

Mali: Next Target of The 9/11 Coalition?

by Douglas DeGroot

Oct. 6—After it took eight days for President Obama to reluctantly acknowledge that terrorists (run by his British allies) had assassinated U.S. Ambassador Christopher Stevens in Benghazi, Libya, Obama is now suddenly discovering that al-Qaeda (his ally in Libya and Syria) is operating in Mali, and is jumping at the chance of spreading permanent warfare to that country, which will ultimately spread from there throughout West Africa.

The Obama move comes at the same time that France and Britain have launched naval maneuvers in the Mediterranean, which, in turn, come on the heels of large Western maneuvers in the Persian Gulf, off the coast of Iran.

On Oct. 1, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson began preparing the groundwork for military intervention in Mali, by stating that the United States cannot afford to allow Mali to be fragmented, with a Caliphate established in the North by terrorists from other countries, such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar al-Dine. After a mid-March putsch in Mali, rebel jihadists, who were allied with Tuareg secessionist rebels, hijacked the Tuareg rebellion, and took over a region as big as France, in the Sahara Desert in northern Mali.

AQIM's alliance is with Ansar al-Dine, now a nominally Salafist, Touareg grouping headed by Iyad ag Ghali. He was formerly a whiskey-drinker who got involved in whatever criminal activity would earn him and his group some money. He was often the key negotiator with European nations for the release of Europeans who had been kidnapped. As a result, to get him out of the country, he was given a diplomatic post in Saudi Arabia in 2008 by the former Mali government. After a stint in Saudi Arabia, he decided that the easiest way to strike it rich was to become a Salafist, the prerequisite for Saudi funding.

Ag Ghali is now back in northern Mali/southern Algeria, has a long beard, and is calling for the imposition of Sharia law over the entire nation of Mali.

Another smaller grouping, allied with AQIM, Movement for United Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), is said by well-informed Africa sources to be the most dangerous. It has members who are well-trained in special-forces types of tactics. It is headed by a Chadian, and is also the unit from which the Boko Haram offensive against Nigeria is being run.

Mohamed Bazoum, Republic of Niger Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Cooperation, stated May 21 in an address in Washington, that Niger had intelligence of Pakistani and other foreign operatives active in northern Mali.

Carson's Oct. 1 statement was a shift of position for him and the State Department. He had previously stated, as had Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, that the chaotic situation in Bamako would have to be settled before the U.S.A. could support a West African military intervention into Mali. This is still the position of U.S. Africa Command Commander Gen. Carter F. Ham, who stated this explicitly at a Sept. 30 press conference in Algiers. He was on a tour of West and North African nations, discussing the Mali crisis. He also repeated that there would be no American boots on the ground.

Carson and the Obama Administration changed their policy line on Mali only after the administration admitted that al-Qaeda had killed Ambassador Stevens and three other Americans.

At this point, the Mali army does not exist, and the institutions of the country are not functioning. Under pressure from the West African Economic Community of West Africa (ECOWAS) states, a weak interim government has been formed. But the original putschists who overthrew President Touré are still popular, and have popular support.

Who Are the Jihadists?

The northern Mali area has long been the staging point for smuggling drugs flown into various areas of West Africa from South America. This was the primary source of income for criminal networks there, which was augmented by returns from kidnapping of European travelers or workers.

The tipping point in favor of the Mali jihadists however, was the unleashing of the jihadists in Libya, who were the backbone of the on-the-ground forces that overthrew Muammar Qaddafi, as auxiliaries to the U.S., British, and French coalition. As *EIR* has documented, the rebel "victory" in Libya was followed by

FIGURE 1
North Africa and the Middle East



rebels spilling out of the country to destabilize other African nations, as well as to join the armed opposition to Syrian President Hafez Assad. These groups, as in the original 9/11, are heavily funded and supplied by the Saudi royal family and Qatar, and many, such as the Libya Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), have been incubated for decades in London (also known as Londonistan by those who understand how these jihadist network are run).

There are three airstrips in northern Mali, where planes from Qatar land regularly. Other land-connections are made across the uncontrolled southern Libyan desert. Some of the Saudi- and Qatari-supplied funds are being used to hire young recruits to their jihadist forces. According to one report, \$500/month is offered to teenagers from many West African countries. Another report clarified this: The 16-year-old, in this particular case, was offered \$30 per week, and his family would be given \$400 per month. Once they are trained in warfare, members (as the members of LIFG were trained in the fighting in Afghanistan), could become the nucleus of jihadist forces in their home countries, once they return. This was the case of LIFG members who returned to Libya from Afghanistan.

The West African states have urgently sought support for an ECOWAS military intervention force against the foreign jihadist onslaught. Without this aid, they will not be able to carry out any intervention. They can supply troops, but need funding to pay for the deploy-

ment, in addition to needing logistical and air support. Thus, the West Africans sought approval for such an operation from the UN Security Council. Their first request was never brought to a vote, because, given the chaotic situation in Bamako, and the complication of certain French involvement, it was informally rejected by China and Russia (who have not forgotten how they were misled to accept the UNSC Resolution 1973 for a no-fly zone, which was used as the justifying pretext for the 2011 assault on Libya).

The Niger Republic, because its long unpatrolled border with Algeria, Libya, and the desert region of Chad, in addition to its border with Mali, is considered by an African source familiar with the region, to be the most exposed to the jihadist threat, and hence most vulnerable West African nation now.

France, very early on, offered to provide logistical support. But, in addition to Russia and China, certain of the neighboring states to Mali, such as Mauritania and Algeria, are very worried about the opening that the creation of such a force would afford France to more strongly establish itself in the region.

Therefore, although a UN-authorized force does not seem to be on the immediate horizon because of the regional complications, and reluctance on the part of China and Russia, the greatest immediate danger is that Obama, discredited in this election period by failure to immediately expose the well-coordinated jihadist assassination of Ambassador Stevens, may initiate drone warfare in northern Mali, outside of the UN, as he has done, and is continuing to do, in Pakistan and Yemen.

A Yemen-style attack on Mali does not go at the source of the terrorism in Libya; it's just an excuse to expand the "global war on terror," which furthers the British plan of global permanent war.

The Mauritanian press reported Sept. 26 that NATO is preparing an air base in the Canary Islands to support an eventual military intervention in the Sahel.

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