

## **Terrorism in East Africa and the Horn: An Overview**

by  
*David H. Shinn*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The United States has properly identified East Africa and the Horn as the region in Sub-Saharan Africa most threatened by indigenous and international terrorism. This part of the continent also stands out for the number of internal and regional conflicts that it has experienced in recent decades. The following analysis looks generally at the role of local conflict, corruption, Islam, and other factors that contribute to acts of terrorism. It then offers a country by country summary and concludes with some comments on US counter-terrorism policy in the region and suggestions for the future.

### **NATURE OF THE THREAT**

There are three kinds of terrorism in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania) and the Horn (Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia). These are acts perpetrated by organizations based outside the region, those by an organization within the region but aimed at a neighboring country, and those instigated by an internal insurgent group against authority in a single country. An example of terrorism emanating from outside the region was the assassination by the Palestinian terrorist group Black September in 1973 of the American Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission and a Belgian diplomat in Khartoum. The attempted assassination in 1995 of Egyptian President Hosny Mubarak in Addis Ababa by the Egyptian terrorist group *Gama'at al-Islamiyya* also falls in this category. Other examples include the bombing by *al-Qaeda* in 1998 of the American embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, and the simultaneous *al-Qaeda* attacks at Mombasa, Kenya, in 2002 against an Israeli airliner and bombing of a hotel popular with Israeli tourists. These are classic examples of international terrorism. The primary goal is not to injure the country where the terrorist attack takes place; rather it is designed to harm a third party such as the United States, Egypt, or Israel.

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**David H. Shinn** served for 37 years in the US Foreign Service at seven embassies in Africa and one in the Middle East, including as ambassador to Ethiopia and Burkina Faso. He is now an adjunct professor in the Elliot School of International Affairs at The George Washington University.

Terrorism conducted by organizations in the region against neighboring countries includes a series of attacks by Somalia-based *al-Ittihad al-Islami* (AIAI) against civilian targets in Ethiopia in the 1990s. The Sudan-based Eritrean Islamic Jihad (EIJ) has conducted attacks inside Eritrea that have killed civilians although the intended targets may have been military. The third category includes indigenous organizations such as the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Allied Democratic Front (ADF) in Uganda and the militant wing of the Ogadeni National Liberation Front (ONLF) and Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Ethiopia that have used terrorist attacks in Uganda and Ethiopia respectively. The LRA has occasionally operated out of southern Sudan and the ADF out of the eastern Congo while the OLF at various times has had support from Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Both of these kinds of terrorism are intended to embarrass, harm, or even overturn an established government in the region. They generally are not aimed at a third party.

### **A CONFLICTED REGION PRONE TO TERRORISM**

The Horn of Africa has been the most conflicted part of Africa during the last 50 years. Although there have been long-standing disputes in places like Angola, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Congo, no other region on the continent has had as many conflicts over such a long span of time. The root causes are numerous and sometimes complex even within a single dispute. They include ethnic, language and cultural differences, arbitrary boundaries, religion, ideology, competition for scarce resources including pasturage and water, unequal sharing of resources controlled by the state, and the sheer desire for power.

There are underlying conditions in East Africa and the Horn that contribute directly to conflict and the use of terrorist tactics. Poverty and social injustice are widespread. Borders are porous even by African standards. Tanzania, Kenya, Somalia, and Eritrea have long and poorly patrolled coasts on the Red Sea or Indian Ocean. Weapons are readily available throughout the region, but especially in Somalia. All of the countries have a severe shortage of financial resources and trained personnel to counter the activities of terrorist elements. Corruption is endemic in the region and a particularly serious problem in several countries. Transparency International surveyed 102 countries in 2002 for its annual Corruption Perceptions Index. Kenya tied Indonesia for position 96 on the list while Uganda shared 93 with Moldova. Tanzania vied with several nations for position 71 and Ethiopia shared position 59 with several nations. There were not sufficient data to rank the other countries in the region.<sup>1</sup> Countries facing serious corruption combined with low pay for security personnel leave officials wide open to the temptation of accepting money from terrorists in return for support.

Important to the understanding of terrorism in the region is the inter-con-

nectedness of most of the indigenous conflicts. They often result in refugee flows in various directions. Based on the author's experience with all countries of the region, they frequently lead to support for a dissident group in one country by a neighboring country. That support, in turn, causes the affected country to back another dissident organization against the offending government. At different points in time, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Eritrea have supported the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) against Khartoum while Khartoum has supported the LRA against Uganda, the OLF against Ethiopia, and the EIJ against Eritrea. Following the 1998-2000 Ethiopian-Eritrean war, Eritrea has supported the OLF against Ethiopia. Ethiopia responded by supporting a coalition of Eritrean dissidents against Eritrea. Somalia also plays this game. This has developed into a debilitating tit for tat in the region that shows no sign of abating. It also increases the prospects for the use of terrorist tactics.<sup>2</sup>

The primary terrorist threat to American and Western interests comes from those organizations that are not indigenous to the region. Although Americans and other foreigners sometimes find themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time and are, therefore, caught up in attacks aimed at harming local authority, the indigenous groups generally do not target foreigners. There have been exceptions when attacks on bars and hotels frequented by foreign tourists or residents seem designed to attract international publicity and/or embarrass the local government. Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda, for example, have suffered from such attacks.

## **ISLAM, THE REGION, AND TERRORISM**

Not all of the local groups that use terrorist tactics are linked to Islam. The LRA claims to be a Christian fundamentalist organization based on the Ten Commandments. A cult-like group, it has used terrorism in its campaign against the government of Uganda.<sup>3</sup> The ADF consists of a diverse coalition of former members of the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda and Islamists from the *Salaf Tabliq* faction. The external terrorist organizations, on the other hand, are all linked to radical Islamic fundamentalism and target Western, pro-Western, and Israeli interests. The most threatening external group in this regard is *al-Qaeda*. Experience shows that these external terrorist organizations can function with only a small number of local supporters. There are also numerous Islamic non-governmental organizations in East Africa and the Horn. Some of them, which are usually funded by persons or even governments in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, wittingly or otherwise offer cover for terrorists.<sup>4</sup>

Every country discussed in this analysis has either a predominantly Islamic population or has a significant Muslim minority. Sudan's population of about 36 million is between 60 and 70 percent Muslim. At least 45 percent of "Christian" Ethiopia's 67 million people are Muslim. This means that Ethiopia's approximately 30 million Muslims tie it with Morocco for the 11th most populous

Muslim nation in the world. Eritrea's 4.3 million people are divided about equally between Christians and Muslims. Although Djibouti has only about a half million people, some 94 percent are Muslim. Somalia and Somaliland together total about 7.5 million people; 99 percent are Muslim. Kenya has a population of about 31 million. There are wide variations in the estimates of Muslims, but most fall in the 10 to 30 percent range. Uganda's population of 24 million contains the smallest proportion of Muslims at about 16 per cent. There are some 37 million Tanzanians, 35 percent of whom are Muslim. Zanzibar is 99 percent Muslim. Except for a significant minority in Sudan and a smaller group in Somalia, the vast majority of Muslims in East Africa and the Horn have shown no interest in Islamic fundamentalism. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that organizations like *al-Qaeda* and *Gama'at al-Islamiyya* have been able to recruit from this population small numbers of local collaborators.<sup>5</sup>

## SUDAN

Sudan constitutes a special case because it has a long history of tolerance toward and support for terrorist groups. This policy existed even during the Muhammad Gaafur al-Nimeiry government, which remained in power until 1985. During the latter part of the Nimeiry reign the US had in Sudan its largest military assistance program in sub-Saharan Africa and a huge development aid program. A military coup in 1989 overthrew the elected Sadiq al-Mahdi government and resulted eventually in the establishment of a fundamentalist Islamic regime. A sharp deterioration in relations with the US followed. The Clinton administration placed Sudan in 1993 on the list of states that sponsor terrorism. In announcing the decision, the State Department's press spokesman, Mike McCurry, stated: "The cumulative weight of the evidence establishes that Sudan is providing repeated support for international terrorism. The evidence currently available indicates that Sudan allows the use of its territory as sanctuary for terrorists, including the Abu Nidal organization and members of Hezbollah and Palestine Islamic Jihad."<sup>6</sup>

The first suggestion that Sudan was willing to cooperate in a limited way against terrorism occurred in 1994 when it turned over to the French the infamous terrorist Illich Ramirez Sanchez, known as Carlos the Jackal, who had been living in Khartoum during the previous year. Khartoum became miffed when Washington did not express any appreciation.<sup>7</sup> Sudan made another effort in 1996 when, at the request of the US, it removed from the country Osama bin Laden, who had been living there since 1991. The US took note of this development and then made new demands of Sudan. Sudanese officials interpreted this as a case where the US "raised the bar" before there could be any improvement in relations. In any event, additional Sudanese overtures do not seem to have been pursued vigorously by the US. The low point occurred in 1998 when the US bombed the al-Shifa pharmaceutical factory in Khartoum with cruise mis-

siles in response to the *al-Qaeda* attacks on the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. The US claimed there was a link between the factory and *al-Qaeda*, adding that it had evidence of possible chemical weapons production involving al-Shifa. Sudan denied all these charges.<sup>8</sup>

There was no additional US-Sudan engagement on counter-terrorism until President Omar Al-Bashir managed to neutralize the militant Islamic wing of his government represented by Hassan al-Turabi. There were then tentative steps at the end of the Clinton administration to test a better relationship with Sudan on counter-terrorism. The new Bush administration presented an opportunity for both countries to evaluate the bilateral relationship and explore further cooperation. September 11 focused the attention of Sudan and the US counter-terrorism cooperation increased significantly after this tragedy.

Comparison of the entries for Sudan in the 1999 and 2002 State Department's annual *Patterns of Global Terrorism* is instructive. The 1999 report states: "Sudan in 1999 continued to serve as a central hub for several international terrorist groups, including Usama Bin Ladin's al-Qaida organization. The Sudanese Government also condoned Iran's assistance to terrorist and radical Islamist groups operating in and transiting through Sudan. Khartoum served as a meeting place, safe haven, and training hub for members of the Lebanese Hizballah, Egyptian Gama'at al-Islamiyya, al-Jihad, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, HAMAS, and Abu Nidal organization . . ." <sup>9</sup> In sharp contrast, the 2002 report concluded that "while concerns remain regarding Sudanese Government support for certain terrorist groups, such as HAMAS and the Palestine Islamic Jihad, the US is pleased with Sudan's cooperation and the progress being made in their antiterrorist activities." <sup>10</sup>

Progress with Sudan on counter-terrorism has been impressive and is continuing. Although there has been minimal improvement in the human rights situation in Sudan, there may be, with US help, an end to the long-running civil war. This is happening in spite of a faction in the Sudanese body politic that welcomes support for terrorists and what must be major pressure on Sudan from groups like *Gama'at al-Islamiyya* to continue its support for terrorist organizations. Sudan has not been a significant supplier of homegrown terrorists. Rather, it has for decades offered hospitality and encouragement to a variety of external terrorist organizations. So long as Sudan continues to cooperate with the US and others, it should be easier to deal with the problem than is the case in countries that breed significant numbers of international terrorists. While Sudan remains high on the list of countries where terrorist acts against Western interests could take place, there are, at the same time, relatively few Western targets left in the country.

## ETHIOPIA

With the largest Islamic population of any country in the region, the situation in Ethiopia deserves careful attention. Muslim-Christian relations are surprisingly good in a nation that has historically experienced several Islamic invasions. There are recent indications, however, that the environment has become more problematic. The situation is further complicated because the largest ethnic group, the Oromo, who constitute about 40 percent of the population, is 55 to 60 percent Muslim. Many of them have aspirations for greater autonomy or control of the Ethiopian government. The Oromo live in a large swath of Ethiopia that cuts through its heartland. The OLF has not shirked in the past from using terrorist tactics inside Ethiopia to achieve its goals. The OLF recently denied, however, any involvement in the bombing of a passenger train on the Djibouti-Addis Ababa route, adding that it rejects all acts of terror against the civilian population.<sup>11</sup> The militant wing of the Somali ONLF and the now quiescent Islamic Front for the Liberation of Oromia have also used terrorism as a weapon. It will be difficult for Ethiopia to end completely the use of terrorist tactics by indigenous dissident groups. It is imperative, however, that Ethiopia put at the top of its agenda equal opportunity for the Muslim community in order to reduce the temptation by Islamic malcontents to join forces with external Islamic terrorist organizations.

Although Ethiopia has a tough and effective security apparatus, it also offers to international terrorist groups a large number of attractive Western targets. Terrorist threat intelligence briefly forced the American and Norwegian embassies in Addis Ababa to close down in June 2003. Ethiopia cooperates closely with the US on counter-terrorist issues. But it has placed itself in a difficult position. Ethiopia joined the coalition of the willing in the war against Iraq although it provided no material support. This caused some unhappiness within Ethiopia's Muslim community. At one point, Ethiopian police prevented a demonstration by Muslims in Addis Ababa. Representatives of the Muslim community expressed regret that Ethiopia sided with the US and United Kingdom, preferring instead that Ethiopia be neutral. The relationship between Muslims, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Protestants is now in flux. It remains to be seen how Ethiopia's collaboration with the US on counter-terrorism issues will play out within the Islamic community.

Ethiopia focuses its counter-terrorist efforts against AIAI, the OLF, and the militant wing of the ONLF. The Somali groups pose a special, political problem for Ethiopia and the future of its counter-terrorism cooperation with the US. Ethiopia believes that AIAI is linked to *al-Qaeda*. Most Somalis, on the other hand, deny that AIAI is a terrorist organization and, even if it once engaged in terrorist acts against Ethiopia, they argue that it has terminated this practice. Some Somalis go so far as to suggest that AIAI attacks against Ethiopia in the 1990s do not even qualify as terrorism. Addis Ababa has every right to retaliate

against AIAI when it attacks Ethiopia. It needs to be careful, however, not to use this as an excuse to interfere more generally in internal Somali affairs. Most Somalis are convinced that Ethiopia wants only to keep Somalia weak and divided. This breeds Somali hostility and increases the probability of additional attacks against Ethiopia. To the extent that Ethiopia is central to US counter-terrorist strategy in the region, it is essential the US not be sucked into unwise activities in Somalia.

## **ERITREA**

Eritrea, due to its Muslim-Christian split and location across the Red Sea from Yemen also requires close monitoring. Perhaps the major surprise is the fact that terrorism has not become a serious problem. Although it did not provide material support, Eritrea joined the coalition of the willing against Iraq. Like Ethiopia, it seeks close collaboration with the US on counter-terrorism. Eritrea is trying to curry favor with the US in hopes of support on matters related to the Ethiopia-Eritrea dispute. Having lost the war to Ethiopia, it especially wants the border demarcation to go forward as determined and announced by the international arbitration panel. The conflict broke out in 1998 in a small section of the border known as Badme, which the arbitration panel awarded to Eritrea. Ethiopia says this is unacceptable. As a result, the experts have not yet begun border demarcation and the situation remains tense.<sup>12</sup>

Both Ethiopia, now with Sudanese backing, and Eritrea engage in tit for tat support of groups hostile to the other country. Early in 2003 the EIJ, probably operating out of Sudan, planted land mines that killed five Eritrean militia. For its part, Asmara remains the headquarters for a northern Sudanese opposition group known as the National Democratic Alliance, assists the SPLA against Sudan, and supports the OLF against Ethiopia. Eritrea has an effective security service but it also has a significant Western presence that may eventually attract international terrorists.

## **DJIBOUTI**

Tiny, Muslim Djibouti is located across from Yemen and near the Strait of Bab el Mandeb, a critical chokepoint where the Red Sea meets the Gulf of Aden. Before the 11 September attacks, the US maintained a minimal presence in Djibouti and attached little importance to the country. Everything changed after 11 September. Djibouti became in 2002 the headquarters for the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). This unit coordinates coalition counter-terrorism operations in the total airspace and land area of Somalia, Kenya, Sudan, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Yemen. The Commander of the US-led counter-terrorist task force is Brig. General Mastin M. Robeson. The American component, all of which moved ashore in May 2003 to the former French bar-

racks at Camp Lemonier, numbers more than 1,800 military and civilian personnel representing all branches of the US armed forces. The CJTF-HOA forces are based in Djibouti while a small number of liaison personnel work in other parts of the region.<sup>13</sup>

The mission of CJTF-HOA is to detect, disrupt, and defeat international terrorist groups in conjunction with coalition partners in the region. This includes identifying *al-Qaeda* “sleeper cells” and neutralizing any *al-Qaeda* safe havens in the region. It emphasizes the denial of safe havens, external support, and material assistance for terrorist activity. CJTF-HOA also provides security assistance in support of civil-military operations and supports international organizations working to enhance long-term stability in the region.<sup>14</sup> The *New York Times* reported in November 2002 that the Central Intelligence Agency flies classified missions from an airfield in Djibouti using the Predator, a drone equipped with Hellfire missiles. According to the account, one attack hit a vehicle in a remote part of Yemen, killing a senior *al-Qaeda* operative and five other occupants.<sup>15</sup> The Deputy Commander of the Central Command based in Tampa, Lt. General Michael DeLong, commented in May 2003 that working with friendly governments in the region US forces affiliated with CJTF-HOA had captured an unspecified number of mid-level *al-Qaeda* operatives in several countries.<sup>16</sup>

Djibouti is the only US military base in sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, Djibouti has become more important to the US than at any time in history. In addition to CJTF-HOA, some 3,200 French military personnel are stationed in Djibouti. This makes it a rich target for terrorist attack. In a place as small as Djibouti, however, the overwhelming Western security presence may discourage potential attacks and force terrorists to seek out softer targets in the region. So far, there has been no significant, negative reaction from Djibouti’s Islamic population to either the coalition military presence or the war against Iraq.

## SOMALIA

Somalia is another special case because it has been without an effective national government since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1991. (The former Northern Province, Somaliland, declared its independence from Somalia in 1991. Although recognized by no country, it is now generally peaceful and not subject to the terrorist concerns presented by the situation in Somalia.) The organization of most concern, AIAI, follows Wahhabi doctrine that emanates from Saudi Arabia. Wahhabism constitutes a strict form of Islam similar to the Taliban. Its goal is to create a Somali Islamic state that incorporates those Somalis living in Ethiopia.<sup>17</sup> AIAI conducted terrorist attacks from Somalia against Ethiopia in the 1990s. Ethiopia retaliated on several occasions against AIAI inside Somalia. AIAI seems to have changed tactics in recent years by dispersing its followers and focusing on support for Islamic schools and social programs. The US placed AIAI on its Terrorist Exclusion List in 2001.

AIAI's links to *al-Qaeda* are unclear. The British government announced in 2001 that Mohamed Atef, now deceased and whose *al-Qaeda* duties included training and organizing military and terrorist operations, traveled to Somalia in 1992 and 1993 to encourage attacks against US and UN forces. According to this account, Atef trained Somalis to fight UN forces and *al-Qaeda* operatives participated in the October 1993 attack that resulted in the eventual departure of the US from Somalia. In a November 1996 interview with an Arabic-language newspaper, Osama bin Laden for the first time took credit publicly for helping Somali factions against the Americans in Mogadishu. Bin Laden's claim appeared three years after the fact and did not refer specifically to the 3-4 October 1993 battle popularized by the book and movie *Black Hawk Down*.<sup>18</sup> Other sources, including American military personnel who were present at the time, are highly skeptical of the alleged connection in 1992 and 1993 between AIAI and *al-Qaeda*. In any event, there does not appear to be much trust between AIAI and *al-Qaeda* although there has almost certainly been contact.

A failed state, Somalia continues to be governed as a series of fiefdoms supported largely by the business class and the militias they finance. There is some evidence that AIAI has infiltrated elements of the business community.<sup>19</sup> Islamic charities, especially *al-Islah*, provide considerable aid to Somalis and may be susceptible to penetration by terrorists. The situation in Somalia raises serious concerns and could attract terrorists chased from other areas such as Afghanistan. While this is true, Somalia is no Afghanistan. Clan ties are more important than religious ones. There are few places to hide and non-Somalis are highly conspicuous in Somali society. Somalis are pragmatic and quick to shift loyalties. They would not hesitate to expose an outsider if they found it in their interest. While terrorists from *al-Qaeda* or other external groups probably transit Somalia from time to time, there is no evidence it has become a base of operation. This is the conclusion of the 2003 Report of the Panel of UN Experts on Somalia. The report added, however, that non-Somali terrorists apparently transited Somalia with their weapons en route to the 2002 bombing of the hotel in Mombasa, Kenya.<sup>20</sup> The potential for terrorist activity emanating from Somalia is real and requires close monitoring, but many observers have overstated the threat. In addition, there are virtually no attractive, Western terrorist targets remaining inside Somalia.

## **KENYA, UGANDA, AND TANZANIA**

Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania are well aware of the dangers of international terrorism. All three governments cooperate with the US on counter-terrorism programs. Kenya has been especially forthcoming and participates in the US Terrorist Interdiction Program. It is one of only two countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to have a military access agreement with the US. Tanzania cooperated last year with the US on civil aviation security, anti-money-laundering initiatives,

border control, and police training. Uganda joined the coalition of the willing against Iraq, albeit without offering material support. All three countries are constrained by inadequate resources and lack of trained personnel. They are all soft targets and offer a rich assortment of Western targets. Sixteen people died in 1980 during a terrorist attack on the Israeli-owned Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi. The *al-Qaeda* attacks against the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 and then against the Israelis in Mombasa in 2002 underscore this point.<sup>21</sup>

Tanzania and Kenya are easily accessible surreptitiously by sea and both have a small, radicalized Islamic element that has assisted outside terrorist groups. Kenya has a particularly porous border with ungoverned Somalia. The Kenyan government has long been concerned about the activities of the Islamic Party of Kenya, an unregistered organization with significant strength on Kenya's Swahili coast and one that has had frosty relations with the US. A support network for terrorists has developed along the coast where persons coming from the Gulf States, Pakistan, Somalia, and the Comoro Islands can blend in with ease. Pervasive corruption among Kenyan immigration personnel makes it possible for these individuals to obtain citizenship and engage in legitimate cover businesses. Once all the facts are known, it may well be that *al-Qaeda* has stronger links along the Swahili coast than it does in Somalia, where the US has focused most of its attention.<sup>22</sup>

Following the 11 September attacks against the US, Kenyan police arrested about 20 persons in Mombasa on suspicion of links with *al-Qaeda*. Until recently, however, the government of Kenya did not arrest any Kenyan nationals suspected of aiding the *al-Qaeda* terrorists. It chose to ignore the links to Kenyans and the need to provide more assistance to the disaffected Muslim minority on the coast. This began to change after the November 2002 attacks in Mombasa. Nevertheless, the United Nations anti-terrorism committee criticized Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in mid-2003 for failing to submit on schedule a report on terrorist activities in their territory.<sup>23</sup>

There was another security scare in May/June 2003 reportedly based on intercepted *al-Qaeda* communications. The United Kingdom issued an advisory against travel to Kenya and banned British Airways flights to and from Kenya. The US issued a similar advisory, authorized the voluntary departure of American embassy personnel and briefly closed the Nairobi embassy in June. In response, Kenya arrested several more suspected terrorists and banned flights to and from Somalia.<sup>24</sup> In mid-September, the US extended the warning to American nationals and interests throughout East Africa.

Late last year a small number of the Muslim faithful in Dar es Salaam conducted special prayers for the destruction of the US and its leaders. There are increasing signs of militancy developing in certain mosques on Zanzibar and along the Tanzania coast. In a recent interview with *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Zanzibar's President Amani Abeid Karume did not deny the possible presence of

*al-Qaeda* on the island.<sup>25</sup> Foreign elements encourage Islamic militancy in Tanzania under cover of providing funds to build new mosques and by infiltrating legitimate businesses such as banking. Tanzania is slowly beginning to take the threat more seriously. Several Tanzanian banks recently froze the accounts of some individuals and organizations suspected of funding terrorism in the country.<sup>26</sup>

Uganda hosts two organizations – the ADF and LRA – that the US added to its Terrorist Exclusion List in 2001. There have been numerous attacks by the Christian LRA against civilian targets in northern Uganda over the past two years. Although Uganda's Islamic community is relatively small, it is still capable of being radicalized. A recent Pew Research Center poll in Uganda determined that more than one-quarter of Ugandans thought suicide bombing and other forms of violence against civilian targets are justified in defense of Islam.<sup>27</sup> Although it is important not to overstate the importance of this anecdotal information, it should give governments in the region and the US cause for serious concern. It also underscores the need to bring these minority Islamic communities in all three East African countries into the mainstream of the political process and to ensure that they receive their fair share of state resources. This will only be possible if enlightened leadership in the three countries appreciates more fully the nature of the threat posed by terrorism.

## **THE US RESPONSE**

The challenge for the US in countering terrorism in East Africa and the Horn is considerable. Groups engaged in or supportive of terrorist tactics are numerous, complex, and not easy to monitor. In the case of Islamic communities, it is important to track any terrorist links in cooperation with host government intelligence organizations. Looking to the future, it is even more important that the US show an interest in the Muslim communities and identify ways that American assistance can support them. In the case of Ethiopia, the embassy opened the door several years ago to the Supreme Islamic Council by offering help in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Other innovative ways, perhaps in the areas of health and education, must be found to improve relations between these communities and the US. Improved American public diplomacy alone is not adequate.

The US has identified East Africa and the Horn as the priority region in Africa for counter-terrorism cooperation because of its past history of terrorist acts. It has created a fund of nearly \$100 million to increase the capacity of the countries in the region to combat terrorism.<sup>28</sup> The key countries in this effort are Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti. Training is already well advanced in Ethiopia and Kenya while Djibouti hosts the CJTF-HOA. Smaller training programs will take place in Tanzania, Uganda, and Eritrea. Somalia does not have a government in control of the country and is not, therefore, in a position to develop a counter-ter-

rorism program. The US seems to be in a quandary as to how it should treat Somaliland, which has established control over most of the country but is still unrecognized. This should not prevent the US from cooperating on issues such as counter-terrorism. Sudan remains on the US list of state sponsors of terrorism. Nevertheless, CJTF-HOA personnel visited Sudan in May 2003 when they highlighted the improvement in relations between Sudan and the US.<sup>29</sup> It is time to reassess whether Sudanese cooperation on counter-terrorism merits removing the country from the list and ending American sanctions.

Indigenous insurgent groups that use terrorist tactics pose a greater challenge because by definition they are trying to harm governments that the US supports. Working with host governments, there may be cases where the US can serve as an intermediary to help resolve differences with certain insurgent groups. The US tried this several years ago without success in the case of Ethiopia and the OLF. The time may be ripe to try again. There are other groups, for example AIAI and the LRA, which do not lend themselves to this approach. Perhaps the most that can be done in such cases is to expand the effort to collect intelligence on them and implement training and appropriate counter-terrorism programs. In the final analysis, helping to eliminate the conditions that give rise to the alienation of groups that use terrorism, better intelligence on those that persist anyway, and carefully designed counter-terrorism programs are the most effective ways to deal with the threat in East Africa and the Horn.

### Endnotes

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