
THE MANY ARMIES OF IRAQ: IF ISIS GOES, DO THEY TURN ON EACH OTHER?

- 03.01.2017

The Daily Beast, 02 Jan 2017

KIMBERLY DOZIER

ERBIL, Iraq [] injured Iraqi soldiers stretched on hospital beds were still in their uniforms, a haphazard mix of mismatched camouflage in the military ward of a hospital north of Mosul. The walls were peach-colored, as if painted for some other kind of place. The tang of antiseptic hung in the air.

Another soldier was in a wheelchair, his lower half covered in a heavy multicolored blanket.

The three men, all in their twenties, were injured trying to rescue Iraqis fleeing the so-called Islamic State just after dawn on Dec. 26 outside the village of Telskuf, about 20 miles from the besieged ISIS capital in Iraq.

The soldiers say ISIS fighters spotted them as they dashed from behind defenses to escort the villagers, and opened up with gunfire and mortars.

A third of the people were killed, a third injured, and a third got away, one of the soldiers said in Arabic. Two of the soldiers were shot and a third hit by shrapnel from a mortar blast.

The three wounded soldiers asked that their names not be published for fear of ISIS retribution against members of their families still trapped inside Mosul.

These men are not from the Iraqi Army, or the Kurdish Peshmerga, nor are they part of the newly legalized Popular Mobilization Forces [] mostly Shiite militia groups, which now answer directly to Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, and which previously were accused of summary killings, kidnapping, and torture.

These three wounded belong to a militia that is mostly Sunni from Mosul, and they're fighting to free their loved ones. They don't trust Abadi or his Shiite-dominated administration. And when ISIS is gone, if they feel their community is suffering abuse again, they could become the vanguard of an ISIS 2.0, dragging Iraq into a civil war akin to Syria next door—and mirroring the U.S. in the chaos.

Abadi's government is aware of the risk, and is considering completely withdrawing its mostly Shiite army from all Iraqi bases once the fight against ISIS is done, and deploying its newly legalized militia groups to keep the peace in the cities they come from.

But this particular group of locals, the Knights of Ninewa, or Haras Ninewa, aren't invited. Made up of Arab Sunnis, Shiites, Christians, and Yazidis, this force answers to the former Mosul governor Atheel al-Nujaifi, a man some Shiite politicians blame for failing to stop ISIS's initial takeover of the city in 2014. That intramural conflict has lain dormant as everyone fights ISIS, but will re-emerge the moment that fighting stops.

The resentments are already building. The men in the hospital told The Daily Beast that they get no pay nor medical benefits nor survivor benefits for their families if they are injured, unlike

Abadi's now-legal Shiite militia groups. They have no confidence that the Iraqi government will do any better representing the rights of Sunnis and other minorities after Mosul is captured than it did before ISIS rule.

Given the kind of allegations leveled in the past against some of the militias in the mostly Shiite Popular Mobilization Forces, the organizations current charm offensive seems incongruous at times as its leaders vow to professionalize and eject any member who abuses the groups newly awarded authority as the prime ministers de facto strike force.

"Since its first day, it was for all of Iraq, not for a specific sect of religion," PMF spokesman Ahmed al-Asadi told The Daily Beast in an interview at his heavily but discreetly defended Baghdad home. He described the PMF as a volunteer force of nearly 60 different groups that has worked unpaid until now. The Iraqi government has just budgeted a salary for 110,000 fighters as part of the new law, which al-Asadi said is being parceled out among roughly 142,000 troops.

Some of the groups were formed originally to fight the U.S. military occupation: Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr's forces killed Americans by the dozen. But most of the fighters signed up after Iraqi Shiite Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa or religious order in 2014 calling on Iraqis to protect the state from ISIS. Some of the factions, like Ktab Hizbullah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq are considered to be veritable extensions of the Iranian military's Quds Force, although al-Asady disagrees.

Al-Asady concedes that the bulk of the combined officially recognized militias are Shiite, but says there are also groups that include minorities like Sunnis, Christians, and Yazidis.

He says that now that the militias are legal, they will separate from the political parties or movements that gave rise to them, and answer only to the prime minister. The Iraqi military code of justice will also apply to them, although the details are still being worked out as the law Iraq's Parliament passed is a scant page and a half long.

Such forces have been accused of carrying out a scorched earth policy toward Sunnis and anyone suspected of working with ISIS, a reaction to the continuing campaign of deadly attacks and bombings aimed at Shiite neighborhoods (like the explosions that killed more than 20 people in Baghdad on Saturday).

Reports persist that the most hard line of the groups are holding up to 3,000 prisoners in up to five makeshift jails, some for alleged crimes, and some to exchange for ransoms that help fund militia activities.

Al-Asady denies those reports, but he says Iraq's justice ministry has appointed a judge who is working his way through 300 reported cases of abuse by militia members ranging from alleged prisoner abuse to summary executions. He said only roughly a quarter of those accused are genuine militia members and the rest are part of wannabe groups like the Knights of Ninewa.

He insists the wider force is now being trained to understand the Geneva Conventions and international human rights law.

Instilling discipline started about a year and a half ago. We opened specialized training camps, to provide moral guidance... tasked with spreading this culture across the PMF.

He said the militias had invited international human rights organizations to lecture dozens of his forces, like the International Committee of the Red Cross. The ICRC confirmed it had held seminars with some of the groups.

U.S. Coalition Commander Lt. Gen. Stephen Townsend says the militia groups have been remarkably disciplined since he arrived, although he'd heard the previous allegations of human rights abuses.

It was a stunning comment from the coalition commander on Christmas Day, after the multiple allegations of human rights abuses by the militia groups in the ISIS fight.

It all seems to be focused on fighting Daesh, the general said, using the pejorative Arabic acronym for ISIS.

Townsend said he thought the PMF could be a force for stability in Iraq if it becomes more of a national guard rather than an extension of Iran.

That's a big if when many of the groups already have a heavy complement of Iranian advisers and equipment, leading to allegations that Quds Force commander Qasem Suleimani is orchestrating Iraq's war on ISIS. Indeed, Suleimani taunts the U.S. on social media, but Townsend does not allow himself to be baited.

Townsend is relentlessly circumspect.

They [the Iranians] are advising the PMF because no one else is, Townsend said. They are a neighbor of Iraq's. They are a fact of life here. I can't do much about it.

He, and other senior western officials who asked to remain anonymous, hold on to the hope that Iraq's desire for independence will trump Iran's ability to act as puppeteer.

Not all Iraqi Shia align with Iran. There are plenty of nationalists that see Iran as * a competitor, Townsend said.

As for Iranians and American military advisers on the battlefield?

They stay over there, and we stay over here," he said. I try not to let them trouble me.

Iraq's Deputy National Security Advisor Safa al-Sheikh said some of the militias had been somewhat difficult to control, which is all the more reason to bring them under the Iraqi government's legal umbrella, he said.

It's important to have a law, in order to contain the popular mobilization units, to put them [under] discipline, he said in an interview at his office inside the Iraqi government's heavily defended Green Zone.

He said there were tens of thousands of minorities who also made up militia groups under the government's control, adding that the PMF has been misinterpreted outside Iraq.

That especially applies to groups like Ktab Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH), which are advised by the Iranian military.

There is a great influence of Iran on them. There is some influence of the Iraqi government on them, and there is a good degree of self interest driving their actions, Safa said.

Disciplining members who step out of line will be a challenge, he said.

Ktab Hezbollah and AAH are believed to hold the bulk of the illegally detained prisoners, according to human rights, Western and Iraqi officials who all spoke anonymously because of the sensitivity of the subject.

Safa said the Iraqi government had not been able to verify the existence of the secret detention facilities, but authorities did find evidence of other abuses.

We have heard about the detention facilities, but we could never verify these numbers in these reports, he said. However they could find violations that happened including killing of some of the detainees [] than 10 people in one incident, after the battle to drive ISIS out of Fallujah. He said that that particular case was attributed to the individual seeking revenge because his brother had been killed, but he did not offer further details.

Bottom line, it was not a policy by the groups, he said.

Safa said the Iraqi government is considering a post-ISIS plan that would see Iraq's mostly Shiite army withdrawn from all the cities, especially non-Shiite ones, so as not to cause friction with the local population which he says is what contributed to the rise of ISIS in Mosul and throughout

Sunni-majority Anbar Province. In their place, PMF forces that came from the towns they would patrol would back up local police as a sort of reserve force.

Why have them? said Kurdish Foreign Minister Falah Mustafa. We should have invested in the Iraqi army. Not have a force from one sect.

"Are we going to the Islamization of this country? Are we going to see the majority set aside the minorities?" he asked.

In an interview with The Daily Beast at his ministry office in Erbil, Mustafa said that while Kurds appreciate the sacrifices of some of those who have come to help protect Baghdad and the country, not all of the groups are disciplined.

This will create a problem for the future of Iraq, he said.

Mustafa griped that while the militia groups will now be paid by the Iraqi government, his Peshmerga forces had to be funded by the Pentagon [] the tune of \$450 million for his roughly 180,000 volunteers. U.S. Forces work closely with the Peshmerga as they do with the Iraqi army, but they do not advise the militia groups.

Back in the hospital, the newly legal status of the mostly Shiite PMF groups doesn't sit well with the injured militiamen from Mosul who have no hope of receiving pay or benefits from the Iraqi government.

If anything happens to me, no one will take care of my family, one of the fighters said.

From their perspective the money just goes to the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government. But even more telling, in their view, is the way the U.S.-led coalition doles out critical support during combat. Just before they were attacked, they say, four Humvees with Americans in them had been observing them from a distance. When they came under fire, they say, the Americans quickly drove away rather than helping them the way they have seen the American soldiers do for the Peshmerga or Iraqi troops.

U.S. military advisors have been ordered to stay out of the front lines by the White House, except in the rare special operations missions accompanying elite Iraqi or Kurdish forces on a specific raid or operation.

But from the point of view of the wounded fighters of the Knights of Ninewa, the Americans should have helped.

"They just left us," one said.

Worse, they think the new incoming Trump administration will work with the Shiite government to keep them down.

"Trump is going to raze the Muslim world," one of them said, to nods all around.

[] Murrani contributed reporting from Baghdad, and Bawar Ihsan contributed reporting from Erbil.

On the last morning she was seen alive, Cari Farver sent a heartbroken text message to her mother letting her know that she and her boyfriend split and she might check into a mental institution.

It was Nov. 13, 2012, and according to a source close to the investigation, Farver disappeared from Macedonia, Iowa, without so much as a hug or handshake. Three days later Farvers employer received a Dear John text of their own: She was resigning to take another gig in Kansas.

The missives and the disappearance didnt sit right with Farvers mother, Nancy Raney, who went on to file a missing persons report with the Pottawattamie County Sheriffs Office (PDF).

A New Years Day post warned friends to ignore Farvers original account claiming it had been hacked. The next day she revealed her boyfriend Dave had proposed to me on Christmas Eve.

I said yes [sic] above is a picture of the ring, the post read.

Two weeks after that Facebook post, Farver's car turned up in the parking lot of Dave's apartment complex in Omaha, Nebraska.

Four years later Omaha detectives, relying on new DNA and forensic evidence, say Farver wasn't posting any nuptials or sending morbid texts.

She wasn't even breathing.

In fact, police say, the 37-year-old woman was murdered by a romantic rival named Shanna Golyar. David Wear, a prosecuting attorney for the Douglas County Attorneys Office, accused Golyar of concealing the fact that [Farver] was no longer alive by making numerous attempts with text messages from Farver's mobile phone to Facebook posts.

There's so many messages, deputy prosecutor Brenda Beadle told The Daily Beast. There's more than one person that she was sending stuff to as Cari.

Golyar was arrested on Dec. 22, 2016 in Iowa and extradited to a Nebraska jail where she is awaiting trial for the first-degree murder of Farver, whose body has not been found.

Not only did Golyar allegedly pose as Farver online, she went so far as to pick a fictitious feud with herself as Farver to make the missing woman's appearance seem more real.

GET THE BEAST IN YOUR INBOX!

Enter your email address

By clicking "Subscribe," you agree to have read the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy

SUBSCRIBE

Farver attacked Golyar on April 23, 2013 in a post that read:

So now the Herpes infested whore is going to hide from me. Can't be a woman and stand up for stealing me man. God will punish all whores.

Playing along, authorities contend Golyar as Farver strikes again four days later blaming Dave's ex for harassing Farver through text messages.

Farver posts: She keeps saying that Dave [sic] still loves her and that she is the love of his life. That she slept with him a few weeks ago. How crazy can you be to text someone such lies. If the other party won't back you up. This is to show how crazy the girl is.

Farver returned the following month:

This is the real Cari Farver I need to be alone right now people just need to give me space for right now.

The next day Farver had more attacks for Golyar, calling her a hoe that took my boyfriend away from me... She will be punished for taking my man.

And the final Farver post on May 13, 2013 calls it quits with Facebook, deciding then and there to stop playing Farver online:

I have answered enough questions to prove myself to everyone I am done, Farver writes. You can't either believe I am your daughter, mother, sister and friend that you have known [sic] your whole life or you can just leave me alone...I am not missing I just don't want to come home right now.

Farver ends the post by apologizing for hurting everyone by bolting town and that the reason was I needed to do this for me.

Sorry, and I hope some day you can forgive me.

In a similar episode last year, Golyar claimed another potential romantic rival [redacted] mother of Dave's child—shot her in a park.

While walking along an isolated trail at Big Lake Park located in Council Bluffs, Iowa, Golyar told

police a woman ordered her to lie down on the ground before swearing at her and shooting her in the left thigh.

Police immediately descended on the area but metal detectors failed to turn up shell casings. Later, Golyar told police she believed the shooter was none other than Daves ex. Council Bluffs Det. Matthew Kuhlman said Golyar failed a polygraph test about the incident.

We believe that she shot herself but we couldnt prove it and thats why we didnt charge her, Kuhlman told The Daily Beast. Her story didnt add up from the beginning.

Authorities from the same agency ended up booking Golyar for criminal mischief back in February after she used what is believed to be a mortar to break out a window of [her] apartment that was occupied by the woman she accused.

During their investigation, Kuhman said Golyar was discovered to have kept several fraudulent email accounts pretending to be two women.

Dave supposedly didnt know his girlfriend stood accused of murdering his ex-girlfriend. Attempts to reach Dave were unsuccessful.

Golyar, 41, has been dating her 24-year-old boyfriend since June 2016, according to their gushing Facebook profiles.

On the day of her arrest last week, his parents say a call came for their son from a detective who rattled him when he said there was a case that has your name on it.

Racking his brain the young man, who is not a suspect and The Daily Beast is not naming, remembered only one summons hed been given for expired license plate tags.

A meeting was set for later that day so authorities could interview him.

But, according to his parents who requested anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the criminal investigation, the detective was a no-show.

Then the phone rang again—the call came from the Pottawattamie County lockup.

They arrested me with 10 sheriffs showing up at my house, Shanna Golyar allegedly told her boyfriend of six months.

The arrest came as a devastating shock.

Then he shared the sobering details with his parents that the woman he loved was facing a murder rap.

Can you believe that? the stunned son asked his dad.

Whats it for? his father asked.

I dont know, he said. I have to wait till she calls me back.

Because Farvers remains have yet to be discovered, defense attorney James Martin Davis said pinning Golyar to the murder rap is a drastic reach.

You cant convict without a body, he told The Daily Beast.

Davis said the only reason his client was ever pinned for Farvers disappearance was that she was arrested on a warrant for being truant from court for a civil matter involving a car accident.

The attorney claims authorities used the warrant as an excuse to quiz his client about Farvers demise.

They were trying to interrogate her about the missing person case, he said.

The deputy prosecutor Beadle confirmed that Golyar did lawyer up after murder charges were brought.

She has a lawyer so we werent able to have a conversation.

Davis maintains that Golyar pleaded her innocence.

Shes denied it from the beginning and told them I didnt kill anybody. I dont know that shes even

dead.

Moreover his client has only crossed paths with Farver during a pivotal moment where they were both visiting Dave.

The only time Shanna thinks she saw Cari was when she was going into Daves apartment and Cari was coming out!

And while prosecutors stressed in court that Golyars fingerprints had been found on a pack of gum in Farvers forsaken car, Davis said it is a far leap to get to murder.

It could have been in the apartment and the lady or the boyfriend could have put it in the car.

The attorney also disputed blood evidence that was supposedly lifted from Daves apartment. [Farver] was living with him for a while, he said. It could be a nosebleed, a cut or it could be a scratch, he said.

He said unless there is proof Farver exsanguinated or bled profusely so that she couldn't survive its easy to contest. I dont know if its a droplet or what.

Beadle argued that there was nothing about any blood trail released publicly and that it was misinformation and inaccurate.

While the affidavit remains sealed until Golyars preliminary trial, investigators believe the woman was killed inside an apartment located in central Omaha soon after she was last spotted on Nov. 13, 2012—it is believed to be the same location where Dave resided.

Beadle admits the missing case remained cold until, thanks to a 2014 National Institute of Justice grant, Omaha authorities got a DNA hit that they say nails Golyar as Farvers killer. That funding allowed investigators to better test DNA evidence pulled from Farvers abandoned car as well as process samples from the apartment where they believe the other woman killed her.

The fact that Farvers corpse has never been found wont faze prosecutors in trying to secure a guilty verdict against Golyar: According to Nebraska state law if a person has been missing after five years they are declared dead.

It wouldnt be the first time, Beadle said. Weve been successful in the past at trying a case without a body * Certainly it presents its own set of challenges but obviously we thought we could overcome that otherwise we wouldnt have filed these charges.

Farvers father Mark Raney would only say the family was preoccupied with Golyars preliminary trial.

Were not talking much about it yet until the hearing, he told The Daily Beast.

In one of her last Facebook posts before her arrest, Golyar was defensive about dating a man almost half her age.

I guess if people can not stop criticizing others for their relationships, then dont be surprised if you lose those loved ones, she wrote on Dec. 18. People love who they love, and no one can control that or take it from you unless you let them.

Golyar is due back in court for a preliminary hearing on Jan. 18. And perhaps her main supporter wont give up on her.

My son is hes determined shes innocent, the mother of Golyars boyfriend said. He believes everything she says to him.

In an attempt to spare her beau of the murder drama since Golyar was arraigned and a judge set bail for \$5 million, the parents say she broached ending the relationship.

You should go on with your life. I dont know whats going to happen but I dont want you involved anything and I love you very much, she allegedly told the young man.

But Golyars boyfriend seems willing to sweat it out telling his parents: If she gets out were going to have to sit down and have a long talk to go over all these lies.

Though they disapprove of their sons ties to Golyar, the parents maintain that if shes innocent she should be set free.

I dont want her with my son, the boyfriends mother said. But there cant be an innocent person going to jail. Im sorry.

Kaynak/Source: