

# **NARCOTIC DRUG TRADE FUELLED TERRORISM ACROSS UGANDA/DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO BORDER**

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## **Abstract**

This article probed the involvement of the Allied Democratic Forces in the narcotic drug trade to fuel terrorism across the Uganda/Democratic Republic of Congo border. The aim was to unravel ADF's use of drug money in aiding terrorist efforts. Data were collected qualitatively using document review, interviews and observations along the Uganda/Democratic Republic of Congo border. The article found Allied Democratic Forces terrorists engaged in the drug trade to fund their activities. Arms and ammunition were acquired using proceeds from the drug trade. Bomb attacks, assassinations and murders were carried out against security and judicial officers in Uganda, and innocent people were killed in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The article concludes that the Allied Democratic Forces is involved in the narcotic drug trade to finance terrorism. The article recommends that Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo sustain the current joint operation to eliminate the terrorist groups from their bases in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Therefore, both governments should encourage intelligence co-operation in order to block access to narcotic drugs by terrorists. Additionally, countries in the region and the whole of Africa should co-operate to deny access to drugs by terrorists.

**Key words:** Narcotic Drugs, Trade, Terrorism, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Border

## 1. Introduction

The link between narcotic drug trade/trafficking and terrorism is a long history. In the 1980s, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were already engaged in drug trafficking to finance their rebellion. FARC taxed producers and smugglers by levying a 10% per kilogram tax on coca base, a raw material for cocaine growers. The rebels also collected fees for every drug flight leaving rebel-controlled areas.<sup>i</sup> In India, the Kashmir insurgency is thought to be fuelled by the drug trade as India is caught between the three largest heroin and opium producers; Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar. The Sri Lankan militants have equally penetrated deep into the drug world to augment their armed struggle against the Sri Lanka Army. In Africa, Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), especially in Mali, has been heavily implicated in the drug trade in the Sahel region. In East Africa, the Al-Shabab is known to be heavily involved in the khat trade to finance its terrorist activities.<sup>ii</sup>

While several terrorist groups engaged in the drug trade have been documented, little is known about the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) involvement in the drug trade to finance their terrorist activities. This article aims to show the involvement of ADF in the narcotic drug trade to fuel their terrorist activities across the Uganda/Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) border.

Data were collected through content review, observation and interview. Key informants included some border community members. Observations were made on activities at the border, and photographs were taken. The article begins with brief literature on drug links with terrorism, the history of ADF, ADF's terrorist attacks on Uganda in 2021 and Operation Shujja, ADF's involvement in the drug trade, and use of the drug money. The article then draws a conclusion and recommendations.

## **2. Brief Literature on Narcotic Drug Links with Terrorism**

In recent years, it has become evident that terrorism and drug trade/trafficking are intertwined. The terms “narco-terrorism” and “narco-terrorists” are now used to describe this interface between terrorist organisations and narcotic drug trade/trafficking.<sup>iii</sup> Narcotic drug trade/trafficking in source countries, transit countries and consumer countries contribute to terrorism in several ways; supplying cash for terrorist operations, creating chaos in countries where drugs are produced, where they pass, and where they are sold at retail price and consumed. Drug traffickers deliberately cause chaos to provide an environment conducive to terrorist activities.<sup>iv</sup> It is also intended to generate corruption in law enforcement, military and other government/civil-society institutions to build public support for terrorist-linked groups. Terrorist groups also engage in the drug trade to provide services useful for terrorist actions and the movement of terrorist personnel and materials. It also supports common infrastructure such as smuggling capabilities, illicit arms acquisition, money laundering, and production of false identification to serve drug trafficking and terrorist interests.

From Latin America to the Middle East, funding for armed violence has long been linked to the illicit drug trade. Insurgent networks and terrorist groups have increasingly turned to drug trafficking as a source of revenue. Not only does it provide funds, but it also furthers the strategic objectives of the terrorists. Some terrorist groups believe they can weaken their enemies by flooding their societies with addictive drugs.<sup>v</sup>

The decrease in state sponsorship of terrorism in the 1990s led to a concomitant increase in efforts by terrorist groups to become self-financed through drug trafficking. For example, a former United States (US) official of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) noted that terrorists use

the Black Market Peso Exchange's (BMPE) \$5 billion in annual funds transfers as a cover for hiding the movement of terrorist funds. The official added:

What is more, the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers were financed partially with funds moved through the BMPE market. That money is ready for those who need a discreet source of funds that is difficult to trace.... The links to terrorist funding through the BMPE are even stronger today since the placement of drug dollars into U.S. financial institutions now begins in any country of the world.<sup>vi</sup>

The BMPE is active in Colombia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti and Venezuela. In these countries, the system is known to be linked to terrorist groups in Lebanon and Palestine.

Further, several terrorist groups have been designated by the US Government as having links to drug trafficking. In Latin America, these groups include the left-wing National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional[ELN]), FARC, the right-wing United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia[AUC]) and Peru's Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso [SL]).<sup>vii</sup>The Colombian and Peruvian terrorist groups exert control over regions containing coca fields, laboratories and airstrips, and impose taxes ranging from \$100 to \$500 per kilogram to protect the area. Beers argues that FARC and ELN terrorist groups receive pure cocaine in payment for services provided to the drug trafficking and resell it to Brazilian criminal organisations in return for armaments.<sup>viii</sup> The FARC played a direct role in the drug trade in the 1980s and gained importance in the 1990s. They provided security for cocoa crops and taxed the introduction of precursor chemicals. In addition, the FARC played a prominent role in taxing different aspects of the production chain and selling cocoa paste.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) holds that proceeds from lucrative Asian hashish shipments smuggled into Canada end up in the hands of terrorist elements in Afghanistan.

Most hashish drugs reaching the Canadian market originate in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The RCMP reports that most Asian terrorist groups have been in this business for over 10 years. Terrorist elements in Afghanistan tax producers and receive a portion of the proceeds. In East India, Afghan, Pakistani, Tamil, Turkish and Middle Eastern terrorist and extremist groups are suspected of fund-raising in Canada through various means.<sup>ix</sup>

In the Syrian Arab Republic, seizure data on “captopon” pills (amphetamine mixed with caffeine) suggest that a manufacturing hub exists in the area of operations of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Al-Qaida offshoot Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (formerly Al-Nusrah Front). ISIL fighters and other groups involved in the civil war in the Syrian Arab Republic have been reported to consume “captopon”.<sup>x</sup>

Bodansky explains that Iranian intelligence agencies first encouraged Islamic radical groups to participate in the drug trade. Since then, the Islamic terrorist and extremist groups have expanded into myriad criminal activities, in addition to drug trafficking, operating prostitution rings involving mainly Bosnian Muslim and North African women, laundering money and disseminating high-quality Iranian-printed \$100 bills.<sup>xi</sup> Moreover, he points out that Hizballah’s original fatwa issued in the mid-1980s on the distribution of drugs has provided a rationale for drug trafficking, “We are making these drugs for Satan, America and the Jews. If we cannot kill them with guns, so we will kill them with drugs”.

Similarly, the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) activities have also been linked to laundering money and drug trafficking. The PKK is alleged to be taking protection money from drug traffickers and supporting their own operations with the revenue gained. The PKK was also involved in the taxation of drug shipments and the protection of drug traffickers throughout the

southeastern region of Turkey.<sup>xii</sup>The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is a militant Islamic organisation that funds itself from drug trafficking and controls the main drug trafficking routes through the Central Asian region. IMU is known to store 1,500 tons of narcotics in the Tavildara district of northern Tajikistan.<sup>xiii</sup>

The Kashmiri militant groups are known to participate in the drug trade to finance their activities, given their proximity to major production, refining sites and trafficking routes. Throughout the South Asian and former Soviet Union regions, proximity to cultivation and production, combined with the infrastructure provided by the traffickers, has encouraged mutually beneficial relationships between terrorist groups and drug-trafficking organisations.<sup>xiv</sup>

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) controlled major drug-producing areas in Burma. It used the proceeds to carry out an insurgency against the government of Burma until a ceasefire agreement granted the UWSA autonomy to continue drug trafficking for profit. They have also engaged in the large-scale production and trafficking of synthetic drugs. There are also links between narcotics trafficking in the region's Golden Triangle and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) in the Philippines.<sup>xv</sup>

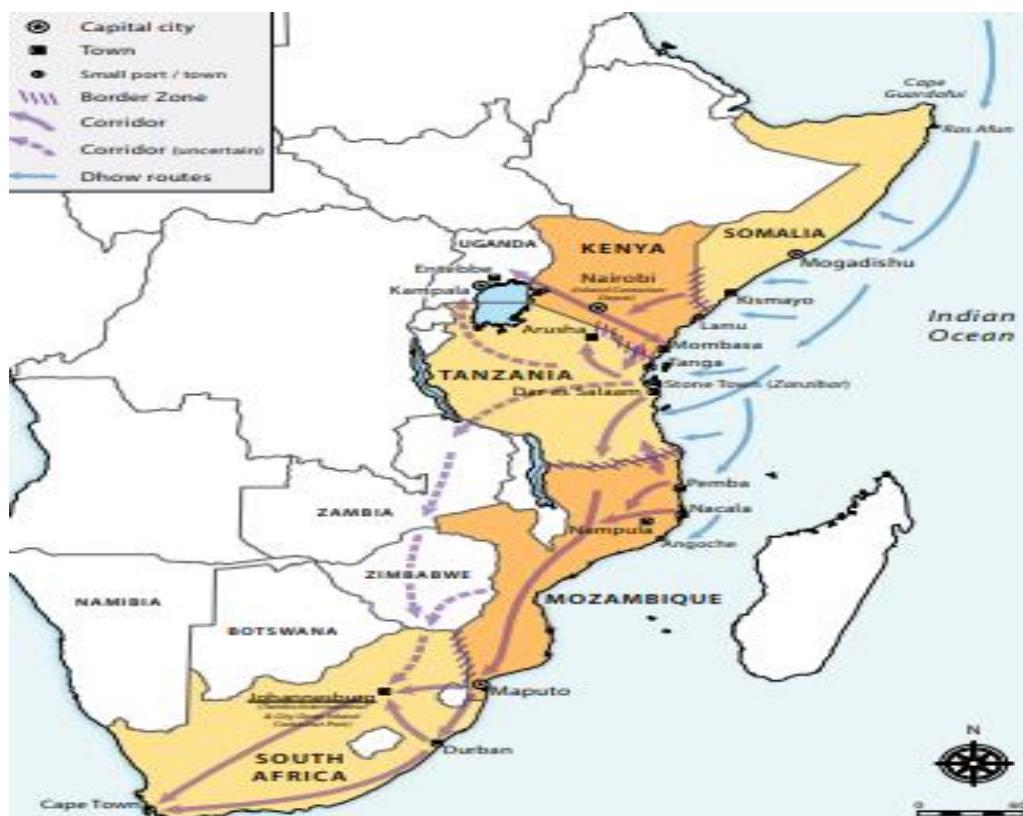
In Europe, terrorist groups include Basque Fatherland and Liberty (Euzkadi Ta Azkatasuna[ETA]) from Spain's Basque region. There is also some linkage between the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the Middle Eastern narcotics industry, and the former guerrillas of the Albanian Liberation Army (KLA). The KLA spin-off groups are well positioned to exploit the Balkan route, which links the Golden Crescent of Afghanistan and Pakistan to European drug markets.<sup>xvi</sup>

In Africa, some evidence suggests that Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, which operates primarily in North and West Africa, is involved in cannabis and cocaine trafficking and protecting traffickers who move through their area of control at a fee. Events in the region since the 2012 coup in Mali and the ensuing military intervention by France have revealed a growing control of the drug trade by the Islamist group. It was suggested that Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Hezbollah have earned millions of dollars through illicit dealings and used the funds to finance terrorist operations in Africa and elsewhere.<sup>xvii</sup> In Mali, local collaborators include a complex and dynamic mix of legitimate business people, Islamist extremists, terrorists, kidnappers, police and army officers, militia groups and local politicians. This toxic mix in the region prompted the UN Secretary General to organise a discussion on the problem in Togo in 2012, leading to a Presidential statement that recognised the serious threats to international peace and stability in West Africa and the Sahel region posed by terrorism and its increasing links with drug trafficking groups. Drugs are moved into Mali by road from Guinea and transported via small convoys through the desert to destinations further north towards Europe.<sup>xviii</sup> This toxic mix of drug trafficking was highlighted in the infamous crash landing of a Boeing 727 in Tarkint (northeast Mali) in 2009, which had originally come from Venezuela and carrying an estimated nine tons of cocaine. The jet first landed on a makeshift airstrip about nine miles from Gao, in an area controlled by Tuareg and Islamist insurgents, and after offloading cocaine and other drugs, it took off in the skies once more and crashed in the desert.

Further, a concept note prepared by France for the 2013 United Nations (UN) Security Council debate on drug trafficking and transnational organised crime noted that violence in Mali by criminal networks attempting to control the drug trade was promoting radicalisation. Based on the belief that those radicalised then participated in the drug trade, the concept note stated that

cocaine and cannabistrafficking enables extremists to generate income, which in turn finances rebellions.<sup>xx</sup>

In East Africa, the Al-Etihad al-Islami (AIAI), Somalia's largest militant Islamic organisation, is suspected of smuggling an illegal narcotic leaf, Khat, into the US for money. Arrests and shipment seizures indicate a sharp increase in demand for the drug. East African Khat sales proceeds are remitted to Middle Eastern banks via the Hawala network and wire services to support terrorist efforts. In addition, there is concern that violent extremists are operating along the transit routes in East Africa, including Mozambique, notably Al-Shabaab, are using drug trafficking proceeds to fund their terrorism.<sup>xx</sup>



Source: Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2017)

**Figure 1: Heroin drug routes from the Middle East to the East African coast**

The above map depicts narcotic drug trafficking through eastern Africa enroute to ADF-held territories in the eastern DRC. From the map, the heroin drug is transported on land through Somalia, Tanzania and Kenya. Through the porous land borders between Tanzania and Kenya, heroin is transported from the coast to the interior of the countries en route to Uganda. On Uganda/Kenya border, the heroin drug enters through the border posts of Busia, Malaba and other porous border points. The drugs enter Uganda/Tanzania through the Mutukula border and other porous border areas. As the drugs enter East Africa's inter-land, some are trafficked to South Africa along the Mozambican border. Press reports reveal that the Al-Shabaab terrorist groups operating in the Cabo Delgado province of Mozambique are involved in the narcotic drug trade.<sup>xxi</sup> Before the capture by the Uganda Government in Tanzania, the ADF terrorist leader, Jamil Mukulu, was known to be in contact with the Al-Shabaab in northern Mozambique. Given the involvement of Al-Shabaab in the drug trade, the contact with the ADF leader and the ramification of the heroin drug route through the inter-land of East Africa, it confirms the ADF is involved in the drug trade to finance their terrorist activities.

## **2.1 A brief history of Allied Democratic Forces**

Uganda has experienced acute terrorism perpetuated by different terrorist groups since 1986 hitherto. These groups include the Lord Resistance Army (LRA), ADF and Al-Shabaab. Starting their terrorist activities in 1996, the ADF killed several people in Uganda and was responsible for 48 bomb blasts in Kampala, towns, and along highways between 1997-2001. This claimed 84 innocent lives and 262 injuries.<sup>xxii</sup> Efforts to control the activities of the ADF led to a confrontation in 1991, which led to the arrest and imprisonment of 400 Tabliq Muslims, including their leader Jamil Mukulu.<sup>xxiii</sup> Released in 1993 from prison, Mukulu established the Salaf Foundation (SF), which had an armed wing, the Uganda Muslim Freedom Fighters

(UMFF). The UMFF established links with the Government of Sudan in 1995. In the same year, the Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) clashed with UMFF's members in a training camp and killed many UMFF fighters. Some remnants of the fighters fled to the DRC and renamed themselves Allied Democratic Forces. The ADF then launched their first attack in 1996 at the Mpundwe border with the DRC. From that time, several battles were fought with the UPDF, culminating in an attack by ADF terrorists in 1998 where 70 students of Kicwamba Technical School were burnt in dormitories.<sup>xxiv</sup> From 2001 to 2007, there was a lull in ADF activities. However, from 2008 to 2020, there was a spate of assassinations in Kampala City targeting Muslim clerics and judicial and security officers, all blamed on ADF terrorism. In 2015, the ADF leader Jamil Mukulu was arrested in Tanzania, and is currently imprisoned in Uganda. Upon Mukulu's arrest, the command of ADF was assumed by Musa Baluku, a former Imam of a Kampala mosque. After assuming command of ADF, Baluku linked it to Al-Shabaab, and in 2016 he made a similar linkage with the Islamic State group in the Levant. Prior to taking command of ADF, Baluku was Chief Political Commissar and Head of Doctrine/Ideology. In 2019, the US Government designated Baluku a global terrorist and placed him on the wanted list of terrorists, and in 2020 the UN placed sanctions on him.

## **2.2 The ADF terrorist attacks on Uganda in 2021 and Operation Shujja**

The close of the year 2021 saw heightened terrorist activities of the ADF. In October 2021, there was a planned attack by the ADF operatives on the mourners of the late Deputy Inspector General of Police in the north of the country.<sup>xxv</sup> However, the attack was foiled, and attackers were arrested before they could detonate a bomb. Thereafter, an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was detonated at a police post in the suburbs of Kampala City. The Islamic State promptly claimed responsibility. After this incident, an attack on revellers in a bar in Komamboga, a

suburb of Kampala, using an IED was launched. One person was killed and three injured. In November 2021, a suicide bomber detonated a bomb in a bus heading to western Uganda. The bomber died in the incident, and four people were injured. In the same month, there were twin bombings in Kampala, near a central police station and on a busy city street. While Kampala City was rocking with bombs, the terrorists also launched an attack in Beni City, DRC, killing five people.

These attacks prompted the Uganda Government and the Government of DRC to sign a memorandum of understanding to conduct a joint operation with the aim of eradicating ADF and other foreign armed groups in eastern DRC. The Operation was code-named “Operation Shujja” with a specific objective to annihilate the ADF and rebel groups from the jungles of Ituri and Kivu provinces, DRC. The Uganda Peoples’ Defense Forces (UPDF) and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC) combined and bombarded the ADF hideouts in Yayuwa, Ttondoli, Bel 1 and Bel 2 camps.<sup>xxvi</sup> Other ADF strongholds, namely Nobili, Kamango and Watalinga, were also destroyed in the air strikes and artillery attacks by the combined forces. In addition, the combined attacks destroyed the terrorist bases of CODECO, an association of the Lendu militia and armed rebel groups which operated in the towns of Dhera, Djungu, Budhu, Llobu, Likpa, Masikini and Libi. In December 2021, the combined forces entered Virunga National Park pursuing ADF terrorists and 130 other armed groups who were believed to be camping in the Park. As a result, the biggest terrorist camp, CambiYaYuwa, occupying eight square miles of land, was captured, and 600 terrorists dispersed.

Operation Shujjawas largely successful, as 91 terrorists and 36 CODECO militia men surrendered to the combined forces, 49 were killed (including Somalis and Chadians), 25 were injured, 42 were captured, 31 Congolese civilians were rescued, three PK machine guns, two rocket-propelled

grenades, 150 AK-47 and 300 ammunitions captured.<sup>xxvii</sup> Islamic radicalisation materials, bomb-making machines and three solar panels were also seized from Cambi Ya Yuwa.

### **2.3 Allied Democratic Forces' involvement in the narcotic drug trade**

From the literature review, the narcotic drug trade has become a hallmark of terrorism. Most terrorist groups are engaged in narcotic drug trafficking to raise funds for the recruitment and training of their combatants, mobilise logistics, and acquire arms and ammunition. As for the ADF terrorist group, the porous borders and corruption among law enforcement officials have facilitated the movement of drugs in and out of their bases in the DRC.

**Table 1:Narcotic drugs seized across Uganda/DRC border, 2016-2019**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Drug category</b>	<b>Quantity (kg)</b>	<b>Value (USD)</b>
2016	Cocaine	128.0	44,288,000
2017	Heroin	256.7	82,653,000
2018	Methamphetamine	63.1	21,845,000
2019	Cannabis	4,753.8	20,335,000
		Total	169,121,000

Source:TOC (drug trafficking)(2021)

Four categories of drugs, namely cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine and cannabis, were intercepted at the Uganda/DRC border from 2016-2019 to/from terrorist-held areas in the DRC territory. The drugs are trafficked in different concealment forms, in pellets to appear as pharmaceutical drugs and in tubes disguised as a body lotion. The drugs are also concealed in the linings of handcrafts, packets and bottom lining of bags.



Source: Uganda police records

**Figure 2: Drugs in various concealment methods**

Some drugs pass through Entebbe Airport and land in Goma or Beni, DRC cities close to Uganda. In effect, Entebbe Airport acts as a conduit for drugs. This is attributed to some security loopholes at the airport as security deployment has adopted a multi-agency workforce comprising revenue officials, police, internal security, immigration, army, counter-terrorism task force and clearing agents. In this approach, cargo is inspected jointly. If any problem of concern is discovered, for instance, narcotic drugs, it is assigned immediately to the security agency concerned for further investigations. However, this approach has some flaws in narcotic drug interception:

I have always argued that there is no effective narcotic drug law enforcement at Entebbe Airport. There are three layers of checks. The inner layer is occupied by the customs officers, the next layer by civil aviation authority, and the third layer by all the mainstream law enforcement agencies (police, immigration, internal security, army and joint anti-terrorism personnel). The personnel don't have the same objectives. Visitors arriving in the country are first handled by the customs officers, whose main objective is revenue collection and evasion of taxes or custom laws. The second layer focuses on aviation security, that is, the security of the planes on air and land, and general airline

routes. They ensure that the runways are clear of any obstacles in case of landing and take-off by the aircrafts. The third layer is general law enforcement, which enforces narcotic drug issues. Checks are done by the first and second layers, and by the time the third layer checks luggage, a lot of collusive, connivance and outright corruption would have taken place, to the extent that any narcotic drugs in transit may not be discovered. This layered deployment with disjointed objectives creates loopholes for narcotic drug traffickers to exploit to their advantage since the first two layers do not have narcotic drug issues as their core function during the inspection of the cargo or luggage. Coupled with corruption, it is therefore not surprising that Entebbe Airport is a transit or conduit for narcotic drugs, save for the marijuana drug, which is grown locally. Bonafide employees of the Airport have also been implicated in narcotic drug smuggling into the Airport terminals. When reporting on duty, they are rarely checked at the checkpoint because they are considered “usual faces”. They take this opportunity to smuggle narcotic drugs into the planes. Sometimes air hostesses are used to traffic drugs since they are rarely suspected. This laxity and “usual faces” have exacerbated narcotic drug trafficking through the Airport.<sup>xxviii</sup>

The heroin drug flow from the Middle East to the East African coast and the flow in the inter-land illustrates that the heroin market is best understood as forming an integrated regional criminal economy based on the transit of the drug from the Middle East to the Western world. As the drug is trafficked, there is a spin-off trade along the way in the East Africa region. Besides coming from the Middle East, cocaine also comes from the Andean region via West Africa to the Western coast of DRC in the Atlantic Ocean, and with spin-off trade again, some drug money gets into the terrorist-controlled areas. Some terrorist collaborators masquerade as traders

commuting between Kinshasa and the eastern DRC towns of Goma, Beni, Bunia and Kisangani, bringing arms for terrorist efforts. In the process, some money is also brought into the areas, which is used to buy drugs and resold elsewhere. A truck driver recounts the drug trafficking across the Ugandan land border:

Hussein (pseudo name) got involved in narcotic drug trafficking as a driver of a truck transporting cement from Mombasa (Kenya) to Kampala (Uganda). He was to drive a truck loaded with cement to Kampala via the Busia land border. Hussein made three monthly trips to Kampala, with a salary of \$500 per trip. In every trip of 1000 bags of cement, 50 bags of the heroin drug would be loaded in the truck disguised as cement. This load would be delivered to a warehouse in Banda, a suburb of Kampala, where some people with vehicles on standby would receive and deliver the 50 bags of heroin to an unknown destination in Kampala. One day, Hussein ran out of luck, and his truck was impounded at the checkpoint in Busia border post upon suspicion, and a thorough check discovered 50 bags of heroin marked as cement. When Hussein made a phone call to the Pakistani owner of the business, the phone call was not answered. However, unknown to Hussein, a man sent by the Pakistani appeared and started negotiating with customs officials and the police, with money exchanging hands. The truck was released, and the driver proceeded to Kampala with his load intact. After realising that the Busia route was risky, Hussein's employer changed the Tanzanian route through Mutukula to Kampala where he continued with his job.<sup>xxix</sup>

This narrative demonstrates that Uganda is a conduit for narcotic drugs. The Uganda/DRC/South Sudan borders are all porous, save for Mpondwe and Elegu border points with customs checks,

but without drug detection equipment. Thus, drugs move easily to the terrorist-controlled areas of eastern DRC enroute to foreign markets.

As for cannabis, the drug is native to Uganda and DRC. The mixture of equatorial and tropical climates with fertile alluvial soil in the two countries makes it conducive to growing the drug. In Uganda, cannabis is grown all over the country, with the greatest concentration in the western parts of the country bordering DRC. This concentration along the border allows easy movement of the drug across the border. The porous borders between Uganda and her neighbours have exacerbated the narcotic drug trade. It is worsened by the perception of borders by border communities that borders are lifelines for transnational existence. Many interactions and livelihood activities occur across borders to the extent that border communities do not see their relevance as demarcations between countries. With border interactions characterised by informal trade, cannabis is trafficked across the border into terrorist areas. The thick forest jungles also cushion vast cannabis gardens, which feed the terrorist drug needs.



Source: Field data (2019)

**Figure 3: Porous border at Uganda/DRC**

In DRC, the growing of cannabis takes place in the deep forests of Batalinga and the forested areas bordering Uganda right from Lubingha, Isango, Bwera, Kasaka and Kamango near river

Semiliki where they cross easily using small boats. In Batalinga, they have chased away people to pave the way for an airfield. The insurgent group at Isango participates in hunting in Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park to raise some revenue from wildlife trafficking. This group chased away many Ugandans who used to cultivate at a game reserve called Domeni and now use the area to cultivate their foodstuff and cannabis. The drug is transported across the border disguised as merchandise, crossing to a market in the DRC and vice-versa. The perception of borders by the local population as links and zones of contact with the neighbouring communities has exacerbated the drug trade:

We just cross. Just yesterday, I was relaxing with friends in Mpondwe, DRC. Borders exist only as a myth. It is in the mind of the government, but the local people do not see it as something that divides people. People do not understand it. For example, a Congolese family has lived in this area for a long time and grows their foodstuff along the border. For this family, some of the gardens extend into Uganda across what is supposed to be a border. The family believes that the border issue does not make sense to them since their parents grew there, cultivated the land, left it for them, and they have since continued cultivating it. The creation of this border was partly an attempt by both governments of Uganda and DRC to mark their territory. The border cannot be identified and understood. The no-man's land was formerly homes, so you wouldn't know whether you were in DRC or Uganda. The government said we need this thing cleared. We need to know where Uganda ends, and DRC starts.<sup>xxx</sup>

At Uganda/DRC border at Busunga, other than the physical mark of river Lamia separating the two countries, which even has no meaning to them, there is total free movement of people and goods:

We are from Busunga in Uganda. We lost our cousin brother in Lwanda on the DRC side, and we went for the burial. Here we just cross on either side of the river; we are one. Our relatives from DRC also come and cultivate in Uganda; we don't know what the border is. It is like we are going from this village to the next village across the river.<sup>xxxii</sup>

At the Busunga border checkpoint, there seems to be an understanding that people do not always have to show documentation to officials if the intention is to cross over to purchase small items or visit family members. Border officials did not bother with documentation; people merely walked through the zone. "We just pass; we never stop, many people here have family on both sides, or they go buy things from the other side. We cannot stop visiting our people".<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Indeed, interacting with the local people along the border shows the extent to which residents' everyday economic lives depended on the ability to cross the border relatively quickly and frequently without any hassle. For instance, many household activities involve items purchased elsewhere, in Uganda or DRC. The boda-boda men (motorcycle riders) transporting small sacks of goods such as maize flour, beans and cooking oil go back and forth frequently across the border.

In these cross-border interactions, marijuana drug is trafficked concealed among luggage of food products such as maize seeds, rice, millet, beans, charcoal and other local commodities. Three to five kilograms of marijuana drug is concealed in every 50-kilogram bag of maize or beans. If many bags of maize or other agricultural products are transported to DRC daily, a good amount of marijuana drug is also transported. Therefore, the free movement of people facilitated by the porous border, the perception of the border as a lifeline by the border communities, cross-border kinship relationships and informal cross-border trade have greatly facilitated the marijuana drug

trade. Terrorist collaborators disguised as businessmen/women convey the drugs or proceeds of the drugs in the form of money or arms.

The involvement of the ADF terrorist groups in the drug trade business to further their terrorist activities fits into the understanding of narco-terrorism as defined by the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA):

A subset of terrorism, in which terrorist groups or associated individuals participate directly or indirectly in the cultivation, manufacture, transportation or distribution of controlled substances and the monies derived from these activities used in violence and destabilization, qualifies as narco-terrorism. The Drug Enforcement Agency uses the term to characterize the participation of groups or associated individuals in taxing, providing security or otherwise aiding or abetting drug trafficking endeavors in an effort to further or fund terrorist activities.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

#### **2.4 Allied Democratic Force use of drug money**

As shown in the table of drugs seized, the amount of money fetched from the drug trade by the ADF terrorists is substantial. This amount of drugs is what law enforcement intercepted, but it is probable that a lot of drugs have filtered through the porous borders and made a significant amount of money for the terrorist group. The money is employed in the acquisition of arms, ammunition and other logistics for insurgent efforts. In addition, the money is used to lure youth from rural Uganda/DRC to join terrorist ranks. These are usually youth from poverty-stricken or broken families where the children are left to fend for themselves. The food, pharmaceutical drugs, arms and specialised terrorist training in Al-Shabaab camps in Somalia are funded from this fund. Several categories of arms have been seized by Ugandan law enforcement officials

from the ADF camps. These include grenades, ammunition, suicide vests, AK-47 assault rifles and light machine guns.



Source: Uganda police records

**Figure 4: Arms and ammunition seized from ADF terrorist groups**

These war materials obtained through proceeds of the drug trade had been used to unleash violence on the population both in DRC and Uganda. The ADF has committed many atrocities in DRC, including killing nine coca farmers and seven pygmies, and the disappearance of three priests in Mpaho. In addition, the displacement and killing of people took place in the areas of Losilosi, Mwenda, Kilya, Bolongo, Kanindo and Lume:

One day in May 2021, a suicide bomber entered Buchiri Catholic Church near Beni city with the intention of exploding a bomb during a baptism ceremony on Sunday. Luckily enough, the bomb exploded before the prayers started. Only the suicide bomber died in

the incident. In the same week, a bomb exploded in Letrot near Beni where three women were killed. In Paida Rwengoma, another bomb exploded, killing 11 people. Here the situation is terrible; you cannot go to the garden to dig. You will die.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

This article concludes from the empirical data that the narcotic drug trade is fuelling terrorism across the Uganda/DRC border. The ADF has engaged in the drug trade to sustain their terrorism in Uganda and DRC with many atrocities. Until access to drugs by this group is curtailed, terrorism will likely continue at this border. Therefore, the article recommends that Uganda and DRC sustain the current joint operation to eliminate the terrorist groups from the border area. In addition, both governments should encourage intelligence to co-operate in order to block access to narcotic drugs by terrorists. Burundi, Rwanda and Central African Republic with insurgents should co-operate to fight the narcotic drug trade as a source of funds for conflicts. Similarly, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Libya, Niger and Mozambique, which are experiencing conflicts now, should forge co-operation to fight the drug trade in their regions to eliminate drugs from insurgents.

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<sup>i</sup> Okello, F. (2021). The challenges of curbing transnational organized crime across Uganda/Kenya border. A PhD thesis.

<sup>ii</sup> Ibid

<sup>iii</sup> Financial flows linked to the production and trafficking of Afghan opiates. FAFT report 2014.

<sup>iv</sup> CRS Report for Congress. (2004). Illicit drugs and the terrorist threat: Causal links and implications for domestic drug control policy.

<sup>v</sup> A global overview of narcotics-funded terrorist and other extremist groups. A report prepared by the Federal Research Division, Library of Congress under an Interagency Agreement with the Department of Defense; 2002.

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