

Middle East North Africa Action Network Stop the Spread and Misuse of Small Arms

January 2007
Part 1

‘Uncivil War’
Regional Small Arms Bi Monthly Roundup

Dear MENAANSA Network members and friends,

Eid Mubarak and a Happy New Year to all of you.

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FEATURE

The Arms Trade in Yemen [MENAANSA Regional Coordinator speaks about demand and control]

09/01/2007

By Arafat Madayash



Sanaa, Asharq Al-Awsat- Yemeni authorities are currently seeking to restrict the spread of arms in the country, in fear of weapons falling into the hands of terrorist networks such as Al Qaeda for example. Last year, Yemeni authorities discovered that weapons belonging to the Yemeni Ministry of Defense had reached members of Al Qaeda who attacked the American consulate in Jeddah in 2005. However there are many obstacles in the way of controlling the arms trade in Yemen, for example buying and selling weapons is deep-rooted within Yemeni tradition and linked to the concepts of revenge and settling tribal conflicts. There are approximately 18 legitimate markets for the arms trade all over Yemen, the most prominent of which are Jahana and Ataleh, north of Sadaah near the Saudi/Yemeni borders.... Sheikh Ahmed Saleh Al Azouby, an arms dealer, told Asharq Al Awsat, "In this market we sell light arms; Yemeni people have always carried weapons, and the civil war of 1994 between the north and south reinforced this practice". Al Azouby regards the arms trade as one that is unprofitable, however it will always exist, "especially since arms dealers have invested so much into it"... Eiz Eddin al Asbahi, the director of the Human Rights Information and Training Center, and the coordinator of the regional network to limit the misuse of light arms... looks at a cultural point, which is a widespread belief amongst Yemenis and Arabs in general that there are "advantages" to carrying a weapon "in case of invasion for example as the case was in Lebanon, Palestine, and Iraq; at the same time if we subjugate the issue to reason and rationalism, we find that light arms did not contribute to liberating the land, but rather to the killing of many innocent people especially women and children. This factor created much havoc and debilitated the notion of a central state".

<http://aawsat.com/english/news.asp?section=3&id=7594>

News

GAZA-WESTBANK

Elliot Abrams' uncivil war

Is the Bush administration violating the law in an effort to provoke a Palestinian civil war? Deputy National Security Advisor, Elliott Abrams — who Newsweek recently described as “the last neocon standing” — has had it about for some months now that the U.S. is not only not interested in dealing with Hamas, it is working to ensure its failure. In the immediate aftermath of the Hamas elections, last January, Abrams greeted a group of Palestinian businessmen in his White House office with talk of a “hard coup” against the newly-elected Hamas government — the violent overthrow of their leadership with arms supplied by the United States. While the businessmen were shocked, Abrams was adamant — the U.S. had to support Fatah with guns, ammunition and training, so that they could fight Hamas for control of the Palestinian government. <http://conflictsforum.org/2007/elliott-abrams-uncivil-war/>

Guns are no solution

Both Hamas and Fateh have raised the stakes in their confrontation over control of the Palestinian territories. With Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's decision to double the size of Hamas paramilitary forces in a bid to check the security forces under the command of Fateh, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' calling the move illegal, the possibility of wider confrontation between the two sides is becoming more likely than ever. Hamas' move to double the so-called Executive Force, loyal to it, to about 12,000 seems to have been inspired by Hizbollah, which has been showing increased reliance on its military force and was successful in defeating last summer's Israeli attacks on Lebanon, thus improving its grip on power in the country.

<http://www.jordantimes.com/mon/opinion/opinion1.htm>

Gunmen ordered off Gaza streets

The Palestinian prime minister, Ismail Haniya and the president, Mahmoud Abbas, have agreed to keep armed members of their rival Hamas and Fatah factions off Gaza's streets.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/66F158D3-F981-4E24-BADA-0A3728028FEC.htm>

Israel allows guns across border to support Fatah leader against rivals

STEPHEN FARRELL IN JERUSALEM

Two thousand weapons and two million bullets have been sent through Israel into Gaza, the most tangible evidence yet of efforts by Jerusalem, London and Washington to reinforce President Abbas



against his Islamist rivals Hamas. The delivery, with Israel's co-operation, comes ten days after Tony Blair backed publicly the "moderate" Fatah leader in his power struggle with Hamas. Britain promised £1 million to bolster Mr Abbas's Presidential Guard.
<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,251-2522247,00.html>

IRAQ:

Uncontrolled Small Arms Perpetuate Insecurity in Iraq

On Dec. 6, 2006, the Iraq Study Group released its highly anticipated report on the way forward in Iraq. While the report highlighted strategies for protecting U.S. forces from escalating violence in Iraq, minimizing the deadly violence, missing from the report is a comprehensive strategy to address the millions of weapons being used to perpetrate this violence. Since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, CDI has highlighted the threat that uncontrolled small arms and light weapons pose to successful reconstruction and lasting peace and security in Iraq. Articles published by the Challenging Conventional Threats Project during the early stages of the invasion drew attention to the vast stockpiles of weapons abandoned by Saddam's forces and promptly looted by civilians seeking to protect themselves, militias and insurgents seeking to arm themselves, and those seeking to profit off of the war by selling weapons to civilians, insurgents, and militia members alike.

http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?DocumentID=3743&from_page=../index.cfm

Iraq Battle Plan Includes Aid, Talks, Troops

Los Angeles Times*

Lt. Gen. Raymond T. Odierno, the newly installed day-to-day commander of military operations in Iraq, said that success here would depend on a multi-pronged strategy that included economic aid and political negotiations in addition to increased military actions targeting Shiite and Sunni Arab militants. Speaking before an expected Bush administration proposal to request a surge of thousands of U.S. troops, Odierno said more soldiers would speed the training of the Iraqi force and help quell sectarian fighting in the capital. He said bringing peace to Baghdad could be accomplished either with additional American troops or expanded recruiting and training of Iraqi troops, or a combination of the two... Political instability and the alienation of ordinary Iraqis from their government have driven many people into the embrace of armed militant groups, he said, adding that the U.S. government could try to help close the gap by better protecting Iraqi civilians, creating jobs and helping to support elections for local councils more responsive to their constituents' needs.

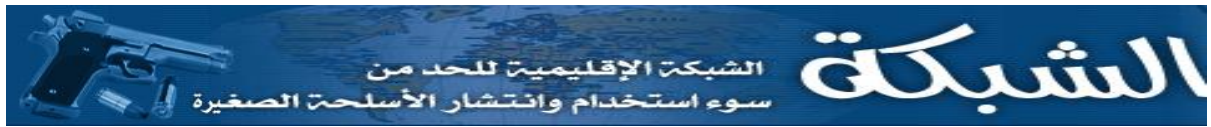
<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraq8jan08,1,741929.story?track=rss&ctrack=1&cset=true>

LEBANON:

MI chief: Al-Qaida militants in Lebanon planning attacks

By Gideon Alon

Several hundred Al-Qaida militants have arrived in Lebanon with the intent of carrying out terror attacks, the head of Military Intelligence Major General Amos Yadlin told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee yesterday. "Between several dozen and several hundred Al-Qaida activists have arrived in Lebanon from Iraq and Pakistan, in accordance with instructions from the group's leadership to deploy in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt in order to carry out terror attacks," Yadlin said. Yadlin added that the operatives could target UNIFIL and other Western interests... The MI chief stressed that Iran continues to provide funding and weapons to Syria, Hamas, and Hezbollah, and has close military and intelligence coordination with Syria. According to the major general, Hezbollah has not left southern Lebanon and arms transfers from Syria are continuing apace, but the organization is currently focused on rehabilitating its strength, with help from large quantities of arms from Iran. <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/811605.html>



NORTH AFRICA:

SOMALIA:

Everyone in Somalia's capital has a gun — except the police

MOGADISHU, Somalia: Ahmed Hassan has no plans to part with his AK-47, the weapon of choice in this notoriously violent city, even now that a legitimate government is functioning here for the first time in more than a decade. "I won't do it," Hassan said Wednesday, tugging on his gray beard. "For 16 years this country has been in chaos. It would be suicide." From freelance gunmen on the streets to women selling mangoes by the sea, everybody seems to have a weapon in Mogadishu. Many here say they would rather protect themselves for now than trust the government forces who just captured the city from Islamic militants last week.

http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/01/04/africa/AF_GEN_Somalia_Weapons.php

Arms Surrendered to the Government for the First Time

Somalia's security forces may resort to heavy-handed tactics following an unsuccessful request to Mogadishu citizens to hand in their weapons voluntarily. Very few weapons were surrendered and now that the amnesty deadline has passed, police say they will undertake a program of compulsory disarmament. <http://allafrica.com/stories/200701030732.html>

Other Security News

Slovakia to send further redundant weapons to Afghanistan

PRAGUE: The Slovak Defense Ministry will send further redundant weapons to Afghanistan as a gift, local media said the other day.

The Slovak military will send about 20 automatic rifles, two machine guns, 30 military compasses and 1,000 rounds of ammunition to Afghanistan, part of which will be transported by the United States, the report said. Slovakia promised Afghanistan military material in 2003 at the donors' conference on the reconstruction of Afghanistan in Berlin. The agreement on the redundant weapons was signed by the two countries at the beginning of 2006. <http://www.onlinenews.com.pk/details.php?id=107109>

Has Lebanon's Cedar revolt come undone?

Hizbullah now occupies the Beirut squares where the 'Cedar Revolution' helped end Syrian dominance in 2005.

By Nicholas Blanford | Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

BEIRUT, LEBANON – Rita Awad was one of Lebanon's "Cedar revolutionaries" when she participated in the mass street demonstrations in spring 2005 that led Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon. Now, Ms. Awad is back on the street. And in a quirk of Lebanese politics, she is demonstrating alongside pro-Syrian supporters against a government dominated by the leaders that she once rallied behind. <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0103/p06s01-wome.html>

See also:

http://www.boston.com/news/globe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2007/01/04/a_crucial_time_for_saving_lebanons_fragile_democracy/?page=2

US Somali Air Strikes 'Kill Many'

British Broadcasting Corporation

The US has carried out at least two air strikes in southern Somalia targeting Islamist fighters, who the US believes include members of an al-Qaeda cell. The militias were reported to have been tracked by aerial reconnaissance and then attacked by a US gunship launched from a US military base in Djibouti. The US says Somali Islamists sheltered al-Qaeda operatives linked to the 1998 US embassy bombings in East Africa. The Somali transitional government says many people were killed in the raid. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6243459.stm>



Events, Campaigns, Reports

REPORTS:

Study: Illegal Small Arms Trade Fueling African Conflicts

Voice of America

The major wars of the 20th century gave a boost to the legal arms trade. But the end of the Cold War and the move from international to local and regional conflicts pushed trade in small arms and light weapons into a gray zone where oversight is difficult. Today, brokers and their networks of intermediaries and sub-contractors are increasingly involved in trafficking weapons to rebel groups fighting in developing countries. Barry Wood, co-author of a recent study on illicit arms brokering, says it requires a lot of expertise and can involve people across many continents. The eventual destination of the weapons is more often than not Africa. <http://www.voanews.com/english/2007-01-03-voa27.cfm>

'Freedom in Peril'

A draft fundraising booklet by the US National Rifle Association (NRA) has been leaked to the internet. 'Freedom in Peril' presents the gun lobby's belief in an anti-American conspiracy between NGOs, the media, the UN and leading members of the US Democratic Party. A full page is dedicated to IANSA, inaccurately described as a 'United Nations non-governmental organisation'. The text also includes the NRA's persistent and unfounded claim that the UN is working towards 'a global gun ban treaty'. (This is possibly a reference to the proposed Arms Trade Treaty which aims to regulate international transfers of conventional weapons.)

www.iansa.org

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