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WEST AFRICA: A NEW RECRUITING FRONT FOR AL-QAEDA?

by

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Abstract

After the 9/11 attacks, The United States of America (USA) destroyed al Qaeda's established training bases and removed the Taliban from power in Afghanistan. Thus, al Qaeda is forced to find new havens to continue operating safely as well as new sources of recruits. Unfortunately, if the conditions in the ground do not change, West Africa will be the next recruiting front for Osama bin Laden's terrorist movement. This paper examines what al Qaeda wants in the region and what the terrorist organization is presently doing there to meet its goals. Lastly, the document will address the means and ways to thwart al Qaeda's efforts in West Africa.

Part 1

Introduction

West Africa includes the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) plus the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, which withdrew from the organization in December 2000. ECOWAS was founded in 1975 and today includes Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina-Faso, Ivory-Coast, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea, the Republic of Cabo-Verde and Guinea-Bissau. So, even though Mauritania is a key state in the Global War on Terror (GWOT), for the purpose of this study, the focus will be limited to the analysis of the ECOWAS members only. Moreover, the Republic of Cabo Verde, an archipelago which is a member of ECOWAS, will not be examined due to its lack of significance to the discussion. Therefore, throughout this research paper, West Africa will refer to the ECOWAS members minus the Republic of Cabo Verde.

The West African region is, indeed, unique in many respects. First of all, it hosts Nigeria, the most populated country on the continent. Secondly, it is one of the most unstable places in Africa. As a matter of fact, two United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions are currently operating in Liberia and Ivory Coast. Sierra-Leone, where the UN has just completed another peacekeeping operation, is a nation still struggling for its stability. Guinea-Bissau is “one of the five poorest countries in the world”¹ and is the most unstable in the region. In December 2008, hours after the death of President Lansana Conte, Guinea was once again

shaken by a military coup d'état—continuing to show how volatile and precarious the political situation is in that country. Thirdly, with no exception, all the West African countries have inter-state boundary disputes. Finally, even those states reputed to be relatively stable, such as Senegal and Mali, are affected with rebellions or insurgencies of some sort.

In terms of religion, more than 140 million of West Africa's total of 240 million are Muslim, while the majority of the remaining population is Christian². The relationships between the different religions, especially Muslims and Christians, range from friendly to antagonistic. It is also essential to emphasize the relationship between religion and ethnicity. Generally ethnicity corresponds to religion in West Africa. For example, the Fula people are Muslims, whereas Igbo people are mainly Christians. Therefore, when political issues involve ethnic crises, a clash between the religions is witnessed as well. To illustrate that, according to the New York Times, in December 2008, "at least 400 people were killed ... after angry Christian and Muslim mobs protested what they said were rigged local election results."³ However, little media coverage was given to these incidents because they coincided with the Mumbai terror attacks.

Unfortunately, international attention is still on the Middle-East and the AFPAK region (Afghanistan-Pakistan). This is problematic because even though West Africa is not yet considered the hotbed of terrorist activity, it "has what it takes to be a breeding ground for terrorism: it is resource rich and democracy poor; protection is lacking for civil society and human rights; regional, economic, and religious conflicts abound as economic distress, lawlessness and criminal activity. Corruption is rife."⁴ In addition, the West African countries are all either weak, collapsed, failed or failing states. Since "weak states and small groups could attain a catastrophic power to strike great nations"⁵, West Africa should be central in the efforts

for the GWOT, and “the United States intelligence community must also take West Africa more seriously.”⁶

If nothing is done to alleviate the suffering of the people in the region, Al-Qaeda, via its West African operating agent, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC- Groupe Salafiste pour la Predication et le Combat), could thrive in West Africa and recruit potential terrorists who may threaten Western or US interests. Therefore, this paper intends, first, to examine the situation in West Africa. Then, it will discuss what Al-Qaeda wants and what the organization could be doing now in the West African context to recruit. Finally, solutions, means, and ways to stop Al-Qaeda actions to transform West Africa into a recruiting field, will be proposed. Those therapies are the quintessence of this paper.

Part 2

Conditions on the Ground

The conditions on the ground in West Africa are characterized by a difficult religious situation, an unstable political environment, disastrous economic and social contexts, and unfair educational policies. If those conditions do not change and are not replaced by a more viable political, religious and educational space, AQ may take-over the region and raise armies of recruits against the local governments and against Western interests.

The Political and Religious Situation

As states, the ECOWAS countries are fairly young. The majority were freed from the European colonialism in the early 1960s. Few of them can claim to have great democratic processes or traditions. Even today, elections are an important source of political and religious turmoil. They have even caused several civil wars throughout the region (Ivory Coast, Liberia, Sierra Leone, etc.). Transition of power is rarely peaceful. Freedom of speech and liberty are still a luxury in some places. Thus, the political situation is unstable and volatile. Moreover, in the Muslim countries, like Senegal and Nigeria, westernized, educated elites are promoted over and above marginalized Arabic/Islamic trained intellectuals; therefore creating two classes of intellectuals. The first is in charge of the conduct of the state, and the second is in charge of religion within society, particularly the Islamic education system.

In addition, in most of the West African countries politics and religion do not cohabit well. The biggest example is Nigeria. In that country, religion is one of the main sources of political issues within the federation, whereas in Senegal, religion is “a constructive and regime-stabilizing force.”⁷ The nature of political Islam in West Africa is multi-faceted. It is a colorful spectrum of varied and competing interpretations of the Muslim concept of community and society. For instance, Islam in Senegal is traditional, secular and family-based in the form of Sufi Muslim orders named “*Tariqa*”. The leaders of those Sufi orders are called *Serigne* (in Wolof) or *Marabouts* (in French), and their disciples are called *taalibes*. The *tariqas* are structured around Koranic schools (*Daaras*) and Muslim associations (*Dairas*). Those are the basic cells or units of any *Tariqa*. The units of the *tariqas* we will be interested in are the *Daaras*.

On the other hand, in Nigeria, “political Islam has played an important role in the evolution of [its] polity.”⁸ Throughout history, the Koranic schools and so-called traditional Madrasah have taught Quran (Koran), Fiqh (jurisprudence), Falsafah (philosophy), Irfan (mysticism), etc. In fact, Daaras represent the traditional Islamic schooling system in Senegal, Nigeria, Mali, and in most of the West African Muslim states. Indeed, historically, political Islam and Islamic reformism are very old phenomenon in West Africa. To illustrate, the Wars of the Marabouts in the Senegambia should be referenced⁹. The Marabouts, such as Nasir al-Din¹⁰ were the ones who waged “the Sufi jihad against enslaving aristocracies in West Africa in the seventeenth century.”¹¹ Furthermore, the Marabouts are the ones who also fought the colonial wars. Specifically, we can cite Samory Toure in Guinea, Usman Dan Fadio in Nigeria, and El Hadj Umar Tall and Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Mbacke (Serigne Touba) in Senegal.

The Educational Challenges

French, Portuguese and English are the official languages of the countries in the ECOWAS. Those are the languages of the colonial powers which ruled West Africa for the last two centuries. But, beside those Western languages, Arabic was the language of the West African education system (*Daaras*) prior to colonialism. Indeed, the Koranic schools have educated and trained the first intellectuals of the region. The old Islamic learning cities like Timbuktu and Jenné are the best illustrations of that fact. Also, the Sub-Saharan Muslims have contributed to the Arabic literature as far as the Middle Ages. The most ancient of them is the writer Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al-Kanemi, whose first writings date from 1200.¹²

Thus, when the European powers started the colonization process, an effective education system based on the Islamic teachings was already in place. Therefore, to diminish the cultural and religious influence of the Islamic religion and increase their own, the colonial powers marginalized Arabic as a language and the Islamic schooling system as the way to conduct the educational policy. The elite in charge of running the states were educated in those European languages; *de facto* ousting the “arabo-islamic” intellectuals from the ruling system.

However, despite the favor given to the westernized education system, the people did not quit the Islamic education system for two reasons. First and foremost, according to the teachings of the prophet of Islam, Mouhammad (Peace be upon him), it is a duty to every Muslim to “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave.” This follows a strong recommendation from the first word of the Koran which is: *Iqra'* (read or learn). Therefore, it is required to every Muslim to learn and seek about Allah and Islam. Consequently, it is comprehensible why the West African Muslim communities kept their *daaras*.

The second reason for the survival of the Islamic schools is the strong bonds between the *taalibes* and their Marabouts. Indeed, the Marabouts (the Sufi clerics) “were not simply recognized men of learning, ‘ulama, they had a kind of institutional authority over their followers [talibes], and they were thought to possess special powers others lacked – powers passed down from the original founder of the order through a mystical chain of benediction called *silsila*.”¹³ The *taalibes* are not simply students. They are the backbone of the *tariqas* and they owe obedience to those Marabouts. In sum, the Sufi brotherhoods in place, such as the Mouridism, *Qadiriya* and *Tijaniyya*, carried out the burden alone with the backing of the *talibes*, who participate in that effort by providing gifts (Hadiya) to the Marabouts.

However, the inability of the governments to bring schooling to everybody combined with the criticism some Muslims make about the Sufism have facilitated the implementation of a new type of *daaras* funded and run by foreign money and Saudi-educated teachers. This paper will call those schools modern *daaras*; the ones run by the Sufi brotherhoods will be named traditional *daaras*. In fact, the criticism made by the Islamic reformers is that they see “the broad currents of Sufism as a cancerous growth that had to be removed from the body of Islamic belief.”¹⁴ Those Islamic reformers are in reality the Wahhabi-ideologists who may be, at least, philosophically related to al-Qaeda.

In addition, some Marabouts are criticized for encouraging the begging of young kids in the big cities rather than teaching them their religion on any knowledge for what they were sent for. Whether this charge is justified or not, in Dakar for instance, thousands of young kids can be met in the streets begging for food or money; whereas, the modern *daaras* can feed and take care better of the *taalibes*. This situation is the ultimate reason why the parents are sending more and more young boys and girls to the modern *daaras* for their religious education.

In the context of extreme poverty, the foreign money and aid is more than welcomed with its doctrine of a more puritanical Islam. Hence, two lines of intellectuals, within the Islamic community have emerged. Yet, if nothing is done to correct this injustice and help more the tariqas, the talibes and the daaras may join the jihad sought by al-Qaeda. The success of Ben Laden's organization in that effort may be enhanced by the political, social and educational issues mentioned above.

Part 3

What Al Qaeda Wants in West Africa?

The best answer to the question of what AQ desires of West Africa has been given by the former Washington Post correspondent in the region, Douglas Farah. In the interview he gave on August 5th, 2004 to AllAfrica, he said: “Al-Qaeda looks for different things in different areas. It’s clear that they would like to expand their pool of potential recruits in the Islamic communities wherever they find them. What sub-Saharan Africa offers them that other parts of the world don’t are the abilities that they had in Liberia, to move into states that would protect them and operate with them for monetary reasons.”¹⁵ So, in West Africa, al-Qaeda is looking for recruits, safe haven, and resources to finance its operations. But, to fulfill those objectives, the organization may need to attain the following political and ideological objectives first.

The Political Objectives in West Africa

“The key document for understanding bin Laden’s strategic plan is his August 23, 1996 “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places.”¹⁶ In this document, al-Qaeda clearly defined its four main strategic objectives. One of them is “the overthrow of the corrupt Muslim regimes, and the restoration of the ‘pious Caliphate’.”¹⁷ Based upon the number of western African Muslims, estimated at approximately more than 140 million people,¹⁸ combined with the political history of the region, the West African regimes may be in danger. Indeed, the failure of the actual governments to restore order and prosperity over the

region may be favorable to propaganda which seeks to restore the successful Islamic caliphates of Kanka Moussa (Mansa Musa), Askia Mouhammad Toure, etc. The idea of greatness of those caliphates may be presented as an alternative to the existing political and societal systems. The Muslim communities may be mobilized either into political parties or rebellious movements to seize or capture political power. Al-Qaeda may also influence or infiltrate some groups opposed or rebellious to the local governments by providing weaponry and money in order to provoke chaos and desperation; two elements favorable to the creation of a safe haven for al-Qaeda. Islamism may rise again and replace political ideologies as it did in Algeria and the Philippines. In that sense, ethnicity may be a dangerous element that the Islamists may use to “divide and rule”. Nations like Nigeria and Ivory Coast may be vulnerable to that strategy. Other countries where ethnicity is not an issue, like Senegal, a strategy of crashing a *Tariqa* to another may be very dangerous.

In that sense, seizing power and establishing an Islamic regime may be its ultimate objective. Al-Qaeda may seek to push local groups to demand a political reform by means of an Islamic ideology. The failure of the traditional ideologies and political parties to develop West Africa in general may favor this ideology and so facilitate the recruitment of members of Islamic organizations, thus a pool of potential recruits for Al-Qaeda.

The Ideological Objectives

“Osama bin Laden and others founded al Qaeda on their desire for a puritanical Salafist-Islamist reform movement in the Muslim world.”¹⁹ This “Jihadi ideology is based on the religion Islam and refers to Suras of the Qur’ān, which calls on Muslim to defend their religion. This is one of Islam’s core concepts and means roughly translated “striving”, which denotes any attempt of a Muslim to follow the path of God, which does not necessarily include a violent

struggle though the Jihadi ideology interprets it that way.”²⁰ It is this misinterpretation that Al-Qaeda has used elsewhere and would likely use in West Africa to inculcate its doctrine to those educated in the Arabic school system. This potential Al-Qaeda target population may be found first in the *da’wa* process, which is the rhetoric prior to probable revolutionary actions against the local governments. Those students called *taalibes* may be receptive to that propaganda due to their frustration related to an exclusion from the public service opportunities. Indeed, despite their skills and knowledge, those former Arabic or Islamic students have few opportunities in the public system. If those are manipulated enough, al-Qaeda may gain a real advantage in terms of a recruitment strategy.

Islam is not yet a political identity in West Africa, beyond parts of Nigeria. It is still a cultural and religious identity. Making it a political identity in West Africa may be a necessary step for al-Qaeda’s recruitment strategy. If the organization becomes successful in transforming the political landscape into Islamic parties against non-Islamic parties, the whole region would be more likely to head into a direction that would be favorable to implementing an ideologically violent based-form of Islam that could be conducted by fanatic West African recruits. Already, countries like Mali and Nigeria are suspected to be breeding grounds for terrorism. As stated in the Annual Report of USAID/Mali FY 05, “the U.S. State Department (DOS), the European Command - the U.S. military command responsible for West and Central Africa -- and the United Nations have confirmed that Mali is a breeding ground for fundamentalism and possible terrorist networks.”²¹ As well, “Nigeria, with a Muslim population in the tens of millions, many of them poor, is sometimes seen as a potential base for Islamic extremists.”²²

Therefore, Al-Qaeda would attempt to achieve those goals by any means using those territories. Al-Qaeda has already used the West African diamond networks in Liberia and Sierra-

Leone. It is then likely that it will stay for recruits, if it is not done already. The GSPC may be the organization which will handle that.

Besides political, ethnic and religious turbulence, the region contains huge resources. However, they do not improve the lives of the populations. Sometimes, only the local leadership and few privileged take an advantage from that wealth. In fact, "Poverty per se does not cause terrorism. But hopelessness, despair, and unemployment in the face of large discrepancies in economic opportunity may feed political rage. Efforts must be made to assure, in so far as possible, equitable employment and advancement opportunities for young people, especially those living in zones of conflict or marginalized subgroups."²³ Otherwise, the West African region would be in danger to be taken over by Muslim fanatics or al-Qaeda operatives.

Part 4

What GSPC (AQ In Maghreb) May be Doing Now in West Africa?

As mentioned above, AQ is looking for safe havens, resources, and recruits in the West African region. Indeed, in his book entitled “Blood from Stones: the Secret Financial Network of Terror”, Douglas Farah has demonstrated that AQ is already present in the region and is fulfilling the first two objectives. According to him, the Liberian and Sierra-Leonean diamond networks served to laundry AQ’s cash prior to the 9/11 attacks. In addition, the failed states of Liberia and Sierra Leone have been used to harbor Ben Laden’s top agents, such as Ali Abdelseoud Mohammed.²⁴ This part of Africa has played the role of a sanctuary for Osama Ben Laden’s organization. The former Liberian president, Charles Taylor, and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, had been the key players allowing AQ to operate safely in the region.

Even though “the CIA and other intelligence services” have “dismissed” Douglas Farah’s conclusions²⁵, there is today no doubt about the presence of AQIM in West Africa. Therefore, it is essential, even urgent, to determine what the organization is doing now. Let us assume that Douglas Farah is correct in his conclusions regarding AQ looking for recruits in West Africa because of its difficulties in Afghanistan. Consequently, the situation in the ground combined with the state of the Muslim communities in the region may be receptive to AQ’s propaganda. In

fact, “messages can be delivered to a target in a variety of ways: media (television, radio, print, movies), personal (familial, friend, or social networks), religious (spiritual advisors/students, prayer groups, newsletters or proselytizing), and through education (textbooks, curricula, student/teacher relationships).”²⁶

Indeed, Al-Qaeda would likely use the last three approaches to deliver its message in order to recruit eventual terrorists. In that sense, personal relations will play an important role. Because of the nature of the West African societies, personal relations may be a leading force in the delivery of AQ’s propaganda. “Blood is thicker than water,”²⁷ Osama once said about his ties with the Ben Laden family. This type of personal relationship has the advantage to ensure the secrecy of the recruitment process. Marc Sageman would argue that, “so far, the concept of recruitment as an active organizational process is not relevant for the global Salafi jihad.”²⁸ Nevertheless, he recognizes the importance of social bonds in joining the jihad.²⁹

The second method of messaging that Ben Laden’s organization may be using now is the religious way. Proselytizing may be central in this process. Influential imams and *daara* teachers may lead those efforts to influence the young people; the *talibes-Serigne* (student-teacher) relations as well. The most likely target in this propaganda may probably be the *taalibes*. The mosques would not be the place where the recruitment would take place. Instead, the *daaras* may be the square where recruiting may start.

The third way, education, would be the most powerful and dangerous way to transmit and entertain AQ’s message. This is a reliable way to make sure that the ideology has a future by growing the seeds that will fuel the recruitment strategy. It should be kept in mind that, those methods would not be employed separately or in phases, but they are likely to take place simultaneously. Funding *Daaras* by Islamic charities may be an interesting way to achieve that

goal. Daaras may be an ideal place to indoctrinate the young kids sent by their parents to learn about their religion. The motivation necessary for this type of recruitment may be found in the *da'wa* (preaching) and training that may be delivered by those former Arabic students.

In fact, underdevelopment did not allow the Information Revolution to take place in West Africa. In some places, even a television or a computer may seem to be a sign of fortune. Hence, it is unlikely that the “media way” would be used. So, this paper will skip that approach. The Daaras are the most likely cell that the organization may seek to infiltrate. Like the Madrasah in Pakistan and Afghanistan, al-Qaeda may build *medersa* to grow seeds for future terrorists and hire those marginalized Arabic or Islamic intellectuals. This would be the most dangerous recruiting process due its long-term character. West Africa may be vulnerable to that threat because of the governments’ lack of control over the school systems and educational curricula.

If it achieves its ideological and economic objectives, al-Qaeda may now run an effective recruitment campaign to destabilize the local and weak African governments. The most likely terrain for that operation would be what could be thought of as the “West African Islamic Crescent”: Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Niger and Nigeria (see figure 1). For that purpose, different approaches may be examined. It should be pointed out that recruitment from the internet is unlikely to take place, at least at a large scale, due to infrastructural reasons.

For this type of recruitment campaign the youth attending the *daaras* would be the target population. This fragile population will be very interesting to monitor in order to undermine AQIM’s efforts to recruit them to serve its cause.

Part 5

Counter-recruitment Strategies in West Africa: “Barrage” and “Denial”

Any attempt to fight terrorism without understanding the recruitment process is doomed to failure. Indeed “understanding how that recruitment process works is the critical first step in undermining recruitment by al-Qaeda and its affiliates.”³⁰ This fight probably will not take place in the cyber domain due to infrastructural shortfalls in the region. The messaging would be conducted through personal relations, education and *da’wa* (proselytizing). However, messaging to be efficient and persuasive must be accompanied by sound recruitment techniques. Therefore, in this chapter, the different recruitment approaches AQ may be using will be explored before recommending **preventive** and **curative** strategies to thwart the recruitment process using all the national instruments of power (IOP): diplomatic, informational, military and economic (DIME). The preventive actions recommended here are referred to as “Barrage”; the curative actions, “Denial”.

Therefore, in order to effectively and efficiently tackle Al-Qaeda’s recruitment efforts in West Africa, this paper will propose to divide the ECOWAS territory into two major sectors: North (desert and semi-desert) and South (jungle). The Sector North will encompass the following states: Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Nigeria and Niger (“**the West African Islamic Crescent**”). This sector is the most populated with Muslims (see figure 1). The sector South will include Benin, Togo, Ghana, Burkina-Faso, Ivory-Coast, Liberia, Sierra-Leone, Guinea, and

Guinea-Bissau. This is the less Muslim populated part of the region (see figure 1), but it also the most troubled. Both sectors should be under the command of the JFC commanding the Combined ECOWAS Standby Force (ESF)/AFRICOM Task Force/Counterterrorism (CT) that should be established jointly by the two organizations.



Figure 1. “The West African Islamic Crescent”.

The Recruitment Approaches

The RAND Corporation has developed four models of recruitment that AQ may be using to recruit³¹. These are: the Funnel, the Net, the Seed Crystal, and the Infection technique. The Funnel approach “implies, potential recruits start at one end of the process and are transformed, after some culling along the way, into dedicated group members when they emerge at the other end.”³² This type of recruitment may be very effective when conducted in schools where kids

are transformed and shaped in a way favorable to the organization. This may be the privileged pattern to approach the *taalibes* in West Africa.

The Net pattern is meant to approach the target population equitably.³³ This approach may work best in environments where the target audience is seen as homogenous. A *Daara*, for instance, seems to be a good example. “This is the approach used when there is little serious opposition to the group in the audience’s environment, or in conjunction with other approaches.”³⁴ It may well work in combination with the Infection approach. The latter, literally, is intended to infect the “body politic”³⁵ of a given government by introducing a “germ” (recruiter within the organization) which based on his credibility will influence the target population. This scenario may work very well in an environment where relationship between teacher and student are sacred like in West Africa. This is certainly the most fearful technique that is likely to work in the educational system described earlier.

The Seed Crystal model is used on “a target audience [which] is so remote or so inaccessible that a trusted agent cannot be put into it, nor can a media net be cast over it.”³⁶ This is not the case in West Africa. Therefore, this approach will not be considered as a probable way AQ would use to recruit. Thus, AQ’s recruitment process concerning the *talibes* is likely to be the Funnel, the Net and the Infection shapes. Those techniques, depending on the context, may be employed separately or simultaneously.

The Preventive Counterrecruitment Strategies: “Barrage”

The preventive actions recommended here are called “Barrage”. It refers to all economic and informational actions taken to make the Koranic schools in Sector North immune to AQ’s influence. It can be described as a shield over the Sector North sustained by a special focus on the Human Intelligence (HUMINT). Therefore, to thwart al-Qaeda’s recruitment campaign, the

economic and informational IOPs will be dominant in this strategy. The first preventive recommendation to be made is the integration of the Arabic school system into the governmental or public system; put simply, fund the Koranic schools. The model developed by the US Embassy (Dakar)/USAID in Northern Senegal (see figure 2), the area with the most important concentration of Koranic schools, is the proper approach. Indeed, this model, called Koranic School Pilot Project, is “implemented by Counterpart International and funded by USAID and the US Embassy.” This project, as shown in Fig.2, “focuses on finding solutions to address the needs of over 3,800 students attending the rural Koranic schools of [Northern Senegal].”³⁷ This will limit or prevent any influence or need for foreign funding from North Africa, where AQIM is very active. So, spreading this approach is what the “Barrage” strategy is all about. In doing so, the CJTF/AFRICOM/ECOWAS/CT will ensure to limit AQ’s influence or propaganda from Northern and Eastern Africa to attain the “West African Islamic Crescent”. Thus, “Barrage” will disrupt the Net, Infection and Funnel recruitment techniques that AQ may use in the region.

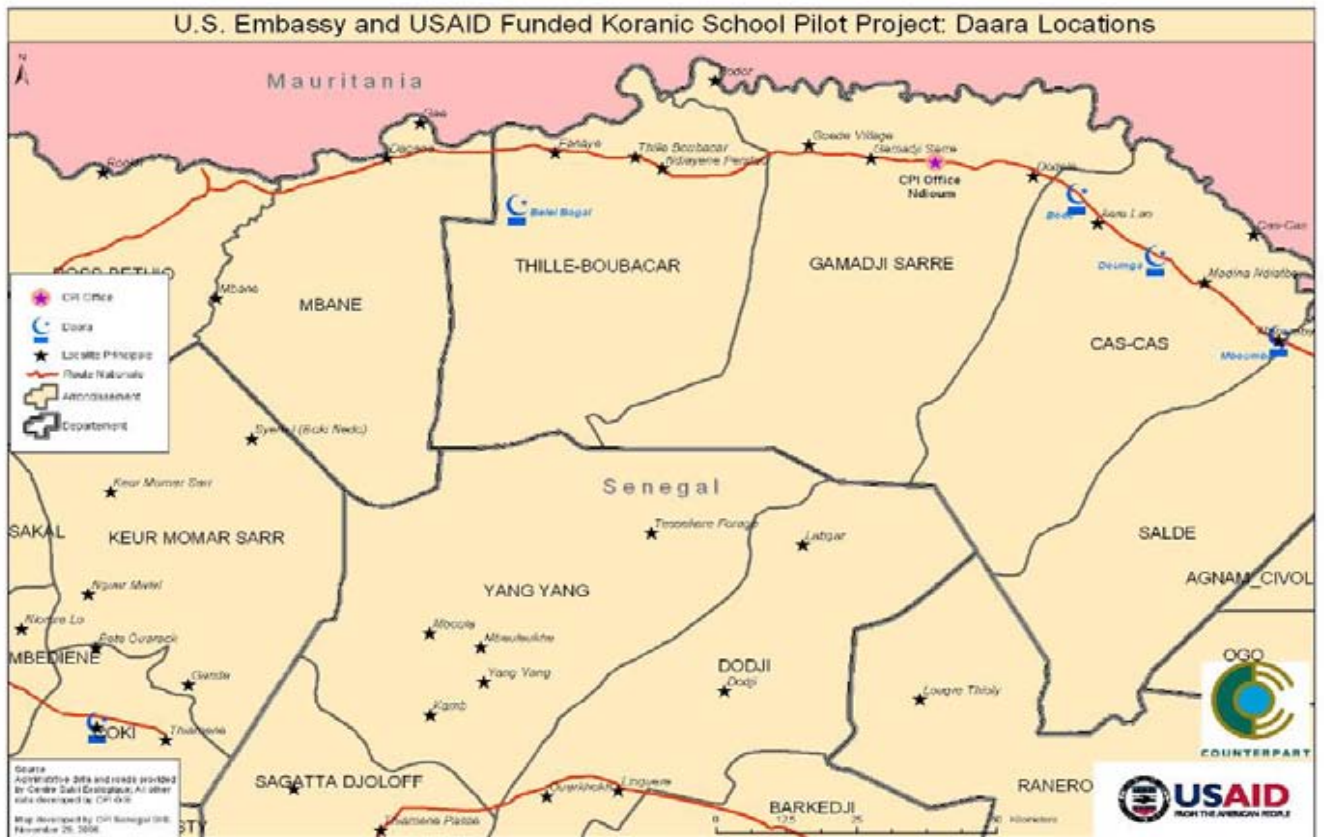


Figure 2. The US Embassy/USAID funded Koranic School Pilot Project in Northern Senegal.

The following actions should be taken in CJTF-North with the integration of all the instruments of power (IOP):

- List all the daaras at the vicinity of the borders and assess their needs
- Create a bridge to allow those former students of the daaras to be inserted in the public service system
- Enhance the capacities and capabilities of the leaders of the brotherhoods in terms of anti-messaging AQ's propaganda
- Create community radios, sponsored by the Sufi Brotherhoods, to propagate the real message of Islam; Community Learning and Information Centers (CLICs) may do the job (remember we must win the battle of hearts and minds)

The second recommendation is a legal and diplomatic approach to deal with the issue. To be efficiently implemented, “Barrage” needs a piece of legislation to track and control all foreign funds destined to the charitable organizations and Koranic schools in Sector North. The ECOWAS General Assembly should also pass another bill to enforce the governmental agencies to reserve positions and jobs for those students after completion of their studies in whatever domain they are working at. Finally, using the diplomatic IOP, the US and ECOWAS must work together to bring the other countries not members of The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) to join. In Sector North, only Gambia is not member of the TSCTP. So, bringing it in must be a priority. As a reminder, according to Douglas Farah, several shipments and arms trafficking went through Gambia in the “Blood Diamond” deal.³⁸ Therefore, it is critical to integrate Gambia into the organization. The Pan-Sahel countries are Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Niger, as well as Nigeria and Senegal. It is a multi-faceted, multi-year U.S. Government (USG) program aimed at defeating terrorist organizations by:

- strengthening regional counterterrorism capabilities,
- enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region’s security forces,
- promoting democratic governance,
- discrediting terrorist ideology, and
- reinforcing bilateral military ties with the United States”³⁹

The last recommendation is an emphasis on HUMINT. As Douglas Farah has put it before the House Committee on International Relations Subcommittee in Africa, on April 1st, 2004, “societies in which telephones are rare, Internet communications limited to a small percentage of the population in the capital and business deals depend largely on familial relationships, our high-tech monitoring systems are of little use.”⁴⁰ In that respect, to be

effective and avoid any kind of competition between the CJTF and the TSCTP, the command relationship between the two organizations must be clearly defined; their actions must be complementary.

The Curative Counterrecruitment Strategies: “Denial”

Any attempt to thwart AQ’s efforts to recruit in Sector North is doomed to failure if the Sector South is not cleared from Ben Laden’s operatives. The Military power is the dominant IOP recommended in this approach. “Denial” is the strategy proposed here to crush AQ in the Sector South. “Denial” refers to all military actions undertaken to deny AQ to access the resources of the Sector South. The CJTF must be empowered and supported by a carte blanche from the local governments and assistance from AFRICOM, in the form of Foreign Internal Defense (FID) or the use of Special Operations Forces (SOF), to operate and track down any suspected terrorist movement within the sector. AQIM being a transnational organization with tentacles everywhere, the CJTF-CT, to be effective, must have transnational authority to pursue and dismantle any terrorist group in any given lawless and stateless areas or ungoverned spaces throughout the ECOWAS perimeter. The CJTF must be equipped with enough manpower and resources to conduct sound intelligence operations in areas as inaccessible as the Sector South, which is a deep forest favorable for hiding terrorists and their activities. It must be given powers in order to be able to initiate and coordinate actions between the countries’ customs and border authorities. As in Sector North, HUMINT will be a critical aspect of the success of the CJTF’s operations.

Here the CJTF-HOA (Horn of Africa) is the model. Therefore, the CJTF/AFRICOM/ECOWAS/CT will be referred to as CJTF-WA (West Africa). Its essence should be training, logistical assistance and intelligence support. As in East Africa, the TSCPT

and CJTF-WA must “provide the base for U.S. counterterrorism programs.”⁴¹ The geographical advantage offered by the coastline should be considered to create a squadron dedicated for maritime patrol. Countries like Senegal and Ghana should take the lead in this project due to their experiences in the domain. Also, the presence of the UN in the sector should be thought of for coordination purposes, especially with the UN missions in Ivory Coast and Liberia.

Part 6

Conclusion

The GWOT will not be won if West Africa remains on the bottom list of the US priorities. The world will be less safe if any real strategy is employed there to stop AQ from recruiting young Africans to conduct its operations in the West. First and foremost, this paper explained how the conditions on the ground are favoring the recruiting ambitions of al-Qaeda. The West African ground, due to tough economic and religious situation, is being very receptive to AQ's ideology and propaganda. Thus, if nothing is done to alleviate the suffering of the people and maintain a fairer educational system, AQ will take advantage of the situation and take-over the region by controlling its resources and recruit potential terrorists.

Osama Ben Laden's organization will fulfill these goals by achieving political and ideological objectives favorable to its cause. In doing so, the West, particularly the US will have to fight a better and more resilient global Islamic insurgency. Nevertheless, the situation is not yet desperate. The US can still help the ECOWAS to change this trend. A combination of the strategies of "Barrage" and "Denial" conducted by a well sustained CJTF-WA is the best option to counter AQ's recruitment attempts.

In sum, working together, and urging the Africans to break the meaningless borders drawn by former colonialists, in order to head toward a real economic and political integration of the ECOWAS, is the real and sustainable solution to change the conditions on the group. No matter what kind of help and assistance the US would provide, no matter what strategy would be

adopted, no matter what CJTF would be put in place, if the local governments are not “governments of the People, by the People and for the People”, AQ will prevail.

Notes

- ¹ www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook
- ² www.usip.org
- ³ www.nytimes.com
- ⁴ “Africa and the War on Terrorism”, edited by John Davis, Howard University, USA p.103
- ⁵ George Bush, USMA (West Point) speech, June 1st 2002
- ⁶ Douglas Farah, House subcommittee
- ⁷ www.usip.org
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Mahmood Mamdani, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim”, p.51
- ¹⁰ Philip Curtin et al, “African History: From Earliest Times to Independence”, p.347
- ¹¹ Ibid., p.127
- ¹² Ousmane Kane, “Intellectuels non Europhones”, p.8
- ¹³ African History, p.172
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p.173
- ¹⁵ www.allAfrica.com
- ¹⁶ Howard and Sawyer, “Terrorism and Counterterrorism”, p.392
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p.393
- ¹⁸ CRS Report for Congress
- ¹⁹ Strategic Influence vs. Terrorist Recruiting, p.15
- ²⁰ HUMSEC journal
- ²¹ USAID/Mali Annual Report FY 05
- ²² Jean Herskovits, Nigeria’s Rigged Democracy, ACSC NSCB, p273
- ²³ “Tangled Roots”, p.438
- ²⁴ www.allAfrica.com
- ²⁵ Farah Douglas, “Blood from Stones”, p.90
- ²⁶ www.ccc.nps.navy.mil/publications/
- ²⁷ Michael Scheuer, “Through our Enemies Eyes”, p.90
- ²⁸ Sageman, “Understanding Terror Networks”, p.124
- ²⁹ Ibid., p.125
- ³⁰ Stephen Johnson, “Strategic Influence vs. Terrorist recruiting, p.4
- ³¹ www.rand.org
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Koranic Schools Pilot Project, Third Quarterly Report.
- ³⁸ Farah Douglas, “Blood From Stones”, p.40;51
- ³⁹ www.africom.mil

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⁴⁰ Farah Douglas, House Subcommittee Hearing, April 1st, 2004

⁴¹ Jessica Piombo, “Terrorism and US Counter-Terrorism Programs in Africa”:

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