

Transcription of the audio file with a translation:

******(Audio begins with indistinct sounds, then chanting)******

****Translation - of abductee:**** The goal was to make us learn things by heart so we'd forget life outside the camp. All we were taught was that we had to kill people to go to paradise.

****Translation:**** RFI (Radio France Internationale) - Major Report. François Balarrin. It's one of the deadliest and most mysterious armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The ADF, an English acronym designating the Allied Democratic Forces, founded 30 years ago by Ugandans, the group presents itself today as the branch of the Islamic State in Central Africa since its leader pledged allegiance to the terrorist group in 2017. We went to Kampala in a de-radicalization center for former fighters, a center that opened its doors to a journalist for the first time. All the names of the people interviewed have been changed for security reasons. Who is hiding behind the Islamic State in Central Africa? This is a major report by Florence Maurice.

******(Sound of helicopter)******

****Translation:**** One morning in March at a military base in Uganda, on the border with the DRC. Caleb Weiss takes a seat in the back of a helicopter.

****Translation:**** We have two aircraft; the helicopter is equipped with very powerful loudspeakers, and this allows us to broadcast audio messages during flights to encourage members of the group to rejoin their families and their communities.

****Translation:**** Caleb Weiss works for a private foundation, Bridgeway, which supports the army in the fight against the ADF, the Allied Democratic Forces.

******(Helicopter sounds intensifies)******

****Translation:**** The objective of this morning's flight is to encourage defections within the group.

******(Helicopter takes off. Sounds of the forest)******

****Translation:**** The helicopter takes off. Through the window, we can see the Rwenzori Mountains and their impenetrable forests, where part of the Islamist group is hiding.

****Translation:**** We target the places where we know they get supplies, the water sources, and the paths they use to move through the jungle. We fly over the different areas where they are active in eastern DRC. We move according to their movements and the military intelligence we have.

****Translation:**** Do they move a lot?

****Translation:**** Yes, a lot. They are under pressure from military operations, so they are constantly moving their camp to avoid being caught by the Ugandan or Congolese army.

****Translation:**** Inside the helicopter, the tension is palpable. We are within firing range of the rebels.

****Translation:**** I've never seen them with my own eyes. You know, this forest is incredibly dense. It's almost impossible to see what's on the ground unless there's a clearing. But we know that they see our helicopter passing by.

****Translation:**** They, a few hundred militiamen, 1000 to 1700 according to various estimates, responsible each year for the deaths of hundreds of civilians, often killed in an extremely brutal way, mainly in eastern DRC.

****(Sound of helicopter)****

****Translation:**** Caleb Weiss slides the door of the helicopter to activate the loudspeakers.

****Translation:**** My brothers, my sisters, leave the forest. You won't live well there. The real life is here. Come here, my brothers and sisters.

****Translation:**** The voices that resonate are those of former ADF members who have agreed to participate in a defection program. The messages are broadcast in three languages: Ugandan, Swahili, Kinande.

****Translation:**** My brothers, my sisters, I was with you inside the camp called Mzerafiki. We were lied to, we were told that if the military caught us, they would harm us, but that's false. Today I live in peace here. Come out of the forest and don't be afraid.

****Translation:**** This is one of the key points of the ADF's propaganda. They say if you ever desert or surrender, you will be killed by the army or the communities. They say not to believe the Kouffars, in other words, the infidels, that these messages are actually a trap against Muslims. With our messages, we want them to realize that there is a life after the jungle, that they can get out of it, that we are not going to torture them, that we are not going to kill them or put them in prison. They are kept in the group in a state of fear and this fear somehow prevents people from wanting to escape.

****Translation:**** This program is backed by Operation Shujaa - Bravery in Swahili, a joint military operation between the DRC and Uganda launched at the end of 2021, while the ADF, which seem to be weakened, are making a strong comeback.

****(Music)****

****Translation:**** The Islamic State group claims responsibility for the suicide attacks that killed four people and wounded 33 in the district.

****Translation:**** For a few weeks at the end of 2021, the Islamic State claimed responsibility for a series of bomb attacks in and around Kampala in Uganda, it was the first time.

****Translation:**** This claim confirms the links between the jihadist organization and the local group ADF.

****Translation:**** The modus operandi is also unprecedented. Two of these attacks are carried out by suicide bombers.

****Translation:**** This is the first case of a suicide attack where the assailant wears an explosive vest and detonates it in a bus.

****Translation:**** A month later, the first suicide attack in Beni in eastern DRC in a restaurant on Christmas Day, said Governor Constantin Dima.

****Translation:**** It was the security guards on this terrace who challenged him and he immediately activated the device.

****Translation:**** This typically jihadist modus operandi reinforces the hypothesis of a rapprochement between the ADF and the Islamic State. 2 years earlier, the leader of the ADF pledged allegiance to Daesh. The United States has also placed the group on its list of terrorist organizations, but for lack of evidence, researchers are still skeptical. The profile of the group stands out in the jihadist galaxy.

**** (Music) ****

****Translation:**** The founder of the ADF is a Ugandan, Jamil Mukulu, a Christian convert to Islam. He attempts an insurrection in Uganda, but fails and takes refuge in 1995 with his group on the Congolese side. Subsequently, he becomes responsible for violent massacres terrorizing the populations, but his objective remains unclear. He evolves in an environment with a majority of animists and Christians, does not claim responsibility for his attacks and does not shine through his expansionism, recalls Jason Stearns, a researcher at the Congo Study Group.

****Translation:**** Jamil Mukulu was very hesitant to make links with the larger Islamist groups, so from the Middle East. He wanted to maintain a certain autonomy and he wanted to create a kind of utopia in eastern DRC, but really isolated from the rest of the world and even isolated from the rest of the jihadist Islamist world.

**** (Music) ****

****Translation:**** In 2015 after months of searching, Jamil Mukulu is arrested in Tanzania. Bruno Minas then tells the story on RFI.

****Translation:**** On the wanted notice issued by Interpol alone, Jamil Mukulu has nine different identities with Kenyan, Tanzanian and British passports.

****Translation:**** This is a blow to the group. The ADF seem to be headed down, they have lost men, lack resources. A junior commander succeeds the historical leader Moussa Seku Baluku.

****Translation:**** Moussa Baluku became the new commander, the new leader of the ADF, and one way in which he was able to assert himself was through a brutality towards his own soldiers, but also towards the civilian population and also with this new orientation towards the Islamic state, which gave him financial resources, but also one of the ideological symbolic resources, here I am who is now who has linked our group to this great international group.

****(Sound of a vehicle)****

****Translation:**** In Kampala, a center run by the American Foundation Bridgeway welcomes former members of the ADF. Some have fled the group, others have been captured during army operations. That morning, about fifteen of them were participating in a mechanics workshop, one of the activities designed to facilitate their return to civilian life. The faces are marked by years spent in the forest. Among them a small, stocky man, we will call him Ali. Before surrendering at the end of 2023 during a military operation, he belonged to the close guard of Seku Moussa Baluku, the leader of the ADF.

****Translation - client at the center : **** If they find me, they will cut my throat like a goat.

****Translation:**** And you, have you beheaded people?

****Translation:**** No, I was too afraid, but I killed people by shooting at them.

****Translation:**** You were not forced to do so?

****Translation:**** New recruits are forced to behead to harden their hearts when they arrive. But I grew up in the camp.

****Translation:**** Forced to join around the age of 8, Ali led a group of fighters considered particularly violent, especially in the 2000s. He will not say more, since he left the group, he remains evasive about his own abuses. One thing is certain, he was at the forefront of the rapprochement between the ADF and the Islamic State.

****Translation:**** When the group joined the Islamic State, the rules changed. Baluku began to refer to a man who gave him instructions, that each commander had to lead such and such a

raid and kill a hundred civilians and above all bring back photos to send them as proof of the work accomplished.

****Translation:**** And so you noticed that orders were coming from outside the camp, right?

****Translation:**** Yes, sometimes we acted alone. If the Ugandan army attacked, we retaliated. Baluku decided, but at one point, I saw Seku Baluku venture into the jungle to find a network, call his superiors within ISIS. Returning after the evening prayer, he gathered the commanders to transmit the new instructions.

****Translation:**** A name comes up repeatedly in Ali's testimony, that of Meddiei Kalubo, one of the architects of the alignment of the ADF with the standards of the Islamic State.

****Translation:**** His name was Meddie, but he was nicknamed Punisher because he was feared and very aggressive. He accused us of not wearing a uniform, of not having a flag to identify ourselves. He imposed a lot of rules on us.

****Translation:**** Meddie was a key player in the allegiance process, confirms, a disarmament specialist within the Bridgeway Foundation.

****Translation:**** Meddie was the first to mention the Islamic State in the ADF camps. It is not known how he joined the group, but it is known that he became radicalized in Uganda, then disappeared before reappearing in the DRC. He is skilled in new technologies and has helped the ADF improve their propaganda. He did not arrive alone but with another Ugandan, together, they tried to convince Moussa Baluku to join ISIS, but the other was too pushy, he ended up being killed by the ADF. Meddie was more patient.

****Translation:**** How did Meddie appear within the ADF? Shadowy areas remain, in particular regarding his link with another central figure under sanctions from the United Nations, the Tanzanian Ahmed Mahmoud Hassan also called Abu Wakas.

****Translation:**** It seems that Abu Wakas was already linked to the Islamic State even before coming to the ADF camps. It is possible that Meddie found him online during his research and it seems that Abu Wakas both evaluated the ADF on behalf of the leadership of the Islamic State and that he also contributed to convincing the ADF to join ISIS. Through Abu Wakas and Meddie, discussions were held for months between the two leaderships and finally the ADF officially joined the Islamic State in October 2017 by pledging allegiance to the Caliph of the time Abu Bakar al-Baghdadi.

**** (Music) ****

****Translation:**** Since then, evidence of the links between the ADF and the Islamic State has accumulated. Propaganda materials sending trainers and financial support via the networks of the Islamic State in South Africa or Somalia, according to the UN, the Islamic State now provides the ADF with drones and passes on its know-how in the manufacture of bombs transported by drones.

****Translation:**** But all doubts have not yet been lifted about the depth of their link and the chain of command. Especially since the alignment of the Islamic State was not done without resistance, our witness Ali confirms.

****Translation:**** Some commanders do not agree with these methods.

****Translation:**** Yes, I would even say the majority. Two commanders were even killed because they opposed these new rules. After that, everyone was afraid.

****Translation:**** The allegiance therefore led to the departure of several commanders who remained loyal to the historical leader Jamil Mukulu. It has also enabled the ADF to gain notoriety and recruit more fighters within the regional Muslim communities, Tanzania, Rwanda, in Burundi, men attracted to the idea of joining the international jihad.

**** (Chanting in Arabic) ****

****Translation:**** This Friday morning, it's prayer time in this center for former ADF members. How many of them adhere or have adhered to the project of the Islamic State, it is difficult to know, once outside, very few dare to say it. About a third of the members of the group are considered pure jihadists convinced by the extremist ideology, but to recruit, the ADF often resort to trickery. This is what happened to Moses, a young Ugandan, deceived by a false promise of work when he could no longer afford to pay for his schooling on a Friday when he left the mosque.

****Translation:**** When I left home, a man followed me, he asked me if I had any problems. I told him about my money problems. I didn't know him, but I trusted him. He told me that he was Muslim, that we were brothers. I didn't think he could lie to me.

****Translation:**** This man gives him the phone number of an intermediary.

****Translation:**** When I got home, I called the number. Ali told me he knew my story and that he could help me no matter what problems I had.

****Translation:**** He makes him believe in a well-paid job in a gold mine in the DRC. The exchanges between them are sustained. 4 days later, Moses is convinced to take a seat on a bus to Rwanda where another intermediary is waiting for him.

****Translation:**** 4 days. Everything went so fast, in a snap of a finger, I had never imagined joining the ADF, but he talked to me a lot, he told me so many things, it's like I had been in a dream, I could no longer think, I was only thinking about one thing, finding money.

****Translation:**** Moses is finally intercepted en route and then realizes the trap. After a few weeks in prison in Rwanda, he is sent back to Uganda.

**** (Sound of traffic) ****

****Translation:**** The ADF are the only claimed branch of the Islamic State not to operate in a majority Muslim environment. Paradoxically, being in the minority pushes the group to greater radicalism, explains Bulama Bakarti.

****Translation:**** As they are in the minority, they do not make much effort to spread their ideology and convince local populations to join them. They favor massacres, the abduction of women and children, and they rely on the ideology and texts provided by the Islamic State with an extreme interpretation of Islamic law in order to justify and legitimize their violence, the abductions and the manipulation of new recruits.

****Translation:**** The ADF have always practiced abductions and forced recruitment, but since the allegiance to the Islamic State, their number has increased, Euphrasia was in the field with her sister and brother on the outskirts of Oicha in DRC when she was kidnapped.

****Translation - client at the center:**** They took my sister and me and they slit my big brother's throat, they tied him up and then cut off his head. I can still see the blood running down his face because he resisted. I am Catholic, but as soon as I was kidnapped, I was forced to change religion and become Muslim. I accepted because I didn't want to die. It was en route, I was forced to wear the full veil and I was made to recite a few words called the Chadda. And that's it.

****Translation:**** Even before arriving at the camp?

****Translation:**** We arrived in a first camp and there I was forced to say the Chaada to convert. Then I was sent to another camp.

****Translation:**** Her testimony, like others, confirms that after the allegiance to the Islamic State, the time devoted to indoctrination has increased within the ADF.