

Hizballah in Africa

by Carl A. Wege

Abstract:

There is a gap in the existing literature on Hizballah which has rarely been examined: Hizballah and Iran's recent roles in Africa. The African continent, particularly countries below the Sahara, is characterized by a large number of failed states and/or effectively ungoverned regions. Hizballah exploited the opportunity presented there to create strategic depth for the organisation in Africa. Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC - Sepahe Padan-e Inqilal-e Islami, Pasdaran), allied with Hizballah, utilizes the strategic space Africa affords to advance Iranian national objectives. Given the expanding US presence on the continent in pursuit of international Salafite jihadists affiliated to Al-Qaeda, it is worthwhile also to take note of the history of Hizballah's role and recent activities and those of Iran in Africa.

Introduction

Africa's state system, exploited by Hizballah and Iran for a generation,[1] more recently became an arena in which transnational criminal organisations and international Salafite jihadists turned into globally relevant players. Africa has now also become an important area of operations for the United States which created an African Command (*Africom*) in 2007 as part of the war against Al-Qaeda and in order to assist African security forces in their counterterrorism efforts. [2] This has changed the operational opportunities for transnationally operating terrorist organisations in Africa in general and those of Salafite orientation in the Sahel in particular.

The Sahel region transects Africa across the southern reaches of the Sahara and contains vast natural resources that, once developed, would offer revenue streams that could, if unchecked, be siphoned off by terrorist organisations.[3] Islamist activists in multiple varieties - from the benign to globally dangerous jihadists - are the primary drivers of social mobilization across the Sahel. Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is active in the Sahel in Mali where an AQIM affiliate recently seized power in the northern half of the country. It has also reached out to the Horn of Africa where Al-Shabab has emerged as an important Al-Qaeda affiliate in Somalia. Armed non-state actors and organisations that previously would have been isolated from one another - such as Hizballah and AQIM - are now more likely to interact with one another. However, the presence of the US African Command (*Africom*) creates a series of "tripwires" or nodes across the continent, reaching from the Sahel's *Africom* Ouagadougou base in Burkina Faso and to Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti.[4] A secondary and originally unintended effect of this system of "tripwires" has been an increased awareness of, and potential engagement with, Hizballah and its state sponsor Iran.

The analytical approach taken here conceptualizes Hizballah and Iranian networks as a series of geospatial layers that overlap one another, creating a matrix in the African space. The layer that defines Hizballah's network and creates revenue is primarily located in two spaces; one is an arc stretching from West Africa along the coast reaching down toward the Congo while the other is a

circle encompassing the Horn of Africa which falls more under the operational control of Iran. Conceptually, the Iranian geospatial layer can be visualized as a circle encompassing the Horn of Africa seeking to influence the Middle Eastern theater. Iranian arms smuggling infiltrations from that circle reach into Nigeria, Kenya, and the central African spaces. Add to that the counterterrorism mission of the US *Africom* layer with a focal point in Djibouti with lesser nodes circling into the central African spaces and spread across the Sahel. If we think of these layers covering one another creating a three dimensional matrix, this can help inform our thinking with respect to counterterrorism efforts in Africa.

Hizballah, though born in Lebanon and an increasingly dominant power at home, is not synonymous with the Lebanese state, being denied the overt governmental instruments of power. [5] In part as a consequence of this, Hizballah designed covert infrastructures, often anchored in Shi'a diaspora communities around the world, both to support Hizballah's organisation in Lebanon and at times also to act abroad in partnership with Iran. Hizballah has built its covert infrastructure across Africa to provide the organisation with financial and operational support but also to further its alliance with Iran. Hizballah's African infrastructure consists of a relatively small number of genuine Hizballah operatives and large numbers of Hizballah associates and sympathizers engaging in activities that help sustain the organisation in Lebanon from Africa.

Hizballah's Support Infrastructure in Africa

Lebanese diaspora communities emerged in West Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were initially made up primarily of Lebanese Christian immigrants who were historically encouraged by British colonial policy to settle in places like Sierra Leone. [6] Ultimately both Lebanese Sunni and Shi'a emigrants entered Africa's diaspora communities in large numbers. The outbreak of Lebanon's civil war in 1975 coincided with Shi'a immigrants of Lebanese extraction beginning to dominate the illegal diamond trade between Sierra Leone and Liberia. In West Africa, as in Lebanon, family and clan structures became the prevailing modality of social and business interactions.[7]

In West Africa, the Lebanese Shi'a rival to the Hizballah ("Party of God") was called the Lebanese Resistance Detachments (*Afwaj al Muqawamah al Lubnaniyyah* or AMAL); it initially controlled the illegal diamond trade Hizballah would ultimately dominate. The Sierra Leone born Shi'a Lebanese Nabih Berri assumed leadership of Lebanon's AMAL party in 1980. He eventually became Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament. Berri and Shahid Mohammed Jamil, an ally of Sierra Leone's President Siaka Stevens (1971 - 1985), maintained a mutually beneficial political relationship.[8] This liaison gave Lebanon's AMAL militia an entrée into the Sierra Leonean Shi'a community which was to prove useful both for fundraising and for the smuggling of diamonds. AMAL associate Sayed Ali Ahmad, of the Lebanese Ahmad clan's Sierra Leone branch, invested money for Berri at the Antwerp end of the diamond trade. This was done through a maze of front companies the Ahmad's controlled, including Sierra Gem Diamonds, ASA International, and ASA Diam. The decade-long civil war that devastated Sierra Leone from 1991 until 2002 facilitated large-scale diamond smuggling with assistance from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), backed by Liberia.[9] However, that civil war weakened AMAL's local advantage in West Africa, thereby increasing concurrently the opportunity for

AMAL's rival Hizballah to improve its position in the Shi'a community and eventually gain control of much of the illegal diamond trade.[10] Hizballah and RUF cooperation in the illegal diamond trade has been documented by the US Congressional Research Service [11]. In other parts of West Africa such as the Congo, other Shi'a traders in illegal diamonds became subjugated to Hizballah men through middlemen, broadening further the revenue stream to finance the organisation.[12] Hizballah's successful blended the illegal diamond trade with legitimate business enterprises; this also helped to disguise finances that supported Hizballah activities in Lebanon.[13]

The flow of money to Hizballah from the Congo region made use of multiple corporate networks.[14] The Shi'a Lebanese Tajideen network, for example, reportedly used corporations such as Tajco Ltd. and Ovlas Trading operated through Ali Husayn and Kassim Tajiadeen along with diamond and food trading enterprises in Gambia, the Congo and Angola to launder money for Hizballah.[15] These Tajiadeen-linked corporations engaged in legitimate business but were also facilitating the movement of monies and goods to Hizballah and Hizballah-linked entities in Lebanon. Likewise they could provide cover in the form of employment abroad, establishing also safe havens for Hizballah operatives on the run from security services in the Middle East.

Activities of Hizballah that are less often mentioned include Hizballah's direct participation in organised crime to generate financial support for the organisation. The two major elements of this type of criminality are Hizballah shakedowns of Lebanese merchants in the African diaspora and its cooperation with narco-trafficking organisations. A less significant factor is Hizballah's involvement in various fraud schemes.

Hizballah has institutionalized a framework for shaking down "donations" from Lebanese businessmen in the African diaspora. As described by Douglas Farah, Lebanese-owned businesses across West Africa were assessed by Hizballah for a "contribution" on a yearly or semi-annual basis whereby the amount to be contributed was a defined fraction of revenue for any given Lebanese-owned business. Those contributions were collected, generally in cash, by Hizballah bag men who often moved the monies to the Middle East by courier.[16] Some contributions were likely to have been genuine voluntary donations meant for political and social service organisations run by Hizballah, but many such contributions were little more than extortions.[17]

Some types of Hizballah-associated criminality required specific religious dispensation. A special fatwa issued by Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah in the mid-1980s, for example, gave Hizballah a spiritual go-ahead to engage in narco-trafficking.[18] The organisation became involved in illicit narcotics enterprises in several areas of the world, including both North and South America.[19] In the Americas, the increasing strength of Mexican drug cartels over the last decades precipitated a shift by South American drug traffickers toward Africa – very much to the advantage of Hizballah. West Africa became a storage and transshipment region used by transnational organised crime groups for major illicit narcotics shipments from Latin America to Europe, as documented by the US Drug Enforcement Administration.[20] A complex set of relationships emerged between Hizballah and other terrorist organisations and various transnational drug-trafficking organisations as well as with local criminal organisations. Those relationships were based on critical services each could

provide to its partners - with all parties making a profit.[21] The local West African model of organised crime (sometimes called the ‘Nigerian model’) is not hierarchical; rather it consists of “project-based” networks that would coalesce and dissolve as opportunities warranted.[22]

Guinea-Bissau for instance, can be described as a narco-state it is one of the more significant drug trafficking hubs in West Africa. Guinea-Bissau-based Lebanese working on behalf of Hizballah have directly engaged the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* or FARC) due, in part, to the geography of the ninety island archipelago.[23] Narcotics are moved from Guinea-Bissau to Mauritania, Mali, and Niger, and then transshipped to Northern Africa’s Mediterranean coast and from there on to final destinations in Europe.[24] The Liberian state under Charles Taylor (President 1997-2003) was a kleptocratic enterprise. Taylor’s Liberia used state institutions to protect and further the activities of favored criminal enterprises, cooperating with organised crime groups from multiple countries – Israeli criminals as well as Al-Qaeda and Hizballah were operating in the same geographic space without much friction.[25] The aftermath of Taylor’s resignation ending a civil war in 2003 saw multiple claims to the Presidency although Ellen Sirleaf was ultimately elected President in two 2006. Nonetheless the status of Liberia as a major drug trafficking hub has persisted with Al-Qaeda and Hizballah essentially using the same Liberian smuggling networks in subsequent years.[26]

Hizballah and Iran

Some elements of Hizballah’s African archipelago support radical Islamist groups at the behest of Iran. These groups are sometimes Sunni but nonetheless share common interests with Iran and Hizballah in their opposition to Western interests. Iran’s interests in Africa have likewise changed over time with early revolutionary fervour devolving to the pursuit of more mundane national and commercial interests. Irrespective of the quite real Sunni-Shi’a jurisprudential differences, both Hizballah and Iran have proven quite adept at working with Sunni radicals when they share common interests.

The Nigerian case demonstrates how local grievances can potentially be exploited by Iran, Hizballah or Al-Qaeda. While the geography of the state of Nigeria has been defined only since independence in 1960, Islam penetrated portions of that space very early. The borders of the modern Nigerian state are transected with Islamic influence defining the culture of Northern Nigeria and separating it from the non-Islamic South. The non-Islamic Southern regions of the countries are the basis for Nigeria’s oil-based wealth while the Islamic North is economically much less developed. That North-South divide is a rather fundamental one, strongly shaping Nigeria’s polity.

The geographic space that now includes the Northern portion of Nigeria boasts a history of Sunni Muslim activism dating back to the ninth century. One consequence of that history of activism is that various Muslims sects from the Northern part of the country ultimately came to dominate the Nigerian army. Shedrack Best [27] has identified two significant Sunni Islamist movements in Northern Nigeria: (i) the *Izala* was defined as a *da’wah* type movement striving for spiritual purification and orthodoxy but with no explicit intent to establish an Islamist state and (ii) the *Maitatsine* movement which, by contrast, has engaged in ongoing, Islamist-inspired violence

against the police and other symbols of the Nigerian state. *Maitatsine* terrorist operations however were less intended to build Islamist institutions as to target Nigerian state institutions. [28] Nonetheless, as the 21st century began, Sunni activists persuaded the Nigerian government in Abuja to allow twelve of its Northern States to make Shariah law the official standard for criminal justice procedures. Northern Nigerian states then saw the emergence of a *Hisbah* militia enforcing Shariah law.[29] More recently, Boko Haram, founded by Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf in 2002, has become more vociferous. Ravidly Islamist and engaging in widespread violence in the North of Nigeria Boko Haram is ideologically compatible with many of the regional Salafist groups and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Boko Haram's operational capacity is currently limited but has the potential to become much more challenging, particularly if armed and funded by Iran.

In addition to potentially exploiting local Islamist radicals, Iranian assets have also tried to build an arms smuggling network in Nigeria and throughout Africa. In doing so it was not always successfully. Iran's efforts to use Nigeria for covert arms distribution backfired in October 2010 when the Nigerian State Security Services, probably tipped by Western agencies, intercepted a ship in Lagos port of Apapa. The ship came from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and was operated through the French container company CMA CGM Group, carrying contraband freight consisting of thirteen containers of heavy arms with a listed destination of Banjul Gambia.[30] It became clear that an Iranian businessman Azim Aghajani who was managing the shipment in Nigeria was in fact a Iranian IRGC agent intending to forward the arms to support dissident factions in several countries, including Nigeria itself. It appears that part of the shipment was to be diverted to the *Hisbah* militia in Nigeria's own North. A fraction of the shipment was going to support the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamanche (MFDC) rebel movement in Southern Senegal and another part was to go to rivals of Gambian President Jammeh.[31] Gambia's President Yahya Jammeh had been a faithful ally of Iran for some years, himself making a reasonable income buying arms from Tehran and reselling them [32] Senegal and Gambia, both of whom previously reported good relations with Tehran, took offence at the Nigerian discovery and broke diplomatic relations with Iran in 2011.[33]

Kenya, while having more sophisticated security services, also offers rich opportunities for Iran. [34] Iran's intent to use the opportunities Kenya presented was demonstrated in 2012 when Kenyan police arrested Sayed Mansour Mousavi and Ahmand Abolfathi Mohammed, both Iranian nationals, for smuggling more than one hundred kilograms of cyclonite (RDX) to a warehouse in Mombasa, Kenya.[35]. The Iranians may have been attempting to strike back at Kenya due to the military incursion by its armed forces to stabilize parts of the Jubaland area of Somalia ruled by Al-Shabab.[36] Iran seems to prefer instability in the Horn of Africa, even under the auspices of Sunni Islamists like Al-Shabab, to gain and maintain Iranian influence in the region. The US government, through its embassy in Nairobi, tries to acts as a counterpoint to Iran, deploying substantial resources to promote stability in Somalia. In addition, Manda Bay in Kenya serves as part of the *Africom* tripwire system for the United States. US Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) forces use the Kenyan military base to conduct stability operations across the Horn of Africa.[37] While these operations are aimed primarily at Al-Qaeda affiliates functioning in the region, they inevitably impact on Iran's interests. *Africom* also

utilizes facilities in Nzara (South Sudan). This too might generate apprehension in Iran's IRGC Force's North African Department.

While arms' trafficking is a significant component of Iran's West African operations, the main focus of Tehran's efforts has been the Horn of Africa, given the proximity of the Horn to the Middle Eastern theater. This is also a focal point of *Africom's* counterterrorism efforts through the vehicle of the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) which is based on the old French military compound camp Lemonnier in Djibouti. While Western attention for the Horn has focused primarily on pirates and on Al-Qaeda's links with Al-Shabab, Iran has quietly continued its long-term efforts to exploit conditions there to further its own interests. The center of Iran's efforts in this regard has been Sudan and, to a lesser extent, Somalia. Iran's efforts began a generation ago, following the 1989 Islamist coup by Hassan Turabi's National Islamic Front in Sudan. Iran traded money for influence in Khartoum and Sudan became a focal point for Iranian intelligence officers liaising with networks of Sunni Islamists. By 1999 the US State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism* referred to Sudan as a central hub for terrorist groups - from Lebanon's Hizballah to Osama Bin Laden's Al-Qaeda.[38]

Concurrent with Iran's mentoring efforts with the Khartoum government, Tehran had established a Somali Revolutionary Guard in Sudan, trained under the tutelage of both Iranian and Hizballah personnel and intended to act as an Iranian proxy in Somalia.[39] However, Iran's efforts to leverage its presence in Sudan to project influence into Somalia became problematic. Somalia had not retained a functional government since 1991, making the Somali geographic space a constellation of competing tribes, warlords, militia factions and their affiliated criminal entities. When the Iranian-trained and Sudan-based Somali Revolutionary Guard was inserted into Somalia's ungoverned spaces, its revolutionary pretensions dissolved into nothing. The Somali Revolutionary Guard became yet another faction fighting on Somalia's battle ground. Iran and its al-Quds elements ultimately supported multiple factions in Somalia, including the Somali Islamic Union Party, a Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF) then led by General Muhammed Abshir and Abdel al-Rahman who controlled parts of the Somaliland area. While these factions never constituted any coherent fighting force or established any consistent form of Islamic governance, they did two things: they allowed Iran's entrée into Somalia and they managed to stop the United Nations aid organisations from stabilizing the country - thereby preventing establishment of any Somali government conflicting with Iranian interests.[40]

The Islamic Court Union (ICU, also called Council of Islamic Courts), initially a device for local leaders to control small geographic areas under generic Shariah law, grew strong enough to assert control over Mogadishu and the trade routes inland.[41] A brief 2006 Ethiopian intervention into Somalia degraded whatever hope the Islamic Courts Union had for a government, although a splinter faction of the ICU called Al-Shabab under Mukhtar Robow Ali (Abu Mansur) continues the fight and lately has affiliated itself with Al-Qaeda. Consequently, Al-Shabab is attracting significantly more US attention, reportedly in the form of drone strikes if not ground level support for Somali factions. The 2006 Ethiopian incursion had resulted in the creation of a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) favored by the United States. The TFG created a Somali National Security Agency headquartered at the Aden Adde International Airport in Mogadishu.[42] An *Alpha Group* within the Somali National Security Agency supported US activities in Somalia with "snatch" operations, direct combat operations against Al-Shabab, and

interrogations of prisoners, some rendered from adjacent countries.[43] In the Puntland region of Northeast Somalia, US JSOC personnel, sometimes flying directly from Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, have assisted Puntland forces in combating Al-Shabab.[44] In addition to Somali's internal players, affiliates of Iran and allies of the United States as well as some Al-Qaeda elements are active in the Somali space.

Sudan, ruled by Omar Hassan al-Bashir, has become a safe haven for some wanted Middle Eastern terrorists, allowing some of them to rejoin the struggle by going from Khartoum first to Iran and then infiltrating back into operational areas of the Middle East.[45] In 2008 Sudan's role in Iran's arms smuggling networks[46] was enhanced by a defense agreement signed by the Defense Ministries of both countries.[47] This expanded Sudan's role as a regional center for larger Iranian arms trafficking operations. In these efforts Hizballah members, acting on Iran's behalf and often with the cooperation of Sudan's *Abadba* tribe, transported weapons north through Egypt and into the Sinai where Bedouin smugglers would move them on into Gaza. With both Sudan and Iran under international arms embargos, Jonathan Schanzer has argued in *Foreign Policy* that Iran might wish to shorten its supply chain supporting radical Islamists by manufacturing arms in the Sudan.[48] Efforts to establish local arms production facilities by Iran in the Khartoum area of Sudan are a possible result of a secret codicil in the 2008 agreement. Sudan already had weapons production facilities operating under its Military Industrial Corporation that could be revamped under the tutelage of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps for Tehran's designs in the region.[49] Israel was concerned enough about the volume and quality of weapons moving north to risk an international incident by attacking a convoy ferrying Iranian weapons in 2009 that was en-route to the Gaza Strip via Egypt.[50] At the end of the day, however, what remains is a substantive Iran-facilitated arms smuggling network, aided by Hizballah operatives, which is moving large quantities of arms through Africa into the Middle East. Some of these arms are smuggled to Hizballah in Lebanon, some to Hamas in the Gaza, and some further Iranian local interests in Africa.

This arms supply chain inevitably led to a confrontation with Egypt as Hizballah's relations with Egypt, never good, began to degrade following the 2006 Israel-Hizballah Summer War in Lebanon. In November and December 2008 Egypt arrested 24 men accused of links to Hizballah and later expanded the search to 49 individuals.[51] The political nature of Egypt's charges against the men became evident early on when charges shifted from financing Hamas to Red Sea shipping reconnaissance to operational preparations for an attack on Israeli tourists. The real confrontation between Hizballah and Egypt, however, involved Iranian facilitated arms smuggling networks that crossed Egypt on the way to Gaza.[52]

Conclusion

With the revolution in Egypt and the ensuing internal power struggle, it is an open question how much and how fast things will change in which direction. The Egypt military establishments still depends on the United States while President Mursi is seeking to revive relations with Iran, planning a state visit to Tehran in August 2012. The outcome of the power struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian military as well as the outcome of the civil war in Syria

will co-determine what opportunities are left or will open up for Hezbollah and Iran to meddle in African affairs.

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Notes

[1] Hizbullah ("the Party of God") created a support infrastructure as far back as its first generation in West Africa. In the 1980s, Hizbullah cells provided logistical support for the organisation by accessing French embassies in Guinea, Gabon, and Senegal through Lebanese Shi'a contract workers who stole French passports and identity cards that were sent to Lebanon. See "Hezbollah Seen Setting Up Terror Network in Africa" *Los Angeles Times*, 27 November 1989.

[2] *Africom's* Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa symbolized the US commitment to this program by moving nearly 2,000 men into the former French military base at Camp Lemonnier to deal with the especially difficult circumstances on the Horn of Africa. France also maintains the 13th Demi-Brigade of the Foreign Legion in Djibouti.

[3] Earlier efforts by the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (formerly the Pan Sahel Initiative) were ultimately of limited utility and demonstrated the need for the broader mission of *Africom*.

[4] "US expands secret intelligence operations in Africa" *Washington Post* 13 June, 2012, and "Contractors run US spying missions in Africa" *Washington Post*, 14 June, 2012.

[5] Hizbullah was created at the behest of Iran through the Sepahe al-Quds element of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC or Pasdaran) in the midst of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. Allied with Iran and facilitated by Syria, Hizbullah eventually became the most significant actor in the Lebanese political system. Hizbullah, as a non-state actor, became an amalgam of proxy and ally for Iran's international ambitions.

[6] The West African Lebanese diaspora near the turn of the 21st century included roughly 100,000 Lebanese in Cote d'Ivoire, 20,000 in Senegal and a few thousand left in Sierra Leone (from approximately 30,000 residents before Sierra Leone's civil war).

[7] Sierra Leone's Koidu region has the richest diamond deposits. Many of the Lebanese families in the diamond trade originate from the area of Nabatiyah in South Lebanon.

[8] AMAL (*Afwāj al-Muqāwama al-Lubnāniyya*) and Hizbullah were rival Lebanese Shi'a organisations who were shooting at one another in Lebanon in 1988-1989. Of the two, AMAL was the more secular in its orientation and more influenced by Syria while Hizbullah was more Islamist and oriented towards Iran. In the 21st century there is much more cooperation between the former rivals although Hizbullah is clearly the dominating party. Berri was elected head of AMAL in 1980 and became Speaker of Lebanon's Parliament in 1992 while Hizbullah currently holds several Ministerial posts.

[9] The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) was neither revolutionary, nor united, nor a front. It is best defined in terms of amorphous and shifting groups of criminals, sometimes with political pretensions, engaging in combinations of war crimes and common crimes spanning a couple of decades in the geographic region of Sierra Leone. RUF was best known for kidnapping children and amputating the limbs of its opponents and others who crossed its path. Foday Sankoh, an illiterate photographer, and a couple of the original “members” spent time at Gaddafi’s “Revolutionary University” in Libya, providing the closest thing to a political pretension the group ever expressed. RUF’s primary impact was that of a destabilizing element in the larger civil conflicts that engulfed Sierra Leone. It should be noted that since much of West Africa is characterized by weak states and ungoverned spaces, constellations of rival and affiliated militias interact without regard to unguarded national borders.

[10] “Hezbollah and the West African Diamond Trade” *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* June/July 2004 (6) 6/7, p.7.

[11] *Africa and the War on Terrorism*. Washington, DC: CRS, 17 January 2002 (Report for Congress RL31247).

[12] Ibid., “Digging Up Congo’s Dirty Gems” *Washington Post*, 30 December 2001. Farah has elsewhere noted that the “blood diamond” trade at its peak in West and Central Africa ran at roughly \$200 million per year. However, only a fraction of that amount would be supporting Hezbollah. Hezbollah’s involvement in drug trafficking is ultimately more lucrative for the organisation. Conflict or “blood” diamonds are thought to account for only a few percent of a worldwide \$10 billion diamond trade.

[13] Lansana Gberie. “War and Peace in Sierra Leone: Diamonds, Corruption and the Lebanese Connection” *The Diamonds and Human Security Project Occasional Paper #6 Partnership in Africa* Canada, 2002. - Antwerp’s Hoveniersstraat district is the world’s diamond center where nearly 90% of stones transit in one form or another. Less regulated markets have emerged in Bombay, Mumbai, and Dubai. See also: Douglas Farah. *Blood From Stones: The Secret Financial Network of Terror*. New York: Broadway Books, 2004.

[14] A Tripartite Plus Intelligence Fusion Cell that could have been helpful in this regard was located in Kisangani in the Democratic Republic of Congo. While underutilized by local services which it was originally intended to assist, it might have been better utilized for creating analytical products that monitored Hezbollah-linked revenue streams.

[15] Press Release, *US Department of The Treasury*, 9 December 2009. Hasan Tajideen, a significant stakeholder in the Tajideen network, died in the crash of an Ethiopian airliner off the coast of Lebanon in January 2010.

[16] Douglas Farah, “Hezbollah’s External Support Network in West Africa and Latin America.” *International Assessment and Strategy Center*, 4 August 2006. The crash of a charter flight from Cotonou, Benin to Beirut on 25 December 2003 illustrated the courier process. Among the bodies was that of a Hezbollah foreign relations officer carrying \$2 million in cash collected from Lebanese businessmen in West Africa. See “Confronting Drug Trafficking In West Africa” *A Hearing Before The Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate*. 111th Congress, 1st Session, 23 June, 2009, p. 33.

[17] It should also be noted that during Lebanon’s civil war (1975-1989) many of Lebanon’s Maronite, Druze, and Sunni militias likewise ran shakedowns within their own ethnic communities in the diaspora. However, none of these were as well organised as those of Hezbollah.

[18] Fadlallah who died in 2010 is generally described as the spiritual guide of Hezbollah although he was more closely associated with the *Da’wah* (Islamic Call group). Fadlallah never exercised direct control over Hezbollah.

[19] For example in operation Titan the DEA in 2008 shut down a drug smuggling and money laundering operation between Columbian cartels and Hezbollah which run through the Lebanese middleman Shukri Mahmud Harb. Likewise DEA’s 2009 operation Mountain Express documented Hezbollah affiliated trafficking of methamphetamine from Canada into the United States.

[20] DEA News: Civil Suit Exposes Lebanese Money Laundering Scheme for Hezbollah *Press Release US Drug Enforcement Administration* Washington D.C. 15 December 2011.

[21] Douglas Farah, “Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines and Criminalized States.” *Prism* (2), No. 3, p. 18.

[22] Antonio L. Mazzitelli “Transnational organised crime in West Africa: the additional challenge” *International Affairs*, 83 6(2007), p. 1084.

[23] Marco Vernaschi “Guinea-Bissau Hezbollah, Al-Qaeda and the Lebanese Connection”. *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting*, 19 June 2009. At one point in time, the headquarters for this network was alleged to operate out of the Palace Hotel in Bissau then owned by the Lebanese financier Tarek Arezki. The Lebanese managed administration and finance for the drug movement while Nigerian and local criminals operating under the supervision of alleged kingpin Bliri Augustus were responsible for labour.

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- [24] “Drug seizure in West Africa prompts fears of terrorist links”, *Observer*, 29 November 2009. The movement of illicit drugs out of Guinea-Bissau into north Africa and Europe is thought to be facilitated in part by Al-Qaeda and its affiliate Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).
- [25] “Al-Qaeda’s Growing Sanctuary”, *Washington Post*, 14 July 2004. Leonid Minin, a Jewish arms dealer originally from the Ukraine, and Aziz Nassour of Hizballah, for example, crossed paths in Liberia and elsewhere without difficulty.
- [26] Douglas Farah, “Terrorist-Criminal Pipelines and Criminalized States.” *Prism* (2) 2011, p. 22. These “shared services” are obviously not secure from infiltration as they are anchored in profit rather than ideology. However, they are nevertheless not much more accessible to intelligence agencies than they are to law enforcement. To a terrorist organisation such shared services are useful as long as their security limitations are kept in mind.
- [27] Prof. Best is a political scientist who served as the Director of the Centre for Conflict Management and Peace Studies at the University of Jos, Nigeria. www.unijos.edu.ng/cccomps/?q=node/4
- [28] Richard Laremont and Hrach Gregorian, “Political Islam in West Africa and the Sahel”. *Military Review* 86 (January-February 2006), p. 30.
- [29] Zachary Devlin-Folz “Africa’s Fragile States: Empowering Extremists, Exporting Terrorism” *Africa Security Brief*, No. 6, August 2010.
- [30] “Iranian guns and a king in Banjul,” *Africa Confidential*, 3 December 2010.
- [31] Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance is a faction seeking independence from Senegal. They were found to be using some weapons of Iranian origin in 2011 when Senegalese soldiers were killed.
- [32] “Did Jammeh Sell Iranian Arms To Hezbollah?” *Freedom Online*, 26 February 2011. The story alleged that Jammeh worked through a Lebanese businessman and General Counsel to Lebanon, Mohammad Bazzi, who was said to coordinate the exchange. The arms were apparently stored at Kanilai Farms in President Hamme’s home village. Bazzi allegedly used a bank he created in Gambia, the Prime Bank, for the financing. Prime Bank was a subsidiary of the Lebanese Canadian Bank which the US Treasury listed in February of 2010 as a money laundering concern with links to Hizballah.
- [33] Perhaps something in the winds of the Arab Spring was blowing against the fortunes of Hizballah in 2011. The Lebanese Ambassador to Cote d’Ivoire, Ali Ajami, who for all intents and purposes was the Ambassador for Hizballah as well as Lebanon, foolishly attended the swearing in of deposed and generally despised former President Laurent Gbagbo. This led to widespread threats against Lebanese in the country and resulted in emergency evacuations of hundreds of expatriate Lebanese back to Lebanon. - See “1,000 Lebanese Evacuated from Ivory Coast” *YaLibnan* 11 April 2011.
- [34] Kenya is particularly poignant for Americans, with the Embassy in Nairobi one of the first successful attacks by Al-Qaeda against the United States in 1998.
- [35] “Kenya police: Iranian terror suspects shipped 100 kg of explosive to hit Western targets” *Washington Post*, 10 July 2012. - See also ‘Iranians were targeting British High Commission in Kenya’, *The Telegraph*, 3 July 2012.
- [36] “Iranians on trial in Kenya deny bomb plot charges”, *Reuters Africa*, 23 July 2012.
- [37] “US expands secret intelligence operations in Africa”, *Washington Post*, 13 June 2012.
- [38] US Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1999, 2000*, p. 55.
- [39] *Ibid.*, see also Shaul Shay, *Red Sea Terror Triangle*.
- [40] Shaul Shay, *Somalia Between Jihad and Restoration*, pp. 61-64.
- [41] M.A. Mohamed Salih, “Transnational Islamist (Jihadist) Movements and Inter-State Conflicts in the Horn of Africa”. *The Nordic Africa Institute*, Policy Notes 2011/2. - The United States supported a counter organisation called Alliance for the Restoration of Peace and Counter Terrorism. That organisation was unsuccessful.
- [42] “The CIA’s Secret Sites in Somalia,” *The Nation*, 12 July 2011.
- [43] *Ibid.* It should also be noted that this conflict as others nowadays is supported by a significant number of private military companies. In this instance, Bancroft Global Development has also played an important role. See “US Relies on Contractors in Somalia Conflict”, *New York Times*, 10 August 2011.
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[44] “Obama’s Not-So-Secret Terror Wars”, *The Daily Beast*, 24 July 2012. Ironically, Puntland also became an area of influence for the Somali Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), led now by Abdullahi Yusuf of the Darod clan which was at one time supported by Iran.

[45] “Israeli, US intelligence report says Sudan becoming haven for Hamas, Hezbollah”, *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts* 14 March 2001.

[46] Annette Huebschle. “Unholy alliance? Assessing the links between organised criminals and terrorists in Southern Africa.” *Institute for Security Studies* (ISS Paper 93), October 2004, p. 9. Smuggling is sustained in part by tribal relationships and religious affiliations that are centuries old and stretch across a geographic arc from East Africa all the way to Pakistan.

[47] “The Drones Club”, *Africa Confidential*, 5 September 2008. In 2008, Sudan would see Iranian produced Ababil III UAV’s operating in the Dufar region, probably using Iranian technicians, while Sudanese personnel were attending Iran’s Military University.

[48] Jonathan Schanzer, “The Islamic Republic of Sudan?”, *Foreign Policy* 10 June 2010.

[49] The facilities include the Alshagara and Yarmouk Complexes, the Zargaa Engineering Complex, the Elshaheed Ibrahim Shamseldeen Complex for Heavy Industries, and the Safat Aviation Complex.

[50] “Israeli drones destroy rocket-smuggling convoys in Sudan”, *Sunday Times*, 29 March 2009 and Chau Donovan, “US Counterterrorism In Sub-Saharan Africa: Understanding Costs, Cultures, and Conflicts.” *The Letort Papers*, p. 18. - Israeli Air Force assets including Hermes drones out of Palmachim air base near Tel Aviv accompanied by Eitan UAV carried out at least two separate operations in January and February of 2009. They attacked two separate convoys carrying Fajr 3 rockets intended to be smuggled from Egypt for use by Hamas in Gaza. It appears that dozens of smugglers and Iranian escorts were killed in the operation. US DOD Special Operations Task Forces (88/145) also covertly engaged Al-Qaeda across the Horn of Africa following the 1998 Embassy bombings.

[51] The numbers themselves are a bit incredulous. Typical terrorist cells consist of 5-7 persons. Discovering a terrorist cell made up of 49 persons rings false.

[52] “Egypt Accuses Hezbollah of Plotting Attacks and Arms Smuggling to Gaza”, *New York Times*, 14 April 2009. Many of those arrested, including acknowledged Hizballah operative Mohammed Yusuf Mansour, would escape in a mass prison break in the midst of Egypt’s 2011 Revolution. The role of arms smuggling as the root of the episode was also confirmed by Salah Ghosh, the head of the Sudanese Intelligence and Security Service.