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THE SOMALI SHABAAB MILITIAS AND THEIR JIHADIST NETWORKS IN THE WEST

Dirk Baehr

The Somali Shabaab militias, far from being as well known as al-Qaeda, over the recent years have adopted a much more focused terror strategy which is aimed at the international community. To do this they are using young people from the West, who they recruit either via the Internet or through their global networks. The aim of their strategy is to indoctrinate and radicalise them so that they will spread Shabaab propaganda or even become suicide bombers. This strategy increases the danger of terrorist attacks in the West because it is very likely that the Shabaab are aiming to bring terror to Western cities rather than just limiting their attacks to East Africa.

Since the return of the Ethiopian military in 2009 such terror scenarios look much more likely, as large parts of the south and centre of Somalia are under the control of the Shabaab militias' jihadist movement. Only small areas of the capital Mogadishu are still in the hands of the Somali transitional government under Sharif Sheikh Ahmed and his allies from the African Union. By controlling a large part of Somalia the Shabaab militias, which grew out of an earlier youth movement, are now in a position to build numerous training camps in which new recruits are prepared for Jihad in Somalia and elsewhere. In recent years the militias have become the best organised and most influential rebel organisation in the region. They are led by Ahmed Abdi Godane, who calls himself Sheik Abu Zubeyr, and who issues orders to the highly diversified group of

up to 6,000 fighters from the port town of Kismayo. The highest organ of the Shabaab is the Shura Council chaired by important leaders such as Ibrahim Haji Jama and Fuad Mohamed Qalaf.

THE ROOTS OF THE SHABAAB MILITIAS

The roots of the Shabaab militias go back to the 1980s. The Shabaab grew out of two older Islamist movements that were heavily influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The first of these was called the Islamic Union (Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya). The then leader of its militant wing, Dahir Hassan Aweys, was later the key figure in the founding of the Shabaab militias. However, the main branch of today's Shabaab grew out of the Union of Islamic Courts (Ittihad al-Mahakim al-Islamiya), which was founded in 1994 in Mogadishu. Its leader was Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, who since 2009 has been the leader of the country's transitional government.

Experts have suggested two possible reasons as to why the Shabaab was founded. The most commonly cited reason is that during the chaotic situation caused by years of civil war in Somalia the Union of Islamic Courts decided sometime between 2004 and 2006 to form the Shabaab militias as a military wing in order to establish some stability. So the Shabaab, founded by Aweys and his *protégé* Adan Hashi Ayro, served initially as militias to fight the U.S.-backed warlords in Somalia. The second goal was to establish a government that would create a new state system in Somalia. In the early years between 400 and 500 jihadists fought for the Union of Islamic Courts, including some who had been trained in Afghanistan by al-Qaeda. They could also count on up to 5,000 mercenaries, who were generally motivated by national interests rather than jihad.

During the chaotic situation caused by years of civil war in Somalia the Union of Islamic Courts decided to form the Shabaab militias in order to establish some stability.

A second reason given for the founding of the Shabaab militias was the 2004 U.S. bombing of a Union of Islamic Courts safe house. The USA suspected that three of those responsible for the bombings at the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 were in the safe house. Fazul

Abdullah Muhammad,¹ Salih Ali Nabhan and Tariq Abdullah had lived under the protection of the Shabaab militias for some time but were in fact not in the safe house at the time of the bombing. As a result of the U.S. attack the Islamists decided to form a military arm in order, as they said at the time, "to safeguard Islam and to protect the Somali nation from its enemies".²

At the beginning of 2006 the Union of Islamic Courts' militias defeated a number of U.S.-backed warlords and for six months ruled over southern Somalia and Mogadishu. As the USA was not prepared to tolerate any Islamists in government they formed an "anti terror alliance", led by Ethiopian troops. The anti-terror alliance occupied the southern part of Somalia in December 2006. Many supporters of the Union of Islamic Courts were forced to flee Somalia. Only the Shabaab militias stayed in the country in that they only fled as far as villages on the border with Kenya. From there they organised the underground resistance to the Ethiopian army.

As a result of the widespread perception amongst the Somali people that the Ethiopians were carrying out a brutal occupation and that the U.S. were supporting this anti-terror alliance, an anti-Ethiopian and anti-Western mood developed in Somalia and among Somali migrants in the West which became so deep-seated that many accused the West of wanting to destroy Islam. For the Shabaab militias this resentment against Ethiopia and the USA provided an ideal opportunity to start a national and anti-Ethiopian campaign, which helped to garner support for the militias. The Shabaab called for the liberation of Somalia from the Ethiopian occupiers. Many

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1 | According to the Kenyan police Fazul Abdullah Muhammad was killed on June 8, 2011 in the Somali capital Mogadishu. Members of the Shabaab militias had previously reported on the death of the terrorist, who had been wanted for many years. According to media reports Muhammed was the head of al-Qaeda in East Africa. Cf. "Ostafrikanischer Al-Qaida-Chef getötet," *Süddeutsche Online*, June 12, 2011, <http://sueddeutsche.de/politik/1.1107740> (accessed July 13, 2011).

2 | Anonymous, "Somalia's al-Shabaab reconstitutes fighting forces," *CTC Sentinel*, Vol. 1, Issue 3 (February 2008), 17-19, here 17.

Somalis saw this call for the liberation of their country as a justification for the armed resistance by the militias, even though they hated the Shabaab for their Islamist ideology. As a result the Shabaab received active as well as passive support for their fight against the Ethiopian troops. This change of mood amongst the people meant that the Shabaab were able to gain enormous power and influence in a very short space of time and the Shabaab militias were instrumental in driving the Ethiopian military out of southern Somalia between 2007 and 2009.³

The Shabaab called for the liberation of Somalia from the Ethiopian occupiers. Many Somalis saw this call as a justification for the armed resistance by the militias.

During the recapture of the south of the country the militant wing of the Union of Islamic Courts split with its moderate Islamist leader, Sharif Sheikh Ahmed, because of significant differences of opinion over how Somalia should be governed in the future. Aweys' goal was to free Somalia from the Ethiopian troops and to establish an Islamic legal system, which would be based not so much on the Somali Sufi tradition, but more on the interpretation used by the Taliban in Afghanistan. Ahmed rejected this type of legal system because the jihadist interpretation of Islam had nothing in common with the Somali Sufi tradition and would therefore be alien to the Somali people. Sharif Sheikh Ahmed also didn't agree with Adan Hashi Ayro who favoured an international orientation of the movement. Ayro's goal was to incorporate the Somali movement into the network of global jihadist movements. Their campaign should not just focus on Somalia but they should follow Al Qaeda's example in pursuing global Jihad.⁴ The final split between the two wings occurred when Sharif Sheikh Ahmed entered into an alliance with the non-Muslim state of Eritrea in September 2007. For the Shabaab militias this alliance was a serious betrayal of their "Islamic" fight against the infidels.⁵

- 3 | Ken Menkhaus, "Violent Islamic Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America," Hearing before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, March 11, 2009, 5.
- 4 | Angel Rabasa, "Al-Qaeda Terrorism and Islamist Extremism in East Africa," Real Institute Elcano (ARI), 96/2009, 4 et seq.
- 5 | Lorenzo Vidino, Raffaello Pantucci and Evan Kohlmann, "Bringing global Jihad to the Horn of Africa: al Shabaab, Western Fighters, and the Sacralization of the Somali Conflict", *African Studies*, Vol. 3, Issue 4 (2010), 216-238, here 221.

At the end of 2007 Aweys also split away from the militias, as even he considered that the Shabaab's new international direction had become too radical. Adan Hashi Ayro became the de facto leader of the Shabaab militia after Aweys moved to Eritrea, where, together with Omar Imam, he set up "Hizb al Islam" in 2009, an Islamist group that has become very influential in Somalia. Under Ayro's authority the organisational structures of the Shabaab militias changed. He built numerous decentralised and independent cells which assumed authority in southern and central Somalia. The Shabaab established three cells to look after specific geographic areas. The Bay and Bakool region and the Juba region are still controlled by Mukhtar Robow and Hassan al-Turki. The third cell was led by Mukhtar Abu Zubair (Ahmed Abdi Godane) during the initial phase of the reorganisation. Abu Zubair had the authority over Mogadishu. After their leader Ayro was killed in May 2008 by an American drone attack Abu Zubair took over the leadership of the Shabaab militias.⁶

THE SHABAAB AND THEIR CONTACTS TO AL-QAEDA

Initial contact between al-Qaeda and Somali groups was established as early as the beginning of the 1990s when Osama bin Laden lived in the Sudan for a short time. The main al-Qaeda cell in East Africa was based in the Kenyan capital Nairobi and included the three main architects of the terror attacks in Darussalam and Nairobi in 1998. While Somali jihadists were not involved in the attacks on the embassy buildings, there was some contact at that time with activists from the Islamic Union (Al-Ittihad al-Islamiya). Aweys, for instance, was in contact with Mohammed Atef (Abu Hafs al-Masri), who was an important al-Qaeda commander. In 1993 Abu Hafs sent four al-Qaeda training officers to Somalia to train members of the Islamic Union. These early contacts led to much closer long-term cooperation between al-Qaeda and the armed wing of the Somali movement. From the end

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6 | Jacqueline Page, "Jihadi Arena Report: Somalia – Development of Radical Islamism and Current Implications," International Institute of Counter-Terrorism, Herzliya/Israel, March 22, 2010, <http://ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articleid/814/currentpage/3/Default.aspx> (accessed July 13, 2011).

of the 1990s Somali jihadists like Adan Hashi Ayro started travelling to Afghanistan for several years for further training and to take part in Jihad. According to al-Qaeda propaganda videos the Somalis were trained in guerrilla warfare. As part of their training, Somali Islamists were involved in numerous operations within the Afghan theatre of operations in order to put their training into practice.

When Abu Zubair took over the Shabaab militias they started jihadist Internet campaigns that were clearly influenced by al-Qaeda propaganda strategies. Campaigns were originally focused on local or national objectives, but under Abu Zubair the Somali jihadists expanded their propaganda on the Internet to include a global agenda that attached great importance to international issues. Since then the Shabaab has also produced numerous video messages in both English and Arabic to draw the attention of the wider international public to their cause. Like al-Qaeda, the militias want to get the message across that there is a global conflict between Islam and the West. Current conflicts, that are actually more national in nature, take on an international dimension with the Shabaab because they maintain that the West is behind the attacks and wants to destroy Islam.⁷ According to the Shabaab, the USA in particular is heavily involved in Somalia because they have had a negative influence on Somalia's affairs since the fall of the Siad Barre regime in 1993. In one of the Shabaab's first Internet messages Abu Zubair made reference to the thousands of Somalis killed by the Americans in "Operation Restore Hope" in 1993. After this operation failed he claimed that the Americans then supported the Ethiopians and encouraged them to occupy Somalia and lay waste to it. So for the Shabaab the decision to treat the USA as an enemy is fully justified because they are convinced the Americans want to destroy Somalia.⁸

Shabaab has also produced numerous video messages in both English and Arabic. The militias want to get the message across that there is a global conflict between Islam and the West.

7 | Vidino et al., "Bringing global Jihad to the Horn of Africa," n. 5, 216-238, 224 et sqq.

8 | "Important Announcement from the General Headquarters of the Shabaab al-Mujahideen: Declaration of a New Praiseworthy Terrorism Campaign in Response of the Tyrants America", April 5, 2008, <http://nefafoundation.org/file/FeaturedDocs/somaliashabaab0408.pdf> (accessed July 13, 2011).

Abu Zubair in a message aimed at al-Qaeda made the point that the Shabaab considered the USA and the United Nations to be a danger and that they should be fought against. What is obvious from this statement is that the Shabaab had definitely joined al-Qaeda's fight against the West back in 2008. Only two months after this statement there were suicide bomb attacks against United Nations facilities in the Puntland region. These terror attacks resulted in the death of twenty people. One of the attackers was a young man from the USA with a Somali migrant background who had travelled from Minneapolis to Somalia at the end of 2007 to join the Shabaab militias. Shirwa Ahmed was the first American to carry out a suicide bomb attack outside of the USA.

THE SHABAAB AND THEIR NETWORKS IN THE WEST

With the Shabaab aiming their propaganda at the wider international community Somalia became a new centre for global jihadism. More and more young jihadist sympathisers are travelling to this East African country to take part in the Shabaab's Jihad. Up to 2,000 foreign jihadists are currently helping the Shabaab militias with their guerrilla war, including Pakistanis, Afghans and Arabs, but apparently the majority of foreign fighters come from the West.⁹ Since 2005 hundreds of young Muslims, whose parents fled from Somalia in the 1990s, have been travelling back to their parents' homeland to fight alongside the Shabaab against the transitional government and foreign UN troops in Somalia. Intelligence agencies believe that the Shabaab have built up numerous networks in Western countries to recruit young Muslims for their cause in Somalia. These networks have been extremely successful in cities which have a large Somali immigrant population and since 2006/7 have sent a lot of young Muslims to Somalia. Because of the chaos in the country following years of civil war it has been easy for the Shabaab to set up training camps where these young Muslims are trained for global Jihad.

The Shabaab have built up numerous networks in Western countries to recruit young Muslims. These networks have been extremely successful in cities which have a large Somali immigrant population.

9 | Florian Flade, "Somalia ist die neue Keimzelle des Terrors," *Die Welt Online*, October 5, 2010, <http://welt.de/politik/ausland/article10095155.html> (accessed July 25, 2011).

THE SHABAAB AND THEIR AMERICAN NETWORKS

American intelligence agencies have found increasing evidence that there is a growing number of young Muslims in the USA who are attracted the jihadist ideology of the Shabaab militias and want to fight in Somalia as Mujahedeen. It is often young Muslims who have a Somali migrant background. In the cities of Minneapolis, Columbus, Seattle and San Diego there are large numbers of Somalis who fled to the USA in the mid-1990s because of the civil war. Up to 200,000 Somalis live in the USA according to estimates by U.S. authorities.¹⁰ The majority of these Somalis live peacefully and unobtrusively within American society, but a growing number of young Muslims are becoming radicalised, especially since the Shabaab militias have started producing more English language propaganda. The Somali militias have developed an effective international strategy to recruit numerous young Muslims for their Jihad. They are producing more jihadist propaganda videos to stimulate the interest of young Muslims who have a Somali background but who have grown up in the West. Their message is designed to stimulate these young people to take part in the global Jihad that is being spearheaded by al-Qaeda. The message that the Shabaab want to get across to these young Muslims is that they will become heroes if they take part in the global Jihad. For some of these young people the attention they get from the jihadist groups gives them an enormous sense of self-worth. The Shabaab is specifically trying to encourage young Muslims with an ethnic Somali background to defend their old homeland. The strategy is aimed at making them feel guilty for living a trouble-free life in the West and not helping the people of Somalia, who have been living under civil war for decades, even though they could if they really wanted to.

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A second strategy of the Shabaab militias is to establish networks in the West that target young people at mosques or in youth organisations with a view to indoctrinating

10 | Philip Mudd, "Violent Islamic Extremism: Al-Shabaab Recruitment in America," Hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, United States Senate, March 11, 2009, 2.

them. Young American men and women are told that it is their duty to fight against the enemies of Islam. Imams also preach that the fight against Ethiopians in Somalia is the holy duty of all individual Muslims. Mosques like the Abu-Al-Bakr mosque in Minneapolis, which is primarily attended by members of a Somali community, are key targets for the jihadists in their quest to attract new recruits. Intelligence agencies have been keeping a close eye on those jihadist networks that had good contacts with the leaders and imams of local mosques and who seek to make initial contact with young Muslims at youth programmes organised by the mosques. Most of the young Muslims are probably in fact spoken to away from the mosques themselves. Evidence gathered from young Muslims who have been arrested suggests that they met people who often invited them to cafes and restaurants, where they were indoctrinated. Later they would be invited to join the Jihad in Somalia.

For some young men the desire to be involved in some great adventure was so great that they accepted the invitation almost immediately. One of these young men is Osman Ahmed Saleh, who testified in court that he had taken part in secret meetings in Minneapolis where several young Muslims were encouraged to join the Jihad.

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According to Saleh the jihadists involved even went so far as to pay for plane tickets to Somalia for some of them.¹¹ This goes to prove that only a network with considerable financial resources could be involved in this kind of recruitment of young Muslims. This is why the experts are convinced that they are dealing with a global network, developed by the Shabaab, to finance the recruitment of people to their movement.¹² Despite numerous arrests in the USA, over 40 young men have succeeded in travelling to Somalia without being stopped by the security services.

11 | Michael Taarnby and Lars Hallundbaek, "Al-Shabaab. The Internationalization of Militant Islamism in Somalia and the Implications for Radicalisation Processes in Europe," Danish Ministry of Justice, February 26, 2010, 58.

12 | Christopher Harnisch, "The Terror Threat from Somalia, The Internationalization of Al Shabaab," Report by the Critical Threats Project of the American Enterprise Institute, February 12, 2010, 29 et sqq.

HOW AN AMERICAN BECAME A LEADER OF THE SHABAAB

One high-profile example of a young man who joined the Shabaab in Somalia is Omar Hammami, who was born in the USA, and who uses the pseudonym Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki on the Internet.¹³ He belongs to a small group of Americans who travelled to Somalia but who does not have a Somali background. His father Shafik Hammami is a Syrian who travelled to the USA in 1972 to study engineering. In Alabama he met Debra Hadley, who came from a conservative Christian family, and married her soon afterwards. After graduation Omar's father got a job in a transport company in Alabama.

Omar Hammami spent his childhood living with his parents in a small town near Alabama. As a child he was raised by his mother as a Christian and regularly attended a local Baptist church. However, when he reached puberty he lost interest in Christianity and turned increasingly towards the Muslim faith. In the beginning Hammami prayed at the same congregation in Mobile that his father attended. However a trip to Damascus made such an impression on him that he stopped wearing Western clothing and started to follow a much stricter interpretation of Islam. Two events appear to have had a significant influence on Omar Hammami's further radicalisation. The attacks of September 11, 2001 seem to have had a lasting effect on him as he was of the view that Muslims could never have carried out such a terror attack. Secondly, he came into contact with a group of Salafists led by the convert Tony Salvatore Sylvester. Sylvester is a prominent preacher within the American Salafist movement "Quran and Sunnah Society". Hammami became so radicalised by mixing in these circles that within only a few months he had made the decision to join the Jihad. The Internet proved to be the ideal way to make contact with international jihadists, as groups such as the Shabaab militias had been increasingly posting propaganda on the Internet since 2005.¹⁴

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13 | Jerome Bjelopera and Mark Randol, "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating A Complex Threat," CRS Report Report for Congress, December 7, 2010, 16.

14 | Andrea Elliott, "The Jihadist Next Door," *New York Times*, January 31, 2010, 1-15.

In the middle of 2006 Omar Hammami travelled to Egypt with Daniel Joseph Maldonado, an American convert he had met through an English-speaking jihadist web forum. From there they planned to travel on to Somalia to join the Shabaab militias and by the end of 2006 they were both in Mogadishu. While Maldonado's stay in Somalia was short-lived because he was captured by the Kenyan military, Hammami's rise through the ranks of the Shabaab militia organisation proved to be quite remarkable. During the first few months he was given military training in a camp run by Hassan al-Turki. From there it appears that he was promoted to a leadership role within the militias in a very short space of time.

The Shabaab used him to create propaganda to attract other young people from the West. From 2007 onwards he produced propaganda videos and audio messages for the Shabaab under the pseudonym Abu Mansoor Al-Amriki. Hammami made his first public appearance in an interview with *Al Jazeera* in September 2007. After that he regularly produced video messages or songs that glorified the Jihad in an attempt to convince young Muslims to join the Jihad in Somalia. In a video message on April 5, 2009 Hammami claimed that the reason he travelled so far from his family to join the fight, and didn't just stay at home enjoying his Western lifestyle, was because he wanted to face the enemies of Islam and to fight against them. Hammami called upon his listeners to encourage their children to come to Somalia and take part in the Jihad. There the goal was to plan and organise bomb attacks to ambush and kill as many infidels as possible. In April 2011 Hammami released two Nasheeds,¹⁵ which are sung in hip hop style and in which he promotes Jihad and calls upon young Muslims in the West to come to Somalia to take part in the Jihad there.¹⁶ Hammami has apparently been so successful at recruiting young Muslims in the West that he has been promoted to military commander within the Shabaab.

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15 | Nasheeds are a traditional type of Islamic song.

16 | "American Shabaab Commander Releases Two Jihadist 'Hip Hop' Chants," *Site Monitoring Service, Jihadist News*, April 12, 2011, <https://insite.siteintelgroup.com/component/content/article/6-Jihadist%20News/599> (accessible only for members).

SHABAAB IN SWEDEN

Swedish security services believe there are around 200 jihadists living in Sweden.¹⁷ Of these, the majority have some kind of link to jihadist movements

that are either close to al-Qaeda or which work in cooperation with other movements that are active in other countries. Swedish jihadists seem to be particularly interested

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in what is going on in Iraq and Somalia, for it is there that they have the most contacts. According to the verdict of the Gothenburg court on December 8, 2010 against two Swedish jihadists there are many people living in Sweden who have contacts to the Shabaab militias. The two accused were sentenced to four years in prison because they had planned to carry out suicide bomb attacks in Somalia and were members of a terrorist organisation.¹⁸ During the trial, evidence showed that the two accused had had telephone conversations with Yassin Ismail Ahmed in Somalia. Ahmed within Shabaab has been responsible for recruiting for several years. In 2007 Ahmed still lived in Sweden and held seminars for young Muslims in a youth centre in Rinkeby known as "Kreativhuset". There he indoctrinated many young Muslims with jihadist ideology and encouraged them to go to Somalia to join the armed struggle. He even organised the travel to Somalia for some of the young Muslims. Through his activities in Sweden he was apparently still in contact with the two accused, to whom he had given instructions on how they could come to Somalia. Ahmed is also considered to be one of the driving forces behind the spread of jihadist ideology via the Internet.¹⁹

17 | Swedish Security Service, "Report on violence-promoting Islamist extremism presented to Government," December 15, 2010, <http://www.sakerhetspolisen.se/english/english/publications/newsarchives/nyhetsarkiv/reportonviolencepromotingislamistextremismpresentedtogovernment.5.34ffc68f1235b740c0680005463.html> (accessed July 13, 2011).

18 | "Al-Shabab members jailed for plotting Somali blasts," *BBC*, December 9, 2010, <http://bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-11957577> (accessed July 13, 2011).

19 | Patric Fahlander, "Al-Shabaab in Sweden. Perceptions of an Islamist extremist organization," BA Thesis in Peace and Conflict Studies, University of Malmö, 2010, 16.

The United Nations published a report in March 2010 which also suggested that numerous Swedes had links to the Shabaab.²⁰ The main contact points for jihadists in Sweden were apparently mosques and the "Kreativhuset" in Rinkeby. It was here that Sheikh Mohamed Fuad Qalaf built a Shabaab network at the end of the 1990s that still appears to be active today, even though Qalaf has not lived in Sweden for a long time. Qalaf is better known by his pseudonym Fuad Shangole. It is believed that he recruited several Muslims to the Islamist movement in Somalia at the mosque in Rinkeby. When the authorities became aware of his activities in Sweden he fled to Somalia. Shabaab jihadist Internet propaganda suggests that he is now a leading member of the Shabaab militias in Somalia. Shangole is currently the head of the Shabaab in Puntland. He is also a leading player in the militias' propaganda machine and it is here that the contacts that he still maintains with groups in Sweden are of major importance. One of the most important Shabaab websites was registered and run

The Al-Qimma web forum is one of the most important virtual platforms for Somali jihadist propaganda. It was registered and run by the Swedish convert Abdu-Raouf Wadman.

by the Swedish convert Abdu-Raouf Wadman (also known by his pseudonym Usama el-Swede). The Al-Qimma web forum is one of the most important virtual platforms for Somali jihadist propaganda. Since 2007 Shabaab video messages and press releases have been published on the site in numerous languages. One of the administrators is called Musa Said Yusuf Godir, who lived in Great Britain for a long time. In 2008 he was arrested in London together with other Somali online jihadists. Strangely his case never came to court, so Godir was able to leave for Somalia, where he now produces propaganda for the Shabaab on the Internet. Most Shabaab Internet sites are registered in Sweden and Wadman appears to have also started up other extremist websites for them. However the sites themselves are run by propaganda experts like Shongole.²¹

Another key player for the Shabaab militias is 31 year-old Sheikh Hassan Hussein. He lives in Kenya and runs an information centre for the Shabaab that is directly attached to

20 | United Nations, UN S/2010/9, Security Council, March 2010, 28, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/246/89/PDF/N1024689.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed July 13, 2011).

21 | Ibid., 28 et sqq.

the Masjid-ul-Axmar mosque in Nairobi. The centre is used not only for propaganda activities and recruitment but also for fundraising. Hussein's main job is to disseminate propaganda about the Shabaab's jihadist ideology. From a Western view point it seems strange that such a prominent Shabaab leader should be invited to Sweden by the leaders of a Gothenburg mosque, especially when he is clearly of the militant jihadist persuasion. But Hussein did indeed visit a conference organised by the Bellevue mosque in Gothenburg in July 2009. The leaders of the mosque felt under no obligation to cancel his invitation, even though many Somali migrants protested against his potential presence at the conference. So all the indicators seem to suggest that there are active Somali Shabaab militia networks in Sweden, whose activities include trying to entice young Muslims to travel to Somalia.

GERMAN SHABAAB

In Germany the Somali migrant community is nothing like as large as in Great Britain or the USA. Still, in Bonn there are Somali communities which include a small number of people who are supposedly close to the Shabaab militias. According to a report published by the Crime Investigation Authority (LKA) of the German *Bundesland* of Northrhine-Westphalia, which was referred to by journalists in January 2011,²² 39-year-old Hussein Kassim M. has appeared on the Bonn Jihadist scene as a major player. The security services suspect that M. is the head of a 15-strong group of extremist Somalis who call themselves the "German Shabaab". Under the name of Sheikh Hussein – not to be confused with the Leipzig Imam Hassan Dabbagh, who also uses the name Hussein – he preaches regularly in the Al-Muhsinin Mosque in Beuel. This mosque is one of Germany's lesser-known mosques where Jihadists meet regularly. It is alleged that M. is an important contact for young people who want to take an active part in Jihad overseas, but to date the authorities have not been able to prove any criminal offence. It is however remarkable that since 2007

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22 | "Gotteskrieger unter uns", *General-Anzeiger*, January 15, 2011, <http://general-anzeiger-bonn.de/index.php?k=loka&itemid=10490&detailid=836311> (accessed July 13, 2011).

at least 13 people have left the Bonn area to join the armed struggle in Pakistan/Waziristan. As a result the security services suspect that Bonn has a network of leading Islamists with close ties to the Jihadist movements in Pakistan and Somalia. In autumn 2008 they arrested two young men as they actually were sitting on the plane ready to fly to Somalia. They were Omar D., a German citizen with Somali roots, and the native Somali Abdirazak B., who could however not be convicted as once all the evidence was presented it was not possible to find them guilty of any serious offence.²³

Yet, two other young men managed to travel to East Africa in 2010/11. One of them was Sascha B., who flew from Frankfurt to Nairobi/Kenya in September 2010. The 23-year old convert planned to continue his journey to Somalia to join the Shabaab militias, but the Kenyan police thwarted his plans. He was arrested and handed over to Germany.²⁴ Sascha B., a former non-commissioned officer of the Bundeswehr (German Armed Forces), apparently was radicalized already during his service. As a soldier he already wore his beard chest long. He left military without handing over his personal Bundeswehr identity card. 2009 the forces commando feared that Sascha B. could use this card to access a barrack or a military camp abroad.

Another German citizen who supposedly stays in Somalia is Emrah E. from Wuppertal. Initially the 23-year old German from Turkish heritage succeeded to get to Waziristan in spring 2010, where he joined the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. In November 2011 Emrah E. reported to the Federal Crime Investigation Authority (BKA) by telephone that al-Qaeda was planning terrorist attacks in Germany.²⁵ Fearing acts of revenge from the al-Qaeda leadership, Emrah E. flew from Waziristan. Besides, his brother Bünyamin was killed by an US-drone attack one month

23 | Holger Stark, "Indizien gegen Terrorverdächtige bröckeln," *Der Spiegel*, October 1, 2008, <http://spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/0,1518,581493,00.html> (accessed July 13, 2011).

24 | Florian Flade, "Somalia ist die neue Keimzelle des Terrors," n. 9.

25 | Emrah E.'s telephone call led to the press conference of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, in which former Minister of the Interior Thomas de Maizière unexpectedly announced that there was reason for concern that jihadist assassins lived in Germany, cf. Hubert Gude and Axel Spilcker, "E-Mail an Ströbele," *Focus*, June 27, 2011, 46-48.

earlier. The destination of his flight however was Somalia and not returning to Germany. The journalist Florian Flade indicates on his blog that the young Jihadist presumably entered Somalia via the Kenyan border in order to meet friends who have joined the Shabaab militia there.²⁶

All three cases show that there are close ties between the Shabaab militias and Jihadists who are active in Germany who recruit young Muslims, organise their travel and collect donations for Jihadist groups. Hussein Kassim M.'s activities at the Bonn branch of the Somali Al-Barakaat Bank have particularly aroused suspicion that he is in direct contact with the Shabaab militias and is regularly sending them donations in Somalia. Bonn is also home to many leading lights of the jihadist scene who were previously active in Hamburg or Neu-Ulm. Six suspected activists from the Multicultural House community centre in Neu-Ulm, a notorious meeting-point for radical Islamists, moved to Bonn when the centre was closed down. And other jihadists who moved to Bonn from Hamburg allegedly include people who have ties to Mohamed Atta and other terrorists linked with the attacks of September 11, 2001.²⁷

CONCLUSION

As early as the 1990s Somali migrant communities in the West were popular targets for political groups from their homeland who were trying to raise funds for groups fighting for their cause in Somalia. Security services started to become aware of the fact that some of the money was being channelled to insurgents. Today jihadist groups like the Shabaab are still actively involved in fundraising in the West. Another key activity for these groups is establishing networks in the West. The Shabaab militias in particular have been very professional in their approach to recruiting young people in recent years. However, the Shabaab do not need these recruits from the migrant community to become soldiers, as they have enough young Somalis who want to join them. These Western jihadists are of much more value to the

The Shabaab do not need these recruits from the migrant community to become soldiers. They are of much more value to the Shabaab for propaganda purposes and as suicide bombers.

26 | Florian Flade, "Der Terror-Insider," <http://ojihad.wordpress.com/der-terror-insider> (accessed July 25, 2011).

27 | "Gotteskrieger unter uns," n. 22.

Shabaab for propaganda purposes and as suicide bombers. For one thing, most of these young Western Muslims have a good knowledge of computers and the Internet and so are often given the responsibility for looking after the technical side of the dissemination of jihadist propaganda on the Internet. Another reason is the social isolation that these young people experience in Somalia. As they have no family or friends there, the Shabaab are the only people they have any contact with. For this reason they are easier for the Shabaab militias to control. There is no real alternative way for them to make friends who might help them out of the dangerous situation they have got themselves into. The Shabaab can therefore fully indoctrinate them and train them for special terrorist activities. Somalia expert Ken Menkhaus believes that diaspora Somalis and other young Westerners are specifically chosen to become suicide bombers.²⁸

The main danger for the West is that, by building global Shabaab networks, Somali jihadists will develop into an international movement, similar to al-Qaeda, which not only carries out terrorist operations in Somalia itself, but also carries out more and more terrorist attacks in the West. The biggest concern for Western security services is that young Muslims could be trained by Shabaab to carry out attacks in the West.²⁹ The growing number of non-Somalis in the ranks of the Shabaab militias has significantly increased the risk that these young Muslims will be used for operations in the West. For this reason it is very important to smash these networks in the West so that the Shabaab can no longer recruit young people to their movement and train them. In the long-term, the internationalisation of the Shabaab militias, especially through the building of networks in the West, could cause enormous damage, especially as in future the Shabaab are unlikely to limit their attacks to Uganda or Kenya but will be setting their sights on Western cities.³⁰

28 | Menkhaus, "Violent Islamic Extremism", n. 3, 11.

29 | Spencer Hsu, "Concern grows over recruitment of Somali-Americans by Islamists," *Washington Post*, October 4, 2009; Richard Norton-Taylor, "MI5 Chief warns of terror threat from Britons trained in Somalia," *Guardian*, September 17, 2010.

30 | Raffaello Pantucci, "Understanding the al-Shabaab networks," *Policy Analysis* 49, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, October 13, 2009, 6.