragnet (see *Terrorism Focus*, September 24).

In what police describe as a “massive operation,” security forces have attempted to close the usually lightly guarded Kenyan-Somali border. On October 30, Kenyan police discovered 600 bomb detonators on a bus headed for the Mandera region of northeast Kenya – a possible indication of an impending escalation of violence in the area, already beset by clan fighting (*Nairobi Star*, October 31).

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In the third week of October, Kenyan police and military forces began a large-scale security operation in the Mandera region, where most of the population is ethnic Somali, with close ties to related groups across the border in Somalia. The operation came in response to continued fighting between the Murule and Gharri clans. The conflict between the two groups has existed in one form or another for decades, but became heated in recent weeks after relative calm since a peace agreement was signed in 2005. The Murule and Gharri appear to have aligned themselves with rival clans within Somalia's larger Marehaan group. According to some reports, Nairobi now views the clan fighting in Mandera as a potential threat to national security, as Kenyan intelligence reports that arms and funding from Somali clans and the extremist al-Shabaab movement are reaching the combatants in Mandera (NTV [Nairobi], October 30). There are also fears the weapons being shipped to Mandera may be passed onwards to intensify ethnic and political conflicts elsewhere in Kenya.

Security forces seized a small amount of communications equipment, which they said was used to coordinate illegal border crossings and monitor the movement of security personnel (NTV [Nairobi], October 30). The clans, however, have charged the security forces with using excessive violence (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], November 3). Hundreds of people have been admitted to local hospitals with fractures, cuts and internal bleeding they say are the result of beatings and torture by security forces looking for concealed weapons. Kenyan police insist the wounds and injuries are self-inflicted and part of a campaign to stop the military operation (*Daily Nation* [Nairobi], September 1; IRIN, October 31).

There are reports that as many as half a million people have become displaced due to the fighting, which began with disputes over pasture land and scarce resources (*The Standard* [Nairobi], November 2). Some local leaders are urging an arbitration panel of religious scholars rather than a military campaign to reduce violence in the region, but the military says it will remain until it has completed its disarmament mission.

KORDOFAN OIL OPERATIONS AT RISK AS KILLINGS CONTINUE

Right on the heels of the death of five Chinese oil workers in Sudan's South Kordofan province came news of the murder of three Sudanese oil workers and the abduction of two Yemeni workers in neighboring Unity State. The latest ambush is blamed on individuals from Sudan's Baqqara (cattle-owning) Arabs, who are also held responsible for the abduction and killing of the Chinese workers (*Sudan Times*, October 30).

Nine employees of the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) were abducted on October 18 while doing contract work for the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC). Three were killed on October 27 in an incident described by Chinese authorities as a botched rescue attempt by the Sudanese Armed Forces and by Khartoum as an accident caused when the kidnappers became nervous after a military helicopter began monitoring their movements. Two more workers were found dead in the following days (AFP, October 31). Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi is reported to have told his Sudanese counterpart, "It is one of the most serious killing cases of oversea Chinese workers in recent years and we are very shocked by it" (*Sudan Times*, October 29). Four remaining workers were hospitalized after being rescued.

Identification of Arab Misseriya tribesmen as the responsible parties seems to have been confirmed by the arrival of a delegation of Misseriya leaders to negotiate the workers' release and a claim of responsibility from Abu Humaid Ahmad Dannay, a Misseriya who also claims to be the leader of the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in Kordofan (*Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, October 24). Though JEM has repeatedly stated its determination to drive out China's oil operations, it has denied any participation in the latest abductions through recognized spokesmen. Dannay refuted Khartoum's description of the abductions as terrorism, stating, "The government is terrorizing us and we will respond in a similar manner." The Chinese Foreign Ministry has also denounced the kidnappings as "terrorism" while calling for "severe punishment" of those responsible (*China Daily*, October 29; Xinhua, October 28). Sudanese security forces report they have the names of 25 individuals involved in the

abductions, while local reports say the kidnappers are suffering from shortages of food and drinking water (Miriya FM, October 32; November 1).

The government continued to claim that Darfur's rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) was responsible for the abductions until November 1, when Sudanese Foreign Minister Deng Alor identified the suspects as former members of the government's Popular Defense Forces (PDF) militia who were not integrated into the regular army after the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) (*Sudan Tribune*, November 1). The PDF in South Kordofan have suffered from a recent decline in funding and numerous defections to the Sudanese Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA).

Misseriya grievances against Sudan's growing oil industry include the destruction of pasture land and a preference for employing imported Asian workers instead of hiring locally. Having fought for years on the frontline of the north-south civil war, the Misseriya now feel abandoned by Khartoum. The Misseriya feel that the oil fields of the north-south border region were secured through their efforts, only to now see oil revenues used for the reconstruction of Khartoum while the poverty of South Kordofan remains unchanged. The leadership of the Misseriya is in a state of flux after government efforts to replace traditional leaders who supported Sadiq al-Mahdi's Umma party with inexperienced individuals willing to support the ruling National Congress Party (NCP), which is dominated by Arab Islamists from north Sudan. Misseriya gunmen also abducted four Indian oil workers and their Sudanese driver last May.

Continuing attacks on oil workers threaten the development of the petroleum industry in Sudan just as a decline in oil prices and demand is creating a sharp drop in current revenues. The continuing militarization of the oil-producing regions is unlikely to inspire further investment, though China has stated its close economic involvement with Sudan will stay unchanged despite this latest in a series of attacks on Chinese facilities (AP, October 21).

Turkey Reorganizes Security Structure to Combat Terrorism

The October meeting of the Turkish National Security Council (Milli Guvenlik Kurulu – MGK) delivered major decisions regarding the reorganization of Turkey's domestic security structure. In the areas of inter-agency counter-terrorism cooperation and border security, the changes are comparable with those made by the United States when it established the Department of Homeland Security.

During early October's Counter-Terrorism High Council meeting (chaired by Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan), Turkish civilian and military elites discussed the need for a reorganization of Turkey's domestic security structure to better address the recent rise in domestic terrorism. This led to the MGK decision to create a new organization for counterterrorism coordination under Interior Ministry control. Input was sought from a range of security organizations, including the Interior Ministry, the General Staff, the Gendarmerie, the Turkish National Police and the National Intelligence Agency (Milli Istihbarat Teskilati – MIT) (*Zaman*, October 23).

According to information provided by Interior Ministry officials, the details of the initiative are as follows:

- In order to strengthen the structures and authority of the Interior Ministry, its minister will also be the Vice Prime Minister.
- Two new agencies under the Interior Ministry will be established – the High Council on Interior Security and the General Secretary of Interior Security. These agencies will develop strategy, establish a databank, and develop projects.
- The General Directorate of the Turkish National Police (Emniyet Genel Mudurlugu) will be elevated to the position of undersecretary, and the Coast Guard will be placed under its authority (*Aksam Gazetesi*, October 23).

At the heart of this comprehensive reorganization is the goal of combating terrorism economically, politically, psychologically, socially and internationally along with traditional military measures. In this respect the scope of the two new agencies has been broadened

by design, in order to combat terrorism at home and abroad. Foreign recruitment by the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan - PKK) in Syria, Iraq, Iran and Europe will be addressed by opening offices in those areas to coordinate counterterrorism activities with local authorities and isolate the PKK's external support (*Aksam Gazetesi*, October 23).

The new Interior Ministry agencies will also address the domestic social concerns that exacerbate terrorism. To this end, developing projects to prevent terrorist recruitment and providing public outreach will be among the main tasks of these agencies. The reorganization also sets high standards in terms of the future conduct of security operations. Oversight, accountability and responsiveness to public concerns are the new themes for counterterrorism activities (*Aksam Gazetesi*, October 23).

After the PKK attack on the Turkish military outpost in Aktutun in early October, border security has sparked a public debate on the need for increased precautions. Since PKK militants have been coming from the Iraqi side of the border, securing the frontier to prevent terrorist infiltration has become an important concern for Turkish counter-terrorism efforts. To this end, the reorganization will include the establishment of a new undersecretary for border security (*Zaman*, October 23).

The MGK also warned Iraq about preventing the use of its soil as a safe haven for terrorists. In light of repeated Turkish demands for Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to deny safe havens to the PKK, the MGK has decided to closely monitor Iraq's progress in this area (*Bugun Gazetesi*, October 21).

Due to the multifaceted nature of terrorism, the methods used to combat it will determine the success of the new Turkish counterterrorism policy. Turkish Minister of Interior Besir Atalay noted, "[W]e will take into consideration terrorism with all of its dimensions" (*Milli Gazete*, October 23). The Minister's statement summarizes the substance and the spirit of this reorganization. For that reason, it is important to note the key change in the approach to counter-terrorism. The overall transfer of authority from traditionally military domains into the civilian bureaucracy of the Interior Ministry is the most important element in the reorganization effort, though this is not meant to deny the military's indispensable role in combating

terrorism. The move is accompanied by an integration of military and civilian decision making structures through inter-agency mechanisms, such as the establishment of databanks and intelligence-sharing pools (*Aksam Gazetesi*, October 23).

To evaluate the success potential of the new organization, it is important to examine its structure in detail. As of now, the fact the creation of the new organization passed from an ad hoc Counter-terrorism High Council meeting at Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's office to official MGK resolutions can be viewed as a demonstration of civil and military consensus on the principal idea of the new organization. The presence of the top echelons of Turkey's military and intelligence in the MGK alongside Turkey's political elites gives the MGK a unique function in Turkey's national security structure. Despite this, there is no guarantee the Turkish parliament will draft corresponding laws to legislate the MGK's decisions regarding the new organization. Although the ruling AKP (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi) have an overwhelming majority in parliament, pressure from the republican CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) and nationalist MHP (Milliyetci Hareket Partisi) parties is likely to influence parliamentary debates of the issue. Mounting public pressure to do more to combat terrorism is likely to be taken into account by those parties in the approaching 2009 nation-wide municipal elections. Thus, taking into account the domestic political dynamics of Turkey can help to understand the timing of this reorganization.

The reaction of the Turkish military will also play a critical role in the final form of the reorganization. Hence, the military is a key actor in its implementation, especially since it is the military whose authority has been most diminished as a result of the security reforms. So far, there have not been any open challenges from the General Staff, at least in public. Though there may be some resentment in the military over the reforms, the reorganization so far appears to be in keeping with the belief of Turkish Chief of Staff General Ilker Basbug that effective counterterrorism measures must rely on joint civil-military measures (*Turkish Daily News*, October 29). As the reorganization has been a response to the changing nature of the terrorist threat and the demands of the Turkish public for a safer Turkey, its success will be determined by its ability to meet public expectations.

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Baghdad's Saad bin Abi Waqas Army - Former Iraqi Soldiers Fight to Restore the Caliphate

In late 2007, al-Qaeda's second man, Dr. Ayman al-Zawahiri, conducted an open dialogue through the internet in which he answered questions posed by members of jihadi internet forums. Since then, some Iraqi jihadi group leaders have imitated al-Zawahiri's example by answering questions put to them through jihadi forums. One such interview was conducted through two forums with the spokesman of the Saad Bin Abi Waqas Army, Shaykh Salah al-Din Jabouri (muslm.net, October 19).

To the first group of inquiries, al-Jabouri said that the Saad Bin Abi Waqas army (the Saad Army hereafter) is an Islamic jihadi group fighting to expel the occupiers from Iraq, exalt God's word by strengthening Islamic Sharia (law), follow the Prophet's Sunna, and implement a Salafi-Jihadi Islamic regime. Al-Jabouri is optimistic that Caliphate rule will make a comeback soon. The Saad Army, according to al-Jabouri, is present in the two parts of Baghdad – divided by the River Tigris – and in the southern districts of the city.

Recently the Saad Army has deployed to Mosul, says al-Jabouri, who urges interested volunteers from Mosul to contact the Saad Army in person or through their website. The Saad Army is comprised of experienced jihadis equipped with weapons stolen from ex-Iraqi military depots, according to al-Jabouri, who adds: "Our Jihad is defensive. We are fighting in Iraq and our eyes are on occupied al-Aqsa [the mosque in Jerusalem]". Although the Saad Army and the 1920 Revolutionary Brigades have the same political and jihadi position, the disassociation between the two occurred due to differences in jihadi methods and expertise between the two groups.

Al-Jabouri admitted that, like many other jihadi groups, the Saad Army is suffering from a lack of funds and has had to sell real estate to sustain jihadi operations. The Saad Army spokesman called on Muslims to donate money, noting that the Saad Army coordinates field and media activities for a range of other jihadi and Sunni political groups, including the Association of Muslim scholars, the Political Council of the Iraqi Resistance and the Jihad and Liberation group, even though no official association between the groups yet exists.

When asked whether the Saad Army consents to the actions of al-Qaeda in Iraq, al-Jabouri dodged the question, saying fallouts with some Jihadi groups are due to ideological differences, adding only that the so-called Islamic State of Iraq (ISI – widely regarded as an al-Qaeda affiliate) is another jihadi group participating in "defensive jihad" against the occupier. The Saad Army, however, has declined invitations to join ISI because the ISI lacks the prerequisites of a state.

The Saad Army spokesman also commented on Iraq's Sunni-Shi'a divide. Unlike al-Qaeda and other extreme Salafi-Jihadi groups, al-Jabouri does not deem all Shiite factions infidels, just the Imami "Twelvers" faction, largest of the various Shiite groups. [1] The Saad Army equates the Twelvers with the "Jews and Crusaders." On the question of a possible political settlement with the government, al-Jabouri states his refusal to negotiate with the authorities, denying suggestions such talks have taken place with the Americans in neighboring Jordan.

In response to a question on jihadi use of the internet, al-Jabouri revealed the Saad Army uses the internet to pull up manuals on conventional and chemical weapons manufacturing, locate enemy military targets through Google Earth and boost the fighting spirit of the mujahideen. Websites also have a role in breaking the morale of enemy soldiers by posting video clips of jihadi operations.

Although the majority of forum participants made supportive comments on al-Jabouri's interview, pro-al-Qaeda participants rejected al-Jabouri's reasons for not uniting with other jihadi groups and urged jihadis in the shura (consultative) council of ISI not to accept the disunity pretexts of other jihadi factions.

In a recent interview with Alrai TV (the Syrian-based successor to Iraq's al-Zawra TV, best known for its continuous broadcast of Iraqi jihadi videos), al-Jabouri said that the Saad Army has acquired large quantities of arms from Iraq's old weapons manufacturing facilities with the help of ex-Iraqi military personnel (the undated video was posted on the Saad Army's website, saadarmy.com). The core of the Saad Army operates in Baghdad and the towns south of the city: al-Mahmoudiya, al-Latifia, al-Yousofia and al-Haswah.

On the influence of the tribal Awakening councils (al-Sahwa), al-Jabouri said that the councils are protecting American forces in Iraq. The Americans do not intend to pullout of Iraq and need the Awakening councils to fight the jihadi formations on their behalf. Reasserting the Saad Army's intentions to keep fighting even after a U.S. pullout, al-Jabouri declared the group will keep up jihadi activities until all of the American-installed Iraqi government apparatus is eliminated and replaced with an Islamic Sharia government. Al-Jabouri is very optimistic about the future of Saad Army operations: "We still possess tons of weapons we haven't revealed yet. The Amirs of the Army met two months ago and pledged to continue the fight until we expel the occupier." Al-Jabouri denies receiving any foreign funds or volunteers from abroad, saying that many Iraqi locals directly contact the different divisions and join the Saad Army. In conclusion, al-Jabouri declared that if the Democrats win the U.S. elections and decide to pull out of Iraq, the Saad Army would refrain from attacking the withdrawing American forces.

The fact that the core of Saad Bin Abi Waqas comprises ex-Iraqi army soldiers implies a nationalist inclination for the group, regardless of the ostensible Salafi-Jihadi rhetoric they use to lure in volunteers and funds. Although not as extreme as al-Qaeda's Salafi-Jihadi forces, the ex-military and intelligence operatives of the Saad Army could prove more capable of penetrating current Iraqi security and military agencies, a resistance method already recommended to the group by a visitor to their website.

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Notes:

1. Imami "Twelver" Shi'ism (Ithna Ashariya) is the largest branch of Shi'i Islam. The majority of Shiites in Iran and Iraq are adherents of Imami Shi'ism, which recognizes the spiritual and political authority of twelve "Imams" (leaders of Islamic communities) as successors to the Prophet Muhammad through the line of the fourth Caliph, Ali. The twelfth Imam, Muhammad ibn al-Hassan, was hidden by God (a process known as "occultation") in 872

and will return one day as the Mahdi ("the expected one") together with the Nabi 'Isa (the Prophet Jesus) to restore an Islamic order of peace and justice.

India and Pakistan Address Terrorism Issues as Relations Deteriorate

The fourth meeting of the Joint Anti-Terror Mechanism (JATM) between India and Pakistan on October 24 in New Delhi remained trapped between diplomatic niceties and hard-nosed positions, adding to the widely held skepticism about the utility of such an exercise. While the Indians were insistent on proving the involvement of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in last July's suicide attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul to the delegation from Islamabad, the latter countered by demanding more evidence as well as citing India's role in fomenting political violence in Pakistan's Balochistan province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The Indian delegation was led by Vivek Katju, Special Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs and an old Pakistan hand in the Indian foreign office who is best known for negotiating the release of a hijacked Indian Airlines passenger jet at Kandahar in December 1999. The Pakistan delegation was led by Mr. Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, Additional Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The meeting, at least according to the official statement that followed, was held "in a positive, constructive and forward looking atmosphere" (Associated Press of Pakistan, October 24).

In fact, the outcome was hardly positive, or for that matter constructive. India has consistently accused Pakistan-based jihadi groups and Pakistan's ISI intelligence agency of planning and executing the suicide attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul on July 7, 2008. The October JATM meeting was specially convened to exchange views on the subject. At the meeting, India presented evidence of ISI involvement in the Kabul attack to the Pakistani delegation, including intelligence intercepts and NATO's technical analysis of the bombs (*Indian Express*, October 25). The dossier also included Indian allegations of a role in the attack by Mullah Abdur Rahman Zahid, the former Deputy Foreign Minister of the Taliban regime, now living in Peshawar (*India Today*, October 31).

Pakistani delegates said “no agency from Pakistan” was involved in the attack, which, according to diplomatic sources, was an admission of the possibility of terrorist elements operating from within Pakistan but outside the control of Pakistani agencies (*Indian Express*, October 24). The Indian side was informed that Pakistan would continue with its own independent investigation into the attack and wait for additional evidence.

India presented a fresh list of fugitives wanted for terrorist and criminal activities. The list included the names of Mumbai underworld don Dawood Ibrahim and his associate Karimullah Hussain Khan, both of whom are wanted for terrorist as well as criminal activities and are believed by Indian authorities to be resident in Pakistan under ISI protection. Another prominent fugitive named by the Indian delegates was Masood Azhar, leader of the Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM – “The Army of Muhammad”), a terrorist movement dedicated to the separation of Kashmir from India. The Indian dossier had photographs of Azhar supervising the construction of his new house in Peshawar. India also asked Pakistan to take action against the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT – “The Army of the Pure”), another militant group involved in Kashmiri separatism. The Indian delegates reminded their counterparts of the promise made by Pakistan’s ex-President Pervez Musharraf on January 6, 2004, in which Musharraf pledged anti-Indian terrorist groups would not be allowed to operate from within Pakistan.

The Pakistani delegation presented its own list of fugitives to the Indian government, adding that they, too, were looking for JeM leader Masood Azhar. Pakistan tabled a list of actions taken against terrorist groups like LeT and JeM and laid out its own set of charges against India, primarily involving the alleged use of India’s consulates to foment trouble in Balochistan and FATA (*The Post* [Lahore], October 25). The second charge against India related to the slow pace of investigations into the February 2007 Samjhauta Express bombing (*Hindustan Times*, February 19, 2007; BBC, February 19, 2007). Of the 68 people killed in the bombing of the twice-weekly train service between Delhi and Lahore, most were Pakistanis. Both countries have sparred ever since on sharing information related to the attack. India has accused Pakistan-based terrorists of executing the blast on the India-Pakistan train link, citing Pakistan’s refusal to help the investigation by providing information about some suspects hiding in Pakistan. During the meeting, Pakistan’s delegation said the names given by the Indian authorities were wrong,

adding they were keen to know about the progress of the investigation. The Indian side said progress was slow because of some unspecified “constraints” (*Daily News and Analysis* [Mumbai], October 25).

Despite the differences, the meeting concluded on the note that terrorism was a common enemy and must be fought jointly. There can hardly be any dispute over such a sentiment. What needs to be seen next is the actual translation of such sentiments into practical steps in the India-Pakistan context. This would call for some quick thinking on changing the format of the discussion. To begin with, the discussions must be freed from the narrow parameters of bureaucratic parleys to include a much more broad-based group of people. This could mean the expansion of the mechanism itself by introducing additional layers of Track II meetings on specific points. An increase in the scope and number of meetings on terrorism might lead to an extradition treaty and a deeper level of information exchange. A tangible success on this front could dramatically change the pace of the peace process, infusing, as a natural corollary, a much-needed dose of trust between the two nuclear-armed adversaries.

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A Mujahideen Bleed-Through From Iraq? Part Two - A Look at Lebanon

By Michael Scheuer

Lebanon always has been a country whose people are more loyal to family, clan, tribe, and faith than to the concept of Lebanon as a united nation-state. Since 2003, this existing internal divisiveness has been sharpened by the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq and the U.S.-led international effort to drive Syria out of Lebanon. The former opened a role for Lebanon as part of the path for would-be jihadis traveling to fight in Iraq. The latter – together with the 2006 Hezbollah-Israel war - forced the precipitate decline of effective governmental authority in Lebanon, allowing jihadis to use the country for transit and basing. This made it a target for aggressive expansionist efforts by Saudis and other Salafis and encouraged

the rapid growth of internal violence between political and religious factions. Overall, the Iraq war and Syria's departure from Lebanon gave al-Qaeda and its Islamist allies an unprecedented opportunity to infiltrate their influence and manpower into Lebanon, as well as help strengthen the Sunni Salafist trend in northern Lebanon.

It is now old-hat to say that the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was a *casus belli* for Sunni Muslims worldwide, and especially among the Salafists who are prominent in al-Qaeda, other Islamist radical groups, and the Saudi regime, who are now effectively expanding their power across the Arab and Muslim worlds. A glance at the map showed jihad-bound Sunnis that Lebanon was a geographic key to infiltrating Islamist fighters into Iraq. The war itself made many Sunni Lebanese eager to assist that entry process, with some ready to go and fight there themselves.

With Syria effectively in charge of Lebanon at the start of the Iraq war, it appears that the transit of would-be mujahedeen through Lebanon was kept moving by Syrian authorities and did not initially result in the build-up of non-Lebanese Sunni Islamists within the country. The West's pyrrhic 2005 victory in forcing President Bashar al-Assad to evacuate Syrian forces from the country, however, seems to have created a situation which now finds growing numbers of non-Lebanese Salafi Islamists present in Lebanon and a growing Salafist movement in the north – especially in Tripoli, which is Lebanon's largest, most conservative Sunni city – as well as in the city of Sidon and Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps (*Al-Ghad* [Jordan], October 11).

In addition to the growth of Salafism and Islamist militancy engendered by the passions aroused by the Iraq war, Saudi Arabia has been fishing in troubled waters by encouraging the growth of each in northern Lebanon. Riyadh has paid for the construction of new mosques in Tripoli and reportedly has assisted militants residing in the northern territory abutting Syria (*The Economist*, October 2; *New York Times*, October 16). According to the media, Lebanese and Syrian sources are reporting that Saudi National Security Chief Prince Bandar Bin Sultan is supervising the Saudis' pro-Salafist agenda in Lebanon, a program which includes sponsoring Islamist terrorist operations in Syria (*Al-Akhbar* [Beirut], September 30). Riyadh's activities in northern Lebanon hold the promise of fulfilling two longstanding Saudi goals: (1) creating a viable, well-armed, and militant Sunni Salafi movement

in Lebanon as a military counterweight to the Shia Hezbollah, and (2) to enable Riyadh to cause domestic instability for their Syrian enemy (*Middle East Times*, June 30).

The turmoil of post-Syrian Lebanon also has been exploited by al-Qaeda forces based in Iraq. Multiple media reports indicate that al-Qaeda fighters – mostly Yemenis, Saudis, Jordanians who left Iraq to avoid the U.S. surge and its surrogate Sunni fighters – went to both Syria and Lebanon (Naharnet, September 12). They have established themselves in Lebanon along the Syrian border, in Tripoli and in the Ain al-Hawah Palestinian refugee camp; they also have built working relationships with the Sunni militant groups Asbat al-Ansar and Fatah-al-Islam group. In 2007, the latter fought the Lebanese army for fifteen weeks at the Nahr al-Bared refugee camp (Naharnet, June 16).

In the face of growing Salafist and al-Qaeda influence, one Lebanese academic claimed, "Security in Iraq is improving, but the militants are being driven across the border. There are a large number of militants coming into Lebanon and Syria, and our countries are paying the price for what is happening in Iraq" (BBC, September 29). The academic's words are an apt description of the westward-bound jihad highway for Sunni mujahideen that the United States and its allies have unwittingly built across Iraq.

As in Syria, the growing al-Qaeda and Saudi-backed Salafist movement in Lebanon's north and its Palestinian refugee camps clearly is in part a product of the militant bleed-through from Iraq. But, as in Syria, Salafism's Lebanese growth is occurring in already fertile soil: Lebanon's Sunni north has been slowly radicalizing for much of this decade – Tripoli's Sunni leaders long viewed Hezbollah as the "Resistance," but now regard it as the "party of evil" – and the eviction of Syrian forces has substantially reduced Beirut's ability to limit the growth of Salafism (*Middle East Times*, June 30). Bin Laden's operatives and Saudi intelligence will continue to push these trends, thereby once again demonstrating just how closely aligned are the interests of al-Qaeda and Riyadh outside the Arabian Peninsula.

This said, al-Qaeda still has considerable work to do in Lebanon. While Ayman al-Zawahiri said in April 2008 that Lebanon is now "a Muslim frontline fort,"

Lebanese Salafists will for the foreseeable future be more concerned with securing increased political power and communal autonomy in the country than in flocking to support the worldwide Sunni jihad. The possibility of the Shia Hezbollah and its allies winning a majority in the spring 2009 parliamentary elections, for example, could provide a flashpoint for a confrontation between Hezbollah forces and the expanding Salafist Sunni force in the north. For now, the Salafist leaders will continue to work with Saad Hariri's "Future Movement." A group of Lebanese Salafists recently told the media, "Hariri is our leader, we respect and support him." Rather ominously, however, they added, "If [cooperation with Hariri] fails, we have another option called bin Laden" (*Middle East Times*, June 30). For its part, al-Qaeda will strengthen its presence in Tripoli and the north as well as its ties to Lebanese Sunni militants and Palestinian refugees. It will also continue to spread its influence across the country in a manner that will place its operatives as close as possible to Israel's territory.

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