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SITUATION REPORTS

AFRICA

ZIMBABWE: National Airline Suspended

On 27 September, the International Air Transport Association suspended Air Zimbabwe's membership for failing to pass a biennial operational safety audit. The airline has until 31 November to improve its safety standards, after which it will be banned from operating in foreign airspace and at international airports.

AMERICAS

PARAGUAY: Demonstrations Against President

On 24 September, an Anti-Militarist Week organized by Paraguay Peace and Justice Service began in the capital. The week includes debates and panels on the legality of President Frederico Franco's ascension to power in June. Programming picks up over the weekend, coinciding with a planned teacher's strike.

CENTRAL ASIA

KAZAKHSTAN: Shuffles Ministerial Positions

On 24 September, Prime Minister Karim Masimov resigned his post in order to take charge of the presidential administration. On 25 September, Deputy Minister Serik Akhmetov was approved to become the new Prime Minister. Akhmetov is an engineer by background, and has until 5 October to appoint a cabinet approved by President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

MIDDLE EAST

IRAN: Announces New Air Defense System

On 21 September, Revolutionary Guard General Ali Hajizadeh announced the successful testing of an Iranian-produced defense system. The system, called Ra'ad, uses 'Taer' missiles to defend airspace. The missiles have a range of 75,000 feet and are reported accurate to 50 km. They are designed to counter aircraft, missiles, and guided bombs.

TURKEY: Bomb Targets Military Vehicle

On 25 September, six Turkish security personnel and one civilian were killed in a remotely detonated explosion in the eastern Anatolian city of Tunceli, also known as Dersim, a city where the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) is very active. The attack targeted a passing armored military vehicle. First responders reportedly engaged and killed a suspected PKK member in a firefight.

SOUTH ASIA

INDIA: Faces Local Government Turmoil

On 26 September, Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar handed in his resignation to the Governor of the state of Maharashtra following allegations of arbitrarily sanctioning irrigation projects. Pawar has stated he may return after investigations are concluded. He remains a leader of the National Congress Party in the state legislature.

BRIEFS

AFRICA

KENYA: Contracts Chinese Company for Construction of Major Railway

Summary: The new Mombasa to Nairobi rail line, which parallels an existing African-operated track, represents China's increasing interest in overseas railroad development, but will likely undercut the existing railway, which also connects to Kampala, Uganda.

Development: On 22 September, *The East African* reported Kenya's national railway corporation has signed a contract with China Roads and Bridges Company, the overseas subsidiary of China Communications Construction Company (CCCC), to fund a major new rail line paralleling an existing track from the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa to Nairobi. The new line will follow Chinese railway standards and, unlike the existing route, will feature standard gauge track, allowing for heavier transport loads. In addition, passenger and freight trains operating on the railway will travel up to 75 mph and 50 mph, respectively, about three times as fast as trains running the international route from Mombasa to Nairobi and on to Kampala, Uganda. The track will cost USD 2.6 billion and is expected to be finished in 2017.

Analysis: The signing of the Kenyan railways contract is representative of China's significant interest in African infrastructure development, most likely as a means toward greater trade with the continent, diplomatic goodwill, and natural resource exportation.

The deal also highlights a growing trend of Chinese overseas rail development, marked by several recent agreements with other East African countries, including a CCCC contract for 160-mile line in Ethiopia signed in June. However, the Kenyan deal is also significant because the new railway will almost certainly pose a significant business threat to the existing railroad, operated by an East African consortium, likely indicating Nairobi's willingness to choose foreign investors over less lucrative regional projects. Given the relative secrecy with which the new contract was negotiated, Nairobi very likely expects diplomatic or legal consequences and will likely robustly engage with its neighbors in order to mitigate any potential fallout in the coming months.
[Scott Small, scott.small@eagleeyeintel.com]

SOMALIA: AMISOM Advances on Key al-Shabaab Stronghold

Summary: Although the securing of Kismayo would likely represent a significant victory for international forces, Islamist militants could remain a threat if enough fighters escape the assault.

Development: On 18 September, African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) forces closed on the port city of Kismayo, one of the largest al-Shabaab strongholds in southern Somalia and a critical source of income for the Islamist organization. The offensive began with the AMISOM forces taking control of Jana Cabdalla, located 40km from Kismayo. Fifty al-Shabaab fighters were killed and seven AMISOM soldiers were wounded in the fighting. On 25 September, Kenyan forces under AMISOM launched air raids on al-Shabaab positions within the city. The Shabaab armory and a warehouse were destroyed with no casualties or civilian property damage reported. The attack comes along with sea and land bombardments on Shabaab positions to prepare for the eventual assault on the city. In anticipation of an AMISOM victory in Kismayo, many Shabaab fighters have reportedly fled the city.

Analysis: An AMISOM victory in Kismayo would indicate al-Shabaab's operational capacity has degraded considerably. If a large number of al-Shabaab fighters remain in the city, the AMISOM forces will likely be forced into urban combat, increasing the likelihood of a high number of casualties. A military victory in Kismayo would represent a victory for AMISOM and the newly elected president, Hasan Sheikh Mohammad. Success for Hasan Sheikh, the first Somali elected president since 1991, would be a huge leap towards the stabilization of Somalia and its credibility as an independent nation. However, the reported escape of some militants could allow them to regroup and continue significant military operations, likely using increasingly asymmetric tactics. In addition, it is likely that without the income provided by Kismayo, al-Shabaab will rely more on piracy to fund their operations, threatening US shipping in the region.
[William Berryhill]

AMERICAS

MEXICO: Drug Cartels Pay Better Than Government

Summary: Cartels' bribery of law enforcement officers remains a significant obstacle to improved security in many Mexican states.

Development: Thirty-five Mexican police officers were arrested on 24 September in the state of Veracruz on charges of providing intelligence to the Zetas drug cartel. The Zetas have increased operations in Veracruz, aiming to take over valuable shipping territory from the Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion despite the deployment of 4,000 federal troops to the area last year to curb violence. The corrupt officers were being paid to supply information and to assist in local operations. Eighteen police officers were arrested on similar charges in October 2011. As a precaution, the Navy has taken control of anti-narcotics operations for many local municipalities including the port of Veracruz.

Analysis: Corruption plagues the Mexican government despite President Calderon's offensive against the cartels. The police force is under-paid and over-worked in a very dangerous job, leaving them open to bribes, including money and safety from the cartels in most states. Dramatic economic disparity throughout the country makes working for the cartels a very lucrative, and often safe, option. While northern and central Mexico have a Human Development Index that rivals European countries, roughly half the population is still below the poverty line. This provides a prime opportunity for the cartels, whose efforts to bribe law enforcement officials generally offer better financial returns than opposing them.

[Joseph Harris]

MIDDLE EAST

EGYPT: Sinai Security Deteriorates

Summary: The security situation in the Sinai Peninsula will likely be used by Jerusalem to pressure Cairo if a new border fence fails to halt attacks.

Development: On 21 September, three armed militants of the Egyptian jihadist faction, Ansar Bayt al-Maqdes, crossed 150 meters into Israel and fired on Israeli Defense Force soldiers, killing one, before the attackers were killed. The militants were well-armed and wore explosive belts. On 22 September, Jerusalem returned the attackers' bodies to Egypt. Israel is constructing a fence to span almost the entire border to prevent these types of attacks.

Analysis: Since the ouster of former President Hosni Mubarak, militants have taken to the Sinai Peninsula to plan and carry out attacks on Israeli and Egyptian forces. In August, armed men ambushed an Egyptian military base, killed 16 Egyptian soldiers, commandeered two armored vehicles, and then entered Israel. There have been three

other attacks that have crossed the border into Israel. Because the Sinai is remote and difficult to monitor, it presents a significant vulnerability for Israeli-Egyptian border security. However, if Israel's fence fails to stop the attacks coming from Egypt, Jerusalem will very likely pressure President Morsi to increase efforts to counter terrorist threats originating in his country. Although Ansar Bayt al-Maqdes cites the recent *Innocence of Islam* film as its reason for attacking, it is highly likely the attacks will continue even if popular protests against the film subside.
[Kevin Moss, kevin.moss@eagleeyeintel.com]

MOROCCO: Al-Qa'ida in Mali Threatens Moroccan Security

Summary: The military coup in Mali and the new Malian government's inability to agree on military aid terms with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has enabled an al-Qa'ida splinter group to consolidate its hold on a strategic region of West Africa.

Development: On 24 September, ECOWAS and the Malian government agreed on the establishment of an ECOWAS logistics base and headquarters in Mali's capital, Bamako. The deal will move to the United Nations Security Council this week for approval. Mali's interim president, Dioncounda Traore, had previously requested assistance from ECOWAS in subduing an al-Qa'ida splinter group, Unity Movement for Jihad in West Africa (UMJAO), before the group, working strategically with local Tuareg rebels, captured the city of Douentza, but the interim government in Bamako refused the conditions of military aid drafted by the West African states. Since the 22 March Malian coup, Islamic extremists and secular rebel groups have taken over northern Mali, armed with man-portable air-defense systems and shoulder-fired, heat-seeking missiles looted from Libya's armory after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi. Moroccan Foreign Minister Saad Eddine El Othmani, has established a committee to link with the Moroccan communities residing in Mali.

Analysis: Disorganized government in Mali and the resulting lack of a decisive military response have significantly increased opportunities for Islamic extremists and criminal operations to regroup in the desert regions of the country. Al-Qa'ida's growing roots in Mali, combined with newly acquired modern military-grade weaponry, threaten the security of Morocco and other West African states. Moroccan Foreign Minister Youssef El Amrani has expressed Rabat's desire to find a peaceful diplomatic solution but is willing to pursue "other options" if necessary. It is likely that Morocco will prepare its military for air strikes and give logistical support to the government of Mali and ECOWAS in their campaign against UMJAO and Tuareg rebels in Douentza. In the past, Morocco and Algeria have often disagreed on a range of issues, particularly regional security. However, the situation in Mali may briefly align them as the threat of al-Qa'ida first approaches the Algerian border, and then, potentially, Morocco's.
[Abdullah Al-Mansour]

SOUTHEAST ASIA

THAILAND: Car Bomb Attack Threatens Stability

Summary: Suspected Islamic insurgents detonate a car bomb in south Thailand, further degrading peace talks and creating instability within the region.

Development: On 21 September, suspected Muslim insurgents carried out a coordinated attack in Pattani province, in southern Thailand, after warning local businesses against opening on the Muslim holy day. Gunmen fired at a shop in the Sai Buri district and then fled. After the shooting, Thai security forces arrived at the scene, and an improvised explosive device (IED) hidden in a nearby pickup truck exploded. The explosion killed six and wounded 44 people, as well as set fire to several buildings in the area.

Analysis: The attack may be credited to members from Islamic insurgent groups based in southern Thailand who oppose negotiations and peace talks with the Thai government. If Thai authorities determine insurgents are responsible, the attack demonstrates the insurgents' continued capabilities to inflict damage and degrade the credibility of recent Thai government successes in the south, including the recent surrender of nearly 100 Muslim insurgents to Thai authorities. Although this attack could have been initiated in retaliation for the recent surrender, it may signify a broader re-strengthening of loyal Islamic dissidents aimed at degrading peace talks between the two parties and creating instability in Thailand's southern region. Similar attacks in the coming weeks will likely indicate if this was motivated by revenge or if it indicates a more significant trend.
[Timothy Whalen]

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