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THE ISLAMIC STATE IN CONGO

TARA CANDLAND, ADAM FINCK, HARORO J. INGRAM, LAREN POOLE,
LORENZO VIDINO, CALEB WEISS

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About the Program on Extremism

The Program on Extremism at George Washington University provides analysis on issues related to violent and non-violent extremism. The Program spearheads innovative and thoughtful academic inquiry, producing empirical work that strengthens extremism research as a distinct field of study. The Program aims to develop pragmatic policy solutions that resonate with policymakers, civic leaders, and the general public. This report is the product of a cooperation between the Program on Extremism at George Washington University and the Bridgeway Foundation. The views expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Program on Extremism or George Washington University.

“There is no ADF anymore. Allah willing, ADF ceased to exist a long time ago. [...] Currently, we are a province, the Central Africa Province which is one province among the numerous provinces that make up the Islamic State that is under the Caliph and Leader of all Muslims...Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi.” - Musa Baluku, September 2020¹

¹ Mujahideen TV video released on Sept. 18, 2020. On file with authors.

Executive Summary

This report systematically examines how the efforts of the Islamic State to expand globally and the aspirations of Musa Baluku's Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) merged in a mix of push and pull factors that resulted in the ADF becoming the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) chapter of the Islamic State in Central Africa Province (ISCAP). Based largely on primary sources, including a unique collection of defector and local source accounts, it tracks the ADF's evolution from its Ugandan origins to being part of a formal province of the Islamic State, revealing unique insights into the group's inner workings and its efforts to build transnational networks to support its operations.

The report's key findings include:

- The ADF's ties with the Islamic State may have started as early as 2017. By 2018, ISCAP was acknowledged as a formal province of the Islamic State, and in April 2019, ISCAP attacks in the DRC were first formally claimed by the Islamic State's central media units. The debate should no longer concern whether the ADF has a formal relationship with the Islamic State but rather focus on the nature of that relationship.
- While there is currently no evidence of direct command and control orders from the Islamic State to the ADF, the evolution of the ADF's operational and strategic activities under Baluku's leadership suggests that the group is seeking to implement the Islamic State's *aqeeda* (creed) and *manhaj* (method). This is most notable in the ADF's propaganda output, content, and rhetoric that reflect the Islamic State's influence on the group.
- There is growing evidence to suggest that the ADF has established communication links with the Islamic State as evidenced by ISCAP's DRC-based elements featuring in messaging by its central media units since 2019 (although retroactively claiming an attack in 2018). Human source reporting also suggests that financial links have been established between Islamic State entities and the ADF. The ADF has a history of foreign outreach, and it continues to leverage its transnational networks for funding, recruitment, and logistics.
- Given the frequency with which ADF activities in the DRC have appeared in Islamic State media messaging since 2019, it is evident that the Islamic State is leveraging these activities to demonstrate that it remains a relevant and active movement with a broad transnational reach, despite its loss of territorial control across Syria and Iraq. With formal Islamic State affiliates and pro-Islamic State groups dotted across Africa, the potential for transnational collaboration and the migration of increased numbers of regional foreign fighters may threaten regional stability.

While this report seeks to address some crucial gaps in the research field, it also aims to bring strategic policy attention to what are urgent security and humanitarian issues in the DRC that are being exacerbated by the Islamic State's influence.

Introduction

On October 20, 2020, the Islamic State officially claimed an attack on Kangbayi central prison in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) that freed over 1,300 prisoners and which government officials attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).² This was merely one of the latest in dozens of ADF attacks in the DRC that have been claimed by the Islamic State since it formally acknowledged in 2019 that its “soldiers of the caliphate” were present in the conflict-stricken country. While the ADF is one of the oldest and most resilient armed groups in the DRC, the group has remained largely shrouded in mystery, partly due to its geographic isolation and the secretive practices that have characterized much of its history. At times, different Congolese armed actors have been complicit in ADF violence or have carried out their own massacres in the region, adding to the confusion surrounding the identity of the perpetrators and the role of the ADF in regional violence. Consequently, the nature of the ADF threat is highly contested in the research and strategic-policy fields.

Historically, UN forces and regional government actors have often painted the ADF as a one-dimensional transnational jihadist group responsible for most of the violence in Beni territory. Several journalists and researchers familiar with dynamics in eastern Congo have been quick to dismiss this narrative and, instead, stress the significance of the ADF’s role as a locally entrenched actor in the milieu of Congolese armed groups motivated by politics and economic gain.³ For some in the latter camp, the narrative of the ADF as an Islamic State affiliate seems to contradict in some way the decades of locally motivated actions and historical drivers of conflict threatening civilian protection by failing to accurately identify the root problem.⁴ Furthermore, the idea of the ADF serving as the Islamic State chapter in Congo contradicts recent findings from the UN Group of Experts (GoE), as well as other international and local groups who, as recently as June 2020, stated that they have not found any direct links between the ADF and the Islamic State.⁵

The dearth of evidence emerging from the DRC can be explained, in part, by the extremely reclusive nature of the ADF, including a long history of sparse external communications. Indeed, given the timing and limited information available to the GoE and other researchers, the case for an Islamic State presence in Congo may have seemed fanciful, and their conclusions rightly challenged years of narratives that have too often exaggerated both the ADF’s impact and their transnational terrorist links.⁶ While regional

² “Armed fighters free over 1,300 prisoners from DR Congo jail,” *Al Jazeera*, (October 20, 2020). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/10/20/suspected-rebels-free-900-prisoners-from-east-congo-jail>

³ Kristof Titeca, “Jihadis in Congo? Probably not,” *The Washington Post*, (September 27, 2016). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/09/27/heres-why-its-a-problem-that-congos-u-n-peacekeeping-force-is-blaming-international-jihadis-for-these-killings-and-attacks/>.

⁴ Daniel Fahey and Judith Verweijen, “A closer look at Congo’s Islamist rebels,” *The Washington Post*, (September 30, 2020). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/09/30/closer-look-congos-islamic-rebels/>.

⁵ *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations Security Council, (June 2, 2020). <http://www.undocs.org/S/2020/482>.

⁶ Michelle Nichols, “Congolese army attacked U.N. troops meeting Islamist rebels: U.N,” *Reuters*, (February 4, 2016). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congodemocratic-un-idUSKCN0VD2EO>.

and country specialists have analyzed recent developments in the ADF's insurgency, scholars of the Islamic State, with a few notable exceptions, have largely ignored ISCAP in the DRC as a case study.⁷ Yet the ISCAP in the DRC offers a fascinating case study of both the top-down 'push' forces as the Islamic State seeks to increase its global reach and the bottom-up, locally generated 'pull' forces as existing local groups seek the Islamic State's recognition and support.

The purpose of this report is to explore these dynamics by tracking the ADF's evolution to become the DRC chapter of ISCAP, position it within the context of the Islamic State's other transnational provinces, and consider its implications for the DRC and region more broadly. It argues that the Baluku-led faction's evolution is reflected in the group's steady adoption of the Islamic State's *aqeeda* and *manhaj*, the establishment of direct communication links, and human source reporting that suggests more substantive financial and logistical support.

This report brings together analysts of the DRC and ADF with scholars of Islamism and the Islamic State. It seeks to incorporate new information into the dialogue in the form of unique primary source documentation collected over the course of four years—including 72 claims coming from the Islamic State's central media, the Islamic State's Amaq News, and its weekly newsletter al-Naba; interviews with 46 former ADF members and victims; dozens of videos, photos, bank documents, remittance receipts, and communications from within the ADF camps; and additional interviews provided by the Ugandan authorities—⁸ alongside an analysis of independently verified ADF attacks.⁹ While there is much yet unknown, and the extent of the links need further investigation, an analysis of these source materials clearly connects the Baluku-led ADF to the Islamic State. The picture that emerges from this research is of an armed group that has evolved over time in its efforts to survive and maintain relevance, becoming entrenched in local Congolese

⁷ There have been other analysts whose publications have clearly acknowledged and tracked the activities and evolution of ISCAP in the DRC. For more, see: Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State-loyal group calls for people to join the jihad in the Congo," *Long War Journal*, (15 October 2017). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/10/islamic-state-loyal-group-calls-for-people-to-join-the-jihad-in-the-congo.php>; Brian M. Perkins, "The emerging triad of Islamic State Central Africa Province," *Terrorism Monitor* 18, no. 5 (March 2020). <https://jamestown.org/program/the-emerging-triad-of-islamic-state-central-africa-province/>; Robert Postings, "Islamic State recognizes new Central Africa Province, deepening ties with DR Congo militants," *The Defense Post* (April 30, 2019). <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/04/30/islamic-state-new-central-africa-province/>.

⁸ The human source interviews referenced in this report were conducted either directly by or through local intermediaries of the Bridgeway research team. All interviews cited in this report were conducted in a manner that prioritized the safety of the human sources, anonymity was assured where it was requested, and the information was provided by the interviewees consensually and without coercion.

⁹ The authors rely primarily on data from the Kivu Security Tracker (KST), which maps violence committed by state security forces and armed groups in North and South Kivu. The KST uses a network of trained local researchers to collect and verify every occurrence, including the identity of the perpetrators and details of the incident. There must be "conclusive or highly convincing evidence" before attributing an attack to a particular actor, which often involves multiple independent confirmations of responsibility. For more information, please consult the KST's methodology guide. Available at: https://kivusecurity.org/static/KST_Methodology_Nov2017.pdf

The KST is a joint project of the Congo Research Group, based at New York University's Center on International Cooperation, and Human Rights Watch. Bridgeway Foundation, which employs some of the authors of this paper, provides funding for the KST but is not involved in reporting or verifying incidents.

dynamics, engaging in increasingly brutal retaliatory attacks when provoked, and finding support internationally, most recently from the Islamic State. The toll exacted on the civilian population over the years of this evolution has been immense.

This report begins by examining the emergence and evolution of the Islamic State's transnational enterprise, a relatively recent development in the Islamic State movement's history, to set the broader strategic context for the case study that follows (*The Islamic State's transnational enterprise*). It then analyzes the rise of the ADF as an affiliate of the Islamic State in two parts. The first analyzes the ADF's history from its foundation in the early-1990s to the events leading up to the arrest of its founder and leader, Jamil Makulu, in 2015 (*The ADF's early history, circa 1991-2015*). The second examines how the Musa Baluku-led ADF has evolved, from its strategic and operational activities and leadership to its transnational ties, as its relationship with the Islamic State has developed (*The Baluku-led ADF: ISCAP in the DRC, 2015-Present*). It concludes by synthesizing the findings of this report and outlining its research and strategic-policy implications.

The Islamic State's Transnational Enterprise¹⁰

The Islamic State's transformation into a transnational enterprise is a relatively recent development in the context of its multi-decade history.¹¹ Consequently, how it has tended to manage and project its global expansion has been inconsistent not only from location to location, but also over time as the movement's strategic fortunes have changed. These dynamics are largely the product of a complex mix of top-down "pushing" forces related to the Islamic State seeking to globally expand and, the perhaps less appreciated but at least equally important, bottom-up "pulling" forces that see local groups reaching out to the Islamic State for reasons typically rooted in local issues. What this means is that each formally recognized "province" of the Islamic State needs to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

With the declaration of its caliphate in June 2014, the Islamic State sought to establish the conditions for its global expansion by arguing that it was a jurisprudential obligation for Muslims to pledge allegiance to al-Baghdadi as caliph and join the Islamic State. As the Islamic State's spokesman, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, said at the time: "We clarify to the Muslims that with this declaration of khilāfah, it is incumbent upon all Muslims to pledge allegiance to the khalīfah Ibrāhīm and support him. The legality of all emirates, groups, states, and organizations becomes null by the expansion of the khilāfah's authority and arrival of its troops to their areas."¹² While the Islamic State's

¹⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the Islamic State's global insurgency see Haroro J. Ingram, Craig Whiteside, Charlie Winter, 2020, "The Islamic State's Global Insurgency and its Counterstrategy Implications", *Evolutions in Counter-Terrorism*, Volume 2, The International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, (November 2020): pp.21-46.

¹¹ For a detailed analysis of the Islamic State movement's history from its founding in the 1990s to the death of al-Baghdadi, see: Haroro J. Ingram, Craig Whiteside, and Charlie Winter. *The ISIS Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020).

¹² "This is the Promise of Allah," Al-I'tisaam Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (June 29, 2014). An English-language text translation of the speech is available at: <https://news.siteintelgroup.com/Jihadist->

jurisprudential obligations were designed to publicly compel Muslims to join its ranks, internally its transnational outreach was seen as a strategic imperative. In *Principles in the Administration of the Islamic State*, an internal document produced by the Islamic State in 2014 and described by scholar Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi as a “masterplan” text, it argues that, “External relations are the first foundation for building every nascent state, and they are among the foundations that show the strength and might of the state, and they should constitute for it a general stance in everything that happens in the world with the people of Islam and be for it an external hand protecting its dealings.”¹³

The Islamic State has stressed that certain criteria need to be satisfied for a group to be formally accepted as an Islamic State province. According to primary source materials produced by the Islamic State and trends in practice over time,¹⁴ this typically involves the group and its leadership publicly pledging *bayat* (allegiance) to the Caliph, which must then be accepted.¹⁵ The Islamic State also plays a role in the approving of, if not directly appointing, the group’s leaders, with the overarching leader given the title of *wali* (governor) of the province. Efforts to consolidate different groups and factions under one banner and leadership are an important component of this process. Additionally, the group must adopt and apply the Islamic State’s *aqeeda* (creed) and *manhaj* (methodology) to guide its ideological, military, governance, and propaganda activities. The Islamic State’s *aqeeda* broadly refers to the group’s ideological and jurisprudential system of beliefs, while its *manhaj* refers in this case to what it claims to be the Prophetic methodology for establishing an Islamic State.¹⁶ This is perhaps the Islamic State’s most

News/isis-spokesman-declares-caliphate-rebrands-group-as-islamic-state.html.

¹³ Abu Abdullah al-Masri, “Principles in the Administration of the Islamic State,” The Islamic State, (2014). An English-language translation of this document is available at: www.aymennjawad.org/18215/principles-in-the-administration-of-the-islamic.

¹⁴ What follows is based on primary source analyses of primary sources including: “This is the Promise of Allah,” 2014; “Remaining & Expanding,” *Dabiq* 5 (October 2014): 22-33; “Wilayat Khurasan and the bay’at from Qawqaz,” *Dabiq* 7 (January 2015): 33-37; “A fatwa for Khurasan,” *Dabiq* 10 (June 2015): 18-24; “O Our People Respond to the Caller of Allah,” Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (June 23, 2015). An English-language text translation of the speech is available at: https://scholarship.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/bitstream/handle/10066/16613/ADN20150623_IS.pdf?sequence=1; “So They Kill and Are Killed,” Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (March 12, 2015). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2015/03/12/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-shaykh-abu-mu%e1%b8%a5ammad-al-adnani-al-shami-so-they-kill-and-are-killed/>; “Say, ‘Die in your Rage’,” Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (January 26, 2015). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2015/01/26/al-furqan-media-presents-a-new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-shaykh-abu-mu%e1%b8%a5ammad-al-adnani-al-shami-say-die-in-your-rage/>; “The Structure of the Caliphate,” Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (July 6, 2016). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2016/07/06/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-the-structure-of-the-caliphate/>.

¹⁵ Daniel Milton and Muhammad Al-’Ubaydi, “Pledging Bay’a: A benefit or burden to the Islamic State?” *CTC Sentinel* 8, no. 3 (March 2015), 1-6. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/pledging-baya-a-benefit-or-burden-to-the-islamic-state/>.

¹⁶ For more, see: Aaron Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Territorial Methodology,” *Research Notes* 29, (January 2016). <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/ResearchNote29-Zelin.pdf>; Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, “This is our Aqeeda and this is our Manhaj: Islam 101 according to the Islamic State,” Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi’s Blog, (October 27, 2015). <http://www.aymennjawad.org/2015/10/this-is-our-aqeeda-and-this-is-our-manhaj-islam>.

significant export to its affiliates because it provides them with a comprehensive ideological system via its *aqeeda* and a phased politico-military strategy via its *manhaj*.

An important feature of the Islamic State's *aqeeda* is its extreme position on *takfir* (excommunication, or the declaration of apostasy against a Muslim), which is not only controversial amongst other Sunni jihadi groups, like Al-Qa'ida, but even within its own ranks.¹⁷ Of course, the Islamic State's jurisprudential position on *takfir* has significant implications in practice, and it is used as the justification for extreme violence against other Muslims. Meanwhile, the Islamic State's *manhaj* for establishing an Islamic State has been described, by the group itself, as a multi-phased process consisting of *hijrah* (migration),¹⁸ *jama'ah* (organization),¹⁹ destabilization of the *taghut* (idolaters),²⁰ *tamkin* (consolidation),²¹ and finally, the establishment of the caliphate.²² By insisting that groups adopt and apply its *aqeeda* and *manhaj*, the Islamic State not only helps local groups to cohere their messaging and actions in a phased strategic manner, but provides its propagandists with content that it uses to project its global expansion. This is part of the reason why direct communications between the Islamic State and the local group have also been identified as a necessary criterion to ensure that information and direction can be exchanged. With the satisfaction of this criteria and its acceptance by the caliph, the group may then be formally accepted by the Islamic State and a new province declared.

However, in the first three years of its transnational expansion (circa 2013-2016), the Islamic State demonstrated inconsistencies in how it applied its own criteria for acceptance as a formal province. This was perhaps most pronounced regarding the extent to which new affiliates had applied the Islamic State's *manhaj* and/or demonstrated the potential to achieve *tamkin* (consolidation), i.e. territorial control and implementing authority. In turn, this exacerbated tensions within the Islamic State's own ranks on the basis that its transnational spread had been mishandled, that its areas of core operations in Syria and Iraq had been disadvantaged by its outreach, and that provinces had been formally accepted which had little chance of achieving *tamkin*.²³ As the Islamic State was routed from its areas of territorial control this impacted both how it managed its

¹⁷ For more, see: Cole Bunzel, "Ideological Infighting in the Islamic State," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 1 (February 2019): 13-22.

<https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/binaries/content/assets/customsites/perspectives-on-terrorism/2019/issue-1/bunzel.pdf>.

¹⁸ Traveling to the lands of *jihad*.

¹⁹ Organizing for the purposes of war.

²⁰ Engagement in terrorism and guerrilla warfare activities which transition, asymmetry of capabilities with the enemy is reached, to more conventional politico-military activities.

²¹ Territorial control and implementing political authority.

²² "From Hijrah to Khilafah," *Dabiq* 1 (July 2014): 39. Available at: <https://jihadology.net/wp-content/uploads/pda/2014/07/islamic-state-22dc481biq-magazine-122.pdf>.

²³ Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Dissent in the Islamic State: Abu al-Faruq al-Masri's 'Message on the Manhaj'," Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, (October 31, 2016). www.aymennjawad.org/19341/dissent-in-the-islamic-state-abu-al-faruq-al; Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Dissent in the Islamic State's Yemen Affiliates: Documents, Translation & Analysis," Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi's Blog, (February 29, 2016). www.aymennjawad.org/2016/02/dissent-in-the-islamic-state-yemen-affiliates.

transnational provinces and its willingness to broaden the criteria for approval as a formal affiliate.

As the Islamic State lost ground in Iraq and Syria, the group restructured its provinces in 2018, consolidating across its territories to merge some provinces into broader territorial divisions (e.g. Iraq, Syria) and elevating groups that had previously been denied provincial status (e.g. the Islamic State East Asia). This restructure more than halved the number of Islamic State provinces and occurred with no formal announcement. Administratively, it was likely motivated by a need to prepare for reversion back into an insurgency given the devastating losses of territory, personnel, and resources it had suffered. This rationalization process saw, for instance, the twenty-eight provinces that dotted Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Libya consolidated into just four provinces that, ironically, largely followed those nation's borders.²⁴ Meanwhile, particularly over subsequent months, groups across Asia (e.g. Philippines, Indonesia) and Africa (e.g. DRC, Somalia) were raised to the status of a formal provinces as a consequence of the Islamic State designating new provinces with much broader and more ambiguous territorial boundaries.²⁵ For example, in the cases of the Islamic State East Asia (ISEA) and Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP), some of the active groups within these territorial boundaries are geographically divided.²⁶ Other provinces, such as the Islamic State West Africa (ISWAP)²⁷ and Islamic State Khurasan Provinces (ISKP)²⁸ maintained their hubs while spreading into neighboring territories. When the Islamic State finally lost its territorial stakes in Syria and Iraq in early 2019, it launched a campaign to renew pledges to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi that summer, which was repeated months later—after al-Baghdadi was killed—with pledges from around the world being given to the new caliph, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi in November 2019.²⁹

The ebbs and flows of the Islamic State's transnational expansion provide important historical and strategic context for understanding the rise and evolution of the Islamic State's provinces including, for the purposes of this report, ISCAP in the DRC. It is misleading to judge the legitimacy of an Islamic State affiliate by whether it essentially looks like the Islamic State in Mosul or Raqqa circa 2014-2015. Whether or not an affiliate

²⁴ BBC Monitoring, "Analysis: Islamic State restructures its 'provinces' a year on from 2017 defeats," BBC Monitoring, (October 17, 2018). <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c200bdcn>. Colin P. Clarke, "What does the Islamic State's organizational restructuring tell us?" International Centre for Counter-Terrorism-The Hague (June 3, 2019). <https://icct.nl/publication/what-does-the-islamic-states-organisational-restructuring-tell-us/>.

²⁵ BBC Monitoring, "Analysis: Islamic State restructures its 'provinces' a year on from 2017 defeats," 2018; Rikar Hussein, Ezel Sahinkaya, Sirwan Kajjo, Nafisa Hoodbhoy, Mehdi Jedinia, "IS Decentralizing Into 'Provinces' in Bid to Return," *Voice Of America News*, (July 21, 2019). <https://www.voanews.com/extremism-watch/decentralizing-provinces-bid-return>.

²⁶ For example, ISEA includes the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, while ISCAP's most active elements are in Mozambique and the DRC.

²⁷ Jacen Zenn, "ISIS in Africa: The Caliphate's Next Frontier," Center for Global Policy, (May 26, 2020). <https://cgpolicy.org/articles/isis-in-africa-the-caliphates-next-frontier/>.

²⁸ Amira Jadoon, "Islamic State in Khorasan: Attempting to Absorb Rival Groups," Center for Global Policy, (June 9, 2020). <https://cgpolicy.org/articles/islamic-state-in-khorasan-attempting-to-absorb-rival-groups/>.

²⁹ Aaron Zelin, "The Islamic State's Bayat Campaign," *Jihadology*, (November 3, 2019). <https://jihadology.net/2019/11/03/the-islamic-states-bayat-campaign/>.

adopts the Islamic State's technologies of war used in Iraq and Syria, such as its improvised explosive device (IED) techniques and tactics, is an even more misleading criteria for legitimacy.³⁰ It is also inaccurate to dismiss an affiliate if its relationship with the Islamic State is different to other formally accepted affiliates. Given the fluctuations of this recent history, the critical criterion for whether a *group* is formally a province of the Islamic State is whether it has been officially declared so by the Islamic State. Of course, this is *not* necessarily indicative of the nature of the relationship between the Islamic State and its various affiliates. For example, being a formal affiliate does not necessarily mean that the Islamic State has overarching direct command and control. However, formal acknowledgement by the Islamic State is *likely* to indicate the satisfaction of most (if not all) the broad criteria outlined earlier and, where the province is active, this will be publicly reinforced if/when the Islamic State's central media units feature the activities of the affiliates in its messaging.

It is therefore useful to think of the Islamic State's various global affiliates as sitting on a spectrum that reflects varying degrees of (i.) centralized control and influence from the Islamic State, (ii.) the types of activities conducted by the affiliate and, (iii.) the extent to which the group and its activities are leveraged by the Islamic State and its leadership for strategic and propaganda purposes.³¹ At one end of this spectrum sits its Iraq and Syria provinces that are centrally controlled and essentially represent the heartlands of the Islamic State movement. Just inside of this would be provinces like IS-Libya and ISKP that have a history of direct Islamic State involvement in its inner workings and have had pockets of success where they claim to have achieved *tamkin*.³² On the other end of this spectrum are provinces that have been largely inactive such as Algeria, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia.³³ Through the middle of this spectrum sits provinces like those in East Asia and Central Africa that, despite often pledging to al-Baghdadi years earlier, essentially only became formal provinces as beneficiaries of the Islamic State's 2018 restructure or subsequent rationalization. This should not be misinterpreted to mean that such provinces are somehow *not really* part of the Islamic State's global initiative because there is little evidence of direct oversight by the Islamic State's command. Put simply, different affiliates will have different relationships, and the key is to understand the nuances of that relationship on a case by case basis. In an interview with a senior leader of the Islamic State, Abul Nasser Qardash, it was revealed that the Islamic State's links to its branches

³⁰ Daniel Fahey and Judith Verweijen, "A closer look at Congo's Islamist rebels," *The Washington Post*, (September 30, 2020). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/09/30/closer-look-congos-islamic-rebels/>

³¹ Clint Watts, "When the Caliphate Crumbles," *War on the Rocks*, (June 13, 2016). <https://warontherocks.com/2016/06/when-the-caliphate-crumbles-the-future-of-the-islamic-states-affiliates/>; Will McCants. *The ISIS Apocalypse*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2016).

³² Jadoon, "Islamic State in Khorasan," 2020; Frederic Wehrey and Ala' AlRababa'h, "Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya," Carnegie Middle East Center, (March 5, 2015). <https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/59268?lang=en>; Paul Cruickshank, Nic Robertson, Tim Lister, and Jomana Karadsheh, "ISIS Comes to Libya," *CNN*, (November 18, 2014). <https://www.cnn.com/2014/11/18/world/isis-libya/>; Benoît Faucon and Matt Bradley, "Islamic State Gained Strength in Libya by Co-Opting Local Jihadists," *Wall Street Journal*, (February 17, 2015). <https://www.wsj.com/articles/islamic-state-gained-strength-in-libya-by-co-opting-local-jihadists-1424217492>.

³³ BBC Monitoring, "Analysis: Islamic State restructures its 'provinces' a year on from 2017 defeats," BBC Monitoring, (October 17, 2018). <https://monitoring.bbc.co.uk/product/c200bdcn>.

outside Iraq and Syria are mostly through propaganda, finance, and, of course, the pledge of allegiance.³⁴ While there is a lot of variation through the middle of this spectrum regarding the types and frequency of activities conducted by the respective provinces,³⁵ within the disjointed territories of both ISCAP and ISEA are groups that are engaged in long-running and highly active insurgencies. In the DRC, Islamic State's representatives are the ADF.

Previous assessments of the extent to which the Islamic State (or other transnational jihadists) have influenced the ADF, including several United Nations' expert reports³⁶ and other publications, have tended to argue that there is little evidence of direct command and control links.³⁷ While this report agrees with this assessment, it is important to highlight that the absence of direct command and control is not evidence that a relationship with the Islamic State does not exist. Meanwhile, others have pointed to a lack of Arab foreign fighters or improved explosives capabilities as a metric to gauge the ADF's relationship with the Islamic State.³⁸ Unfortunately this reflects a misunderstanding about the variety of ways in which the relationship between the Islamic State and local affiliates may manifest in reality. The recruitment of Arab foreign fighters is not a prerequisite for an Islamic State branch.³⁹ Likewise, the lack of more sophisticated improvised explosive devices is a poor indicator to assess this relationship.⁴⁰ It is essential

³⁴ Husham Al-Hashimi, "Interview: ISIS's Abdul Nasser Qardash," Center for Global Policy, (June 4, 2020). <https://cgpolicy.org/articles/interview-isis-abdul-nasser-qardash/>.

³⁵ For example, with the exception of Islamic State's Khorasan Province, its Pakistan and Hind provinces in South Asia engage in relatively infrequent operations. For more, see: Shweta Desai and Amarnath Amarsingam, "ISIS in South Asia: Struggle for Survival Beyond 'Khorasan'," Center for Global Policy, (June 29, 2020). <https://cgpolicy.org/articles/isis-in-south-asia-struggle-for-survival-beyond-khorasan/>; Robert Postings, "ISIS announces new India and Pakistan provinces, casually breaking up Khorasan," *Defense Post*, (May 15, 2019). <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/05/15/islamic-state-pakistan-province-al-hind/>.

³⁶ *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2020. <https://www.undocs.org/S/2020/482>. Previous UNSC Group of Experts reports on the Democratic Republic of Congo are available at: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1533/panel-of-experts/expert-reports>.

³⁷ Titeca, "Jihadis in the Congo?" 2016; Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion: A Glimpse into the Life and Operations of a Secretive Jihadi Armed Group*, The Center on International Cooperation at New York University, (November 14, 2018). <https://cic.nyu.edu/publications/Inside-the-ADF-Rebellion-A-Glimpse-into-the-Life-and-Operations-of-a-Secretive-Jihadi-Armed-Group>.

³⁸ Daniel Fahey and Judith Verweijen, "A closer look at Congo's Islamist rebels," *The Washington Post*, (September 30, 2020). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/09/30/closer-look-congos-islamic-rebels/>.

³⁹ While ISWAP is currently not known to employ Arab foreign fighters, a possible Caucasian fighter was briefly seen in a January 2019 video from Nigeria prompting many to interpret this as evidence of an Arab member. However, this development remains unverified. See: Jacob Zenn, "The Islamic State's Provinces on the Peripheries: Juxtaposing the Pledges from Boko Haram in Nigeria and Abu Sayyaf and Maute Group in the Philippines," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 13, no. 1 (February 2019): 87-104. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26590511>; Caleb Weiss, online conversation with Jacob Zenn, October 13, 2020.

⁴⁰ Harun Maruf, "Islamic State Claims Attack in Somalia," *Voice of America News*, (October 24, 2017). <https://www.voanews.com/africa/islamic-state-claims-attack-somalia>; Also based on author Caleb Weiss' tracking of the Islamic State in Somalia since its emergence in late 2015. For instance, since April 2016, when the Islamic State in Somalia began claiming attacks, it has only claimed 32 IED blasts out of a total 193 attack claims (or roughly 17% of all claims). Of these 32 IEDs, the vast majority either caused little to

for the field to develop a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the Islamic State and its affiliates. Dismissing the ADF's link to the Islamic State when the Islamic State itself has formally claimed dozens of operations in the DRC involving the ADF and featured ADF leaders in its propaganda simply ignores the evidence. The debate is not whether the relationship exists, but rather the nature of the relationship, and this is a far more complicated issue with significant implications for scholarly research and strategic-policy practice.

The remainder of this report is devoted to understanding the ADF's evolution and the critical bottom-up dynamics that contributed to its outreach to the Islamic State. In doing so, it looks to contribute to the ongoing discourse about how best to understand conflict dynamics in Eastern Congo. After a decade of relatively low-level violence that lasted from 2001-2010, coinciding with the ADF's integration and intermarrying into local communities, the group began to incrementally increase its attacks on civilians in an effort to expand its area of control.⁴¹ By 2014, on the heels of *Sukola*, a MONUSCO-backed Congolese military (FARDC) offensive against the ADF, a major shift in the group's operations was underway. The ADF began to indiscriminately target civilians, including young children and elderly persons, in a wave of horrific retributive massacres, largely using machetes, axes, and small arms. While they were not the sole group committing violence in Beni—substantial evidence emerged of attacks in Beni being carried out by the FARDC, former members of the *Rassemblement congolais pour la démocratie Kisangani/Mouvement de libération* (RCD-K/ML), and communal militias⁴²—ADF-attributed violence spiked to levels not seen in over a decade. Since 2014, thousands of civilians have been killed or abducted by the ADF,⁴³ and hundreds of thousands of people are currently displaced in Beni territory.⁴⁴ From January 2019 to June 2020 alone, the ADF killed at least 793 civilians, with local civil society organizations placing that number far higher.⁴⁵ According to the United Nations Joint Human Rights Office (UNJHRO), who conducted recent investigations, these ADF atrocities may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁴⁶ While the ADF is not the only group engaged in such horrific

no damage or cannot be verified at all. This indicates that its local IED production remains rudimentary and has not benefited from any knowledge transfer from other Islamic State branches.

⁴¹ Hilary Matfess, "Understanding the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Central Africa," Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), (April 29, 2019).

<https://acleddata.com/2019/04/29/understanding-the-allied-democratic-forces-adf-in-central-africa/>.

⁴² Congo Research Group, "Who are the Killers of Beni?" The Center on International Cooperation at New York University, (March 22, 2016). <https://cic.nyu.edu/publications/who-are-killers-beni>.

⁴³ Clionadh Raleigh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre, and Joakim Karlsen, "Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (September 2010): 651-660. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0022343310378914>; "The Kivu Security Tracker," The Congo Research Group and Human Rights Watch, (2020). Available at: <https://kivusecurity.org/>.

⁴⁴ Charlie Yaxley, "As violence spikes in DRC, UNHCR concerned for trapped civilians," The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), (November 29, 2019). <https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2019/11/5ddfd3964/violence-spikes-drc-unhcr-concerned-trapped-civilians.html>.

⁴⁵ "DRC: Attacks by ADF armed group may amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes," United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner. 2020, (July 6, 2020). <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26041&LangID=E>.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

violence in the DRC, it is important to acknowledge its evolving role in the unfolding disaster in North Kivu.

Beyond a marked shift in operations, the ADF's evolution can also be seen in their transition from reclusive secrecy to embracing external communication and branding strategies. In 2016 and 2017, the group began engaging in social media-based propaganda and recruitment campaigns targeted primarily at regional audiences in Africa, reframing how it described and legitimized its operational and strategic activities and rebranding itself as a global jihadist group and "the Islamic State in Central Africa."⁴⁷ By 2018, the Islamic State confirmed the establishment of an Islamic State in Central Africa (ISCAP),⁴⁸ and then, in April 2019, the Islamic State acknowledged its first attacks in the DRC. What emerges is that while there is currently little evidence of direct command and control by the Islamic State, having adopted the Islamic State's ideology and strategy, the ADF has demonstrated a willingness to frame its operations as part of the Islamic State's global effort and contribute to its campaigns of 'attrition' and 'breaking the walls'. In return, the ADF has become a frequent feature in the Islamic State's globally distributed media, which is augmented locally by the ADF's continued production of increasingly sophisticated videos targeted at regional supporters and potential recruits. The Baluku-led faction of the ADF, while operationally focused on the DRC, is increasingly looking to build its transnational networks.

The ADF's early history, 1991-2014

It is important to begin this case study by providing some historical and strategic context for the ADF's evolution since 2015, when the shift began that would culminate in it joining the Islamic State. It is a complex history that can only be addressed very briefly here. However, what is noteworthy about this history is that the ADF, despite its name and ties to non-Muslim communities and armed groups, has always had a stated militant Islamist agenda, which, like this group's politico-military efforts, has become increasingly extreme over time. The ADF has demonstrated, throughout its history, a willingness to form alliances and leverage international support to further its aims.⁴⁹ Tracing the arc of these two dynamics are important continuums for understanding how the group—or technically speaking, a major faction of the group led by Musa Baluku—became part of ISCAP.

⁴⁷ MTM video on file with authors, November 2017.

⁴⁸ "But Give Good Tidings to the Patient," Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (August 22, 2018). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2018/08/22/new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-shaykh-abu-bakr-al-%e1%b8%a5ussayni-al-qurayshi-al-baghdadi-but-give-good-tidings-to-the-patient/>.

⁴⁹ Henning Tamm, "The Origins of Transnational Alliances: Rulers, Rebels, and Political Survival in the Congo Wars." *International Security* 41, no. 1 (August 2016):147-181. doi:10.1162/ISEC_a_00252

The ADF's Ugandan roots

While the ADF was formally established in 1995, its origin story can arguably be traced back to 1991. That year, Jamil Mukulu, the future founder of the ADF, participated in two raids on the Old Kampala Mosque, now called the Uganda National Mosque, with fellow Tabliq Muslims who attempted to take over the Ugandan Muslim Supreme Council (UMSC) offices.⁵⁰ After the second raid resulted in the death of four policemen, mass arrests saw over four hundred Tabliqs imprisoned, including Mukulu. While largely opposing violent jihad, the Tabliqs in Uganda have sometimes aligned with the Salafi community.⁵¹ In 1993, Mukulu and some of his compatriots were acquitted of murder⁵² and released from prison, whereupon they formed the Salaf Foundation with an armed wing called the Ugandan Muslim Freedom Fighters (UMFF).⁵³ Ultimately establishing its base in Buseruka in western Uganda,⁵⁴ it was not long before UMFF attracted the attention of the Ugandan security forces. In February 1995, the Ugandan military (UPDF) launched an offensive against the UMFF that drove the group from its main training camp and killed many of its leaders.⁵⁵ Taking refuge in the DRC, Mukulu then reconstituted the remaining UMFF forces as the Allied Democratic Forces.⁵⁶ By June 1995, the ADF had formed a Sudanese-sponsored alliance with the National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (NALU), which was formalized in September 1995.⁵⁷ NALU had its base in the Konjo community in Uganda and was composed largely of non-Muslims.⁵⁸ Sudan continued to support the joint ADF-NALU venture, providing substantial training to the militants for their fight against the Ugandan state.⁵⁹

⁵⁰ The Tablighi Jamaat, known simply as the Tabliqs, reached Uganda in the 1950s, where it had a pronounced impact on the evolution of Ugandan Islamism from the 1980s onwards. Some scholars have noted its role in advocating a more conservative interpretation of Islam inside Uganda while others argue that Sudanese support enabled Uganda's Tabliqs to build international networks. For more, see: Gerard Prunier, "Rebel movements and proxy warfare: Uganda, Sudan and Congo (1986-99)," *African Affairs* 103, no. 412 (July 2004): 359-383. <http://www.jstor.com/stable/3518562>; Kristof Titeca and Daniel Fahey, "The many faces of a rebel group. the Allied Democratic Forces in the Democratic republic of Congo," *International Affairs* 92, no. 5 (August 2016): 1189-1206. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2346.12703>.

⁵¹ Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

⁵² Eleanor Beevor, "The Allied Democratic Forces: the DRC's most deadly jihadist group?" *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, (January 16, 2019). <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2019/01/adf-jihadist-group-drc>

⁵³ Titeca and Fahey, "The many faces of a rebel group," 2016.

⁵⁴ W-1 Interview with author (Bridgeway), Uganda, 2015.

⁵⁵ Titeca and Fahey, "The many faces of a rebel group," 2016.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid*; Prunier, "Rebel movements and proxy warfare," 2004.

⁵⁸ Lindsay Scorgie-Porter, "Economic Survival and Borderland Rebellion: The Case of the Allied Democratic Forces on the Uganda-Congo Border," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 6 no. 2 (July 2015): 191-213. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/21520844.2015.1055452?scroll=top&needAccess=true&journalCode=ujme20>.

⁵⁹ Kristof Titeca and Koen Vlassenroot, "Rebels without borders in the Rwenzori borderland? A biography of the Allied Democratic Forces," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (April 2012): 154-176. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17531055.2012.664708>; Prunier, "Rebel movements and proxy warfare," 2004.

There are several operational and strategic milestones in the ADF's early history that are noteworthy. In November 1996, the ADF-NALU launched its first attack inside Uganda, marking the beginning of what would become a decades-long insurgency targeting Uganda and, eventually, the DRC, where it would later focus the bulk of its attention.⁶⁰ The following year, between June and September 1997, its attacks into western Uganda⁶¹ included one of its earliest mass abduction operations, wherein 19 seminary students were taken from a Catholic school.⁶² Kidnapping became a way for the group to bolster its ranks, with dozens of Ugandans being abducted in raids over the next year.⁶³

The transition from kidnapping civilians to specifically targeting and killing them soon became apparent with a failed kidnapping raid in June 1998 that resulted in dozens of students being burned alive.⁶⁴ Terrorist attacks in Kampala followed in 1999⁶⁵ and 2000,⁶⁶ as the UPDF began to mount military offensives against the ADF⁶⁷ to drive it back into its rear bases in the DRC. In December 2001, the U.S. State Department designated the ADF as a global terrorist organization, allocating additional US assistance to help Ugandan counterterrorism efforts.⁶⁸ UPDF operations severely weakened the ADF to such an extent that it is believed that by 2003 it had only a few hundred fighters, down from approximately four thousand in 1996. It withdrew from Uganda that year.⁶⁹ The ADF's decision to base itself exclusively in the DRC was pivotal in its evolution into its current threat.

The ADF settles in the DRC

Despite the ADF having launched attacks in the DRC prior to 2003,⁷⁰ the dense forests in parts of eastern Congo proved conducive for it to rebuild and refocus. In the ensuing years, the ADF leadership enforced a strict interpretation of sharia over its camps'

⁶⁰ Moses Draku, "Zairean Troops Attack Uganda," *PanaPress*, (November 14, 1996). Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/democratic-republic-congo/zairean-troops-attack-uganda>.

⁶¹ Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

⁶² "HRW condemns Deadly Attack by Ugandan Rebels on School Children," Human Rights Watch, (June 10, 1998). <https://www.hrw.org/news/1998/06/10/hrw-condemns-deadly-attack-ugandan-rebels-school-children#>.

⁶³ *Eastern Congo: The ADF-NALU's Lost Rebellion*, International Crisis Group, (December 19, 2012). <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/democratic-republic-congo/eastern-congo-adf-nalu-s-lost-rebellion>

⁶⁴ *Uganda Assessment*, U.K. Home Office, (April 2000). Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/486a53430.pdf>; Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

⁶⁵ Anna Borzello, "Valentine's Day bombings kill four in Uganda," *The Guardian*, (February 15, 1999). <https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/feb/16/2>; *Eastern Congo: The ADF-NALU's Lost Rebellion*, 2012.

⁶⁶ "Uganda blasts injure six," *CNN*, (January 29, 2001). <https://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/africa/01/29/uganda.bombs/index.html>

⁶⁷ *Eastern Congo: The ADF-NALU's Lost Rebellion*, 2012.

⁶⁸ "Designation of 39 Organizations on the USA PATRIOT Act's "Terrorist Exclusion List"," Press Relations, U.S. Department of State, (December 6, 2001). <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2001/6695.htm>.

⁶⁹ Scorgie-Porter, "Economic Survival and Borderland Rebellion," 2015.

⁷⁰ For instance, the ADF's first kidnap raid in the DRC was in 1999 and targeted a Ugandan refugee camp in North Kivu. See: *Uganda Assessment*, 2000.

inhabitants⁷¹ and leveraged its relationship with NALU to marry into the local communities, from which it increasingly recruited.⁷² Sudanese support largely ceased by 2005, but the ADF's local networks allowed it to offset those losses in the short-term and were crucial for its long-term staying power. Successive campaigns to rout the ADF from North Kivu strongholds by the Congolese military (FARDC), at times backed by UN forces, were unsuccessful. Instead, it was the demobilization of NALU leadership in a 2007 truce with the Ugandan government that proved a more significant blow to the ADF's fortunes. Nevertheless, it was one which the group could weather thanks to significant external financial support networks and "taxation" of the surrounding communities. The ADF worked with Congolese collaborators to establish local businesses,⁷³ including plantations where farmers would work in exchange for a portion of the yield.⁷⁴ These provided the group with alternate sources of income and sustenance and meant that they largely refrained from pillaging local towns, which helped with community relations. A UN Group of Experts report in 2011 suggested that almost half of the population in Beni supported the ADF, with some community leaders suggesting the ADF could help prevent incursions of Hutus and Tutsis.⁷⁵ This dynamic would not last long, however, as the ADF soon began to target local communities.

Local sources suggested that the targeting of civilians from 2010 and 2011 onwards was designed to pressure the population from collaborating with government officials. ADF forces reportedly had specific instructions during this period *not* to target women and children, although this changed dramatically in later years.⁷⁶ The group's international notoriety also increased in 2011 when the Ugandan government officially issued an arrest warrant for Mukulu in January, followed a month later by an INTERPOL red notice.⁷⁷ By the end of 2011, the UN⁷⁸ and the US⁷⁹ had sanctioned Mukulu. On the ground, the ADF's aggressive tactics resulted in steady territorial gains. By 2013, the ADF had influence over four hundred and twenty square kilometers of Beni's "triangle of death" and its membership was estimated to be between 1,600 and 2,500 militants.⁸⁰

Somewhat renewed since its nadir a decade earlier, in July 2013 the ADF unleashed a campaign of terror in Beni territory, notably around the town of Kamango, where it

⁷¹ Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

⁷² *Ibid*; Scourgie-Porter, "Economic Survival and Borderland Rebellion," 2015.

⁷³ Congo Research Group, "Who are the Killers of Beni?" 2016.

⁷⁴ *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations Security Council, (December 2, 2011). <https://www.undocs.org/S/2011/738>.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*.

⁷⁶ W-33 interview with authors (Bridgeway), October 2018.

⁷⁷ Vision Report, "Interpol issues red notice for ADF leader," *New Vision*, (February 13, 2011). <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1016423/interpol-issues-red-notice-adf-leader>.

⁷⁸ "Jamil Mukulu," Sanctions List, United Nations Security Council, (December 5, 2016). <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1533/materials/summaries/individual/jamil-mukulu>.

⁷⁹ "Democratic Republic of the Congo Designations," Specially Designated Nationals List, U.S. Department of the Treasury, (October 5, 2011). <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/financial-sanctions/recent-actions/2011005>.

⁸⁰ *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations Security Council, (January 23, 2014). <https://www.undocs.org/S/2014/42>.

looted, tortured, and killed civilians in a campaign lasting several months.⁸¹ Accusations of collaboration with the government were used to justify the violence, including the beheading of the Chief of Bawisa Groupement.⁸² By September 2013, sixty-six thousand Congolese civilians had fled the violence into neighboring Uganda.⁸³ A speech given by Jamil Mukulu in 2014 underscores the group's brutal approach, justified with typical jihadist rhetoric:

Even when they see us in villages as we pass by, they must report this to their forces FARDC. If he [the civilian] sees you, kill the polytheists just as they fight you. Slaughter him or her, behead them immediately. Never give it a second thought. Do not hesitate to behead them.⁸⁴

FARDC launched a counter-offensive in early 2014, forcing the group to retreat. In April of 2014, Mukulu fled from the ADF's main camp, Madina. He would eventually be arrested in Tanzania in 2015.⁸⁵ In his absence, Musa Baluku, Mukulu's second-in-command and the ADF's political commissar, became its leader.⁸⁶ Even after his arrest, Mukulu continued to try to exert control over the group from his cell in Uganda, but he was unable to prevent Baluku's rise.⁸⁷ Under these immense pressures, the Baluku-led ADF launched a campaign of violent retaliation as, behind the scenes, it eventually sought to align with the Islamic State movement that had emerged as the flagship of the global jihad thousands of kilometers away in Iraq and Syria.

The Baluku-led ADF: ISCAP in the DRC, 2015-Present

The context within which the Baluku-led ADF sought the attention and support of the Islamic State is important to consider. Having just lost its founder and leader, Mukulu, and weathering immense military pressure from the FARDC, the comparatively younger and more extremist Baluku was at the helm of a group in crisis, and not just from external forces.⁸⁸ Within the ADF, tensions between Mukulu's vision of the ADF and Baluku's would eventually lead the group to split. While Mukulu founded the ADF with the intention of returning to Uganda to establish an Islamic government that would be the envy of similarly minded militants around the world, Baluku wanted to position the ADF

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Jamil Mukulu sermon on file with authors.

⁸⁵ The ADF has long-standing ties to Tanzania, and Mukulu had a Tanzanian passport under a false name. See: *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2011.

⁸⁶ *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations Security Council, (January 12, 2015). <https://www.undocs.org/S/2015/19>.

⁸⁷ W-58 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020.

⁸⁸ Internationally, the UN had blacklisted the entire group. Michelle Nichols, "Exclusive: UN Security Council sanctions Islamist ADF in Congo – diplomats," *Reuters*, (July 1, 2014). <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-congodemocratic-uganda-adf-un/exclusive-u-n-security-council-sanctions-islamist-adf-in-congo-diplomats-idUSKBN0F62XQ20140701>.

as part of a broader global movement. This section analyses the ADF's outreach efforts and how the relationship with the Islamic State shaped the ADF's operational and strategic activities in its adoption of the Islamic State's rhetorical frames, engagement in propaganda operations, and transnational focus. It also explores how the Islamic State provided funding to the ADF and, through its central media units, projected its activities to a global audience.

Reframing the ADF struggle & the Islamic State benefactor

According to the group's own telling, 2014 was an inflection point: the ADF had spent almost 20 years isolated, trying to create a harmonious community of believers, when a coalition of Christian enemies began a crusade against them (see Figure 1).⁸⁹ In retaliation, the ADF launched a series of civilian massacres in October 2014 that claimed 250 lives in just over two months. Even after this revenge spree ended, however, attacks on civilians, including women and children, became common under Baluku's leadership.⁹⁰ After more than a decade of relative peace with the surrounding communities, the ADF has killed and abducted thousands in the last six years.⁹¹

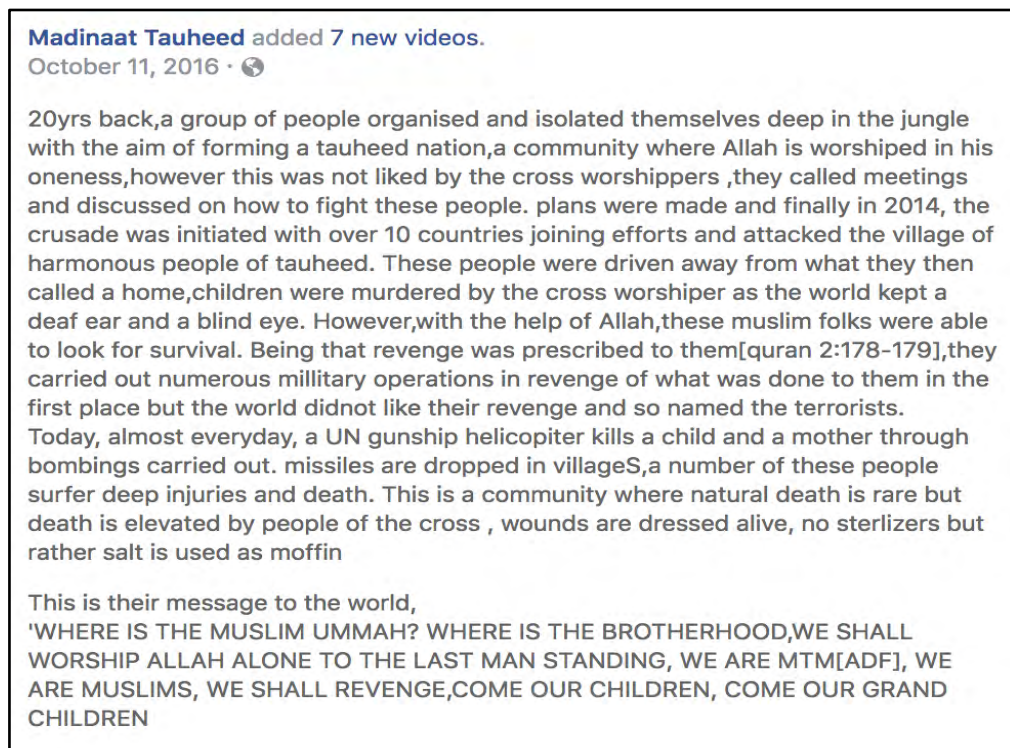


Figure 1: October 11, 2016 Facebook post by Madinaat Tauheed

Baluku's outreach to the Islamic State was likely driven by more than just an ideological alignment. According to an ADF member opposed to this pivot, the hope was that the

⁸⁹ Screenshot of MTM Facebook post dated Oct 11, 2016, on file with authors.

⁹⁰ Matfess, "Understanding the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in Central Africa," 2019.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Islamic State would be “*splashing them with dollars and weapons and ammunition.*”⁹² Although an ADF collaborator reported that funds from the Islamic State first started to be sent in 2016 following a secret pledge of allegiance from ADF leaders, this has not been independently verified.⁹³ However, by 2017 the ADF was seemingly integrated into at least one financial network affiliated with the Islamic State when, between late 2016 and early 2017, it reportedly established ties with Waleed Ahmed Zein. Zein, a Kenyan national, was later sanctioned by the United States for his role as a financier for the Islamic State to “ISIS fighters in Syria, Libya, and Central Africa.”⁹⁴ Local sources have suggested that Zein reportedly traveled to Uganda in early 2017 to meet with ADF collaborators, and two independent sources with direct ties to the group revealed that he began sending funds shortly thereafter.⁹⁵ The initial amount sent was relatively small, but by the end of the year, Zein’s was transferring thousands of dollars at a time.⁹⁶ Although the US government has established Zein’s ties to the Islamic State, investigations into his network are ongoing, and it remains to be determined who authorized Zein’s transfers to ADF elements.

While the ADF remained tightlipped about its new relationship with the Islamic State, 2016 marked the beginning of the ADF’s attempt to publicize and internationalize its movement. In August 2016, a Facebook account for Madinaat Tauheed became active.⁹⁷ Madina at Tauheed Wau Mujahedeen (MTM) was a name the ADF had adopted as early as 2012,⁹⁸ which initially appeared to refer to the group’s



Figure 2: MTM flag

⁹² W-46. WhatsApp chat with David), June 19, 2019.

⁹³ W-5 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2017.

⁹⁴ “Treasury Sanctions East African Facilitator of Intricate ISIS Financial Network,” Office of Press Releases, U.S. Department of the Treasury, (September 7, 2018). <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/sm476>.

⁹⁵ W-59 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020. W-5 interview with author, Uganda, 2018. W-5 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors, Bridgeway partner organization, Uganda, 2017.

⁹⁶ Receipt of wire transfer from Waleed Ahmed Zein, November 17, 2017. Bank Statement from W-60, Jan 2018. W-59 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020. W-5 interview with author, Uganda, 2018. W-5 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2017.

⁹⁷ Screenshot of MTM Facebook post dated August 15, 2016 and Oct 4, 2016, on file with authors.

⁹⁸ *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2014.

headquarters, Madina.⁹⁹ It was only later, in October 2016, that the ADF began to publicly use it as a reference to the group as a whole.

On October 4, the Madinaat Tauheed account reported,

ASALAM [sic] ALAIKUM, what started as shelling BARISTIC [sic] MISSILES, AND KATUSHA TO THE ADF TAUHEED CAMP [MTM] ON IDD [sic] BY THE CONGOLESE AND THEIR ALLIES THE UN CRUSADERS. THESE BOMBINGS WERE INTENDED TO DISORGANISE THE MTM MUSLIM COMMUNITY FROM ENJOYING THEIR IDD [sic] CELEBRATIONS, HOWEVER BY ALLAH'S MERCY, THIS DID NOT WORK OUT.

A week later, it declared (see Figure 1),

WHERE IS THE MUSLIM UMMAH? WHERE IS THE BROTHERHOOD, WE SHALL WORSHIP ALLAH ALONE TO THE LAST MAN STANDING, WE ARE MTM [ADF], WE ARE MUSLIMS, WE SHALL REVENGE, COME OUR CHILDREN, COME OUR GRAND CHILDREN [sic].

Changing its name was likely designed to appeal to a broader audience, downplaying the Uganda-based grievances of the Allied Democratic Forces and broadening its scope. Nevertheless, this appears to have been a mostly external rebranding effort, as few rank-and-file members of the camps who have come out in recent years refer to the group as MTM.

In addition to the Facebook account, the ADF used a combination of YouTube, WhatsApp, and Telegram in its first known forays into social media. Between 2016-17, the ADF posted at least 35 unique videos across its social media platforms.¹⁰⁰ As with the new name, the videos clearly demonstrate a group that is trying to establish itself as part of an international jihadist movement. Featured prominently in a number of the videos is MTM's logo, which mimics the flags from other violent jihadist group such as the Islamic State and Al Shabaab.¹⁰¹ The messages typically implore Muslims to join them as they fight infidels and polytheists,¹⁰² while others show footage of their victories over the Congolese army.¹⁰³ Most significantly, one of the videos contains the group's first public mention of the Islamic State, but it remains unclear whether the message was intended to announce an existing relationship or merely express the ADF's solidarity with the movement. In the video, Jundi, a recently arrived Tanzanian, declared in Arabic: "Here we are in an Islamic state, the Islamic State in Central Africa..."¹⁰⁴

Jundi's appearance was significant not only for his message, but also his nationality. Historically, the ADF was an unabashedly Ugandan group, with Congolese (often unwillingly) making up a sizable portion of the lower ranks. These videos, however, feature fighters from Tanzania, Burundi, and other countries who appeal to their

⁹⁹ *Midterm report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations Security Council, (July 19, 2013). <https://www.undocs.org/S/2013/433>.

¹⁰⁰ For a deeper analysis on the videos, see: Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*; MTM videos on file with authors, "Ghaneema," and, "MTM Waswiyyah."

¹⁰² Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018; Untitled MTM videos on file with authors.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*; MTM videos on file with authors.

¹⁰⁴ MTM video on file with authors, "MTM Waswiyyah."

compatriots and the broader Muslim community to join their fight.¹⁰⁵ They speak in Kiswahili (both Congolese and Tanzanian dialects), Luganda, Arabic, French and Kinyarwanda.¹⁰⁶ The ADF was clearly positioning itself as part of the global jihadist movement. While these efforts may seem fairly modest by the standards of other jihadist groups, it is important to contrast them with the ADF's history of very limited propaganda output, reflecting its secretive approach.

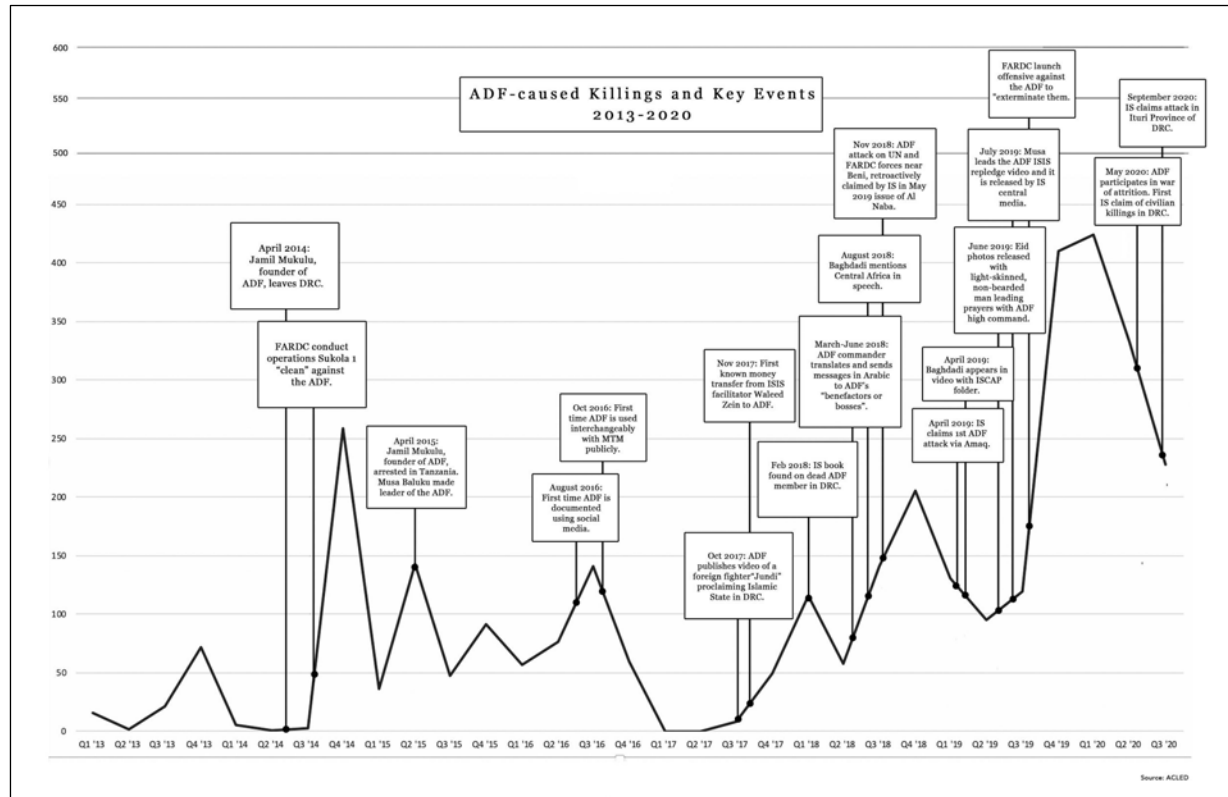


Figure 3: Graph of ADF violence and key events in North Kivu, January 2013 - October 2020

Although it is unclear what role, if any, these narratives played in strengthening ties between the ADF and the Islamic State, that link appears to have deepened in 2018. In February, FARDC soldiers found a book produced by the Islamic State's Office of Research and Studies on a dead ADF combatant.¹⁰⁷ In August 2018, al-Baghdadi first mentioned the existence of a Central Africa Province.¹⁰⁸ That year also marked an all-time high for the ADF in civilian casualties. These numbers were surpassed in 2019 when the ADF was finally recognized publicly by the Islamic State as part of ISCAP. It should be noted that in late October of 2019, the FARDC launched a military offensive against the ADF that President Félix Tshisekedi in the weeks prior announced was intended to "definitively exterminate them," and a wave of retributive violence against civilians at the hands of the ADF ensued in the months that followed.¹⁰⁹ Figure 3 tracks ADF killings of

¹⁰⁵ MTM videos on file with authors.

¹⁰⁶ Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ "But Give Good Tidings to the Patient," 2018.

¹⁰⁹ "After the Death of at Least 77 Civilians, the Congolese Army's Strategy Against the ADF Is Called into

civilians and security force personnel. Fatalities have been trending upward since the group's first confirmed links with the Islamic State in 2017. Although the peak violence from November 2019 - February 2020 was largely in response to the FARDC offensive, we note that this response was far deadlier and more sustained than the 2014 retributive violence, which occurred prior to the ADF's alliance with the Islamic State. The upward trend in ADF violence outside of large military offensives, could be due to increased capacity or manpower, or both, but these explanations are speculative given the current gaps in our understanding. Some ADF insiders have reported an increase in regional fighters, while other human source reporting has identified Islamic State entities that provided funding to the ADF, though more research is required to definitively link these evolutions to changes in ADF operations.



Figure 4: Photo published by the Islamic State showing ADF leaders being instructed by an unknown man

On April 18 2019, the Islamic State claimed its first attack by ISCAP in the DRC (see Figure 5).¹¹⁰ Then, in June, the Islamic State published photos of a clean-shaven man who was apparently lecturing to the ADF in their camp (see Figure 4). Given beards are a requirement in the camps, his clean-shaven appearance suggests that the speaker was newly arrived, likely having shaved his beard to avoid suspicion when traveling. Kneeling in front of him are the ADF's top leaders, including Baluku.¹¹¹ A month later, the Islamic State released a video of Baluku pledging allegiance to the caliph under the title of the Islamic State Central Africa.¹¹² He stated:

Question,” Kivu Security Tracker, (November 25, 2019). <https://blog.kivusecurity.org/after-the-death-of-at-least-77-civilians-the-congolese-armys-strategy-against-the-adf-is-called-into-question/>.

¹¹⁰ Caleb Weiss, “Islamic State claims attack in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” *Long War Journal*, (April 18, 2019). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/04/islamic-state-claims-attack-in-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo.php>.

¹¹¹ W-4 interview with authors (Bridgeway), Uganda, 2019. W-50 interview with author (Bridgeway), Uganda, 2019.

¹¹² Identification confirmed by W-4 and W-50, interviews with author, Uganda, 2019.

We are still continuing with the promise while we are confident and prepared to fight against Infidels who are determined on the destruction of the establishment of an Islamic State {an Islamic Caliph}. May Allah purify it, protect and cleanse it {the Caliph}. We are reaffirming our Oaths of Allegiance to our Islamic Caliphate Sheikh al Mujahid Abu Bakr al Husseini al Qurash, may Allah protect him.

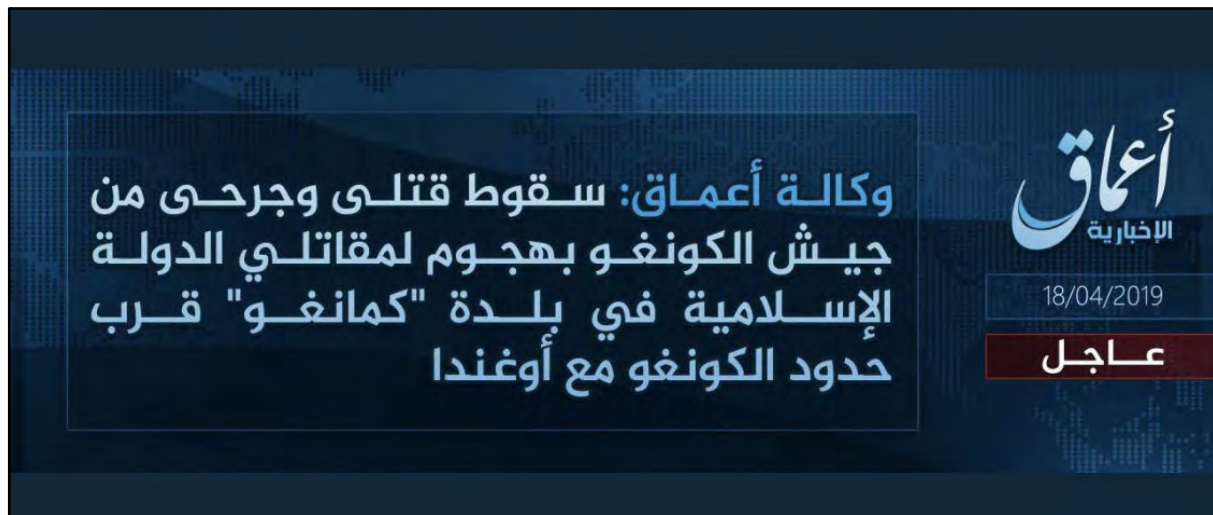


Figure 5: Screenshot of the Islamic State's first claim of responsibility for an attack in the DRC

Of particular note in Baluku's speech is his acknowledgement that this was not the ADF's first oath of allegiance; rather, the group was *reaffirming* a past oath, the exact timing of which is unknown. Senior ADF leaders also implicitly affirm their deference to Islamic State leaders in their communications with external collaborators, using secure messaging protocols as required by the ADF's "bosses."¹¹³ In late October of 2019, immediately following al Baghdadi's death, al-Qurashi highlighted the significance of ISCAP, stating that "the Islamic State today stands at the threshold of Europe and Central Africa."¹¹⁴ Since then, ISCAP in the DRC has appeared dozens of times in messaging by the Islamic State's central media (for a full list see Annex I). Recently, a top ADF leader reminded supporters that, despite the group's name, democracy was never its goal and from its founding it was dedicated to creating a government based on Sharia law, one which, he now claims, would extend to the whole world.¹¹⁵

These events show the clear development of a relationship between the ADF and the Islamic State, one that is often dismissed or underestimated by too narrow an idea of what is required to be an Islamic State affiliate. It would be wrong to use the Islamic State's military and governance activities in Iraq circa 2014-16 as the comparison for assessing the extent to which the ADF has adopted the Islamic State's *manhaj*. Those fleeting moments of conventional success are outliers in the total span of the Islamic State movement's history that is characterized by guerrilla warfare and insurgency. Indeed, the

¹¹³ W-7. Phone exploit. Uganda, 2019.

¹¹⁴ Jeff Seldin, "Supporters Begin Flocking to New Islamic State Leader," *Voice of America News*, (October 31, 2019). <https://www.voanews.com/middle-east/supporters-begin-flocking-new-islamic-state-leader>.

¹¹⁵ W-7. Phone exploit. Uganda, July 2020.

Islamic State has increasingly emphasized the principles of its approach to guerrilla warfare, especially recently.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, the extent to which the Islamic State's *manhaj* is being applied in ADF territories is difficult to assess due to limited access in its areas of operation. However, its history of extreme violence against government and civilian populations, as well as reports by ADF members that ADF camps are governed according to *sharia*, suggest that the ADF's politico-military operations and strategies broadly align with that of the Islamic State. What is clear is that, by 2019, the ADF had begun to ideologically frame its agenda and politico-military activities in language that echoes the Islamic State's key principles. One of the notable elements of this was ADF leadership's emphasis on the type of *takfirist* ideology that has been a hallmark of the Islamic State and has often distinguished it from other groups, including al-Qa'ida, in the severity of its jurisprudential interpretation and application. For example, the following excerpt is taken from a speech by Baluku:

Allah has given us the permission to kill all those hypocrites that work for and help infidels against Muslims. That is where Allah gives us the permission to kill people with Islamic names like ours, because they have betrayed us! Isn't it? This is because Allah has ordered them to kill infidels, but they oppose Allah, they believe Allah is not just in His commands for killing infidels! They instead turn around against their fellow Muslims that Allah has allowed to kill infidels, join with infidels and fight against Muslims. They kill us their fellow Muslims who are allowed by Allah to kill infidels, they torture us, they imprison us for life! Our very Muslims betray us trying to please infidels whose blood is permitted to be poured. Their blood is permitted to be spilt.¹¹⁷

Indeed, the issue of *takfir* may have contributed to the wedge between Baluku and Mukulu loyalists. Jamil Mukulu was ardently opposed to the connection to the Islamic State, partly on ideological grounds;¹¹⁸ Mukulu's willingness to kill civilians does not seem to have extended to fellow Muslims, as a *takfirist* ideology would require. In 2019, an individual known as David, a self-described Mukulu-aligned operative, explained his dislike of this ideology to a Uganda-based recruiter, saying: "Baluku says it openly that a Muslim who doesn't support Arabs from Iraq, his blood is allowed to be poured, and the truth is that he pours it without fear of the owner of this earth."¹¹⁹

Although Baluku and Mukulu's disagreement over *takfir* is largely symbolic—the vast majority of people in North Kivu are Christian, so a dispensation to kill Muslims would make little operational difference—Baluku's decision to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State was a step too far for Mukulu and his followers. In early 2019, a small band of Mukulu loyalists split from the larger corps that followed Baluku.¹²⁰ The breakaway group is reported to have 10-15 fighters in DRC, led by a man called Muzaaya,¹²¹ and, according

¹¹⁶ For example, see: "Except for one maneuvering for battle, or retreating to [another fighting] company," *Al-Naba* 236 (May 28, 2020). An English-language text translation is available at: <https://abujamajem.wordpress.com/2020/05/31/the-islamic-state-conceptualizes-guerrilla-warfare/>.

¹¹⁷ ISCAP in DRC Sermon by Musa Baluku, December 2019 and April 2020. On file with authors.

¹¹⁸ W-7 interview with author and phone exploit, Uganda, November 2019 and January 2020.

¹¹⁹ W-46. WhatsApp chat with David. June 19, 2019.

¹²⁰ W-58 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors, 2020. W-43 interview with author (Bridgeway), Uganda, 2019. W-44 interview with author (Bridgeway), Uganda, 2019.

¹²¹ W-61 interview with author (Bridgeway), Uganda 2019. W-43 interview with author, Uganda, 2019. W-44 interview with author, Uganda, 2019.

to one former member, is affiliated with a training camp in South Africa headed by Mukulu's son Hassan Nyanzi.¹²² Benjamin Kisokeranio, an ADF member who was granted honorary historical status for being the son of the founder of NALU, appears to be the highest ranking member to have defected over the disagreement.¹²³ Despite this split, Baluku has remained faithful to his pledge to the Islamic State, ridiculing those who left and reaping the benefits of the Islamic State's propaganda apparatus, projecting his faction's operations to a global stage.

The evolution of the ADF's propaganda

Prior to Baluku's consolidation of power, the ADF's use of media was confined to the spreading of ideological audio teachings via tapes, CDs, and digital audio files shared on memory cards. As such, their operations were largely shrouded in mystery to those outside their camps. By late 2016, however, as the ADF began using social media to rebrand themselves under the more global MTM banner, they began to showcase their military capabilities, posting battlefield updates and glorifying the killing of their enemies on Facebook and Youtube.¹²⁴ Their social media followers included individuals from across East Africa and beyond. These developments need to be understood both in contrast to a history of secrecy and in the context of the ADF's developing relationship with the Islamic State.

The quality of the videos in the ADF's early forays into social media were markedly low, with some 2016 videos featuring large watermarks of free editing software that often blocked parts of the image. Within a year, however, drastic improvements had been made, as an MTM graphic burned through opening sequences of videos possessing custom soundtracks, including *anasheeds*. By 2019, most ADF videos bore the production label of "Ashabul Kahf Media," or *Media of the Cave Dwellers*, with some videos hosting the "Central Africa Province" branding in the right corner.¹²⁵ The improvement in quality of these videos, alongside the naming of their province with the videos, mirrors that of other emerging provinces, such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara.¹²⁶ This is significant as it shows the group's desire to effectively spread its messaging and to better brand itself within the global jihadist milieu.

¹²² W-53 interview with author (Bridgeway), Uganda 2019. W-53 claims to have trained at the South Africa facility. Stamps in his passport show travel to Zimbabwe, from where he claims to have had help sneaking across the border into South Africa. W-46 confirms that he recruited W-53 and sent him to train in South Africa (W-46 interview with author, Uganda, 2019).

¹²³ W-7 interview with author and phone exploit, Uganda, November and December 2019.

¹²⁴ Screenshot of MTM Facebook posts dating from August 15, 2016 - Oct 10, 2017, on file with authors.

¹²⁵ ISCAP in DRC Martyrdom videos. December 2019; Mujahideen TV videos, October 2020, on file with authors.

¹²⁶ Prior to most videos after March 2019 being released by the Islamic State's central media apparatus, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) utilized locally produced videos for propaganda much like the ADF. In three examples below, however, it is clear that even with these rudimentary productions, that ISGS branded itself within the Islamic State's network. Examples available at: <https://twitter.com/MENASTREAM/status/1112191966836604928>; <https://twitter.com/MENASTREAM/status/1094368269463707649>; <https://twitter.com/MENASTREAM/status/1076112602697220096>.

Aside from quality, the ADF's shift in substance and tone in its messaging shows a clear and distinct move to align with the Islamic State. For instance, many of its earlier videos demonstrated more generic global jihadist rhetoric, often expressing admiration for Osama bin Laden.¹²⁷ In a video posted online in 2017, fighters speaking in Swahili, Kinyarwanda, and French urged people in DRC, Burundi, and Tanzania to join their fight in order to “wage war against infidels so that we establish a caliphate where the Quran and teachings of the Prophet are our only governing constitution.”¹²⁸ Other videos, posted online between 2016-2017, repeated this same line about fighting to establish a caliphate inside the DRC.¹²⁹ While stating its intentions to build a caliphate inside DRC appears intrinsically linked to the Islamic State's overall *manhaj*, this is a common goal expressed by other jihadist groups, namely the Islamic State's rival organization al-Qaeda.¹³⁰ But in October 2017, the ADF released a video featuring Tanzanian fighter Ahmed Mohamood, also known as Jundi, making an explicit reference to the Islamic State.¹³¹ In the video, Jundi calls on “those in Dar al-Kufr [Abode of Apostasy] to migrate to Dar al-Jihad, Dar al-Qitl [Abode of Fighting], and Dar al-Eman [Abode of Faith].” He goes on to state that the ADF is “Dar al-Islam of the Islamic State in Central Africa.” The video, although not released through the Islamic State's official media apparatus, was widely shared on social media by Islamic State members and supporters.¹³²

It is after the 2017 Jundi video that the ADF's relationship with the Islamic State became more transparent, as the Islamic State's Central Africa Province was referenced explicitly by the Islamic State in 2018. In 2019, the Islamic State released the official pledge video, in which Baluku reaffirmed his allegiance to then Caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, under the banner of the “Central Africa Wilayah.” The pledge video features footage of the ADF and, separately, members of Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a (also locally known as Al-Shabaab) in Mozambique. The quality of the video marked a shift from all prior and subsequent ADF propaganda. In it, video stabilization techniques and sophisticated Islamic State branding not seen in locally released ADF videos appear, leading to the assumption that, while most of the ADF propaganda is produced locally in the region, videos of significance such as this are edited by Islamic State's central media before their official release. It also seems likely that some technical media expertise has been transferred to the ADF from the Islamic State, given the leap in production values of Islamic State-branded videos from the DRC. Ultimately, what has emerged is dual track propaganda campaigns, with the Islamic State's central media units promoting material from Congo that fits within their global communication strategy, and the ADF utilizing localized distribution channels to push out segmented messaging to regional supporters and potential recruits.

¹²⁷ Untitled MTM videos on file with authors.

¹²⁸ Untitled MTM videos on file with authors.

¹²⁹ MTM videos on file with authors.

¹³⁰ Thomas Joscelyn, “Al Qaeda leader argues Taliban's ‘blessed emirate’ a core part of new caliphate,” *Long War Journal*, (August 24, 2018). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/08/al-qaeda-leader-argues-talibans-blessed-emirate-a-core-part-of-new-caliphate.php>.

¹³¹ MTM video on file with authors, “MTM Waswiyyah.”

¹³² *Ibid.*

this confusion, as pronunciations of certain towns in the local dialects may be corrupted when translated to Arabic. It is also possible that the media teams are using the closest major settlements rather than specific smaller villages in their frames of reference in order to provide a sense of familiarity. For instance, some Islamic State claims reported attacks “near Oicha” or “near Beni,” but the confirmed incident corresponding to this claim may take place in a small community outside of those towns. Instances where the date is delayed by a few days is likely to be the result of delayed communication between the ADF in the DRC and the Islamic State’s media team.



Figure 7: An Islamic State claim on June 23, 2020: “Thanks to God, soldiers of the caliphate targeted members of the Crusader UN forces on the road linking the Ugandan borders with Beni city yesterday, resulting in the death of five of them, and weapons were captured.” The attack was confirmed in the DRC by several independent sources, though the magnitude appears to have been overstated for effect; according to the UN, the ADF killed one Indonesian peacekeeper and wounded another.¹³⁵

Beginning in 2019, the Islamic State provided regular coverage of the ADF’s operations in the DRC. On April 18, 2019, the Islamic State’s Amaq News Agency reported that “Islamic State fighters in the town of Kamanago” had inflicted “deaths and injuries among the Congolense army”.¹³⁶ On the same day, the Islamic State released a communique stating that “the soldiers of the Caliphate assaulted barracks of the Congolese army in Bufata village, in the Beni region,” killing three and wounding five others.¹³⁷ A week later, issue 179 of the Islamic State’s weekly Arabic language newspaper, Al-Naba, reported attacks in Butembo and Kalianguki village conducted by Islamic State fighters in the DRC.¹³⁸ The report included a photo of over a dozen ISCAP fighters. Then, in a video produced by the Islamic State’s Furqan Media Foundation titled “In the hospitality of *amir al-mu’minin*,” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was shown handling documents one of which was titled “Wilayat Central Africa.”¹³⁹ The following month, on May 5, 2019, a photo report featured captured weapons, ammunitions, and other supplies taken during an attack on Kalianguki Village.¹⁴⁰ Three days later, an Islamic State communique reported an attack in Bunduguya.¹⁴¹ The 181st issue of Al-Naba claimed two attacks by ISCAP forces

¹³⁵ “UN condemns killing of Indonesian peacekeeper in DR Congo,” UN News, (June 23, 2020). <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066912>.

¹³⁶ Weiss, “Islamic State claims attack in the Democratic Republic of the Congo,” 2019.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*.

¹³⁸ “Killing and wounding eight Congolese army elements in Beni,” *Al-Naba* 179 (April 2019): 7. Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/04/25/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-179/>.

¹³⁹ Postings, “Islamic State recognizes new Central Africa Province,” 2019.

¹⁴⁰ ISCAP Photo Report, May 5, 2019.

¹⁴¹ Islamic State communique, May 8, 2019.

in the DRC with one relating to the operation previously featured in the May 5 photo report and another attack in Beni almost a week earlier.¹⁴² This regular reporting of ISCAP attacks in the DRC continued through May to end of July 2019, at which point the reporting on ISCAP activities in DRC became irregular for the rest of 2019. Significantly, on November 7, 2019, the 207th issue of *Al-Naba* featured ISCAP fighters pledging allegiance to the Islamic State's new caliph, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, highlighted in an article alongside other pledges from around the world.¹⁴³

In 2020, the Islamic State's central media units continued to promote ISCAP activities in the DRC, claiming attacks and raids on Congolese military forces in the first months of the year. In May, the Islamic State would claim some of its bloodiest attacks to date in the DRC, including the execution of three Congolese soldiers captured by "the soldiers of the Caliphate," and the gunning down of "a gathering of Christians in the city of Eringeti," killing 10.¹⁴⁴ Both attacks were confirmed by local media as perpetrated by the ADF.¹⁴⁵ As part of the Islamic State's global "Battle of Attrition," ISCAP began making several claims in May of 2020 related to the killing of civilians, including the killing of almost thirty Christians in attacks on the Kokola, Luna, and Mufatabanagi villages, marking a shift in their DRC-related communication that otherwise shied away from claims against civilians.¹⁴⁶ The attack in Kokola was confirmed as an ADF attack on civilians by the Kivu Security Tracker and local media.¹⁴⁷ At the conclusion of the Islamic State's ten-day "Battle of Attrition" in May, *Al-Naba* reported six attacks in DRC out of a total of 228 global attacks across twelve IS provinces.¹⁴⁸

The Islamic State's central media units continued to follow ISCAP activities in June, with communiques detailing attacks on civilians, Congolese troops, and UN forces.¹⁴⁹ The 249th issue of *Al-Naba* featured an infographic detailing its military statistics from across its transnational enterprise for the past twelve months.¹⁵⁰ According to the infographic, the whole of ISCAP (not just the DRC) had conducted 120 operations resulting in the

¹⁴² *Al-Naba* 181 (May 9, 2019): 3. Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/05/09/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-181/>.

¹⁴³ *Al-Naba* 207 (November 7, 2019): 9. Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/11/07/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-207/>.

¹⁴⁴ Islamic State communiques, May 14, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ "Beni : 3 morts dans des combats entre FARDC et présumés rebelles ADF (Société civile)," *Radio Okapi*, (May 12, 2020).

<https://www.radiookapi.net/2020/05/12/actualite/securite/beni-3-morts-dans-des-combats-entre-fardc-et-presumes-rebelles-adf>; "Nord-Kivu : 4 personnes tuées dans une nouvelle attaque des ADF à Eringeti," *Radio Okapi*, (May 13, 2020).

<https://www.radiookapi.net/2020/05/13/actualite/securite/nord-kivu-4-personnes-tuees-dans-une-nouvelle-attaque-des-adf-eringeti>.

¹⁴⁶ Islamic State communique, May 17, 2020.

¹⁴⁷ "Incident #7249," Kivu Security Tracker, (May 17, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7249>.

¹⁴⁸ *Al-Naba* 236 (June 2, 2020): 16. Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2020/05/28/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-236/>.

¹⁴⁹ Islamic State communiques, June 15, 20, 22, 23, and 28, 2020.

¹⁵⁰ *Al-Naba* 249 (August 27, 2020) Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2020/08/27/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-249%e2%80%b3/>.



Figure 8: Pictured published by the Islamic State of Musa Baluku preaching to ADF members in the camps for Eid al-Adha 2020

deaths and injuries of 881. The Islamic State continued to take responsibility for operations inside the DRC in July and August 2020, with nine attacks claimed via its central media apparatus and its weekly Al-Naba newsletter, all focused on clashes with the FARDC. On July 31, the Islamic State published two photographs of ADF leader Musa Baluku preaching to his followers and praying with them on Eid al-Adha. This is one of the first known photos showing Baluku's face, unblurred, in years and the first time he has been clearly shown in Islamic State propaganda (see Figure 8). These photos lend further credence to the Islamic State's endorsement of Baluku's leadership and his faction of the ADF in the DRC.

Through an analysis of periods in which there is an absence of ISCAP claims, such as November 2019 through January 2020 and a three-week period in July 2020, it appears that the disruption in ADF general operations by military forces results in fewer claims by the Islamic State. The implication is that an external communication breakdown occurs as the ADF is immersed in the chaos of fighting and shifting from its bases. As with other Islamic State provinces, the vast majority of attacks attributed to the ADF still go unclaimed by the Islamic State; the Kivu Security Tracker recorded 219 incidents attributed to the ADF from April 2019 to October 2020, compared to 72 claims for ISCAP DRC (a 34 percent attack-to-claim ratio).¹⁵¹ In Central Africa, this could partially reflect the disruption in communications, but also likely indicates the Islamic State's interest in focusing on more significant attacks in their claims. Attacks that do get picked up by the Islamic State's central media apparatus have tended to be larger assaults or attacks that were leveraged for the purposes of the Islamic State championing a particular theme in its propaganda narratives, such as during its "battles of attrition."

¹⁵¹ "The Kivu Security Tracker," The Congo Research Group and Human Rights Watch, (2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/>.

This discrepancy between attacks and claims is not uncommon in other Islamic State provinces, where attack-to-claim ratios show similar trends. For example, the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (a sub-group of the Islamic State's West Africa Province) has been responsible for at least 233 attacks in the Sahel between January and October 2020, according to data compiled by the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).¹⁵² However, the Islamic State has only claimed roughly 88 of these attacks through its various media outlets, accounting for an attack-to-claim ratio of just around 40 percent.¹⁵³ As with Islamic State claims from the DRC, the attacks that have been claimed in the Sahel have tended to be more significant operations, such as battles against al-Qaeda,¹⁵⁴ political assassinations,¹⁵⁵ or major assaults that left dozens dead.¹⁵⁶ The majority of Islamic State operations in the region, however, remain unclaimed.

One example of a significant operation in the DRC that resulted in an immediate claim was the Oct. 20, 2020, Kangbaya prison break in Beni.¹⁵⁷ A total of 1,337 inmates were freed in the attack,¹⁵⁸ which was quickly claimed by both the ADF and the Islamic State.¹⁵⁹ The ADF immediately took responsibility for the prison break through its private social media channel, referring to itself under its Islamic State branding as the "Central Africa Province."¹⁶⁰ An additional statement regarding the attack linked the operation to an October 18 speech from Islamic State spokesman Abu Hamza al-Quraishi, in which he called for more prison break operations around the world.¹⁶¹

Just five hours after initial reports of the attack, the Islamic State released its own communique on the prison break.¹⁶² This timing is significant, as Islamic State claims released from the DRC have often been delayed from the event on the ground by at least a day or longer. A further statement released on Oct. 21 again linked the Kangbaya operation to the Abu Hamza al-Quraishi speech.¹⁶³ While in an article of its weekly Al-Naba newsletter, the editorial indicated that the Islamic State had communication with

¹⁵² Clionadh, Linke, Hegre, and Karlsen, "Introducing ACLED," 2010.

¹⁵³ Data on Islamic State in the Greater Sahara claims compiled by Bridgeway Foundation.

¹⁵⁴ Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State claims killing French aid workers, clashes with al Qaeda in the Sahel," *Long War Journal*, (September 19, 2020). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/09/islamic-state-claims-killing-french-aid-workers-clashes-with-al-qaeda-in-the-sahel.php>.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State kills almost 100 soldiers in Niger," *Long War Journal*, (January 14, 2020). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/01/islamic-state-kills-almost-100-soldiers-in-niger.php>.

¹⁵⁷ Yassin Kombi, "RDC: plusieurs centaines de détenus se sont évadés à la prison de Beni-Kangbaya, après une attaque des présumés ADF," *Actualite*, (October 20, 2020). <https://actualite.cd/2020/10/20/rdc-plusieurs-centaines-de-detenus-se-sont-evades-la-prison-de-beni-kangbaya-apres-une-attaque-des-presumes-ADF/>.

¹⁵⁸ Incident #8345, Kivu Security Tracker, October 20, 2020. <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/8345>

¹⁵⁹ Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State links prison break in DRC to speech from its spokesman," *FDD's Long War Journal*, (October 21, 2020). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/10/islamic-state-links-prison-break-in-drc-to-speech-from-its-spokesman.php>.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State claims prison break in the DRC," *FDD's Long War Journal*, (October 20, 2020). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/10/islamic-state-claims-prison-break-in-the-drc.php>.

¹⁶³ Weiss, "Islamic State links prison break in DRC to speech from its spokesman."

people on the ground by prefacing its description of events with “according to information received from the field.”¹⁶⁴

The ADF's local propaganda efforts

In addition to Islamic State-produced media, the ADF has kept up its own local propaganda apparatus. While attack claims and important milestones are routed through the Islamic State, videos for recruitment, ideological purposes, and other propaganda continue to be released through the ADF's local channels. This practice is generally approved of by the Islamic State, as several of its other provinces have also maintained their own local media productions, such as in the Sahel,¹⁶⁵ Nigeria,¹⁶⁶ and Mozambique.¹⁶⁷ The use of multilayered media apparatuses allows the group to reach and advertise to different audiences: where media routed through official Islamic State channels are for a global audience, the ADF's local videos allow it to broadcast to supporters and potential recruits on a more regional basis.

On some occasions, the ADF has attempted to blur the lines between the videos for global or local consumption. In late 2019, the group began releasing its own martyrdom videos on Telegram eulogizing fighters killed in battle.¹⁶⁸ These videos often serve the dual purpose of boosting the group's morale by glorifying martyrs and inspiring new recruits.¹⁶⁹ For example, the featured fighters in one video were Ugandan, and both were given the title of “The Emigrant,” with their decisions to leave their homes to fight in jihad figuring prominently in its narrative. Such efforts may be an attempt by the ADF to appeal to local and international audiences with its propaganda productions.

In the ADF's locally produced media through 2019 and 2020, it clearly presents itself as part of the Islamic State. For example, in a speech delivered by an unidentified ADF

¹⁶⁴ Islamic State, Al-Naba Issue #257, October 22, 2020. Accessed at Jihadology. <https://jihadology.net/2020/10/22/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-257/>.

¹⁶⁵ Menastream, “#Niger: #ISGS video circulating on social media shows who would be “Abu Anas”, seasoned fighter of younger generation, made reputation as youngster, “often takes the lead during assaults”.., warns locals in Arabic, Fulfulde, & Zerma languages about collaborating w/ foreign forces,” (August 18, 2019). Available at: <https://twitter.com/MENASTREAM/status/1163146772837011457>; Caleb Weiss, “Islamic State in the Greater Sahara branch films clashes with Tuareg militias,” *Long War Journal*, (June 29, 2018). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/06/islamic-state-in-the-greater-sahara-branch-films-clashes-with-tuareg-militias.php>.

¹⁶⁶ Ruth Maclean, “Video Surfaces of Execution of Aid Workers and Others Abducted in Nigeria,” *The New York Times*, (July 23, 2020). <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/23/world/africa/aid-workers-executed-nigeria.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Agence France-Press, “Extremists in Northern Mozambique Declare Goal of Caliphate,” *Voice of America News*, (April 13, 2020). <https://www.voanews.com/africa/extremists-northern-mozambique-declare-goal-caliphate>.

¹⁶⁸ Mohammed Hafez, “Martyrdom Mythology in Iraq: How Jihadists Frame Suicide Terrorism in Videos and Biographies,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19, no. 1 (February 2007): 95-115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550601054873>; Arab Salem, Edna Reid, and Hsinchun Chen, “Multimedia Content Coding and Analysis: Unraveling the Content of Jihadi Extremist Groups' Video,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 31, no. 7 (June 2008): 605–626. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10576100802144072>.

¹⁶⁹ ISCAP in DRC Martyrdom videos, December 2019, on file with authors.

ideologue in late 2019, he details the need for a caliph and a caliphate before extolling the Islamic State's previous leadership:

Allah has been good to us this generation that we had the chance of establishing and declaring a Caliphate under Caliph Sheikh Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, who even the infidels accepted and declared the Leader of all Muslims.¹⁷⁰

In a speech delivered after Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's death in October 2019, senior ADF ideologue Yakubu (also known as Kirya Combo) attempted to console those who may have been anxious about the group's future:

Allah willing, the death of the Leader of all Muslims, the Caliph, recently should not discourage us, we Pray that Allah has Mercy over him. When the Infidels gathered he often told us that we should never ever harbor a thought of ever surrendering to the enemy regardless of even when you are outnumbered or overpowered!¹⁷¹

Another unidentified ideologue clearly positioned the ADF as part of the Islamic State's global structure in a speech released in March 2020.¹⁷² The lecture addresses several issues plaguing the Islamic State around the world while discussing the group's role in remedying these problems through the Islamic State's rhetorical frames:

The eighth issue: taking the responsibility to have respect for the top-most leader and the entire leadership of the Caliphate of the Islamic State and praying that Allah gives them the wisdom to lead well the Muslims and that Allah helps them in doing so.[...] We are duty-bound to be part of the revolution that is meant to liberate the Islamic community from tyranny. This is among the biggest objectives of the Islamic State, liberating the Islamic community through a revolution. [...] People can be part of the struggle through prayers and supplications for the victory of the Islamic State. That is how we are concluding over that matter, the issue of the Islamic State and the attendant duties and responsibilities on everyone to sustain the Caliphate.

As the Islamic State lost territorial control across Iraq and Syria, and top leaders were being killed, Baluku remained staunchly committed in his support, noting the following in a speech posted online in June 2020:¹⁷³

I do not expect a right-thinking person to start blaming the core founders of the Islamic State for establishing what they could not sustain or protect just because they are losing ground and are in trying times! A right-thinking believer is that who appreciates whatever challenge that comes and rightly says to himself or herself that 'I indeed expected all this thus I am not frightened.

The ADF's most recent propaganda releases have continued to emphasize their position within the Islamic State. In a video released for Eid al-Adha in July 2020, an ADF official identified as Mubindo can be heard saying, "Currently, we are under the Islamic banner

¹⁷⁰ ISCAP in DRC Untitled video, April 2020, on file with authors.

¹⁷¹ ISCAP in DRC Untitled video, April 2020, on file with authors.

¹⁷² ISCAP in DRC Untitled video, March 2020, on file with authors.

¹⁷³ ISCAP in DRC Untitled video, June 2020, on file with authors.

“There is no god but Allah,” [and] we are continuing with and under the Islamic State.”¹⁷⁴ Immediately following this proclamation, children can be heard repeating in Arabic the Islamic State’s infamous motto: “Remaining and expanding!”

In mid-September 2020, the ADF created a new social media channel entitled ‘Mujahideen TV.’ The videos feature top ADF leaders discussing issues of ideology and the group’s history and are seemingly geared towards reaching a wider audience. Keeping in line with the formatting established over the course of 2020, most of these videos begin with the dual-branded logos of both the ADF’s internal Cave Dwellers Media and the Islamic State’s Central Africa Province. The introduction used by the Islamic State in videos for its Central Africa Province is directly utilized in these productions. Notably among the videos, Musa Buluku is interviewed in September 2020 by Lumwisa on the history of the ADF, explaining the origins of the group, the past alliance with NALU, and how the ADF name is no longer relevant:

“There is no ADF anymore. Allah willing, ADF ceased to exist a long time ago. There is no ADF here. ADF was merely an alliance out of necessity for a certain time and when we finally got empowered, when we no longer had non-Muslims with us, we are no longer ADF as a group! Currently, we are a province, the Central Africa Province which is one province among the numerous provinces that make up the Islamic State that is under the Caliph and Leader of all Muslims...Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Quraishi.” - Musa Baluku, Mujahideen TV, September 2020¹⁷⁵

The ADF’s leaders

Despite the hardships of his decision to align with the Islamic State, Baluku has remained faithful to his pledge to the Islamic State through its decline, the death of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and the succession of its new caliph, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi. While Baluku’s ascent to overall commander of the ADF and his pivot towards the Islamic State may seem a dramatic shift for the ADF, much of the group’s leadership has remained unchanged, indicating a large degree of continuity within the group.¹⁷⁶ Given the importance the Islamic State reportedly places on local leaders pledging to the caliph and being approved (if not selected) by them, not to mention the tendency for the ADF’s leaders to make decisions of which its members are often reportedly unaware, it is important to identify the ADF leadership’s structure and key personalities. What follows is a brief look at the ADF’s leadership based on debriefs of ADF fighters and some limited open source materials, underscoring the importance of further research to verify and build upon the details introduced here. The *ADF Leadership Chart* identifies the main leaders and some newcomers of the Baluku-led ADF.¹⁷⁷ While it is not possible to devote

¹⁷⁴ ISCAP in DRC Eid video, July 2020, on file with authors.

¹⁷⁵ Mujahideen TV video released on Sept. 18, 2020. On file with authors.

¹⁷⁶ *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United Nations Security Council, (January 12, 2015). <https://www.undocs.org/S/2015/19>; Congo Research Group, *Inside the ADF Rebellion*, 2018.

¹⁷⁷ For more see: “ADF Leadership Biographies,” Congo Research Group and Bridgeway, [Accessed October 15, 2020]. <https://insidetheadf.org/leadership-adf-bios/>.

a detailed analysis of all the ADF's leaders, it is important to briefly profile its overall commander.

Musa Baluku

Born in 1975 or 1976 in Bwera (Kasese District), Baluku is from Uganda's Mukonjo tribe, unlike the bulk of the ADF's commanders who are from the Basoga tribe. Orphaned by the age of ten and raised by extended family, Baluku received an Islamic education at the Bugembe Islamic Institute and was an imam at Malakaz, a Tabligh mosque, during his studies. Towards the end of his time at Bugembe, Musa started a home mosque in Bwera. During this time, Baluku confided in close acquaintances that he wanted to participate in jihad. While it is not known how Baluku became connected to the ADF, he joined the rebel outfit in 1994 and soon after departed for their camps. This makes Baluku part of the first wave of ADF members who joined in the 1990s and was with the group when it moved from Uganda to DRC in the late 1990s.¹⁷⁸

Baluku has occupied several roles in the ADF, including that of chief Islamic judge,¹⁷⁹ a role he ascended to with little battlefield experience. In 2007, Baluku became political commissar (PC) in charge of all ideological and religious teachings (see Figure 9) reportedly after mounting an unsuccessful campaign to become the head of the army.¹⁸⁰ The position, decided by vote, went instead to Jaguar Winyi, seeding fissures between the more radical elements aligned with Baluku and the more traditional historical members. The current ADF military commander, Hood Lukwago, sided with Baluku during the 2007 vote and subsequently ascended to the head of the ADF military wing, where he remains today, helping to maintain its continuity and effectiveness during its recent



Figure 9: Musa Baluku, acting as PC, preaching to ADF members in the camps, pre-2011

metamorphosis.¹⁸¹

During his tenure as chief judge, Baluku earned a reputation for being violent, presiding over beheadings, crucifixions, and death by firing squad.¹⁸² Many defectors interviewed for this report suggested that Baluku is seen as an extremist even among his peers in the ADF, and his brutality has further alienated members, with many defecting or living in exile. For those who stayed, however, Baluku's extremism and brutality helped to further polarize the ADF and facilitate his rise as commander. With Makulu gone, Baluku was voted to assume the role of overall leader. He soon intensified the ADF's campaign of

¹⁷⁸ W-34 interview with author (Bridgeway), October 2018.

¹⁷⁹ W-13 interview with author, July 2018.

¹⁸⁰ W-13 interview with author, July 2018.

¹⁸¹ W-13 interview with author (Bridgeway), July 2018

¹⁸² W-7 interview with author (Bridgeway), October 2018.

violence against the civilian population in Beni and oversaw the group's escalating public outreach efforts. Although it is unknown how Mukulu reacted to these changes, it is clear



**ADF // ISCAP in DRC
Select Members**



Musa Baluku
Overall Leader



Lukwago Hood
Army Commander



Kayiira Muhammad
Member of Top
Command



Amigo Kibirige
Field Commander



Musa Kibuye Barau
Field Commander



Amisi Kasadha
Doctor and Commander



Nasser Hamid Diiru
Field Commander



Meddie Nkalubo
Social Media



Elias Segujja
Field Commander



Muhammad Lumisa
External Mobilizer



Abdurahuman Waswa
Political Commissar



Ahmed Mohamood Hassan
Political Commissar

Figure 10: Leadership of the ADF, 2020

that the former supreme leader did not support Baluku's affiliation with the Islamic State. Mukulu was still in contact with the group, providing instructions from his cell in Uganda.¹⁸³ According to a human source report, after a meeting between Baluku and Islamic State emissaries, an ADF member noted that Baluku inquired of Mukulu whether the ADF should join the Islamic State. Mukulu, according to the source, "refused him."¹⁸⁴

Mukulu had always been focused on overthrowing the Ugandan government. According to one senior ADF leader, Mukulu wanted the ADF to establish an Islamic government in Uganda, to which international jihadist groups would look for inspiration and assistance.¹⁸⁵ Breaking from Mukulu's instructions, Baluku pledged allegiance to the Islamic State and began openly articulating an alternative political goal: the establishment of an Islamic state inside the DRC as part of a global caliphate. The bulk of the remaining historical ADF members reportedly supported Baluku's decision.¹⁸⁶

Baluku's shift towards the Islamic State was the final stage in an evolution that has taken place within the group over the last ten years, beginning with the decision to drive civilians from ADF territory. In essence, by declaring an Islamic state in the DRC, Baluku abandoned the ADF's original goal of returning to govern Uganda and instead focused the ADF's efforts on mounting an insurgency and holding a presence in eastern DRC. Baluku's preaching makes it clear that the ADF's leadership has embraced the Islamic State's ideology free from perceived apostate influence. Baluku has declared, "After telling [non-Muslims] that they are disbelievers and infidels for disobeying Allah, you have to hate these infidels. It has to be a hatred that knows no bounds!"¹⁸⁷

Although much of the ADF's leadership has remained the same since Baluku took control, two emerging leaders in the ADF's ranks are emblematic of the shifts within the ADF under Baluku's reign. Ahmed Mohamood (aka Jundi) and Meddie Nkalubo (aka Punisher) are notable departures from the group's typical leadership promotions. Since its founding, most of the ADF's leaders have been Ugandans with deep roots in the group. According to a former ADF collaborator who worked closely with Meddie, Meddie is Ugandan and grew up in the Kwampe section of Kampala, from where, in early 2016, he suddenly vanished, leaving his friends and family unsure of his whereabouts for over a year. It was subsequently revealed that Meddie had immigrated to the ADF camps in DRC, where he was put in charge of media production, including publishing photos, excerpts of battles, videos and sermons to promote the ADF's campaign.¹⁸⁸ By 2018, Meddie was working alongside Baluku in the latter's office, helping with procurement and managing rank-and-file members' communications with the outside world, according to two people who spent time in the camps.¹⁸⁹ Meanwhile, in South Africa, the Tanzanian Jundi was studying and preaching in Durban when he connected in late-2016 with Meddie via social media (whose online handle was "Puni" aka Punisher). In 2017, Jundi arrived in the ADF

¹⁸³ W-58 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020.

¹⁸⁴ W-46 WhatsApp chat with David (a.k.a. Katumba Ssentongo), June 19, 2019.

¹⁸⁵ W-7 interview with author (Bridgeway), phone exploit, December 2019.

¹⁸⁶ W-7 interview with author, phone exploit, December 2019.

¹⁸⁷ ISCAP in DRC Untitled video on file with authors.

¹⁸⁸ W-59 interview with author (Bridgeway), March 2020.

¹⁸⁹ W-38 and W-37 interview with author (Bridgeway), May 2019.

camps.¹⁹⁰ By late-2017, Jundi would appear in one of Meddie's ADF videos posted on social media dressed in a FARDC uniform and calling for Muslims to join him in the quest to create an Islamic state in DRC. Meddie, who was young, newly recruited, and not related to any historical member of the ADF, was empowered to break the long-held tradition of secrecy in the ADF. This unprecedented move is highly unlikely to have happened under Mukulu's leadership and is emblematic of the shift that occurred under Baluku.

Jundi's video was widely shared amongst Islamic State sympathizers on Telegram and marked a transition in the ADF's road to the DRC chapter of ISCAP. Since that video, both Meddie and Jundi have reportedly ascended the ranks of the ADF. Meddie has been cited as the group's main social media manager and is reportedly in charge of propaganda creation.¹⁹¹ He also appears to be a key coordinator in the group's international financial networks.¹⁹² Jundi, who also goes by Muwarabu in the camps, has reportedly become a political commissar or Sheikh and a member of the ADF's courts.¹⁹³ Notably, he was involved in the ADF trial of Jamil Makulu's son, Moses, in early 2019. Moses objected to Baluku taking control from his father, and an ADF court reportedly sentenced him to death by beheading. According to one recent ADF reporter, Jundi personally carried out the punishment.¹⁹⁴

The ADF's transnational network

Despite the ADF's reputation as a secretive organization largely operating in the dense jungles of the DRC-Uganda border region, it has a surprising history of global networks that precede its outreach to the Islamic State. Although such outreach appears to have started with Mukulu, Baluku and other ADF leaders apparently recognized the benefits and continued these efforts after Mukulu's arrest. Based largely on human source reporting and the focus of ongoing investigations, this history helps to provide further context and nuance to the rationale driving Baluku's decision to reach out to the Islamic State and how that connection may be shaping current international connections.

The ADF's London Network

Starting in the mid-1990s, Mukulu established a network of supporters in the British Ugandan expatriate community. In addition to offering Mukulu and other ADF members a safe haven in London, the UK supporters reportedly began financially supporting the group as early as 2007—and likely earlier—at times transferring thousands of dollars over the course of a few months.¹⁹⁵ ADF collaborators used this money to meet various group

¹⁹⁰ W-62 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2017.

¹⁹¹ W-58 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020.

¹⁹² W-59 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020.

¹⁹³ W-52 interview with author (Bridgeway), September 2019.

¹⁹⁴ W-58 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020.

¹⁹⁵ Hassan Nyanzi debrief. Information was obtained through an interview conducted by UPDF with the witness, March 2012; *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, United

needs¹⁹⁶ The ADF's support networks in London reportedly remain intact and may have expanded as of the time of this report's publication, reflecting a broadening of support that includes British citizens. Reports from people inside the London network and a defector with unique access claim that, since the split between Mukulu and Baluku, members are hesitant to openly declare their loyalties between the two factions.¹⁹⁷ What is clear is that the U.K. members have provided support to the ADF for almost 25 years, including through its present alliance with the Islamic State. In addition to remote support from within the U.K., recent information suggests that at least three British citizens are currently inside the Baluku-led faction of the ADF.¹⁹⁸

East Africa

The ADF's history in neighboring African countries reflect its early "pan-African" operations, and regional support for the group since the early 2000s is fairly well documented.¹⁹⁹ By 2010, Nairobi was recognized as the economic hub for the ADF, while a cell in Tanga, Tanzania, notably served as a significant support to Mukulu.²⁰⁰ Although much of the early financial activity in both Kenya and Tanzania was tied to Mukulu, monetary and material support continued after his arrest in 2015. According to human source reporting, since 2017, several wire transfers were made from Kenya to various ADF intermediaries in Uganda and the DRC ranging from \$500 to \$11,000 USD.²⁰¹ These include the transfers reportedly sent from Islamic State financier Zein which were routed through Uganda at the directive of Meddie Nkalubo and other ADF leaders.²⁰² More recently, funds from South Africa have been transferred via a Kenyan intermediary²⁰³ with the amounts transferred similar to Zein's contributions and may have been designed to fill the gap left by his arrest.

While Kenya appears to be the ADF's East Africa financial hub, Tanzania and Burundi have been playing an ever-increasing role in recruitment. The two countries are

Nations Security Council, (November 29, 2010). <https://www.undocs.org/S/2010/596>; *Final report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2015; W-35 interview with author, October 2018; W-36 interview with author (Bridgeway), October 2018; W-57 interview with author (Bridgeway), November 2019.

¹⁹⁶ Kenneth Kazibwe, "ISO arrest suspected ADF operative with chemicals used to make explosives," *Nile Post*, (July 10, 2018).

<https://nilepost.co.ug/2018/07/10/iso-arrest-suspected-adf-operative-with-chemicals-used-to-make-explosives/>.

¹⁹⁷ W-57 interview with author, November 2019.

¹⁹⁸ W-5 interview with author (Bridgeway), August 2019.

¹⁹⁹ *Final Report of the Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo*, 2011.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ W-59 interview with the authors, 2020; W-59 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020; W-5 interview with authors, 2018; W-5 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), , 2017.

²⁰² W-59 interview with author, March 2020; W-59 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020; W-5 interview with authors, 2018; W-5 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2017; W-36 interview with authors, 2018.

²⁰³ W-59 interview with author, March 2020.

reportedly now contributing the largest source of non-Ugandan foreign recruits.²⁰⁴ Tanzania also continues to act as an important transit point for recruits from other countries, most notably South Africa and Mozambique.

Southern Africa

In contrast to East Africa and the UK, the group's ties to southern Africa appear to be more recent. Outside of a 2014 trip to South Africa by Mukulu to receive medical care after leaving DRC under pressure during *Operation Sukola 1*²⁰⁵ the ADF does not appear to have had a significant presence in these countries until 2017, the year of the first known active ADF recruitment in South Africa and Mozambique.²⁰⁶ Within the ADF ranks today, there is reportedly a small contingent of South Africans, as well as a few fighters from Mozambique,²⁰⁷ but the region's more significant recent contribution appears to be financial. According to human source reports, starting in May 2018 and continuing into 2020, South African financiers have transferred thousands of dollars to the Islamic State-aligned group.²⁰⁸

More significantly, ADF links in southern Africa provide evidence of linkages between the group and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a, the Mozambican arm of ISCAP.²⁰⁹ In January 2018, Abdul Rahman Faisal, a former sheikh in Kampala's Usafi mosque, was quietly arrested in Mozambique with five other Ugandans. Faisal was a notorious religious leader in Uganda, whose audio-recorded teachings on issues of *jihad* and *hijirah* (migration) were often shared alongside lectures by Jamil Mukulu.²¹⁰ Faisal's arrest in Mozambique likely triggered the April 2018 raid on the Usafi mosque, where Ugandan security forces arrested a number of mosque leaders as ADF collaborators, recovered stocks of ammunition, and found a large group of people believed to be in transit to ADF camps.²¹¹

On August 12, 2018, Mozambican police chief Bernardo Rafael listed Abdul Rahman Faisal among the leaders of the Cabo Delgado insurgency,²¹² highlighting the first known direct link between the ADF and Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a. In January of 2019, nearly a

²⁰⁴ W-46 WhatsApp chat with David, June 19, 2019; W-58 interview author (Bridgeway), November 2020.

²⁰⁵ Jamil Mukulu debrief. Information was obtained through an interview conducted by UPDF with the witness, 2015 (Bridgeway).

²⁰⁶ W-15 interview with author (Bridgeway), July 2018.

²⁰⁷ W-14 interview with author (Bridgeway), July 2018; W-38 interview with author, May 2019.

²⁰⁸ W-59 interview with author, March 2020; W-63 interview conducted by Ugandan authorities and provided to the authors (Bridgeway), 2020; W-36 interview with author (Bridgeway), October 2018.

²⁰⁹ Audu Bulama Bukarti and Sandun Munasinghe, "The Mozambique Conflict and Deteriorating Security Situation," Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, (June 19, 2020). <https://institute.global/policy/mozambique-conflict-and-deteriorating-security-situation>.

²¹⁰ W-63 interview conducted by Bridgeway partner organization, 2020.

²¹¹ The Independent, "THIS WEEK: More than 30 arrested in USAFI mosque raid," *The Independent*, (May 5, 2018).

<https://www.independent.co.uk/this-week-more-than-30-arrested-in-usafi-mosque-raid/>; "Alleged Cabo Delgado leader ran rebel mosque in Uganda," 2019.

²¹² "Alleged Cabo Delgado leader ran rebel mosque in Uganda," 2019.

year after his arrest, Mozambican authorities publicly presented Faisal alongside two other Ugandan associates, revealing that the three had helped them locate insurgent camps in northern Mozambique.²¹³ Most recently, the ADF has released videos through its local propaganda channels of Ahl al-Sunna wal-Jama'a conducting attacks and operations in northern Mozambique, indicating their solidarity with the group.

Conclusion

This report brought together researchers on the DRC and ADF with scholars of Islamism and the Islamic State to offer the field a broad study of the historical and strategic evolution of the ADF into representatives of the Islamic State in the DRC. ISCAP in the DRC is perhaps the least studied of the Islamic State's global affiliates by scholars of the Islamic State movement. On the one hand, this is surprising given the regularity with which the ADF's activities have featured in the Islamic State's propaganda since April 2019. On the other hand, in addition to the eastern Congo being one of the most difficult and dangerous areas in the world to access, the ADF has historically been a highly secretive group. A consequence has been that the Islamic State's presence in the DRC has tended to be dismissed, which may have contributed to a strategic blind spot by the international community. The exact nature of the Islamic State's influence on the ADF and the DRC security environment is difficult to assess. What is clear, however, is that the ADF is increasingly framing its activities through the Islamic State's strategic and ideological lens while the Islamic State's central media units have taken the ADF's operations to a global audience. Moreover, this is growing evidence of tangible communications and even financial links.

The picture that emerges from this study, while complex and incomplete, is unequivocal in its core contention: the Baluku-led faction of the ADF is ISCAP's representatives in the DRC, having been formally and publicly accepted by the Islamic State. Indeed, since April 2019 the Islamic State has regularly featured ADF attacks and, more recently, its leaders in the official propaganda produced by its central media units. Put simply, the debate is no longer about whether the Islamic State has an affiliate in the DRC, but rather what is the nature of that relationship. This report offered some important insights into that relationship. What emerged is that, under Baluku's leadership, the ADF were seeking to consolidate the group at a time when it was at risk of fracturing under intense military pressures and in the wake of losing its founder. This report also argued that the relationship between the ADF and the Islamic State goes beyond mutual propaganda benefits with growing evidence of direct communication and financial support between the ADF and elements of the Islamic State. Moreover, the ADF has established transnational links across Africa and beyond that underscore its potential to threaten well beyond eastern Congo. It is also a strategically important case study given the DRC's

²¹³ Andrew Bagala, "Uganda Police Want Usafi Mosque Imam, Five Others Extradited from Mozambique," Club of Mozambique, (January 30, 2019). <https://clubofmozambique.com/news/uganda-police-want-usafi-mosque-imam-five-others-extradited-from-mozambique/>; "Alleged Cabo Delgado leader ran rebel mosque in Uganda," 2019.

geopolitical position in Africa and the rise of Islamic State affiliates and pro-Islamic State groups across the continent.

This report sought to bring together extant research on the Islamic State and the ADF, as well as a wealth of primary source materials collected over many years by local researchers, to offer the field a wide-ranging study of the Islamic State in the DRC. There are many research gaps that remain that have crucial strategic-policy implications. For example, little is known about exactly how the ADF first reached out to the Islamic State and who facilitated these early communications. The extent to which the Islamic State's doctrine is formally taught in ADF camps remains a significant gap with important implications for how the threat is likely to evolve. The split between the Mukulu and Baluku factions of the ADF has also shaped its international linkages, and it will be important to delineate those relationships to appropriately identify, monitor, and dismantle those networks. Another pressing issue is the extent of the ADF's relationships with fellow jihadists in neighboring countries, especially Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa. More broadly, the nature of the Islamic State's relationship with the ADF, such as the extent of command and control, financial links, and operational support, remains an important gap which this report has attempted to help address. These knowledge gaps will require collaborative projects between different disciplinary, country, and thematic specialists.

The strategic-policy implications of this report are considerable. Four are particularly noteworthy. First, it should now be clear that the Islamic State has a formal affiliate in the DRC, and there must be consensus across the international community on this point. This report highlighted several analyses that downplayed the linkage between the ADF and the Islamic State for reasons that were arguably valid at the time of publication, based on the available information, and the expertise of the authors. This report has brought together a range of subject matter specialists, the latest research, and on the ground reporting that includes unique access to a range of primary source evidence to conclusively establish that the relationship with the Islamic State exists and to begin the process of detailing the exact nature of that relationship. Much more research and policy focus are required.

Second, given the attention the ADF has received from the Islamic State's propagandists since 2019, the DRC may emerge as an increasingly attractive location for fighters from across East and Central Africa.²¹⁴ Indeed this report has highlighted several cases of foreign fighters from both Africa and beyond participating in ADF operations. The Islamic State's promotion of the ADF's struggle will strengthen its appeal as an attractive option for foreign fighters wishing to support its global jihad. While the DRC may not become the next hub for jihadi foreign fighters from around the world, its porous borders and general instability make it a relatively easy destination for would-be jihadists to reach. Furthermore, as shown by the disastrous consequences of the first two Congo wars—which started in eastern Congo, pulled in five neighboring countries and are estimated to

²¹⁴ Austin C. Doctor, "The looming influx of foreign fighters in Sub Saharan Africa," *War on the Rocks*, (August 18, 2020). <https://warontherocks.com/2020/08/the-looming-influx-of-foreign-fighters-in-sub-saharan-africa/>.

have killed millions, mostly through disease and starvation²¹⁵—what happens in North Kivu can have far reaching consequences.

Third, countries have a responsibility to identify, monitor, and stop citizens who are providing support to the ADF and, given its clear relationship with the Islamic State as a formally accepted affiliate, the DRC should be considered a priority on par with other Islamic State affiliates. In short, investigators need to be aware of the DRC as a potential avenue for their nationals providing support to the Islamic State. This will require scholars and journalists to continue to monitor the DRC to maintain attention on this fledgling Islamic State affiliate. With the DRC joining the global coalition against the Islamic State last spring, it is imperative to leverage the coalition's capabilities to assist the DRC in these regards.²¹⁶

Fourth, local government, military, and civil society in the DRC and neighboring countries will require support to understand and confront these rapidly evolving threats. The Islamic State's primary export is the *aqeeda* and *manhaj* that local affiliates adopt when they pledge to the Caliph. Understanding the warning signs and signatures of Islamic State influence on the ideological, military, governance, and propaganda activities of regional actors is one of the most valuable, cost-effective, and sustainable ways to support counterterrorism, preventative, and rehabilitative efforts. It will be essential to provide multisector support to those impacted by ISCAP, including in the DRC, to provide them with the understanding necessary to devise nuanced counterstrategies. This should involve support to not only government and military sectors but civil society that play an essential role in local grassroots efforts.

While the relationship between the ADF and the Islamic State was born of mutual opportunism it is evolving in ways that should be deeply concerning for not only officials in the DRC and neighboring countries, but anyone troubled by the Islamic State threat and the humanitarian disasters it can fuel, especially in ungoverned corners of the world. Indeed, the ADF has a long history of terrorizing the civilian populations of eastern Congo. It is no coincidence that as its relationship with the Islamic State has strengthened and formalized, its campaigns of torture and slaughter across North Kivu and Ituri have surged. In the Islamic State, the ADF found a benefactor and amplifier that, through the *aqeeda* and *manhaj* it accepted with its pledge, justified and empowered its politico-military approach. In the ADF, the Islamic State found yet another enthusiastic local group, desperate to revitalize its fortunes, operating in a forgotten corner of the world that has been devastated by decades of war. Tragically, the humanitarian abuses committed by the ADF have been insufficient to rally significant international attention, a challenge exacerbated by the mystery enveloping the group's identity and operations. As more concrete evidence mounts, however—linking the group directly to the Islamic State, demonstrating their expanding reach across Africa, and highlighting their international support networks in places like Europe—the failure to respond becomes more costly, and

²¹⁵ Mollie Zapata, "Congo: The First and Second Wars, 1996 to 2003," The Enough Project, (November 29, 2011). <https://enoughproject.org/blog/congo-first-and-second-wars-1996-2003>.

²¹⁶ William Clowes, "Congo Leader Pledges to Join U.S. War Against Islamic State," *Bloomberg*, (April 17, 2019). <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-04-16/congo-president-pledges-to-join-u-s-fight-against-islamic-state>.

the prospects of the ADF metastasizing further in the region increases. Until these threats are addressed, the ADF's campaign of terror on behalf of the Islamic State will continue.

Annex I

A list of claims and statements about ISCAP DRC made by the Islamic State's central media apparatus from August 2018 to August 2020.

- August 22, 2018: In an audio speech from then-Islamic State caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the jihadist leader mentions a “Central Africa Province” for the first time.²¹⁷
- November 13, 2018: The Islamic State retroactively claimed an attack in the village of Mayangose without providing an exact date in November 2018.²¹⁸ In the closest reported incident, FARDC, supported by MONUSCO, led an offensive against an ADF position in Kididiwe village in Beni territory.²¹⁹ This offensive resulted in 12 dead and 20 wounded in the ranks of the FARDC and seven dead and ten wounded on the side of MONUSCO. This claim was featured in Issue 184 of the Islamic State's weekly Al-Naba newsletter, released on May 30, 2019.²²⁰ The claim also included graphic photos of the dead and several UN identity cards. This attack predates the official announcement of ISCAP.
- April 18, 2019: The Islamic State's 'Amaq News Agency reported that “Islamic State fighters in the town of Kamanago” had inflicted “deaths and injuries among the Congolese army.”²²¹ On the same day, the Islamic State also claimed an attack against Congolese forces in Bovata.²²² The KST confirmed an ADF attack on Bovata.²²³
- April 21, 2019: Issue 179 of the Islamic State's weekly newsletter, Al-Naba, reported attacks in Butembo and Kalianguki village conducted by Islamic State fighters in the DRC.²²⁴
- April 30, 2019: In a video produced by the Islamic State's Al-Furqan Media Foundation titled “In the hospitality of *amir al-mu'minin*,” Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi was shown handling several documents, one of which was titled “Wilayat Central Africa.”²²⁵

²¹⁷ “But Give Good Tidings to the Patient,” Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (August 22, 2018). <https://jihadology.net/2018/08/22/new-audio-message-from-the-islamic-states-shaykh-abu-bakr-al-e1%b8%a5ussayni-al-qurayshi-al-baghdadi-but-give-good-tidings-to-the-patient/>.

²¹⁸ Islamic State communique, May 30, 2019.

²¹⁹ “UN peacekeepers and DR Congo troops killed in offensive against ADF,” *Defense Post*, (November 15, 2018). <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2018/11/15/un-monusco-dr-congo-troops-injured-adf-kididiwe/>.

²²⁰ *Al-Naba* 184 (May 30, 2019). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/05/30/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-184/>.

²²¹ ‘Amaq News Agency, April 18, 2019.

²²² ‘Amaq News Agency, April 18, 2019.

²²³ “Incident #4649,” Kivu Security Tracker, (April 16, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4649>.

²²⁴ “Killing and wounding eight congolese army elements in Beni,” *Al-Naba* 179 (April 25, 2019): 7. Available at: https://jihadology.net/wp-content/uploads/_pda/2019/04/The-Islamic-State-al-Naba%CC%84%E2%80%9999-Newsletter-179.pdf.

²²⁵ “In the Hospitality of the Leader of the Faithful,” Al-Furqan Media Foundation, The Islamic State, (April 29, 2019). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/04/29/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-states-shaykh-abu-bakr-al-e1%b8%a5ussayni-al-qurayshi-al-baghdadi-in-the-hospitality-of-the-leader-of-the-faithful/>.

- May 3, 2019: Islamic State takes credit for an attack near Kalianguki Village through its 181st issue of *Al-Naba*.²²⁶
- May 5, 2019: An Islamic State photo report featured captured weapons, ammunition, and other supplies taken during the April 21 attack on Kalianguki Village.²²⁷
- May 8, 2019: ISCAP claimed the killing of several FARDC soldiers near Bunduguya.²²⁸ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack on May 7 by the ADF..²²⁹
- May 16, 2019: An Islamic State communique reported an attack by “the soldiers of the Caliphate” against military barracks in N’dama village resulting in several casualties.²³⁰ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack on May 14 by the ADF.²³¹
- May 17, 2019: Congolese army barracks in the village of Totolito were attacked, reportedly resulting in casualties and the capture of weapons and ammunition.²³²
- May 23, 2019: Two communiques reported two ISCAP operations in the DRC targeting soldiers in Tchani-Tchani village and, a day earlier, Kumbwa village.²³³ The KST confirmed the occurrence of corresponding attacks by the ADF.²³⁴
- May 30, 2019: Three barracks used by both Congolese and UN forces were attacked by “soldiers of the Caliphate” reportedly “killing and wounding dozens” near Mavivi.²³⁵ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF.²³⁶
- May 31, 2019: Two communiques were released by the Islamic State describing skirmishes between ISCAP and the Congolese army in Mweso village and Makaki village. The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF on Mamiki village.²³⁷
- June 4, 2019: This Islamic State communique framed ISCAP’s attack on Congolese soldiers in Rwangowa village the day prior as part of its global “Battle of Attrition.”²³⁸ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF near Kalongo neighborhood of Beni .²³⁹
- June 17, 2019: An Islamic State communique reported that “Khilafah soldiers” fought “the Crusader Congolese army in Kabasiwa village” the day prior.²⁴⁰ The KST

²²⁶ *Al-Naba* 181, (May 9, 2019). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/05/09/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-181/>.

²²⁷ ISCAP Photo Report, May 5, 2019.

²²⁸ Islamic State communique, May 8, 2019.

²²⁹ “Incident #4760,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 7, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4760>.

²³⁰ Islamic State communique, May 16, 2019.

²³¹ “Incident #4847,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 14, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4847>.

²³² Islamic State communique, May 17, 2019.

²³³ Islamic State communiques, May 23, 2019.

²³⁴ “Incident #4849,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 23, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4849>; “Incident #4873,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 22, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4873>.

²³⁵ Islamic State communique, May 30, 2019.

²³⁶ “Incident #4895,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 30, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4895>.

²³⁷ “Incident #4885,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 31, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4885>.

²³⁸ Islamic State communique, June 4, 2019.

²³⁹ “Incident #4962,” Kivu Security Tracker, (June 3, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4962>.

²⁴⁰ Islamic State communique, June 16, 2019.

confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF near Keya²⁴¹ Photos showing captured FARDC weapons were later released by the Islamic State.²⁴²

- June 25, 2019: On this occasion an Islamic State communique reported ISCAP attacked army barracks in Totolito village resulting in nine killed and weapons and ammunition captured.²⁴³ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF at PK 16.²⁴⁴
- June 26, 2019: An Islamic State communique reported an ambush attack on the Congolese army in Kasinga village involving the use of “multiple explosive devices.”²⁴⁵ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF near Mayangose.²⁴⁶
- June 28, 2019: The Islamic State released a communique regarding an ISCAP attack on Congolese army barracks in Tinambo village.²⁴⁷
- July 10, 2019: The Islamic State released a communique stating that three Congolese soldiers had been killed in an ISCAP attack in Kishanga village. This was followed by the release of a photo featuring military identification cards and captured weapons.²⁴⁸ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF.²⁴⁹
- July 12, 2019: A statement by the Islamic State described another attack that involved “detonating a series of explosive devices”, this time in the Oicha area, that reportedly resulted in the killing of eight soldiers.²⁵⁰ Local media confirmed as an ADF attack against civilians near Oicha.²⁵¹
- July 14, 2019: ‘Amaq released a short video showing the aftermath of the Oicha attack on July 12.²⁵²
- July 21, 2019: An Islamic State communique claimed an ambush on Congolese troops near Mangohu.²⁵³ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack near Masulukwede by the ADF.²⁵⁴
- July 24, 2019: ISCAP fighters in the DRC renewed their pledge to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in their first official Islamic State video that was released as part of a series titled, “The best outcome is for the pious.”²⁵⁵ The video also showed ISCAP fighters in

²⁴¹ “Incident #4970,” Kivu Security Tracker, (June 15, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/4970>.

²⁴² Islamic State photo report, June 16, 2019.

²⁴³ Islamic State communique, June 25, 2019.

²⁴⁴ “Incident #5005,” Kivu Security Tracker, (June 24, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5005>.

²⁴⁵ Islamic State communique, June 26, 2019.

²⁴⁶ “Incident #5084,” Kivu Security Tracker, (June 26, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5084>.

²⁴⁷ Islamic State communique, June 28, 2019.

²⁴⁸ Islamic State communique, July 10, 2019.

²⁴⁹ “Incident #5100,” Kivu Security Tracker, (July 9, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5100>.

²⁵⁰ Islamic State communique, July 12, 2019.

²⁵¹ Yassin Kombi, “Beni: Nouvelle incursion des rebelles près d’oicha, deux civils enlevés et de débetail emporté,” *Actualite*, (July 13, 2019). <https://actualite.cd/2019/07/13/beni-nouvelle-incursion-des-rebelles-pres-doicha-deux-civils-enleves-et-de-debetail>.

²⁵² ‘Amaq News Agency, July 14, 2019.

²⁵³ Islamic State communique, July 21, 2019.

²⁵⁴ “Incident #5136,” Kivu Security Tracker, (July 21, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5136>.

²⁵⁵ “And the Best Outcome is for the Righteous – Wilayat Wasat Ifriqiyyah,” The Islamic State, (July 24, 2019). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2019/07/24/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-and->

Mozambique renewing their pledge.²⁵⁶ The explicit use of the word “reaffirm” suggests the first official bayah to the Islamic State’s leadership was made prior to early 2019.

- September 15, 2019: The Islamic State released a communique reporting an ambush on Congolese and UN forces in Kitchanga.²⁵⁷
- September 26, 2019: ISCAP claimed to have raided a FARDC barracks in Bryman village.²⁵⁸ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF on Bilimani village.²⁵⁹
- October 9, 2019: The Islamic State posted a statement online claiming an attack on Congolese forces near Beni.²⁶⁰ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF on Totolito village.²⁶¹
- October 21, 2019: Another Islamic State communique released online reported an IED against FARDC near Nyaleke.²⁶²
- November 3, 2019: ISCAP released a statement claiming an ambush on FARDC troops near Mayangose that allegedly resulted in the abduction of a Congolese soldier.²⁶³
- November 5, 2019: ISCAP claimed to have killed Congolese soldiers in the village of Vemba.²⁶⁴
- November 7, 2019: In the 207th issue of *Al-Naba*, ISCAP fighters pledging allegiance to the Islamic State’s new caliph, Abu Ibrahim al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, featured in an article alongside other pledges from around the world.²⁶⁵
- January 22, 2020: The Islamic State released two communiques claiming attacks on Congolese forces near Eringeti and Awtikaka in the Beni region.²⁶⁶ The KST confirmed the occurrence of an attack by the ADF on Mayimoya that corresponded with the Eringeti claim.²⁶⁷
- January 23, 2020: Two additional communiques claimed assaults against FARDC and “spies for the Crusader Congolese army” in the village of Maleki.²⁶⁸ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF near Oicha for at least one of these incidents.²⁶⁹

[the-best-outcome-is-for-the-righteous-wilayat-wasa%e1%b9%ad-ifriqiyyah/](https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5565).

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ Islamic State communique, September 15, 2019.

²⁵⁸ Islamic State communique, September 26, 2019.

²⁵⁹ “Incident #5565,” Kivu Security Tracker, (September 26, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5565>.

²⁶⁰ Islamic State communique, October 9, 2020.

²⁶¹ “Incident #5596,” Kivu Security Tracker, (October 9, 2019). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/5596>.

²⁶² Islamic State communique, October 21, 2020.

²⁶³ Islamic State communique, November 3, 2019.

²⁶⁴ Islamic State communique, November 5, 2019.

²⁶⁵ *Al-Naba* 207 (November 7, 2019):. Available at: <https://jihadology.net/wp-content/uploads/pda/2019/11/The-Islamic-State-al-Naba%CC%84%E2%80%99-Newsletter-207.pdf>;

See also: Aaron Zelin, “The Islamic State’s Bayat Campaign,” Jihadology, (2019). <https://jihadology.net/2019/11/03/the-islamic-states-bayat-campaign/>.

²⁶⁶ Islamic State communiques, January 22, 2020.

²⁶⁷ “Incident #6372,” Kivu Security Tracker, (January 22, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/6372>.

²⁶⁸ Islamic State communiques, January 23, 2020.

²⁶⁹ “Incident #6371,” Kivu Security Tracker, (January 22, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/6371>.

- February 5, 2020: ISCAP claimed an attack on FARDC troops on the outskirts of Butembo.²⁷⁰
- February 23, 2020: An Islamic State communique reported an ambush of Congolese troops between Kadua and N'gadi.²⁷¹ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack on by the ADF.²⁷²
- March 7, 2020: ISCAP reported a significant clash with Congolese troops near Mayangose.²⁷³ Photos of several weapons captured from FARDC were later released.²⁷⁴ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF.²⁷⁵
- April 15, 2020: ISCAP claimed killing two members of FARDC in the village of N'duma.²⁷⁶
- April 16, 2020: An Islamic State communique claimed its men clashed with FARDC troops on the outskirts of Beni.²⁷⁷
- May 1, 2020: ISCAP reported a large firefight with FARDC lasting several hours and in which FARDC and the UN evacuated killed and wounded fighters four times near Mamangudu on May 1, 2020.²⁷⁸ The statement was made in *Al-Naba* Issue 235, released on May 21, 2020.²⁷⁹ Confirmed by MONUSCO as an ADF attack near Kazaroho.²⁸⁰
- May 13, 2020: Two communiques released by the Islamic State claimed that three Congolese soldiers captured by “the soldiers of the Caliphate” in the DRC were executed and “a gathering of Christians in the city of Eringeti” were attacked with machine guns, killing 10.²⁸¹ Both attacks were confirmed by local media as perpetrated by the ADF.²⁸² This is the first time the Islamic State openly reports to have killed Christian civilians in the DRC.
- May 18, 2020: Claimed as part of the Islamic State’s global “Battles of Attrition,” ISCAP claimed to have killed almost thirty Christians in attacks on the Kokola, Luna,

²⁷⁰ Islamic State communique, February 5, 2020.

²⁷¹ Islamic State communique, February 23, 2020.

²⁷² “Incident #6658,” Kivu Security Tracker, (February 21, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/6658>.

²⁷³ Islamic State communique, March 7, 2020.

²⁷⁴ ‘Amaq News Agency, March 7, 2020.

²⁷⁵ “Incident #6843,” Kivu Security Tracker, (March 7, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/6843>.

²⁷⁶ Islamic State communique, April 15, 2020.

²⁷⁷ Islamic State communique, April 16, 2020.

²⁷⁸ *Al-Naba* 235 (May 21, 2020). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2020/05/21/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-235/>.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ MONUSCO FORCE, “Beni, North Kivu- DRC: On 02 May 20, MONUSCO's FIB evacuated 32 FARDC soldiers wounded in action. These soldiers were wounded during the attack launched by the FARDC against an ADF base in KAZAROH (17km Northeast of OICHA) on 1st May 2020,” (May 4, 2020). <https://twitter.com/MonuscoF/status/1257227209439432704>.

²⁸¹ Islamic State communiques, May 14, 2020.

²⁸² “Beni : 3 morts dans des combats entre FARDC et présumés rebelles ADF (Société civile),” 2020; “Nord-Kivu: 4 personnes tuées dans une nouvelle attaque des ADF à Eringeti,” 2020.

and Mufatabanagi villages.²⁸³ Only the attack in Kokola was confirmed as an ADF attack by the KST and local media.²⁸⁴

- May 20, 2020: As part of the global “Battles of Attrition,” the Islamic State claims to have executed “two FARDC spies” in Kubari.²⁸⁵ Another statement, also part of the “Battles of Attrition,” reported killing five members of FARDC near Mayimoya. This incident was confirmed as an ADF attack by local and international media.²⁸⁶
- May 25, 2020: Another two communiques, also part of the “Battles of Attrition,” were released reporting another massacre of Christians in Kumbwa Kobo village and the targeting of a FARDC barracks in Loselose village.²⁸⁷ The incident in Loselose was confirmed as an ADF attack by international media.²⁸⁸
- May 26, 2020: The Islamic State reported taking two FARDC soldiers prisoner and killing two others in an attack near Kwiri.²⁸⁹
- May 28, 2020: The Islamic State reported attacks on two Congolese military posts near Makembi that reportedly killed twenty and resulted in the capture of weapons and ammunition.²⁹⁰ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF.²⁹¹
- June 2, 2020: Islamic State reported an ambush on FARDC troops near Kamango.²⁹² Confirmed by local media as an ADF attack alongside the Mbau-Kamango road.²⁹³
- June 4, 2020: Islamic State released a statement claiming the murder of eleven Christians in Miyandi village.²⁹⁴ Confirmed in local media as an ADF attack on villagers in Mighende on June 1.²⁹⁵
- June 5, 2020: Another Islamic State communique was released online taking responsibility for an attack on Christians in Loselose village and an ambush on Congolese soldiers.²⁹⁶ The KST confirmed the occurrence of corresponding attacks by

²⁸³ Islamic State communique, May 17, 2020.

²⁸⁴ “Incident #7249,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 17, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7249>.

²⁸⁵ Islamic State communique, May 20, 2020.

²⁸⁶ “RD Congo: le COVID-19 ne doit pas faire oublier les massacres dan l’Est, prévient le Dr Mukwege,” *France 24*, (May 19, 2020). <https://www.france24.com/fr/20200519-rd-congo-le-covid-19-ne-doit-pas-faire-oublier-les-massacres-dans-l-est-pr%C3%A9vient-le-dr-mukwege>.

²⁸⁷ Islamic State communiques, May 25, 2020.

²⁸⁸ “DRC: Militants kill multiple civilians in North Kivu province May 24,” *Garda World*, (May 25, 2020). <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/345211/drc-militants-kill-multiple-civilians-in-north-kivu-province-may-24>.

²⁸⁹ Islamic State communique, May 26, 2020.

²⁹⁰ Islamic State communique, May 28, 2020.

²⁹¹ “Incident #7326,” Kivu Security Tracker, (May 27, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7326>.

²⁹² Islamic State communique, June 2, 2020.

²⁹³ Bantou Kapnza Son, “Beni: L’armée déjoue une attaque ADF à Mbau-Kamango,” *7sur7*, (June 2, 2020). <https://7sur7.cd/2020/06/02/beni-larmee-dejoue-une-attaque-adf-mbau-kamango>.

²⁹⁴ Islamic State communique, June, 4, 2020.

²⁹⁵ Milan Kayenga, “Beni: 5 morts et plusieurs personnes enlevées dans une attaque des ADF à Mighende,” *L’Interview*, (June 1, 2020). <https://linterview.cd/beni-5-morts-et-plusieurs-personnes-enlevees-dans-une-attaque-des-adf-a-mighende/>.

²⁹⁶ Islamic State communique, June 5, 2020:

the ADF.²⁹⁷ Photos of the aftermath of the attack on FARDC in Loselose were later released by the Islamic State.²⁹⁸

- June 15, 2020: ISCAP reported attacking FARDC near N'gadi before retreating to their bases.²⁹⁹ Another claim reported attacking FARDC near Mukondi.³⁰⁰
- June 20, 2020: ISCAP claimed torching a vehicle belonging to FARDC, killing the driver, near Makisabo.³⁰¹ A photo of the burning truck was later released by the Islamic State.³⁰² The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF.³⁰³
- June 22, 2020: The Islamic State released a communique claiming to have killed one Congolese soldier in a clash on the outskirts of Beni.³⁰⁴ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF in N'gadi.³⁰⁵
- June 23, 2020: ISCAP said it killed an Indonesian peacekeeper belonging to MONUSCO in a clash with the force near Makisabo.³⁰⁶ Confirmed by MONUSCO as an ADF attack.³⁰⁷
- June 28, 2020: An Islamic State claim said that its men killed three Congolese soldiers after attacking their barracks near Oicha.³⁰⁸ Confirmed as an ADF attack by local media.³⁰⁹
- July 1, 2020: ISCAP claimed its men targeted a Congolese barracks near Oicha.³¹⁰ The KST confirmed the occurrence of a corresponding attack by the ADF in Makulu, near Oicha.³¹¹
- July 3, 2020: The Islamic State took responsibility for another clash with Congolese soldiers near Tinambo outside of Oicha.³¹² Confirmed by local media as an ADF attack in Mukoko, which also sits just outside of Oicha.³¹³

²⁹⁷ "Incident #7384," Kivu Security Tracker, (June 5, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7384>; "Incident #7383," Kivu Security Tracker, (June 4, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7383>.

²⁹⁸ Islamic State media release, June 5, 2020.

²⁹⁹ Islamic State communique, June 15, 2020.

³⁰⁰ Islamic State communique, June 15, 2020.

³⁰¹ Islamic State communique, June 20, 2020.

³⁰² Islamic State photo report, June 20, 2020.

³⁰³ "Incident #7502," Kivu Security Tracker, (June 20, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7502>.

³⁰⁴ Islamic State communique, June 22, 2020.

³⁰⁵ "Incident #7501," Kivu Security Tracker, (June 20, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7501>.

³⁰⁶ Islamic State communique, June 23, 2020.

³⁰⁷ "UN condemns killing of Indonesian peacekeeper in DR Congo," *UN News*, (June 23, 2020). <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/06/1066912>.

³⁰⁸ Islamic State communique, June 28, 2020.

³⁰⁹ Yassin Kombi, "RDC-Beni: une position de l'armée incendiée par les combattants ADF à Oicha," *Actualite*, (June 28, 2020). <https://actualite.cd/2020/06/28/rdc-beni-une-position-de-larmee-incendiee-par-les-combattants-adf-oicha>.

³¹⁰ Islamic State communique, July 1, 2020.

³¹¹ "Incident #7577," Kivu Security Tracker, (July 1, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/7577>.

³¹² Islamic State communique, July 3, 2020.

³¹³ Yassin Kombi, "Nouvelles violences à Beni: 4 mort dont un militaire dans une attaque à Mukoko," *Actualite*, (July 3, 2020). <https://actualite.cd/2020/07/03/nouvelles-violences-beni-4-morts-dont-un-militaire-dans-une-attaque-mukoko>.

- July 29, 2020: An Islamic State communique, as part of a renewed “Battles of Attrition” campaign, reported a clash with FARDC near Kanana, reportedly killing a military officer.³¹⁴ Another Islamic State claim said that its men also targeted FARDC near Kididiwe.³¹⁵ Both confirmed as ADF attacks by local media.³¹⁶
- July 30, 2020: Two other Islamic State communiques, also as part of the renewed “Battles of Attrition” campaign, claimed attacks against FARDC near Karhanga and Kidu.³¹⁷ The Karhanga attack has been confirmed as an ADF attack by local media.³¹⁸
- August 5, 2020: The Islamic State claimed to have killed one FARDC soldier in an ambush near Karhanga.³¹⁹
- August 27, 2020: The 249th issue of *Al-Naba* featured an infographic detailing its military statistics from across its transnational enterprise for the past twelve months.³²⁰ According to the infographic, the whole of ISCAP (not just the DRC) had conducted 120 operations resulting in the deaths and injuries of 881.
- August 30, 2020: An Islamic State communique claimed two attacks against FARDC troops near Kamango, reportedly killing nine soldiers.³²¹ Both incidents were confirmed as ADF attacks by local media,³²² though one was conducted against civilians.³²³
- September 17, 2020: The Islamic State reported an attack on FARDC troops in Malbundu in Ituri Province.³²⁴ This is the first claim from Ituri Province.
- September 17, 2020: A second Islamic State claim reported an attack on FARDC troops along the Mbau-Kamango road, allegedly killing one soldier.³²⁵
- October 15, 2020: The Islamic State claimed an attack on a FARDC barracks near Baeti the previous day.³²⁶ This attack likely correlates to an ADF attack in the area on October 13, as confirmed by the KST.³²⁷

³¹⁴ Islamic State communique July 29, 2020.

³¹⁵ Islamic State communique July 29, 2020.

³¹⁶ “Beni: le calme règne de nouveau dans le groupement Banande-Kainama après trois attaques des ADF,” *Radio Okapi*, (August 4, 2020). <https://www.radiookapi.net/2020/08/04/actualite/securite/beni-le-calme-regne-de-nouveau-dans-le-groupement-banande-kainama>.

³¹⁷ Islamic State communiques, July 30, 2020.

³¹⁸ “Beni: le calme règne de nouveau dans le groupement Banande-Kainama après trois attaques des ADF,” 2020.

³¹⁹ Islamic State communique, August 5, 2020.

³²⁰ *Al-Naba* 249, (August 27, 2020). Available at: <https://jihadology.net/2020/08/27/new-issue-of-the-islamic-states-newsletter-al-naba-249%E2%80%B3/>.

³²¹ Islamic State communique, August 30, 2020.

³²² Yassin Kombi, “RDC-Beni: 14 morts dont 8 militaires dans une embuscade ADF contre le convoi des FARDC sur la route Mbau-Kamango,” *Actualite*, (August 29, 2020). <https://actualite.cd/2020/08/29/rdc-beni-14-morts-dont-8-militaires-dans-une-embuscade-adf-contre-le-convoi-des-fardc>.

³²³ “RDC: 5 corps des civils découverts sur l’axe Mbau-Kamango,” *Radio Okapi*, (August 30, 2020). <https://www.radiookapi.net/2020/08/30/actualite/securite/rdc-5-corps-des-civils-decouverts-sur-laxe-mbau-kamango>.

³²⁴ Islamic State communique September 17, 2020.

³²⁵ Islamic State communique September 17, 2020.

³²⁶ Islamic State communique October 15, 2020.

³²⁷ “Incident #8297,” Kivu Security Tracker (Oct. 13, 2020). <https://kivusecurity.org/incident/8297>.

- October 20, 2020: The Islamic State claimed the massive Kangbaya prison break inside Beni city, claiming to have also raided two nearby FARDC bases and killing seven soldiers.³²⁸ The ADF itself also claimed the attack in the name of the Islamic State.³²⁹
- October 30, 2020: An Islamic State communique claimed killing 19 Christian civilians and burning down 45 houses in Baeti the day prior.³³⁰ This incident was confirmed by local and international media.³³¹

³²⁸ Islamic State communique October 20, 2020.

³²⁹ Caleb Weiss, "Islamic State claims prison break in DRC," FDD's Long War Journal (Oct. 20, 2020). <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2020/10/islamic-state-claims-prison-break-in-the-drc.php>.

³³⁰ Islamic State communique October 30, 2020.

³³¹ "Suspected Islamists kill 18, torch church in east Congo," *Reuters* (Oct. 29, 2020). <https://www.reuters.com/article/amp/idUSKBN27E1WS>.