

## QUMAR

### General Situation- July 2007

#### The Country

Qumar is a land-locked North African country with a largely Arabic speaking population of almost 40 million. Qumar's capital is **Jabal Nafusa**, a city with over 3 million inhabitants.

Military regimes favoring Islamic-oriented governments have dominated Qumari national politics since independence from the United Kingdom in 1951. Qumar was embroiled in two prolonged civil wars during most of the remainder of the 20th century. These conflicts were rooted in northern economic, political, and social domination of largely non-Muslim, non-Arab southern Qumarese. The first civil war ended in 1978 with a comprehensive peace treaty and a power-sharing agreement.

A separate conflict, which broke out in the western province of Birani in 2002, has displaced over 2 million people and caused an estimated 150,000 to 400,000 deaths. As of late 2006, peacekeeping forces were struggling to stabilize the situation, which has become increasingly regional in scope, and has brought instability to eastern Sahelise Republic. Qumar also has faced large refugee influxes from neighboring countries, primarily Zamunda and the Sahelise Republic. Armed conflict, poor transport infrastructure, and lack of government support have chronically obstructed the provision of humanitarian assistance to affected populations. Development efforts for the country, which ranks at 175<sup>th</sup> on the UN's Human Development Index, has been hampered by chronic insecurity and corruption.

Qumar continues to be courted politically with important development and military assistance from northern countries involved in the Global War on Terror. While Qumar accepts such assistance with relatively little commentary, they have in parallel continued to build up a key strategic business partnership with Asian, and particularly Chinese, industrial partners. A rapidly developing economy in Jabal Nafusa has little to do with the impoverished realities of Birani province, but it is empowering the Qumari government to take an increasingly militant position towards the demands of key states in the international system and the UN Security Council.

Some key demographics details:

*Ethnic Groups:* black 52%, Arab 39%, Beja 6%, foreigners 2%, other 1%

*Religion:* Sunni Muslim 70% (in north), Christian 5% (mostly in south and Jabal Nafusa), indigenous beliefs 25%

#### Geo-political Situation

*In the West*

**Sahelise Republic** is found to the west of Qumar. It is under-developed, oil rich

country governed by a military dictatorship that is generally suspicious of the government in Qumar. Power remains in the hands of an ethnic minority.

Despite a border monitoring agreement between Sahelise Republic and Qumar to prevent gun running, drug-trafficking and incursions of armed opposition groups, it is rumored that Sahelise Republic is providing weapons and training to the **Qumar Revolutionary Front (QRF)**, which is operating against Qumar Police and Security Forces in the Birani Province border area. The Sahelise Republic suffers from its own rebellion, which broke out in 1998 in the north. The fighting sporadically flares up despite several peace agreements between the government and the rebels. In 2005 new rebel groups emerged in western Qumar and have made probing attacks into eastern Sahelise Republic. While foreign observers tend to paint a worryingly unstable picture of the situation, it has to be noted that this has been the prognosis for the last 30 years.

Fighting in eastern Sahelise Republic has driven a significant number of people to seek refuge in a collection of IDP camps in Lani, Birani province, roughly 100 km from the Sahelise border. The capital of Sahelise Republic is **Omasu**.

#### *In the East*

**Zamunda** is on Qumar's eastern border. The colonial boundaries created by Britain to delimit Zamunda grouped together a wide range of ethnic groups with different political systems and cultures. Today, politically it is a struggling uni-party democracy that is experiencing civil unrest and high crime in its rambling capital city of **Maska**. The government of Zamunda supports the government of Qumar and is providing military assistance to Qumar in its fight against the QRF.

#### *In the North*

To the north of Qumar is **Othar**, an under-developed dictatorship that is isolated from Qumar by rugged terrain and desert. The border with Qumar is largely unguarded and of little strategic importance to either country. Othar is also seen as a key country in the war on terror, and American forces of the nascent AFRICOM are intent on building up one the three strategic headquarters for this command.

#### *In the South*

To Qumar's south is found the state of **Equatorial Kundu**. The country is led by President Nimbala, a former soldier and military commander in Kundu, before becoming President and ruling for the last 28 years. Nimbala has his hands full with rebels who persistently attempt *coup d'état*, thus far with no success. Kundu faces considerable problems with poverty and the AIDs epidemic. The agriculture industry, the staple of its population, faces increasing problems with land infertility. The small capital city of **Bitanga** has a major airport, but little else. Kundu maintains cordial relations with Qumar, and receives preferential prices on Qumari oil.

## **Political Situation**

The Government of Qumar is headed by a civilian president, **Ali Nassir**, a former military officer who serves only with the concurrence of the powerful military. Coup rumors abound; one group of dissident military officers attempted to seize power in 2005, but was repelled by forces loyal to **General Abdul ibn Shareef**, Commander of the Qumari Defense Force (QDF). Neither Nassir nor Shareef enjoy the popular support of the Qumari people, but the political system in Qumar is not democratic by any measure.

The situation in the western province of Birani is a fluid mosaic of armed groups and political parties opposing the central government, more often than not split along ethnic lines. The Birani **Governor Ali Mohammed** tries to hold things together, but as time passes his authority as both political and tribal leader has been weakened. While his alliances are imagined to be with Arab tribes, Nassir is obliged to maintain a delicate balancing act between tribes, armed factions, separate UN and AU missions, UN agencies, and a host of vocal international NGOs, all of whom have direct access to international media. His role is only made more complicated by the continuing fragmentation of armed groups and political parties into smaller and smaller entities who resort to varying acts of banditry as their key means of livelihood.

The key military-political movement in Birani is the Qumari Revolutionary Front (QRF), a rebel group with an estimated 40,000 members who have been fighting the Qumari Government and the QDF. Their popularity has been tribally based, as they represent the interests of the traditionally oppressed African tribes, against the minority Arabic-speaking nomads. The QRF have waged guerrilla warfare against the government for the last decade, initially targeting electrical power infrastructure, petroleum facilities, and military installations. Since the government bolstered the Birani military and police presence in 2003, the QRF has increasingly struck the softer targets, poorly armed and paid Qumari police. In general, it is the civilian population that is the perennial loser in the conflict, being forcibly displaced by one party, to be accused of collusion by the next, seeking refuge in camps near the major cities, where they are again victim of government forced-return policies, and political representatives in the camps who pressure them to settle in peri-urban slum-like conditions.

Particularly in the more recent years of conflict, the human rights records of both the Government Security Forces and the QRF are not good. The situation has pushed educated Qumaris to leave the country as political and economic refugees; over one million Qumaris have migrated over the past decade to the United States and Western Europe. For Qumar's poor, remittances from their family members living abroad represent a vital part of their income.

The Birani conflict has displaced an estimated 2.1 million civilians within Birani province, and towards the Sahelise Republic. The Birani capital city of Lani hosts almost 800,000 displaced civilians, principally in 5 camps. The Al Salam camp hosts over 135,000 IDPs (Internally Displaced People), making it the world's largest camp.

## **Economy**

**GDP (purchasing power parity):** \$97.47 billion (2006 est.)  
**by sector:** *agriculture: 35.5%*  
*industry: 24.8%*  
*services: 39.7% (2006 est.)*

**Population below poverty line:** 72% (2004 est.)  
**Oil - production:** 344,700 bbl/day (2004 est.)  
**Natural gas - proved reserves:** 84.95 billion cu m (1 January 2005 est.)  
**Exports – partners (2006):** China 68%, Japan 28%, and Saudi Arabia 4%

Qumar’s economy has been on a recovery trend during the past two years, despite the continuing armed conflict. The economy continues to improve thanks to austere government budgets, efforts to reduce national debt, and public service expenditure, and an export-oriented growth focus.

Ongoing economic problems facing President Ai Nasir include reforming the military and public employees’ pension system, reducing high unemployment rates, dealing with rapid and uncontrolled growth of urban slums and improving inadequate public services.

There are continued strong economic migratory movements and an important brain drain from Qumar to the United States and Western Europe.

On the positive side, several international financial institutions have praised the economic reforms introduced by the Qumarese government that have succeeded in reducing the public-sector deficit below 1.5% of GDP. The government's economic policy and democratic security strategy have engendered a growing sense of confidence in the economy, particularly within the business sector.

## **The International Community**

The congested capital of Jabal Nafusa has a large international presence. Most nations have embassies in Jabal Nafusa, with the wealthier states also ensuring representatives from their respective development and humanitarian donor agencies.

The United Nations is led in Qumar by the United Nations Mission in Qumar, lead by Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), Mr. Manuel Da Pronk. The SRSG has a number of Deputies, who focus on the respective political, military, humanitarian and development *dossiers* that comprise the vast UNMIQ mandate. The UN Country Team includes UNDP, OCHA, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, FAO, WHO and UNHCHR. While the UNMIQ mission includes civilian police (CIVPOL) for its operations, the military peacekeeping mission is staffed and co-led by the African Union. The African Union Mission in Qumar (AMIB) is a military force of over 12,000

troops that supports the mandate of UMMIQ, and includes troop contributions from non-AU nations.

There are 59 International NGOs operating in Qumar, providing emergency- and-development assistance to internally displaced persons and those that have suffered decades of war and chronic poverty. Qumar is typically portrayed as being 'NGO unfriendly' with complicated and ever-changing administrative procedures, and a well-staffed Qumar Liaison Office (QLO) that is the NGO link to the Government, and very inquisitive about NGO affairs. The QLO enforces a strict policy of promoting cooperation between international and Qumarese NGOs, and of capacity building and partnership approaches between expatriate and national staff.

The private sector has attracted new legions of foreigners to Qumar, largely to the petroleum extraction industry. While aviation, banking, and industrial production have also brought in expatriate staff, nothing can rival the Chinese-dominated petroleum presence.

It has been estimated that there are more than 35,000 expatriate staff based in Qumar, taking into account humanitarian and development staff, UNMIQ and AMIB, and diplomatic and multinational corporation staffers. The expatriate presence in Birani province is limited to humanitarian and UNMIQ/AMIB staff.

## **Crime and Security**

Jabal Nafusa is a capital city with the lowest crime rates worldwide. While foreigners complain of its austere living conditions, dearth of social activities and a complete ban on alcohol, it is a city where expatriate staff can walk the streets 24 hours a day without risk.

The situation in Birani is quite different. Birani province was 'discovered' by foreigners in late 2004, some months after the major hostilities took place between government militias and rebel forces. The first two years of humanitarian operations were exemplary in that despite the scale of assistance provided, and the number of staff and infrastructure deployed, there were remarkably few security incidents reported. The theory was that the presence of expatriate staff was a sort of deterrent to the traditional banditry, and the conflict-related violence affecting the region.

This honeymoon period came to an end in 2006, as the rebel movement began to rapidly dissolve into smaller and smaller armed groups, lacking any clear and legitimate hierarchy. Gone were romantic notions of Qumari rebel groups, as NGOs and the UN were victim to an exponential increase in car-jackings and security incidents specifically targeting aid providers. As of 2007, the insecurity had crept into the capital city of Lani, with agencies falling victim to armed robberies in their offices and residences.

The body count continues to rise in 2007. A total of 157 national staff and 12

expatriates have been killed in the period 2003-2007 in Birani province alone. It is impossible to provide any precise figures on types, numbers and frequency of security incidents, as even the UN Department of Security and Safety (UNDSS) is reticent to be seen as collecting data that might eventually be used to publicly denounce the Qumari government.

The capital of Jabal Nafusa is considered by the UN to be in **Phase One, Precautionary**. This phase is designed to warn staff members that the security situation in the country or a portion of the country is such that caution should be exercised. All travel into the duty station requires advance clearance from the Designated Official (DO). Some areas on the periphery of Jabal Nafusa have been declared no-go areas for international staff, due to high levels of criminality, though not specifically targeting foreigners.

Western and southwestern Qumar including Birani province are in Security **Phase Two, Restricted movement**. This phase signifies a much higher level of alert and imposes major restrictions on the movement of all staff members. No families may be posted to Birani. During Phase Two all staff members are required to remain at home unless otherwise instructed. No travel, either incoming or within the country, may occur unless specifically authorized by the DO as essential travel. Phase Two is generally of short duration, after which the Phase will return to less restrictive terms or will be increased because of the threat.

Outside of Lani, the rural areas are only infrequently visited, and only for short duration when travel does take place. Most such missions into higher risk areas takes the form of inter-agency joint assessments, typically by helicopter. Even NGOs have taken to using UN or AMIB helicopters for their field missions, as they are unable to ensure their own security through traditional acceptance-based means, or through respect for the civilian, neutral and independent character.

The country's police forces are large and well trained, but poorly equipped and irregularly paid. The QDF is well-equipped and led, but has tended to cut corners in its respect for International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The Qumar police are capable of providing some security to UN facilities but have indicated that their support largely depends on the UN's readiness to provide vehicles, fuel, food and 'technical assistance', which often include cash.

International corporations exploiting Qumar's mineral wealth are protecting their facilities and executives with private security companies. An estimated 500+ international staff work for a variety of Private Security Companies (PSC) based in the country. Wealthy Qumaris also routinely use private bodyguards and discretely armed escorts in Jabal Nafusa. Some International NGOs also use PSC services to protect their compounds and assets in the capital. While Lani has yet to see an arrival in force by PSCs, it is rumored that part of AMIB's logistics are being provided by bilaterally financed western security companies.

## **Public Infrastructure**

Public infrastructure is fragile, with electricity often being interrupted for upwards of 4 hours a day in the capital city. Birani province suffers doubly, with its infrastructure having to provide for the annexed IDP camps and several hundred thousand additional 'citizens' living in slum-like conditions, and lacking public infrastructure and services.

The international airport in Jabal Nafusa literally bisects the city. Consistent with the governments strategic goal to boost tourism there are plans to improve the airport's infrastructure. Currently four international airlines serve Qumar.

The Lani airport is located some 25 kilometers from the town centre, just north of the Al Salam IDP camp.