

After Al-Baghdadi, Islamic State Is Being Headed by Shura Council

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In July 2015, the security officials of Afghanistan and Pakistan were holding an important meeting in Islamabad to initiate a dialogue process with the Taliban when the Afghan National Directorate of Intelligence publicly announced that Taliban chief Mullah Mohammed Omar had died two years ago in 2013.

Though the Taliban immediately announced Mullah Akhtar Mansour as Mullah Omar's successor, who was also killed in an American drone strike a year later in May 2016 while returning to Pakistan from a visit to Iran, it transpired that for two years prior to the revelation of Mullah Omar's death, the affairs of the Taliban were being managed by a Shura Council – an advisory council of the top cadres of the Taliban.

Similarly, confirming the deaths of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the Islamic State spokesman Abu Hassan al-Muhajir, who was killed in a US airstrike in northern Syria a day after the killing of al-Baghdadi, the Islamic State's Amaq news agency announced Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Quraishi as the new caliph of the terrorist organization on October 31.

Al-Quraishi is such an obscure jihadist that even national security analysts tracking the details of militant movements in the Middle East don't have an inkling about his origins or biography. Even his name appears to be a nom de guerre rather than a real name. Abu Ibrahim basically means the "father of Ibrahim" in Arabic whereas Banu Hashem was Prophet Mohammad's family and Quraishi means the tribe of Quraish. Both are common surnames in the Islamic World.

Some security analysts surmise that Amir Mohammad Sa'id Abdal Rahman al-Mawla, who is also known by the alias Haji Abdullah and Abdullah Qardash, is the new chief of the Islamic State, as the US State Department has announced a \$5 million reward for information leading to him. Haji Abdullah Qardash is from Tal Afar, a city in northwestern Iraq, and has previously served as an army officer during Saddam Hussein's regime.

In any case, identifying individual militant leaders by name is irrelevant because as in the case of the Taliban and several other regional jihadist groups, the decisions are collectively taken by the Shura Council of the Islamic State. The title caliph of the Islamic State is simply a figurehead, which is obvious from the fact that al-Baghdadi remained in hiding for several years before being killed in a special-ops raid on October 27, and the terrorist group kept functioning autonomously without any guidance or directives from its purported chief.

Regarding the creation and composition of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, apart from training and arms which were provided to Syrian militants in the training camps located in the Turkish and Jordanian border regions adjacent to Syria by the CIA in collaboration with

Turkish, Jordanian and Saudi intelligence agencies, another factor that contributed to the success of the Islamic State when it overran Raqqa in Syria in 2013 and Mosul and Anbar in Iraq in 2014 was that its top cadres were comprised of former Baathist military and intelligence officers from the Saddam era.

Reportedly, hundreds of ex-Baathists constitute the top- and mid-tier command structure of the Islamic State who plan all the operations and direct its military strategy. The only feature that differentiates the Islamic State from all other insurgent groups is that its command structure which is comprised of professional ex-Baathists and its state-of-the-art weaponry that was provided to all militant outfits fighting in Syria by the intelligence agencies of the Western powers, Turkey, Jordan and the Gulf states.

In fact, Washington exercised such an absolute control over Syria's theater of proxy war that although the US openly provided the American-made antitank (TOW) weapons to Syrian militant groups, it strictly forbade its clients from providing anti-aircraft weapons (MANPADS) to the militants, because Israel frequently flies surveillance aircrafts and drones and occasionally carries out airstrikes in Syria, and had such weapons fallen into the wrong hands, they could have become a long-term security threat to the Israeli Air Force.

Last year, a report by the Conflict Armament Research (CAR) on the Islamic State's weapons found in Iraq and Syria was prominently featured in the mainstream media. Before the story was picked up by the corporate media, it was [first published](#) [1] in the Wired News in December 2017, which has a history of spreading dubious stories and working in close collaboration with the Pentagon and DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency).

The Britain-based Conflict Armament Research (CAR) is a relatively unknown company of less than 20 employees. Its one-man Iraq and Syria division was headed by a 31-year-old Belgian researcher Damien Spleeters.

The main theme of Spleeters' investigation was to discover the Islamic State's homegrown armaments industry and how the jihadist group's technicians had adapted the East European munitions to be used in the weapons available to the Islamic State. Spleeters had listed 1,832 weapons and 40,984 pieces of ammunition recovered in Iraq and Syria in the CAR's database.

But Spleeters had only tangentially touched upon the subject of the Islamic State's weapons supply chain, documenting only a single PG-9 rocket found at Tal Afar in Iraq bearing a lot number of 9,252 rocket-propelled grenades which were supplied by Romania to the US military, and mentioning only a single shipment of 12 tons of munitions which was diverted from Saudi Arabia to Jordan in his supposedly 'comprehensive report.'

In fact, the CAR's report was so misleading that of thousands of pieces of munitions investigated by Spleeters, less than 10% were found to be compatible with NATO's weapons and more than 90% were found to have originated from Russia, China and the East European countries, Romania and Bulgaria, in particular.

By comparison, a joint investigation by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) and the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) [uncovered](#) [2] the Pentagon's \$2.2 billion arms pipeline to the Syrian militants.

It bears mentioning that \$2.2 billion was earmarked only by Washington for training and

arming the Syrian militants, and [tens of billions of dollars](#) [3] that Saudi Arabia and the oil-rich Gulf states pumped into Syria's proxy war have not been documented by anybody so far.

More significantly, a Bulgarian investigative reporter, Dilyana Gaytandzhieva, authored [a report](#) [4] for Bulgaria's national newspaper, Trud News, in August 2017 which found that an Azerbaijan state airline company, Silk Way Airlines, was regularly transporting weapons to Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Turkey under diplomatic cover as part of the CIA covert program to supply weapons to militant groups in Syria.

Gaytandzhieva documented 350 such 'diplomatic flights' and was subsequently fired from her job for uncovering the story. Not surprisingly, both these well-researched and groundbreaking reports didn't even merit a passing mention in any mainstream news outlet.

Notwithstanding, Damien Spleeters of the Conflict Armament Research (CAR) authored [another report](#) [5] in November last year, in which he stated that South Sudan's neighbors, Uganda in particular, had breached an arms embargo by funneling East European weapons to the South Sudan conflict.

South Sudan is the world's youngest nation which gained independence from Sudan in 2011. The United States is often said to have midwived South Sudan by leading the negotiations for its independence from Sudan, because South Sudan is an oil-rich country and produces about half a million barrels crude oil per day.

But a civil war began in 2013 between Dinka tribal group of South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and Nuer rebels led by warlord and former Vice President Riek Machar, and has triggered one of the world's largest humanitarian emergencies. Millions of South Sudanese have sought refuge in displacement camps in South Sudan and neighboring countries.

The Conflict Armament Research's report on the weapons found in South Sudan notes: "One of the most astonishing findings is that 99 percent of the ammunition tracked by CAR is of Chinese origin. Some of it was legally transferred to South Sudan, but much of it was delivered secretly to the opposition via Sudan in 2015 and is still being used."

Unsurprisingly, the Britain-based monitoring group has implicated China, East European countries and South Sudan's neighbors for defying the embargo and providing weapons to the belligerents, and has once again given a free pass to the Western powers for creating the catastrophe in its supposedly 'comprehensive and credible' report.

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Notes

[1] [Tracing Islamic State's weapons supply chain](#)

[2] [The Pentagon's \\$2.2 billion Soviet arms pipeline to Syria](#)

[3] [Mark Curtis' book review, Secret Affairs: How Britain Colluded with Radical Islam](#)

[4] [Journalist Interrogated, Fired For Story Linking CIA And Syria Weapons Flights](#)

[5] [Uganda breached arms embargo in funneling European weapons to South Sudan](#)

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