

---

## **Gig Economy Insurgency Codebook**

### **Identification of Potential Cases of Militant Group Subcontracting**

**Margaret J. Foster**

This data contains information about the identification of potential instances of violent nonstate actor subcontracting violence during civil conflict. This is not a universe of cases, which would require systematically analyzing reports from each actor for reports of subcontracting. Instead, it is intended to underscore the degree to which subcontracting behavior is a feature of non-state actor strategic and tactical repertoire.

#### ***Scope Conditions***

At the potential-case gathering stage, the cutoff criterion for inclusion is that the principal was most likely a politically motivated non-state violent actor or rebel group. In building the list of cases, the research team avoided contexts that are non-political violence, such as gangs or violent drug-trafficking organizations. The scope conditions also omitted reports that were clearly about state delegation of violence to non-state actors, notably using proxy fighters and militias. Thus, contexts such as the Russian delegation of operations in Ukraine in 2014 or the Syrian state's delegation of violence to the Shabiha militias.

Likewise, the research team disqualified reports of private security firm (or mercenary) involvement in conflicts, although did not disqualify reports of transnational militant operations nor of foreign fighters. As argued in the introduction, the dynamics of private security firms, and particularly their lack of long-term connection to the local conflict, are expected to differ from local violent subcontracting.

#### ***Search Methodology***

This section describes the search procedures used to populate the potential cases table. The research team searched: Relief Web, Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, and the United States Institute of Peace, and the United Nations Security Council Sanctions

Monitoring Reports for practitioner evaluations. These sources were supplemented by a review of the academic literature and news reporting sourced from the Lexis Nexis database.

In each of the sources, the search process targeted terms that have been used in descriptions of militant outsourcing: militants or insurgents or militias or IED or thugs and [“hire/for hire,” “contract[or],” “independent,” “freelance”]. The procedure also used the more open-ended search terms: “terrorism or militant and subcontract or freelance.”

The search window was for reporting from January 1, 2000 through January 1, 2023.<sup>1</sup> The case list was populated when the search added a new country-year to the results. As an illustration, if ReliefWeb, the International Crisis Group, and The New York Times each reported outsourcing behavior by the Taliban in 2011, only the first instance would appear in the initial case list. This restriction was designed to minimize double-counting of country-conflict pairs. The in-depth cases of Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria also included an expanded list of search terms including: *hire, independent [operators], contractors, outsource, and workshop.*

Country	Year	Group/Org	Activity Description	Citation
Angola	2000	LURD	"Those men who were exposed to violence for seven years, were only disarmed and demobilised but with no proper incentive to be reintegrated into society. They were left alone, guns for hire"	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/child-soldiers-news-jun-2002">https://reliefweb.int/report/angola/child-soldiers-news-jun-2002</a>
Liberia	2000	unclear	"Although the Panel found credible evidence of small clusters of ex-RUF combatants fighting in Liberia as guns for hire for both the Government	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/c%C3%B4te-divoire/report-panel-experts-relation-liberia-s2002470">https://reliefweb.int/report/c%C3%B4te-divoire/report-panel-experts-relation-liberia-s2002470</a>

<sup>1</sup> Cases that the search process found but which are outside the window include the RUF in Liberia (1998) and Bosnian militias (early 1990s).

			and rebels there did not seem to be a connection with RUF." "	
Thailand	2004 - 2006	former militant groups, emergent Islamist groups	"According to one Western diplomat in Bangkok, it is the disillusioned youth who are currently acting as 'the major hired guns in the south' "	"The Malay-Muslim Insurgency in Southern Thailand -- Understanding the Conflict's Evolving Dynamic"  <a href="https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP198.html">https://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP198.html</a>
Liberia	2005	militants	"the significant problems and failures of the ongoing DDR process in Liberia have created a large population of disgruntled excombatants with the capacity and will to remain mercenaries for hire"	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/timber-taylor-soldier-spy-how-liberias-uncontrolled-resource-exploitation-charles">https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/timber-taylor-soldier-spy-how-liberias-uncontrolled-resource-exploitation-charles</a>
Cote d'Ivoire	2005	Pro-Gbagbo militias	"Since then, there have been repeated warnings from humanitarian workers and diplomats that the militia groups are continuing to hire more gunmen, including former combatants from Liberia."	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/c%3%B4te-divoire/c%3%B4te-divoire-step-ahead-peace-rebels-rejoin-cabinet-no-disarmament-deal">https://reliefweb.int/report/c%3%B4te-divoire/c%3%B4te-divoire-step-ahead-peace-rebels-rejoin-cabinet-no-disarmament-deal</a>
Somalia	2006	militias	"Insecurity perpetuated by freelance militia and the lack of local authorities are the greatest factors affecting access in these neglected region"	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-overview-humanitarian-access-aug-2006">https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-overview-humanitarian-access-aug-2006</a>
Colombia	2006	Gaitanistas	"The group fields its own full-	<a href="https://www.hrw.org">https://www.hrw.org</a>

		Self-Defenses of Colombia (AGC)	<p>time fighters and has hired criminals operating in diverse areas of Colombia. The full-time fighters operate in several rural areas of the country and are organized into blocs led by regional and front commanders.</p> <p>The subcontractors are members of local gangs who are hired by AGC commanders."</p>	<p><a href="#">/report/2018/12/13/recycled-violence/abuses-farc-dissident-groups-tumaco-colombias-pacific-coast;</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/63-colombias-armed-groups-battle-spoils-peace">https://www.crisisgroup.org/latin-america-caribbean/andes/colombia/63-colombias-armed-groups-battle-spoils-peace</a></p>
Somalia	2006	militias	<p>"Faction or freelance militia with an interest in a geographical area either</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1)prevent aid from reaching opposing or minority clans;</li> <li>2)prevent the rehabilitation of and access to natural resources such as water and land required for survival; 3)influence agencies to hire staff and provide contracts for goods and services that favour their own kin or allies." </li></ol>	<p><a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-access-fact-sheet-mar-2006">https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-humanitarian-access-fact-sheet-mar-2006</a></p>
Lebanon	2006	Hezbollah	<p>"The farmers received instructions by cell phone regarding the number of rockets to launch and in what direction and range. They were often</p>	<p><a href="https://www.haaretz.com/2006-09-03/ty-article/how-the-idf-blew-chance-to-destroy-short-range">https://www.haaretz.com/2006-09-03/ty-article/how-the-idf-blew-chance-to-destroy-short-range</a></p>

			provided with thermal blankets to cover the position in order to keep [Israeli air force] aircraft from detecting the post-shooting heat signature.”	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/roquets/0000017f-da77-d432-a77f-df7f89a20000">roquets/0000017f-da77-d432-a77f-df7f89a20000</a>
Chad	2007	Misc.	"For those children who have left armies and militias, reintegration efforts are often difficult. ... boys can become guns for hire for crime or neighbouring conflicts."	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/interview-chad-child-soldier-aged-12-tells-horror">https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/interview-chad-child-soldier-aged-12-tells-horror</a>
Iraq	2007	militias	"They work in safe conditions and rarely get burned by the chemicals they work with. If that does happen, we have nurses and a doctor for them,""	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-poverty-drives-children-work-armed-groups">https://reliefweb.int/report/iraq/iraq-poverty-drives-children-work-armed-groups</a>
Liberia	2007	demobilized fighters	"Delays in providing training to the former fighters has triggered concern that they could easily be recruited as freelance fighters in other troubled countries."	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/liberia-idle-fighters-cause-concern">https://reliefweb.int/report/liberia/liberia-idle-fighters-cause-concern</a>
Afghanistan	2009	misc	"We decided that in Qala-i-Zal we would hire 150 to 200 "auxiliaries" to the police force," says the district governor, Mohammad Nazir.' "	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/security-worsens-afghan-district-forms-its-own-militia">https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/security-worsens-afghan-district-forms-its-own-militia</a>
Afghanistan	2010	Taliban	"Habibullah Habib, an defence and security affairs expert, said that in the north of Afghanistan, gangs directed by local militia	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/kidnapping-rise-afghan-north">https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/kidnapping-rise-afghan-north</a>

			commanders were well armed and felt able to act with impunity."	
Afghanistan	2010	misc	"In Afghanistan, military logic drives the conflict, and armed groups for hire turned that into a system of political economy, i.e. they profit from the fighting and are not interested for it to stop," said Ruttig who studies and writes about the Afghan conflict.	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-proliferation-armed-groups-threatens-aid-work">https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghanistan-proliferation-armed-groups-threatens-aid-work</a>
Philippines	2010	misc	"71 reports of violent incidents targeting elected officials and candidates, involving 86 victims. Thirty-eight people have been killed. The CIDG public information officer, Felix Vargas, told Human Rights Watch that suspects include "guns for hire," political opponents, and members of paramilitary forces."	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-candidates-should-propose-plans-end-killings">https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/philippines-candidates-should-propose-plans-end-killings</a>
Pakistan	2010	militant and sectarian groups in Karachi	"Moreover, Karachi is increasingly witnessing a trend of freelance militancy, whereby guns for hire simultaneously operate on behalf of militant and sectarian groups, political parties, and criminal gangs."	<a href="https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW82-Conflict%20Dynamics%20in%20Karachi.pdf">https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW82-Conflict%20Dynamics%20in%20Karachi.pdf</a>
Kenya/Somalia	2012	militias, Shabaab	"According to Hussein Wario, a resident of the coastal town of	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/analysis">https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/analysis</a>

			Malindi, 'youths are ready to join [the Somalia-based insurgency] Al-Shabab or any other militia group. Hundreds have already joined these groups and are available for hire to fight; their threat is serious.' "	= <a href="#">kenya%E2%80%99s-deadly-mix-frustration-politics-and-impunity</a>
Kenya	2013	Regional Militias	"The killings in Mandera relate to perennial conflict between the Garre and Degodia clans, which sometimes involve militia hired from Ethiopia and Somalia."	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/8-more-killed-clan-clashes-forces-deployed">https://reliefweb.int/report/kenya/8-more-killed-clan-clashes-forces-deployed</a>
Afghanistan	2013	Hezbi	"the largest figures of `reintegrees' were generated in peripheral provinces, and often, if not in their majority, the fighters were not Taliban, but Hezbis or members of other freelance illegal armed groups, also including people linked to some of the organizers"	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghan-reintegration-scheme-spotlight">https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/afghan-reintegration-scheme-spotlight</a>
Yemen	2014	AQAP	"Even in terrorist kidnapping for ransom cases, terrorists often subcontract the actual abduction to criminal gangs that deliver the victims to the terrorists for a fee.... there is a high risk that armed tribes and criminal groups that carry out kidnappings in Yemen will go	<a href="https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_770.pdf">https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_770.pdf</a>

			on to sell the victims to Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula"	
Philippines	2014	Abu Sayyaf Group	"Even in terrorist kidnapping for ransom cases, terrorists often subcontract the actual abduction to criminal gangs that deliver the victims to the terrorists for a fee... there are criminal gangs in the southern Philippines that conduct the abduction and then transfer the victims to areas where the Abu Sayyaf Group operates"	<a href="https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_770.pdf">https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_770.pdf</a>
Pakistan	2014	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan	"Even in terrorist kidnapping for ransom cases, terrorists often subcontract the actual abduction to criminal gangs that deliver the victims to the terrorists for a fee...Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan has also been reported to buy hostages from criminal groups"	<a href="https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_770.pdf">https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2014_770.pdf</a>
Ukraine	2014	Trainers	"A BBC report aired May 22 interviews a militia trainer in Western Ukraine who will not give his name... He claims to be Canadian. And he claims there are "a lot of" other Canadians in West Ukraine doing what he is doing."	"Freelance' militia fighters aren't wanted; Nations know they can be a; big problem" Ottawa Post
Northern Ireland	2015	CIRA	"there is evidence to suggest that organized crime groups	<a href="https://www-tandfonline-">https://www-tandfonline-</a>



			form alliances with terrorists by subcontracting them to enforce discipline and settle turf wars on their behalf.... Gary Hutch was assassinated by James Quinn—a hitman subcontracted by a rival Irish criminal network based in Spain, North Africa, and Dubai, the Kinahan crime group"	<a href="http://com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1678878">com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1678878</a>
CAR	2016	Seleka Rebels	"The waves of violence that have rocked the Central African Republic (CAR) are aftershocks of the March 2013 coup by Seleka rebels. The group formed in the far northeast when local leaders formed temporary alliances with guns-for-hire across the border in Chad and Sudan."	<a href="#">Preventing conflict along Central Africa's borders: understanding power at the periphery - Central African Republic   ReliefWeb</a>
Libya	2016	militias	"the confused political situation in that north African country [Libya], with two governments and dozens of freelance militia on the loose,"	"French press review 2 February 2016" RFI
Colombia	2017	FARC	"In its case, the militia – in part criminals hired for specific activities, in part direct FARC fighters – was somewhat disconnected from the larger FARC structure."	<a href="https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A%20Wary%20Farewell%20to%20Arms%20for%20the%20FARC%20_%20Crisis%20G">https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A%20Wary%20Farewell%20to%20Arms%20for%20the%20FARC%20_%20Crisis%20G</a>

				<a href="#">roup.pdf</a>
Kenya	2019	OLF	"Although ENACT couldn't independently confirm these routes, local administrative officials said OLF fighters served as conduits for sophisticated arms and as militia for hire."	<a href="#">Cross-border arms trafficking inflames northern Kenya's conflict</a>