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Résumé de l'article

Al-Qaeda *has had greater success in East Africa and the Horn than any other part of sub-Sahara Africa. Relative proximity to the Middle East and a series of local factors account for this situation.* Al-Qaeda *carried out the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and bombed an Israeli-owned hotel in Kenya north of Mombasa in 2002. Local and international authorities foiled a number of other* al-Qaeda *plots in the region. Osama bin Laden had his headquarters in Sudan from late 1991 until Sudan forced him to leave in mid-1996. Subsequent* al-Qaeda *efforts, which were already well advanced in Kenya and Somalia, tended to emanate from those two countries. But while acknowledging there is a real* al-Qaeda *problem in the region, there is a tendency by the US, a few countries in the region, and* al-Qaeda *itself to exaggerate its impact and influence. This only plays into the hands of* al-Qaeda *and focuses scarce US resources primarily on the short-term goal of tracking down* al-Qaeda *while reducing attention and resources for dealing with the long-term reasons why* al-Qaeda *has been able to function in the region. Eliminating* al-Qaeda *is important but it will not be accomplished solely by military action against suspected* al-Qaeda *operatives. It is time to confront this as a long-term challenge that addresses more effectively its root causes.*

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by
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ABSTRACT

Al-Qaeda *has had greater success in East Africa and the Horn than any other part of sub-Sahara Africa. Relative proximity to the Middle East and a series of local factors account for this situation.* Al-Qaeda *carried out the bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and bombed an Israeli-owned hotel in Kenya north of Mombasa in 2002. Local and international authorities foiled a number of other* al-Qaeda *plots in the region. Osama bin Laden had his headquarters in Sudan from late 1991 until Sudan forced him to leave in mid-1996. Subsequent* al-Qaeda *efforts, which were already well advanced in Kenya and Somalia, tended to emanate from those two countries. But while acknowledging there is a real* al-Qaeda *problem in the region, there is a tendency by the US, a few countries in the region, and* al-Qaeda *itself to exaggerate its impact and influence. This only plays into the hands of* al-Qaeda *and focuses scarce US resources primarily on the short-term goal of tracking down* al-Qaeda *while reducing attention and resources for dealing with the long-term reasons why* al-Qaeda *has been able to function in the region. Eliminating* al-Qaeda *is important but it will not be accomplished solely by military action against suspected* al-Qaeda *operatives. It is time to confront this as a long-term challenge that addresses more effectively its root causes.*

Beginning of the *Al-Qaeda* Threat and Current Strategy

Dissident groups with local agendas have carried out numerous acts of terrorism in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) and the Horn (Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Eritrea, and Djibouti) in recent decades. The groups include, for example, the Janjaweed, Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) in Sudan's Darfur region, the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, and several that operate against the government in Ethiopia. Because of the focus in this article, it may give the impression that *al-Qaeda*-related terrorism poses the principal terrorist threat in the region. In fact, domestic insurgent groups are responsible for many more acts of terrorism and pose a greater threat to regional stability than *al-Qaeda*. The goal here is to provide a

dispassionate analysis of *al-Qaeda* activity in the region and not to make a case for basing policy there almost exclusively on the *al-Qaeda* challenge. Nevertheless, the dramatic international terrorist attacks (and failed efforts) by *al-Qaeda* and affiliated organizations are cause for concern even if the threat has been exaggerated by *al-Qaeda* itself and occasionally countries in the region or those with interests there.

It is important to distinguish between international terrorism and what is often called domestic terrorism. Title 22 of the United States Code defines "international terrorism" as terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country. It defines "terrorism" as premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by sub national groups or clandestine agents.[1] Although there is no universal agreement on the definition of terrorism, these two distinctions effectively distinguish between international and domestic terrorism. The US is intensely interested in the former, especially terrorism perpetrated by *al-Qaeda* and its affiliates; it is only marginally interested in the latter. Leaders in East Africa and the Horn are concerned about international terrorism and tend to overstate its impact in order to attract financial assistance and political support but they are more worried about domestic terrorism.

With the benefit of hindsight, we know that the spiritual leader of international Islamists and head of the Afghan Service Bureau Front, Abdullah Azzam, conceptualized *al-Qaeda* in 1987 and wrote its founding document in 1988. Osama bin Laden was Azzam's deputy.[2] For purposes of understanding US counterterrorism policy, it is essential to remember that Washington was not aware of the existence of *al-Qaeda* until about five years later. In 1992, there was an attack on a hotel in Yemen which *al-Qaeda* thought was being used by US soldiers en route to Somalia. There were no US personnel in the hotel. At the time, Washington had no idea the perpetrator was *al-Qaeda* and only determined this later.[3]

According to Richard Clarke, National Coordinator for Security, Infrastructure Protection, and Counterterrorism under Presidents Clinton and Bush, bin Laden and *al-Qaeda* never came up in the initial investigation of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. The US subsequently established an *al-Qaeda* connection. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) did learn in 1993 that bin Laden was channeling funds to Egyptian extremists. A 1995 National Intelligence Estimate on terrorism did not mention bin Laden as a key player in terrorism. He was known only as a financier of Islamist terrorist groups and not someone directly involved in the organization and planning of operations. The US continued to characterize bin Laden this way until 1997.[4]

The linking of *al-Qaeda* to the planning and organizing of terrorist attacks during these early years in East Africa and the Horn occurred after the fact. The point at which the US learned about *al-Qaeda* activities in East Africa and the Horn is significant in terms of the US policy response. At the time of the 1993

attacks against American troops in Somalia, the US was unaware of any *al-Qaeda* involvement.[5] Even today, there is a debate about the importance of *al-Qaeda*'s role in Somalia in the early 1990s.

Documentation recently published by the Harmony Project Combating Terrorism Center at West Point clearly establishes *al-Qaeda* involvement in Somalia, but it also leaves open the possibility that *al-Qaeda* exaggerated its claims.[6] The real threat to American and United Nations forces were Somali clan militias, especially the one led by Mohammed Farah Aideed. We also know now that *al-Qaeda* began planning in 1994 for the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi, Kenya, and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The US did not, however, connect *al-Qaeda* to the bombings until after the attacks.

Within sub-Saharan Africa, *al-Qaeda* has without doubt focused its attention on East Africa and the Horn. This is the region where nearly all of its attacks, albeit relatively few in number, have occurred. One of the leaders of the *al-Qaeda*-affiliated Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM), Abul Bara' Hassan Salman, explained in 1998 why *al-Qaeda* was attracted to this part of Africa:

> Politically, the African Horn refers to all the countries of East Africa. It includes Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia and Kenya. The area is of particular strategic importance as it links the East with the West through the Red Sea, that is between the agrarian and industrial societies. The region is also an oil producer and has great mineral deposits in the Red Sea. The Horn's strategic security significance increased since the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. These catalysts, along with some others, made the region a highly sought-after place particularly by the colonialists and imperialists, both past and at present.[7]

The countries of East Africa and the Horn offer an enticing environment for *al-Qaeda* to exploit. Poverty is widespread. Social and economic inequality is common. Political marginalization of minority groups exists in every country. Corruption is a serious problem throughout the region. Land and sea borders are especially porous. Populations in each country are either predominantly Muslim or have an important Muslim minority. All of the countries are relatively close to the origin of *al-Qaeda* strength in the Middle East and South Asia. In fact, one might ask why *al-Qaeda* has not had more success in the region than it has exhibited so far.

Bruce Riedel, a counterterrorism expert and now a senior fellow at the Saban Center for Middle East Policy at the Brookings Institution, although not referring explicitly to East Africa and the Horn, explained *al-Qaeda*'s current strategy:

> Bin Laden's goals remain the same, as does his basic strategy. He seeks to, as he puts it, 'provoke and bait' the United States into

'bleeding wars' throughout the Islamic world; he wants to bankrupt the country much as he helped bankrupt, he claims, the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The demoralized 'far enemy' would then go home, allowing al Qaeda to focus on destroying its 'near enemies,' Israel and the 'corrupt' regimes of Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.[8]

Sudan: Once Headquarters for *al-Qaeda*, Now Cooperating with the US

With a long history of hosting organizations that engage in terrorism, it is not surprising that Osama bin Laden accepted Sudan's offer to move there. The government that came into power in Khartoum in 1989 drew considerable support from the National Islamic Front (NIF) led by Hassan al-Turabi. The NIF immediately sent a delegation to meet with bin Laden and invited *al-Qaeda* to establish a presence in Sudan. Bin Laden sent a team to Khartoum to meet with the NIF and determine if a move to Sudan was in the interest of *al-Qaeda*. Between late 1989 and late 1991 *al-Qaeda* moved most of its best trained and experienced fighters, numbering 1,000 to 1,500, to Sudan. However, bin Laden retained an extensive training and operational infrastructure in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He joined his followers in Sudan late in 1991.[9]

Bin Laden established in Sudan some 30 businesses ranging from agriculture to construction. The primary holding company was Wadi al-Aqiq, to which Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir provided a letter that offered protection of *al-Qaeda* while operating in the country. *al-Qaeda* purchased two large farms and built as commercial projects roads and bridges with its construction company. *al-Qaeda* used one of the farms for refresher training in weapons and explosives. One of the groups that used the facility was the Egyptian Islamic Jihad. Bin Laden cultivated senior officials in the government and military and reportedly invested $50 million in a bank closely linked to Sudanese leaders. The Sudanese intelligence service was the intermediary between *al-Qaeda* and the government. *al-Qaeda* eventually infiltrated the intelligence organs of the Islamic party structure. Bin Laden lived simply with only a few bodyguards. The noncombatant component of *al-Qaeda* in Sudan eventually reached about 1,000 while trained recruits grew to some 2,000.[10]

Bin Laden created a confederation of terrorist organizations from throughout the Muslim world. His vision was similar to that of al-Turabi, who convened a series of meetings known as the Popular Arab and Islamic Conference.[11] An assassination attempt against bin Laden took place in 1994, which he attributed to Saudi Arabia. He then stepped up his campaign against the Saudis but generally followed a practice of not taking credit for terrorist attacks.[12] *Al-Qaeda* trained several hundred Eritrean Islamic Jihad Movement (EIJM) fighters in its Sudanese and Afghan camps, and established links with African Islamist political parties and armed groups, especially during 1992-96.[13]

By early 1996, Sudan had become increasingly concerned about the poor state of its relations with the US and inquired what it might do to improve the situation. US intelligence officials subsequently provided Sudanese Major-General el-Fatih Erwa with a two page "non-paper" at a hotel in Rosslyn, Virginia, on 8 March 1996. It contained a list of actions that Sudan should take. Among the items, the US asked Sudan to provide names, dates of arrival, departure and destination, and passport data on *mujahedin* that bin Laden brought to Sudan.[14] Saudi Arabia also put pressure on Sudan to take action against bin Laden. In its response, Sudan went further than the request in the "non-paper" and in mid-May 1996 expelled bin Laden, who left with some of his family and several bodyguards in a chartered aircraft for Afghanistan. Dozens of other *al-Qaeda* members followed on later flights. Sudan increasingly saw bin Laden as a liability but insisted publicly that he departed on his own volition and that Sudan's leaders did not force him out. In 1998, bin Laden acknowledged, however, that he left Sudan because Khartoum could no longer bear the pressure from the US government.[15]

An *al-Qaeda* operative in Sudan, Jamal al-Fadl, sought US protection after bin Laden departed Sudan and provided critical information on *al-Qaeda* activities while he was living there. Based on information provided by al-Fadl, the US concluded that bin Laden was both the financier and mastermind of *al-Qaeda*. Information concerning how much of the *al-Qaeda* structure remained in Sudan after bin Laden's departure is conflicting. There were unconfirmed reports that bin Laden occasionally visited Sudan, with one placing him in Khartoum as late as 1998. Bin Laden closed some of his companies immediately and reportedly took huge financial losses. According to *The 9/11 Commission Report*, the Sudanese government expropriated all his assets, adding that he left Sudan with practically nothing.[16]

US counterterrorist expert, Michael Scheuer, claimed that bin Laden left Sudan on good terms with NIF leader al-Turabi, that several of his companies continued to operate profitably, and bin Laden remained a partner in the NIF's al-Shimal Bank.[17] Another expert on the subject, Rohan Gunaratna, argued that bin Laden maintained ties with the government of Sudan until there was a sharp deterioration of relations between al-Turabi and President al-Bashir, which Gunaratna said occurred early in 2001.[18] In fact, the relationship between the two worsened in the late 1990s. In response to the August 1998 *al-Qaeda* attack on the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, Washington launched a cruise missile strike against Khartoum's al-Shifa pharmaceutical plant, which it thought was owned by bin Laden. The US insisted that al-Shifa was implicated in the production of chemical agents based on a soil sample collected outside the factory gate. Persons who authorized the attack continue to assert the accuracy of the evidence while independent investigators have found it to be highly questionable. In addition, bin Laden no longer owned the facility.[19]

Following the expulsion of *al-Qaeda* from Sudan and the subsequent evolution of poor relations between al-Turabi and al-Bashir, the Sudanese president found little reason to harbor terrorists. He eventually jailed al-Turabi and signaled the US that he was ready to cooperate on counterterrorism. Sudan-US counterterrorism cooperation began near the end of the Clinton administration and picked up significantly after 9/11, perhaps because Sudan wanted to avoid the kind of US military response that Afghanistan experienced. In any event, it is generally acknowledged that Sudan has provided helpful information in recent years about *al-Qaeda* and other terrorist groups.[20]   The State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006* stated that "the Sudanese government was a strong partner in the War on Terror and aggressively pursued terrorist operations directly involving threats to U.S. interests and personnel in Sudan."[21] Considering the otherwise hostile relationship between the US and Sudan, primarily over differences in ending the crisis in Darfur, this was an unequivocal statement by Washington.

Al-Qaeda was no threat to Sudan as long as bin Laden had his headquarters there and he received Sudanese government cooperation. Following *al-Qaeda*'s expulsion and Sudan's significant counterterrorism cooperation with the US, the relationship between Sudan and *al-Qaeda* became ambiguous. According to one account, Sudan serves as a source of young men attracted to *al-Qaeda*'s jihadist ideology. On the other hand, *al-Qaeda* has had little success taking advantage of the crisis in Darfur.[22] In 2006, bin Laden released an audiotape that called on *mujahedin* and their supporters to prepare for a long war against the "Crusader plunderers" in western Sudan. He said the goal is not to defend the Khartoum government but to defend Islam. *Al-Qaeda* deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, subsequently described Sudan's policy on Darfur as "deceitful and hypocritical."[23] *Jihadi* forums urged their followers to go to Darfur where they reportedly would be supported by the Salafi infrastructure in Sudan. The communication listed the names of four Sudanese organizations about which nothing is known. It appears that the jihadists have ignored this call. Both the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rejected bin Laden's appeal and Sudan's government announced it would not host terrorists.[24]

Jihadi forums carried a short statement on 4 July 2006 announcing the establishment of an *al-Qaeda* organization in Sudan. A strange incident occurred on 13 September 2006 when a group called *al-Qaeda* in Sudan and Africa claimed responsibility for kidnapping and beheading eight days earlier the chief editor of *al-Wafaq*, a Sudanese independent daily. The organization said it murdered journalist Mohammad Taha because he had defamed the Prophet. It is not clear if this group is affiliated with bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* or is an Islamist organization that is using *al-Qaeda*'s methods.[25] The US government has acknowledged bin Laden's effort to expand operations in Sudan generally and Darfur in particular but concluded that there are no indications that *al-Qaeda* affiliated extremists are currently active there.[26]

Ethiopia: Subject to Occasional *al-Qaeda* Affiliated Attacks

Ethiopia has been remarkably resistant to political Islam and experienced relatively few terrorist attacks linked to *al-Qaeda* affiliated organizations.[27] Most of the *al-Qaeda*-related attacks in Ethiopia were carried out by a Somali-based organization known as *al-Ittihad al-Islami* (AIAI) or Islamic Unity in the early and mid-1990s. Although probably not controlled by *al-Qaeda*, growing evidence indicates that AIAI received training and support from *al-Qaeda*. Abu Hafs al-Masri, also known as Mohammed Atef, sent a team of *al-Qaeda* operatives to Ethiopia's Somali-inhabited Ogaden region in January 1993 where they worked with AIAI. Abu Hafs later joined the group, appointed Sayf al-Islam as *al-Qaeda*'s representative to AIAI, and detailed in an internal *al-Qaeda* document some of the financial assistance provided to AIAI in 1993. Abu Hafs, born in Egypt, was one of *al-Qaeda*'s most talented, trusted, and militant members. He has a long history of operations in East Africa and the Horn. He died at an *al-Qaeda* safe house in Kabul in November 2001 when coalition aircraft bombed it. Ten months before this death, bin Laden personally nominated Abu Hafs as his replacement and after his death created the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigades in his honor.[28]

AIAI conducted a number of attacks in Ethiopia and severely injured the minister of transportation in a 1996 assassination attempt in Addis Ababa. The most virulent AIAI branch operated from Ogaden. In 1996, Ethiopian cross-border raids against AIAI strongholds at Luuq and Buulo Haawa in Somalia severely weakened the organization. Attacks attributed with certainty to AIAI virtually ended by the late 1990s. This resulted in a debate among experts who followed AIAI as to its continuing existence. The International Crisis Group argued that by 2005 AIAI had essentially ceased to exist. On the other hand, several key personnel in the defunct AIAI assumed control of senior positions in the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia, which controlled much of the country by late 2006. This development contributed significantly to Ethiopia's decision in December 2006 to destroy the Islamic Court structure inside Somalia.[29]

Following Ethiopia's intervention in Somalia, *al-Qaeda*, or at least organizations claiming to speak for *al-Qaeda*, threatened to step up attacks against Ethiopia. A previously unknown Islamic group in Ethiopia calling itself the Mujahedin of the Land of Two Migrations announced its formation on an Arabic language website at the end of 2006. It pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden, appealed for the establishment of *sharia* in Ethiopia, and warned of imminent attacks on US interests in Africa. There is no evidence so far that it has a functional link with *al-Qaeda*. Since then, a variety of groups have taken to the internet threatening Ethiopia and other supporters of the Somali Transitional Federal Government. They include the Youth Mujahedin Movement and the Brigades of Tawhid Wal Jihad in the Land of Somalia. An *al-Qaeda* militant, Abu Yahya al-Libi, who escaped from a US prison in Afghanistan, appeared on *al-Qaeda*'s offi-

cial media web site in March 2007 and called for an Iraq-style guerrilla war against Ethiopia. Although one or more of these groups may be responsible for terrorist attacks in Mogadishu against Ethiopian forces, there it no indication they have the capacity to strike inside Ethiopia.[30]

In June 1995, an unsuccessful assassination attempt took place against Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak while he was en route from the Addis Ababa airport to an Organization of African Unity meeting in the central city. The investigation placed the blame on Egypt's *Gama'at al-Islamiya* (The Islamic Group), which had help from Sudanese officials. *al-Qaeda* has been closely linked to this Egyptian terrorist group. In a 2006 interview, Sudan's Hassan al-Turabi acknowledged the involvement of unnamed Sudanese officials in the failed assassination attempt that was carried out by Egyptian nationals, but insisted President al-Bashir did not know of the plot and that bin Laden had nothing to do with it. On the other hand, radios purchased by *al-Qaeda* in Japan were used in the plot and the US believes the person responsible for the purchase of the radios was in charge of finance for *al-Qaeda* and close to bin Laden.[31]

Eritrea: Living Dangerously but Generally Free of *al-Qaeda* Activity

With a long Red Sea border, predominantly Christian leadership, and a population that is about 50 percent Muslim, Eritrea would seem to be a good candidate for *al-Qaeda* interest. But except for attacks instigated primarily in the 1990s by the then Sudan-based EIJM, Eritrea has been surprisingly free of *al-Qaeda* related activity. Interestingly, Abdullah Azzam, one of the persons who inspired *al-Qaeda*'s philosophy, in 1988 considered Eritrea to be among other countries as a possible base for developing *jihadis*.[32] Eritrea may have recently bought itself some good will with Islamist forces by actively supporting the Union of Islamic Courts in Somalia.

The EIJM originated at a conference in Khartoum in 1988 when the Eritrean Muslim Pioneers Organization and the Eritrean National Islamic Liberation Front merged with several smaller organizations. Although the first EIJM militants entered Eritrea in 1989, offensive military operations did not occur until later. EIJM experienced some internal splits as the more extreme wing came to dominate the organization, and it increased its ties with *al-Qaeda* in Sudan. By the mid-1990s, it had an estimated 500 fighters. Bin Laden provided weapons and training. EIJM even held a seat on *al-Qaeda*'s international network's coordinating council, the *Majlis al Fatwa*. By 1993, EIJM was carrying out occasional raids and ambushes inside Eritrea. Following its second general conference in Khartoum in 1994, EIJM expanded its attacks. This underscored its link to bin Laden's terror network and in early 1995 led to a rupture in relations between Eritrea and Sudan. Asmara then called for the overthrow of the government in Khartoum.[33]

Following the outbreak of war between Eritrea and Ethiopia in 1998, Eritrea, like Ethiopia, decided it must improve relations with Sudan. Although it took much longer for Eritrea to achieve this goal than it did Ethiopia, Sudan-Eritrea relations are now much better and Sudan seems to have reigned in the EIJM. The most recent EIJM activity dates back to 2003, when Eritrea charged that EIJM was responsible for the killing of a British geologist in Red Sea State. EIJM denied the allegation, saying it only targeted the government. A few months later, the "military secretariat" of the Eritrean Islamic Reform Movement took credit for several attacks on Eritrean military targets and claimed that it had replaced EIJM. The picture became even more confused near the end of 2003 when Eritrea claimed EIJM attacked a vehicle and killed two Eritrean employees from the US non-governmental organization, Mercy Corps. The US linked the attack to *al-Qaeda*. There have been no further reports of EIJM attacks in Eritrea, but the Harmony Project noted that Eritrean *jihad* movements have active web sites, such as www.islaher.org.[34]

Djibouti: Managing to Remain Out of Harm's Way

Djibouti, an overwhelmingly Muslim country, seems to have avoided any significant *al-Qaeda* activity. It has long hosted French military forces, and since 2002, Djibouti has served as the headquarters for the American Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, which has about 1,700 military and civilian personnel dedicated to combating extremism and terrorism in the region. Djibouti has been a strong supporter of US counterterrorism efforts. This combination could lead, however, to increased *al-Qaeda* interest in Djibouti in the future.

Al-Qaeda operative Abu Hafs al-Masri complained in an internal *al-Qaeda* memo, probably dating from the early 1990s, that its operative in Djibouti had to be removed immediately "because he is susceptible to Djibouti's corruption as a single male, and replaced with Abu Ahmed al-Radji, who is married."[35] The Iraqi intelligence service in Djibouti reported in 2001 that *al-Qaeda* delivered messages in Arabic and French, allegedly signed by bin Laden, threatening to blow up certain foreign companies in Djibouti unless they ceased cooperating with the US. This threat resulted in stronger security by the French military and US embassy but apparently resulted in no *al-Qaeda* attack.[36]

AIAI has had cells in Djibouti going back to the early 1990s. The International Crisis Group quoted a senior French military source in 2005 stating that AIAI had a quiet presence in Djibouti. A Djibouti government official told the Crisis Group that it tries to engage AIAI personnel to ensure they remain quiet.[37] Most observers who follow AIAI activity now agree that it is defunct; these recent comments from Djibouti may reflect the views of former AIAI members who still trade on the name.

Somalia: In the Eye of the *al-Qaeda* Storm

The evidence is now clear that *al-Qaeda* played a role in the attacks on American and UN forces in Somalia during the intervention that began in December 1992 and continued, in the case of the UN, until the spring of 1995. Although the international relief effort opened up corridors for the delivery of food for starving Somalis and ended the famine, it became preoccupied by the spring of 1993 with the capture of Mogadishu warlord Mohamed Farah Aideed. This distracted the international effort from nation building and led to constant conflict between UN forces and certain Somali clan groups. A decision to end American participation in the UN operation occurred following the 3-4 October 1993 battle between Aideed's militia and US special forces popularized by Mark Bowden's book, *Black Hawk Down*.

Even with the benefit of recently released declassified information and new analyses, there continues to be serious differences concerning the importance of the role *al-Qaeda* played in supporting Somali militias against the initial American-led intervention and then the UN operation. The Harmony Project Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, which relied heavily on declassified *al-Qaeda* documents that fell into the hands of American intelligence, concluded that Africa regional *al-Qaeda* leader, Abu Hafs, made multiple trips to Somalia from the *al-Qaeda* base in Khartoum beginning in 1992. He met with militants, assessed capabilities, and made arrangements to provide training and arms for fighters. In late January 1993, Abu Hafs designated a team of *al-Qaeda* veterans to conduct operations in Somalia. *al-Qaeda* believed that Somalia would offer a safe haven for its operations and allow it to target the US in both Somalia and the Arabian Peninsula. The first *al-Qaeda* operatives left Peshawar, Pakistan, transited Kenya, and arrived in Somalia in early February 1993. The group operated like a traditional special forces group, working closely with AIAI and establishing three training camps. It apparently took orders from the *al-Qaeda* headquarters in Khartoum.[38]

Rohan Gunaratna placed the beginning of the *al-Qaeda* effort in Somalia in early 1992 as a result of visits to Somalia by Abu Hafs starting in that year. *Al-Qaeda*'s chief instructor, Ali Muhammad, began training AIAI personnel in early 1993. Gunaratna argued that *al-Qaeda*-trained AIAI members were responsible for shooting down the two US helicopters on 3-4 October when 18 Americans died during the fighting. This is contrary to conventional wisdom at the time of the attack which believed Aideed's militia was responsible. Gunaratna asserted that *al-Qaeda* also trained Somalis who killed Belgian and Pakistani peacekeepers, adding that some 400 *al-Qaeda* fighters went to Somalia in 1993.[39] *The 9/11 Commission Report* tends to support this account but acknowledged it may reflect *al-Qaeda* boasting.[40] Michael Scheuer, although withholding final judgment on *al-Qaeda*'s role in aiding the Somalis, seemed inclined to concur with the argument for robust *al-Qaeda* involvement.[41] A 1997 report by the East

Africa *al-Qaeda* cell stated that *al-Qaeda*, working through AIAI, took part in the 3-4 October battle but did not otherwise specify its assistance.[42]

In a very recent analysis, Lawrence Wright offered a subdued account of *al-Qaeda*'s role in the 1993 fighting. He noted that bin Laden claimed that he sent 250 fighters to Somalia to attack US troops. Wright then pointed out that Sudanese intelligence reports said the number was only a handful. *Al-Qaeda* did provide some training but found that Somalis were not appreciative and relations with *al-Qaeda* personnel were strained. Wright acknowledged that bin Laden attributed to *al-Qaeda* the downing of the two US helicopters and the desecration of US servicemen. Wright concluded, however, that bin Laden simply took credit for victories in which *al-Qaeda* had little involvement. He also observed that the US dropped charges of *al-Qaeda* responsibility for the killing of Americans in Somalia in a case against bin Laden in a New York court. No testimony in any court cases against *al-Qaeda* operatives proved that bin Laden or *al-Qaeda* was responsible for the deaths of Americans in Somalia.[43]

Memoirs written by senior insiders do not resolve the debate. George Tenet, former Director of Central Intelligence, commented that bin Laden sent some of his people to Somalia to advise Aideed, who at the time was attacking American troops. Tenet did not draw any conclusions as to the importance of *al-Qaeda*'s help. Richard Clarke seemed more convinced that *al-Qaeda* played an important role but based this view on allegations in the indictment of bin Laden that were subsequently dropped in court. Both Tenet and Clarke agreed, however, that bin Laden interpreted the departure of the US from Somalia as a sign of weakness, encouraging him to press harder against the US in other parts of the world.[44] Bin Laden stated in a 1994 interview that *al-Qaeda* was surprised by the "collapse of American morale" in Somalia, adding it "convinced us that the Americans are a paper tiger."[45]

The Harmony Project has done an excellent analysis of early *al-Qaeda* involvement in Somalia and the problems the organization faced. *Al-Qaeda* clearly wanted to establish a franchise in Somalia and leaders like Abu Hafs expected Somalia would be a low-cost recruiting ground where disaffected people in a failed state would readily join its ranks. *Al-Qaeda* believed the Somalis would enthusiastically join the fight to expel the international peacekeeping force. Somalia seemed to be another Afghanistan in the view of *al-Qaeda*. The Harmony Project concluded that the reality of the situation was quite different. *Al-Qaeda* underestimated the cost of operating in Somalia. Getting in and out of the country was costly. Expenses resulting from corruption in neighboring states were high, while poor security in Somalia increased its costs. *Al-Qaeda* constantly experienced extortion from Somali clans and unanticipated losses when bandits attacked their convoys. *Al-Qaeda* overestimated the degree to which Somalis would become jihadis, especially if there was no financial incentive. Many Somali clan leaders wanted the US and UN forces to leave Somalia, but

their first goal was the security of their clan against others. Abu Hafs spent considerable time and scarce resources building consensus among Somali leaders to keep them focused on expelling foreign occupiers instead of fighting with other Somalis.[46]

According to the Harmony Project, *al-Qaeda* failed to understand the importance of traditional Sufi doctrine in Somali Islam. *Al-Qaeda* tried to convince Somalis to accept Salafi beliefs without offering financial incentives. In some cases *al-Qaeda* operatives appeared stunned at the depth of resistance they encountered from Sufi clerics. Nor did *al-Qaeda* appreciate the Somali attachment to clans and sub-clans. The Harmony Project said *al-Qaeda*'s efforts fell short for many of the same reasons that Western interventions failed in the past: it simply did not understand the political, economic, and social dynamics of Somalia. Unlike the tribal areas of Pakistan, it found a lawless land of shifting alliances that lacked Sunni unity. *Al-Qaeda* largely failed to overcome local loyalties, although it did buy its way into a few sub-sub clans. The Somali practice of inclusive, consensus decision-making collided with *al-Qaeda*'s need for rapid decisions. *Al-Qaeda* also complained about the lack of secrecy in Somalia. The primacy of clan ultimately frustrated *al-Qaeda*'s efforts to recruit and develop a unified coalition.[47]

Al-Qaeda did have some early success. It managed to recruit a number of young Somalis who found the call to *jihad* more compatible with their desire for adventure. It also found acceptance in those few areas where it was able to establish security and order. It accomplished this at Ras Kamboni, a small Indian Ocean port town near the Kenya border. Even today, Ras Kamboni is considered a hotbed of radical Islam and was a stronghold of the Islamic Courts movement. There have been numerous reports for years that Ras Kamboni served as a terrorist training camp where jihadis from outside the country were frequent visitors. Nevertheless, based on declassified documents covering the first 18 months of *al-Qaeda*'s experience in Somalia, Harmony Project found that the *jihadi* foreigners encountered more adversity than success.[48]

Coincident with the failure of a national government and *al-Qaeda*'s involvement in Somalia, there has been an Islamist revival. Most of these Islamist organizations are relatively moderate and have no apparent association with terrorism. Examples include *al-Islah* (Revival) and the *Tabligh* movement. A few Islamic groups such as AIAI followed a *jihadi* philosophy.[49] In spite of numerous attempts since 1991, Somalis failed to fashion a widely accepted national government. Except for the provision of emergency assistance, the international community largely abandoned Somalia after the US left in March 1994 and UN intervention ended in 1995. Islamic groups, often supported by Somali business persons who continued to thrive, began to perform some of the functions normally conducted by government. The Islamic Courts became particularly important as they began to establish islands of security in Mogadishu.

The events of 9/11 and especially the US invasion of Afghanistan briefly revived Washington's interest in Somalia when some in the government thought that the defeat of the Taliban would result in a move to Somalia by the remnants of the *al-Qaeda* organization. For the reasons identified by the Harmony Project, this did not happen but it did lead to greater US concern about Somali links to terrorism. The US has long believed that extremist elements in AIAI have protected three key *al-Qaeda* operatives — Fazul Abdullah Mohammed (aka Harun Fazul) of the Comoro Islands, Abu Talha al-Sudani of Sudan, and Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan of Kenya — who took part in the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The US also developed evidence that AIAI received some of its funding from the Saudi Islamic charity, *al-Haramain*, which had an office in Mogadishu. The US pressured Saudi Arabia to shut down *al-Haramain*, which had ties with *al-Qaeda*. In a separate move, the US froze the assets of a Somali money transfer company, *al-Barakat*, alleging that it supported *al-Qaeda* financially. *Al-Barakat* denied any *al-Qaeda* connection but has been unable to resume its operations.[50]

The first Islamic Courts appeared in Somalia in the early 1990s. They were based primarily on local efforts to establish a degree of security in an anarchic situation. As a result, most Somalis accepted their presence. Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, a former vice chairman and military commander of AIAI, started a new type of court in 1998 in the port city of Merka that became a vehicle for the expansion of Ayr sub-sub-clan political and economic interests. This particular court also emerged as a platform for *jihadi* Islamism. By late 2005, there were 11 clan-based courts in Mogadishu, some closely linked with Aweys's brand of radicalism while others functioned more traditionally. Because of his AIAI leadership role, Aweys had links to the terrorist attacks against Ethiopia in the mid-1990s. He also had close ties with several young Somalis, some of whom had trained in Afghanistan and followed a jihadist agenda. They included Ibrahim al-Afghani, Mukhtar Ibrahim Robow, and Hashi Ayro. The latter has been linked to the desecration of a colonial-era Italian cemetery in Mogadishu, the murder of four foreign aid workers, a British journalist, and a well-known Somali peace activist. It is generally believed that Ayro's militia, which became known as the *Shabaab* (The Youth), provided protection for the three *al-Qaeda* operatives sought by the US.[51]

The US became increasingly concerned with the growing power of the Islamic Courts and in February 2006 aided the creation of the Alliance for Restoration of Peace and Counter-Terrorism (ARPCT), a coalition of Mogadishu warlords opposed to the courts. The US had earlier arranged the rendition of two suspected *al-Qaeda* operatives from Somalia, but the new threat seemed in its view to call for a more serious response. The US goal in funding the ARPCT appears to have had the narrow purpose of snatching several *al-Qaeda* operatives who had taken refuge in Somalia. The new organization of warlords used the

ARPCT, however, to wage war on the courts. The warlords had lost the support of most Somalis who just wanted an end to conflict. The ARPCT military effort fared badly and by June 2006 the Islamic Courts had defeated the ARPCT decisively.[52]

By mid-December 2006, the Islamic Courts controlled about 50 percent of the former Somali Republic. They did not control Somaliland, Puntland, and the area around Baidoa in south central Somalia. Abdullahi Yusuf's internationally recognized Transitional Federal Government (TFG) was generally confined to Baidoa, where Ethiopian troops protected it from the militia of the Islamic Courts. As the courts expanded their influence, the TFG, Ethiopia, and the US became increasingly concerned. The courts had already declared a *jihad* against Ethiopia for sending troops into Somalia to support the TFG. One of the court's two most senior leaders, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, began to revive Somalia's long-standing, but dormant, irredentist claims against Ethiopia's Somali-inhabited Ogaden. The other senior leader in the Islamic Courts, Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, did not make the irredentist argument and seemed to keep his distance from terrorists and any connection with *al-Qaeda*.

As the Islamic Courts consolidated power in 2006, *al-Qaeda* confined itself to passive and verbal support of the Islamists and warnings to the West not to interfere. A message under the name of Osama bin Laden appeared on the web in July urging Somalis to build an Islamic state and back the courts in their fight against the TFG. Bin Laden opposed the arrival of military forces in Somalia from any country, i.e. any country that supported the TFG, and said his *al-Qaeda* network would fight them if they intervened in Somalia. Ayman al-Zawahiri, *al-Qaeda*'s number two, gave an interview in September in which he called on Somalis to oppose the TFG and expel the "Zionist-Crusader presence" from the Horn of Africa.[53]

The TFG had long claimed that the Islamic Courts had close ties to *al-Qaeda*, and increasingly, Ethiopia and the US picked up this theme. Ethiopian Prime Minister, Meles Zenawi, stated in early November 2006 that *al-Qaeda*-linked militants controlled much of Somalia. In addition, the courts reportedly provided military support to the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) and the little known United Western Somali Liberation Front (UWSLF), both of which maintained offices in Mogadishu. Ethiopia's nemesis, Eritrea, was supplying arms to and training Islamic Court militia and the ONLF. There were also reliable reports that small numbers of personnel from the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which has its headquarters in Asmara, showed up in Somalia. The OLF neither confirmed nor denied the presence of its fighters in Somalia.[54] There is no indication that the ONLF and OLF have any connection with *al-Qaeda*, but their goal is to defeat the government in Addis Ababa.

The State Department's *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006* stated that the Council of Islamic Courts had become hijacked by the *Shabaab*, which it

described as a "small extremist group affiliated with *al-Qaeda* that consists of radicalized young men, between 20 and 30 years of age. Many of its senior leaders are believed to have trained and fought with *al-Qaeda* in Afghanistan."[55] US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Jendayi Frazer, told reporters in mid-December, "The Council of Islamic Courts is now controlled by *al-Qaeda* cell individuals, East Africa *al-Qaeda* cell individuals. The top layer of the court are extremists. They are terrorists."[56]

The International Crisis Group concluded that Frazer's characterization of the courts as controlled by *al-Qaeda* was an exaggeration but acknowledged that a number of their leaders have been linked to *al-Qaeda*. At least one senior *al-Qaeda* figure — Abu Talha al-Sudani — was believed to exert considerable influence over the court leadership. A steady influx of *jihadi* volunteers from across the Muslim world strengthened the *al-Qaeda* presence in Somalia in late 2006. Although estimates of their numbers varied widely, most observers believe several hundred arrived in Somalia. Most were not battle-hardened veterans but inexperienced soldiers of fortune who required considerable supervision by the courts. Although the courts repeatedly rejected any links to terrorism, they did not formally invite any international party to visit Mogadishu for the purpose of verifying or rejecting the presence of international terrorists. In private talks with European and US diplomats they stonewalled, reinforcing the impression they were shielding extremists.[57]

The Islamic Courts made a critical error in mid-December. They sent their poorly trained and largely conscripted militia to the vicinity of Baidoa and attacked the TFG militia and the professional Ethiopian army that was protecting the TFG. The Ethiopians easily crushed the Islamic Court militia and quickly marched to Mogadishu. To the surprise of virtually everyone, the Islamic Court militia, rather than try to lure the Ethiopians into urban guerrilla combat, abandoned Mogadishu. In retrospect, it appears their support in Mogadishu was broad but not deep. Somalis appreciated the fact that they had created a secure city, begun a cleanup campaign, and restored operations at the port and airport. On the other hand, they disagreed with some of the edicts and practices of the more radical courts, which operated on a highly decentralized basis. Most of the Islamic Court leadership and militia headed south for the port city of Kismayo, which it briefly occupied. Chased out of Kismayo, militia members dispersed along and across the Kenya border. Ethiopian forces pursued them to the border where small numbers of US special forces joined from Kenya.

Throughout the first half of 2007 the TFG, supported by Ethiopian troops, worked hard to establish control in Mogadishu. Most of the rest of Somalia remained generally calm. The TFG encountered serious problems with some of the sub-sub-clans, especially the Ayr, who thought they were being excluded from power. Common criminals and remnants of the courts' militant wing, the *Shabaab*, also opposed the TFG and Ethiopian presence in Mogadishu. The

African Union peacekeeping force of a projected 8,000 troops only managed to attract about 1,600 Ugandans who generally tried to avoid conflict with those forces in Mogadishu that opposed the TFG. It would appear, however, that the only part of the opposition having *al-Qaeda* connections was the *jihadi* leadership of the *Shabaab* and some non-Somali jihadists who joined with them. This group is most probably responsible for the occasional suicide bombing, political assassination, and placement of command detonated mine. These tactics are largely new to Somalia and not common among Somalis.[58]

Once Islamic Court extremists, especially members of the *Shabaab*, departed Kismayo for the Kenya border, the US launched two AC-130 gunship attacks against them. The first strike on 7 January 2007 near Ras Kamboni killed eight militants but not any of the three persons involved in the 1998 bombings of the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The target of the attack reportedly was *Shabaab* leader Hashi Ayro. Ethiopian troops and a member of the American special operations unit, Task Force 88, subsequently found a bloodied passport and other items that led them to believe Ayro may have been injured.[59] A second AC-130 strike took place on 23 January that targeted Sheikh Ahmed Madobe, a senior Islamic Court leader. Madobe survived the attack but reportedly was later captured by the Ethiopians. The AC-130s operated out of a small airfield in eastern Ethiopia, a fact subsequently denied by Ethiopia.[60]

Members of US Task Force 88 were on the ground in southern Somalia searching for key *al-Qaeda* operatives, especially Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, who was believed to be the leader of *al-Qaeda*'s East African cell. Fazul had been receiving protection provided by certain members of the Islamic Courts. Kenyan police did apprehend Fazul's wife, Halima Badroudine, and their three children on 11 January as they attempted to flee Somalia into Kenya. When arrested, she had a laptop computer, 1,600 Euros, and $5,000 in cash. She apparently had joined Fazul in Mogadishu from Pakistan only 10 days before they had to flee the capital for southern Somalia. Fazul, a master of disguise and man with many identities, reportedly fooled even some members of the Islamic Courts.[61]

Subsequently, Kenyan authorities deported Halima Badroudine and her children to Somalia where Ethiopian troops took custody before sending them to Ethiopia. The Kenyans also deported to Somalia dozens of other suspect fighters and supporters of the Islamic Court militias. Those deported included nationals of Yemen, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sweden, Comoro Islands, and Morocco.[62] Ethiopia released Halima Badroudine and her three children in late May. Kenyan authorities said that brought to 22 the number of persons released who had been captured fleeing Somalia.[63] One of the persons captured in southern Somalia and eventually released was a US citizen from New Jersey, Amir Mohamed Meshal. He told investigators that he had been at an *al-Qaeda* camp west of Mogadishu but denied being a fighter or undergoing military training.[64]

In early June 2007, a US warship attacked a small group of *al-Qaeda* suspects hiding in a mountainous region near the coast in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland in northeastern Somalia. The US apparently had special forces on the ground and an unmanned plane in the air while coordinating the attack with Puntland authorities. Among the six killed in the attack, one reportedly had an American passport. The others had passports from the United Kingdom, Sweden, Morocco, Pakistan, and Yemen. There has been no subsequent public confirmation that the persons killed in the attack were linked to *al-Qaeda*. There were reports from the region that American aircraft continued to hunt *jihadi* elements in the area for a number of days after the initial navy strike.[65]

Al-Qaeda continues its propaganda campaign that calls on Somalis to wage a *jihad*. Ayman al-Zawahri released an audiotape early in 2007 urging Islamists in Somalia to launch an Iraq-style campaign of suicide attacks against the Ethiopians until the Islamists reclaim their country.[66] Abu Yahya al-Libi, a prominent *al-Qaeda* leader, in a video released in March called on Muslim fighters to "let the volcano erupt" in Somalia and battle against "the Abyssinian occupiers and their apostate lackeys."[67] A variety of other organizations have joined the internet war against the TFG and Ethiopia, and in favor of *jihad* in Somalia. It is not clear if they are connected to *al-Qaeda* but they are clearly trying to recruit extremist elements to Somalia. One especially active group is the Young Mujahedin Movement, which has claimed responsibility for suicide car bombings in Mogadishu.[68] Imitating tactics in Iraq and elsewhere, Islamic insurgents in Somalia created a video showing a man reciting prayers before apparently blowing himself up in a suicide blast. The *Associated Press* obtained the video from a person associated with the *Shabaab*.[69]

The US was convinced well into 2007 that *al-Qaeda* remained active in Somalia. US ambassador to Kenya, Michael Ranneberger, commented in April that the *Shebaab* harbored *al-Qaeda* members responsible for the attacks on the American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. He added that Saudi Arabia believes Somalia has become an important training ground for Saudis affiliated with *al-Qaeda*. Meanwhile, the State Department announced that 10 *al-Qaeda* operatives remained in Somalia who are at least partially responsible for the growing violence in Mogadishu. It added that six of them are well-known Somali leaders in the Islamic Courts, while four are international *al-Qaeda* members with years of experience in Africa.[70] Following his announcement as the US special envoy to Somalia, John Yates claimed that a recent roadside bomb that killed four Ugandan peacekeepers was evidence of *al-Qaeda* activity in Mogadishu.[71] Ambassador Ranneberger added in late May that *al-Qaeda* has for many years been taking advantage of Somalia's status as a failed state, both as a safe haven and base of operations.[72]

In early June, an unsuccessful suicide bomber attack took place against TFG Prime Minister Ali Mohamed Gedi, who stated that *al-Qaeda* was behind

the effort. The Young Mujahedin Movement, which posted an announcement on a website used by *al-Qaeda* and other Islamic militants, claimed responsibility for the attack. Seven Somalis, including five of the prime minister's bodyguards, died in the explosion. The Young Mujahedin Movement also took credit in the same announcement for a number of roadside bombings and attacks on Somali policemen.[73]

The Pentagon announced in early June the recent capture and transfer to Guantanamo of a suspected *al-Qaeda* terrorist, a Somali national identified as Abdullahi Sudi Arale. A Defense Department spokesperson described him as "an extremely dangerous member of the al-Qaida network," adding that he was suspected of acting as a courier between *al-Qaeda* in East Africa and the network in Pakistan.[74] The Pentagon also alleged that Arale had held a leadership role in Somalia's Islamic Court structure and stated that his capture underscored the threat that the US faces from dangerous extremists.[75] Arale may well be linked to *al-Qaeda* but his name is not known to those outside the US government who follow extremists in Somalia.

After reviewing an extensive quantity of information on terrorism and *al-Qaeda* activity in the region, the Harmony Project concluded that the threat of terrorism from Somalia has yet to materialize as predicted. It added that the inherent challenges of operating in a failed state combined with specific local factors make Somalia an unfavorable place for foreign terrorists to operate in or from.[76] While I agree that there are many challenges for any foreigner with a non-Somali agenda to function in the country, the Harmony Project may understate *al-Qaeda*'s accomplishments so far. While spectacular *al-Qaeda* attacks have occurred in neighboring Kenya and not in Somalia, there are many tempting targets in Kenya and very few in Somalia. The fact that *al-Qaeda* operatives have been able to move in and out of Somalia with relative ease suggests that Somalis either don't know who these people are or don't much care.

Finally, *al-Qaeda* has been able to recruit a small number of Somalis and in the environment of East Africa and the Horn it only takes a few for an organization like *al-Qaeda* to conduct clandestine operations. The US does itself no service, however, when it exaggerates the terrorist and *al-Qaeda* threat in Somalia. *Al-Qaeda*, which engages in its own hyperbole, is only too happy to have the US echo its "success."

Kenya: The Most Frequent Victim of Major *al-Qaeda* Attacks

Of all the countries in the region, Kenya has been subject to the most severe *al-Qaeda* attacks. The Harmony Project suggested the principal reasons for this situation were a target-rich environment for terrorists, a weak security and criminal justice system, and the presence of a disaffected minority Muslim population, especially along Kenya's Swahili coast. These factors provide *al-*

Qaeda with an operational environment that presents less security pressure than elsewhere in the region with the possible exception of Somalia.[77]

Wadih el-Hage, who had served as bin Laden's personal secretary, was born in Lebanon and obtained US citizenship through marriage. He went to Nairobi in 1994 to run the *al-Qaeda* operation and remained until September 1997, when he returned to the US under pressure from Kenyan and US authorities. The FBI arrested him in October 1998 following the embassy bombings. He was convicted on terrorism charges in 2001.[78] The CIA knew there had been an *al-Qaeda* cell in Kenya but thought, working with the Kenyan police, they had broken it up. Kenyan authorities arrested five individuals in Nairobi in 1997 suspected of connections to bin Laden.[79] Former US ambassador to Kenya, Johnnie Carson, wrote in 2005 that although Kenya has not produced any indigenous terrorist organization, at least one and probably two *al-Qaeda* cells had operated there for more than a decade. He added that more than a half dozen Kenyan nationals and their family members have been implicated in significant *al-Qaeda* attacks and three of *al-Qaeda*'s senior leaders in East Africa traveled routinely in and out of Kenya.[80]

Al-Qaeda began planning the August 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1994. Abu Ubadiah al-Banshiri and, following his death on Lake Victoria, his deputy and successor, Abu Hafs, did the planning together with Ali Muhammad, who surveyed the US embassy in Nairobi as a possible target. He took photographs and made reconnaissance sketches. Bin Laden, then in Khartoum, applied his engineering knowledge to identify the best entry for the explosive laden vehicle. *Al-Qaeda* also developed a diamond import business in Kenya for raising and laundering money. Originally planned for 1996, *al-Qaeda* delayed the operation due to difficulties in Sudan that followed the 1995 failed assassination of President Mubarak, the death of al-Banshiri, and the expulsion of bin Laden from Sudan. The operation against the embassies was planned as a suicide mission. Two Saudis entered the embassy perimeter in an explosive-laden truck. One died in the blast; the other, Rashed Daoud al-Owali, jumped out of the vehicle before the explosion occurred and escaped. The attack killed 213 persons and wounded about 4,500, the vast majority Kenyan. Authorities in Kenya arrested al-Owali and sent him to the US, where a court in New York convicted him in 2001; he is serving a life sentence. Kenyan officials and the FBI also implicated the local offices of four Islamic charities in *al-Qaeda*'s attack, including the Saudi International Islamic Relief Organization and al-Haramain.[81]

In November 2002, *al-Qaeda* bombed the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Kikambala along the beach north of Mombasa, killing 15 persons and injuring another 35. In a coordinated attack, an *al-Qaeda* team fired two SA-7 missiles at an Israeli passenger plane, Arkia flight 582, that departed from Moi International Airport in Mombasa. One missile hit the aircraft but failed to explode while the

other narrowly missed. Investigators found two missile launchers and two additional SA-7 missiles at the launch site. They were the same series and production line as missiles fired by *al-Qaeda* at an American military plane in Saudi Arabia earlier in the year. The mastermind behind the attacks was Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, who also took part in the attack on the US embassy in Nairobi. An *al-Qaeda* spokesman took credit for the attack in an audio tape broadcast by the *al-Jazeera* television channel.[82]

In March 2003, the British government warned of an imminent terrorist attack in East Africa and suggested the target was Western interests in Kenya. The US alerted American citizens to avoid unessential travel to Kenya. The UK suspended international flights to and from Kenya from mid-May until June 2003 in response to concerns there might be a missile attack similar to the one that occurred in Mombasa in 2002. President Bush had planned to visit Africa in early 2003, including a stop in Nairobi where he would praise the successful Kenyan elections that had occurred in late 2002 and encourage the north-south peace talks concerning Sudan. When the White House finally rescheduled the trip to Africa, it substituted Uganda for Kenya. The primary reason for changing the stop was a fear that *al-Qaeda* terrorists in East Africa might try to attack the president's plane with a shoulder-launched surface-to-air missile. US and British intelligence did foil an *al-Qaeda* plot in June 2003 to crash an airplane and drive a truck full of explosives into the new American embassy in Nairobi. The plan was developed in Somalia and involved participation of Somali and Somali Kenyans associated with *al-Qaeda*. Kenya sealed off its airspace to flights from Somalia and banned the flight of small aircraft from airports within Kenya. The US embassy closed for five days.[83]

The US has not been satisfied with Kenyan efforts to prosecute alleged *al-Qaeda* operatives captured in the country. In June 2005, a Kenyan court acquitted seven suspects arrested on charges related to the Kikambala Hotel bombing and the attempted shooting-down of the Israeli airplane in November 2002, the 1998 attack on the American embassy in Nairobi, and the 2003 plot to attack the new US embassy.[84] On the other hand, the US appreciated Kenyan cooperation when it deployed forces along its border with Somalia in December 2006 to prevent fleeing Somali Islamic Court militia from entering Kenya.[85]

Al-Qaeda almost certainly continues to maintain cells in Kenya, which is riddled with corruption and has a marginalized Islamic minority along the Swahili coast and the border with Somalia. In fact, the Harmony Project sees *al-Qaeda* terrorism in Kenya as posing a greater threat than the one from Somalia. It pointed out that *al-Qaeda* operatives continue to move about the country freely, establish businesses along the coast and in Nairobi, operate Islamic charities, find local brides, rent light aircraft to come and go from Somalia, hold meetings, communicate with *al-Qaeda* outside the country, transfer money, stockpile weapons, and engage in undetected reconnoitering of possible targets.[86]

Several other factors enhance Kenya's attractiveness as an *al-Qaeda* target. It has a long history of close relations with the US, United Kingdom, and Israel. It is geographically close to longstanding conflicts in northern Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Rwanda. Its porous borders permit *al-Qaeda* to travel between Somalia by sea and land. Kenya has small but significant Arab, Arab-Swahili, and Somali minorities concentrated in coastal Kenya, Nairobi, several other urban centers, and along the border with Somalia. Many residents of coastal Mombasa, Malindi, and Lamu have stronger ties with the Arabian Peninsula than with Kenya's interior. Kenya has a serious problem with corruption that makes it easy for terrorists to use airports, cross borders, and obtain identity papers and travel documents. The Harmony Project concluded that in this region Kenya is a decisive battleground between *al-Qaeda* and the West.[87]

Many Muslims along the Kenyan coast have a profound sense of grievance against the Kenyan government. Its Arab and Arab-Swahili leaders went from being highly privileged under the British to becoming subjects of a largely alien hinterland and non-Muslim elite. Poverty along the coast exacerbates the differences.[88] Not everyone agrees with the Harmony Project that Kenyan Muslims are such good terrorist recruitment prospects. One scholar who has spent considerable time along the coast concluded that bin Laden may be admired but he has not won the sympathy of Muslims. He symbolizes resistance against the global political and economic hegemony of the US and has dared to stand up to the world's only superpower. Kenyans praise his courage but not his actions.[89] Similarly, William Roseanu at RAND argued that although conditions in Kenya are ideal for conducting terrorist operations, other factors essential to the terrorist recruitment process are largely absent. He concluded that Islamic radicals had made little headway in Kenya and doubted that *al-Qaeda* can expect to attract more than a handful of new members.[90] But as we have seen elsewhere, it only requires a handful of operatives and a receptive environment to conduct successful terrorist activity.

Tanzania: Victim of One Major *al-Qaeda* Attack

The bombing of the US embassy in Dar es Salaam in August 1998 caused US and Tanzanian authorities to take a much harder look at the presence of *al-Qaeda* in the country. An extensive study by Global Witness concluded that *al-Qaeda* operatives based in Nairobi, Wadih el-Hage, and Abu Ubadiah al-Banshiri, began in 1993 to use diamonds, tanzanite, and rubies as a resource to make the cells financially self-sufficient. *Al-Qaeda* purchased property in Tanzania to mine diamonds and gold and established trading companies to launder illicit diamonds that probably came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. For this purpose, they established Taheer Ltd. and Tanzanite King in Tanzania.[91]

Evidence at the trails in New York also suggested that *al-Qaeda* was deeply involved in the semi-precious tanzanite trade in Tanzania. In response to this concern, the US encouraged tanzanite dealers and wholesalers to sign on to the Tuscon Tanzanite Protocol so that nefarious persons could not take advantage of the trade. The US then declared that there was no link between tanzanite and *al-Qaeda*. Although a prominent tanzanite dealer in the US who investigated the issue agreed there was no *al-Qaeda* connection, others, including Global Witness, were not convinced.[92]

The bombing of the embassy in Dar es Salaam resulted in 11 deaths and 85 injuries, most of them Tanzanians. *Al-Qaeda* operatives involved in the attack included two Tanzanians from Zanzibar — Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani and Khalfan Khamis Mohammed. South African authorities captured Mohamed and a US court convicted him in 2001. He is serving a life term in Florence, Colorado. A joint US-Pakistani raid in Gurjat, Pakistan, netted Ghailani in 2004. Ghailani told military officers at Guantanamo Bay that he had no idea explosives he purchased for a friend would be part of a truck bomb to be used against the US embassy and that he was sorry for what had happened. He claimed not to have knowingly participated in any terrorist act but admitted joining *al-Qaeda* operatives after the bombing and undergoing training in Afghanistan. He also said he had met bin Laden.[93]

Subsequent investigations revealed involvement in financing for *al-Qaeda* by the Saudi charity, al-Haramain Islamic Foundation in Tanzania. The US charged its former director with providing funds to plan the attacks against the embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. Saudi Arabia subsequently shut down al-Haramain worldwide.[94]

Zanzibar and the Swahili coast of Tanzania are potential hotbeds of radical Islamic activity and Zanzibar has produced a few *al-Qaeda* operatives. Occasional reports surface that *al-Qaeda* is planning something in Tanzania, including a 2003 plot against tourist hotels on Zanzibar, but so far there has been no significant attack since 1998.[95]

Uganda: Avoiding *al-Qaeda* Attacks but Walking on the Edge

In 1994, *al-Qaeda* supported the obscure Salafi Foundation of Uganda, which led to the Ugandan Mujahedin Freedom Fighters. It eventually evolved into an anti-Uganda government group known as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). *Al-Qaeda* helped set up training camps for the ADF, which operated out of the eastern Congo. Ever since the ADF launched its first attack in Uganda in 1996, the organization has been shrouded in mystery. It disappeared and then resurfaced, using different tactics designed to overthrow the government of Uganda and establish a Muslim state based on *sharia* law. The late ADF chief of staff once stated that ADF's leader, Jamil Mukulu, was trained in urban terrorism

by *al-Qaeda* in Afghanistan. Uganda's minister of internal affairs told parliament in 2002 that the ADF had ties with *al-Qaeda*. The Ugandan government said in the same year that *al-Qaeda* trained top ADF leaders in Afghanistan.[96]

In 1998, Ugandan authorities detained 20 suspects linked to *al-Qaeda* and believed to be planning an attack against the US embassy in Kampala. *Al-Qaeda* reportedly planned to assassinate Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and another African leader visiting Kampala in 1999. Museveni told a stunned group of Ugandan Muslims at the end of Ramadan in 2001 that, based on documents passed to him by the US, *al-Qaeda* terrorists had targeted Uganda. This remark may have been linked to information available in George Tenet's book that the Egyptian intelligence service provided in 2001. It reported that a senior operative from *Jemaah Islamiya*, a Southeast Asian terrorist organization allied with *al-Qaeda*, was planning attacks on US and Israeli interests. Four trucks filled with C-4 explosives had been brought to Kampala and operatives there had been casing the American embassy. Whatever the facts, Uganda has managed to avoid a major *al-Qaeda* attack.[97]

The arrival of Ugandan peacekeeping forces in Somalia in 2007 may increase the *al-Qaeda* threat against Uganda. Several *al-Qaeda* leaders have publicly threatened Ugandan troops in Somalia. A new Somali insurgent group called the Popular Resistance Movement in the Land of the Two Migrations issued a warning in February that it would use suicide attacks against Ugandan forces. Another organization called the Brigades of Tawhid Wal Jihad in the Land of Somalia made a similar threat in March. A roadside bomb did kill four Ugandan soldiers in mid-May, although no group has taken responsibility.[98]

CONCLUSION

There has been far more *al-Qaeda* activity in East Africa and the Horn than in any other part of sub-Saharan Africa. This is a result of the relative proximity of fundamentalist Islamic ideology and centers of *al-Qaeda* support, porous land and sea borders throughout the region, the fact that most of the countries constitute a religious fault line, serious problems of governance and corruption, social and economic inequality, widespread poverty, and the marginalization and alienation of Muslim communities in several of the countries.

Al-Qaeda cells almost certainly exist today in all the countries of East Africa and the Horn and the *al-Qaeda* threat may well be increasing. Having said this, it is important not to accept at face value all *al-Qaeda* claims or to overstate the *al-Qaeda* threat. US policy in the region is so focused on countering terrorism over the short-term that it may be failing to deal appropriately with the root causes and the long-term threat. Following US support early in 2006 for the warlord coalition in Mogadishu known as ARPCT, the International Crisis Group concluded that US counterterrorism efforts designed to contain *al-Qaeda* opera-

tives accelerated the expansion of *jihadi* Islamist forces and produced the largest potential safe-haven for *al-Qaeda* in Africa.[99] The recent defeat of the Islamic Courts in Somalia may have disrupted the plans of the jihadists among them, but in this part of the world political stability is ephemeral and America's extremist enemies have their eye on the future. This is a time to pursue long-term solutions to root causes rather than remain obsessed with short-term tactical victories.

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Endnotes

1. See Chapter 7 of the US Department of State *Country Reports on Terrorism 2006* for definitions of key terms, at www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82726.htm.

2. Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Berkley Books, 2002), pp. 4-5. Coverage of *al-Qaeda* in Sudan is especially strong.

3. Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror* (New York: Free Press, 2004), p. 88.

4. Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, pp. 78-79 and 134; *The 9/11 Commission Report* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004) pp. 108-09.

5. Footnote number 45 on p. 468 of *The 9/11 Commission Report* states that US intelligence did not learn of *al-Qaeda*'s involvement in Somalia until 1996. I was the deputy director of the State Department's Somalia Task Force from November 1992 until April 1993 and then State Department Coordinator for Somalia until the end of the year. On no occasion during this period did anyone raise the existence of *al-Qaeda*.

6. The most comprehensive research effort so far on the role of *al-Qaeda* in the region is now on the website of the Harmony Project Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. Entitled *Al-Qaida's (Mis)Adventures in the Horn of Africa*, it includes original, mostly early, *al-Qaeda* documents. It has a heavy focus on Kenya and Somalia, and offers relatively little information on the rest of the region. It is, nevertheless, must reading for specialists on East Africa and the Horn. It is available at http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/Al-Qa%27ida%27s%20MisAdventures%20in %20the%20Horn%20of%20Africa.pdf. I refer to it hereafter as the Harmony Project.

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12.   Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, pp. 45-47.

13.   Ibid., pp. 202-03.

14.   *The Washington Post* carried the text of this "non-paper" in its on-line service on 3 October 2001. *The Post* labeled it "1996 CIA Memo to Sudanese Official." It accompanied a piece by Barton Gellman entitled "U.S. Was Foiled Multiple Times in Efforts to Capture Bin Laden or Have Him Killed." The non-paper no longer seems to be available on-line.

15.   *The 9/11 Commission Report*, p. 63; Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, pp. 51-52 and 208; Anonymous, *Through our Enemies' Eyes*, pp. 143-47; George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), p. 103; Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 220-23.

16.   *The 9/11 Commission Report*, pp. 109 and 170; Clarke, *Against All Enemies*, p. 148; Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 221-22.

17.   Anonymous, *Through our Enemies' Eyes*, p. 183.

18.   Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, p. 208.

19.   Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm*, p. 116-17; Anonymous, *Through our Enemies' Eyes*, pp. 212-13; Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda*, pp. 63-64; *The 9/11 Investigations: Staff Reports of the 9/11 Commission*, "Staff Statement No. 6: The Military," (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), pp. 99-101; Jules Lobel, "The Use of Force to Respond to Terrorist Attacks: The Bombing of Sudan and Afghanistan," *Yale Journal of International Law* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1999), pp. 537-57; Eric Croddy, "Dealing with Al Shifa: Intelligence and Counter Proliferation," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2002), pp 52-60; Wright, *The Looming Tower*, pp. 281-82.

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