



**AL-QAEDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB (AQIM):
USING CRIME TO ADVANCE SALAFIST GOALS, SECURE
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Belmoktar (above) is nicknamed “Mr. Marlboro” for his smuggling activities before he decided to become a jihadist.



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Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM):

Using crime to advance Salafist goals, secure safe havens, and acquire international reach

By Michael F. Scheuer

Summary: The Islamist insurgency that began in Algeria in January 1992 has always had a heavy component of criminality attached to it. Organized Algerian and Moroccan criminal groups or mafias in Algeria and Europe existed long before 1992 and have been consistently important sources of funding, weapons, and logistical support for the Algerian insurgents. Since the main Algerian insurgent group -- the Salafi Group for Call and Combat -- officially became part of Al-Qaeda in January, 2007, it has continued the insurgents' traditional criminal relationships in Europe and developed new ones in Africa. As Al-Qaeda-in-the Islamic-Maghreb (AQIM), the Algerian insurgents have spread out of Algeria into the nations of West Africa and the Sahel and have their built close and profitable working relationships with tribes that have for centuries controlled smuggling routes that run north from the Gulf of Guinea, and are used to move contraband of multiple varieties into Africa and through Africa to Europe. AQIM also has built ties to non-Islamic groups using the region for smuggling purposes, primarily Latin American narcotics traffickers from Mexico and Columbia.

The AQIM's steady and now increasing exploitation of criminal organizations in Europe and Africa for funding and logistical requirements should not be seen as a move away from the group's militant Salafist Islam toward becoming primarily an organized criminal gang. In many ways, the Algerian insurgents' cooperation with criminal groups is fully in keeping with Islam's mandate that those fighting to defend the faith must work with any person or entity -- even if non-Muslim and morally unsavory -- that can help to defeat Islam's main enemy. In other words, it is permissible to work with Islam's lesser enemies to combat its greatest enemy; indeed, it is a great sin to refrain from doing so because such a failure would weaken Islam's cause. AQIM's cooperation with criminal organizations is well within the method of operation employed by al-Qaeda (AQ) elsewhere in the world. AQ cooperates with Afghan narcotics traffickers today and did so during the Soviet-Afghan War; it and the North Caucasus mujahedin have cooperated with the Chechen and Russian mafias; al-Qaeda and al-Shabaab cooperate with African gangsters and pagan tribesmen in Somalia; Al-Qaeda-in-the-Arab Peninsula employs the services of criminal smugglers who move contraband across the Red Sea between Yemen and East Africa; and AQ, Lashkar-e Taiba, and the Indian Mujahedin group have worked with nominally Muslim and Hindu gangsters. In none of these cases is there evidence that the Islamists' religious beliefs or their goals have been altered by the association.

Beyond material and geographical benefits, the development of ties to criminal organizations for AQIM also have been driven -- if not mandated -- by a need to accommodate the traditions, social mores, religious practices, economies and tribal structures of local populations as the group has expanded into areas where it is an alien element. In this vein, the AQIM's seemingly unIslamic behavior is simply evidence that its leaders have recognized that if the group wants to be permitted to live and train in, and then attack from and return to safe haven in someone else's territory, they cannot call the tune regarding how their hosts live, pray, and behave, but rather they must, to some extent, learn to live and behave like the locals. (The failure to accommodate these things and the desire to impose an alien lifestyle on locals led to the destruction of Algeria's Armed Islamic Group (GIA, in French) in the 1990s and the near destruction of al-Qaeda-in-Iraq under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in 2004-2006.) By expanding into West Africa and the Sahel since 2007, AQIM has increased its ties to criminal groups and activities not only for funding and logistical purposes, but to make residence and basing there possible; by not trying to make the locals more like themselves, AQIM leaders have avoided destabilizing and alienating an ancient

and at times xenophobic society. Again, this method of operation is common to al-Qaeda operations elsewhere, especially in areas like Pakistan's tribal regions and Somalia where the Islam practiced is marked by accretions -- such as the worship of saints and tombs -- that are anathema to AQ's Sunni Salafists.

Introduction

With Algeria's Islamist insurgency now in entering its twenty-first year, the basics of the

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war have changed little since 1992 when the Algerian military decided to cancel elections that looked certain to return an Islamist government and thereby spurred the Islamists to violence. The gulf between those Algerians favoring the status quo -- a largely secular regime dominated by the military -- and those who favor the installation of a Sharia-based government remains unbridgeable and marked by continuing violence. While the level of violence has ebbed and flowed over the decades there appears no near-term likelihood of effective reconciliation between the opposing sides.

What has changed in Algeria, however, is that the Algerian Islamists' insurgency has, in fits and starts, expanded -- both physically and ideologically -- across much of North Africa and is now moving into the countries of West Africa and the Sahel. After being at death's door on several occasions, the Algerian insurgents, in their latest organization structure called Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), appear to have weathered the self-imposed death threat that an earlier version of the group -- the Armed Islamic Group (GIA, in French) -- inflicted on Algeria's Islamist movement. The GIA's ruthless application of takfirism -- a heretical Islamic belief that one Muslim can decide if another is a "good Muslim," and then kill him or steal his property if the decision is negative -- killed thousands of innocent Algerian Muslims and non-Muslim foreigners and generally moved the mostly sympathetic-to-the-Islamists Algerian populace toward the side of the regime. The GIA's murderously takfiri behavior likewise cost it support from most leading Salafi Islamists outside Algeria, including that of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. [1]

For the Algerian Islamists this was a deep hole out of which to dig, perhaps deeper than the enormous and nearly fatal takfiri hole dug for al-Qaeda by the activities of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his al-Qaeda-in-Iraq (AQI) in Iraq. Over most of a decade after it was formed in 1998, the GIA's successor organization, the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC, in French) slowly stabilized the sinking Islamist movement by abandoning the application of Takfirism and focusing its attacks primarily on the Algerian government's facilities and personnel, especially on the police, security service, and military. The GSPC's founder and first emir, Hassan Hattab also began expanding the GSPC's organization in southern Algeria -- where the bulk of the country's oil and gas resources are located -- by designating talented leaders in the region and by "incorporating outlaw networks operating in southern Algeria. This gave the GPSC access to the Sahara smuggling routes and a 'global potential.'" For unknown reasons, Hattab chose not to make much use the Sahara smuggling routes, but the access he acquired was later exploited more fully by AQIM emir Abu Musab Abdul Wadud and has given the group a "global posture." [2] Indeed, the GSPC's reforms not only recouped some of the Islamists' lost support among Algerians, but won it renewed approval from major overseas Salafist leaders and groups, most notably from bin Laden and al-Qaeda in January, 2007, when the GSPC formally joined al-Qaeda and became the AQIM.

Today, AQIM is a more vibrant, successful, and geographically dispersed organization than any Algerian Islamist organization has been in the last decade; it currently poses a threat to national governments and Western interests across much of northern and western Africa and is intent on extending its operations further south into Nigeria. Through its use of non-Takfiri behavior; the emergence of a new and competent generation of

leaders; a new and potent foil to play against in the expansion of a visible and apparently durable U.S., French, and Western presence in support of corrupt and repressive incumbent regimes; and a well-developed ability to work with the historic customs, mores, and traditions of local societies in the Maghreb and Sahel -- which include a dominant thread of contraband smuggling and other criminal activity -- AQIM has reestablished its Islamic credibility and is slowly reinventing and expanding the North African Islamist movement as a whole.

AQIM, its predecessor Islamist groups, and criminality

The purpose of this paper is to examine the AQIM's increasing involvement in criminal activities with the goal of determining whether the organization has transformed itself from an Salafist-jihadi-guerilla movement, based on the goal of advancing-to-government the Sunni Salafist interpretation of Islam, into an organization that uses Salafism to disguise its now basic reason for existence: namely, criminality and the profits accruing thereto. This determination is essential in providing the AQIM's opponents with a sense of whether they are confronting a religion-based, multi-country insurgent organization or a more traditional mafia-like network of narco-traffickers, contraband smugglers, and gray-arms merchants.

In general terms, the worldwide militant Islamist movement that was born during the Afghans' war against the Red Army and Moscow's communist clients in Kabul (1979-1992) has always had a significant component of criminal activity attached to it. Smuggling, after all, was a key feature of the Afghan mujahedin's logistical system and all of the Afghan insurgent groups derived significant income -- as they do today -- from heroin production and the unregulated mining and trafficking of precious gemstones. Beyond these practices there lies a lengthy list of activities the West defines as "criminal" that have been essential parts of the logistical systems of all Islamist groups, and which have comfortably co-existed with the Salafist doctrine most abide by. Among these criminal activities are:

- The production and use of forged passports, identity cards, residence and work permits, and other documents.
- The purchase of a wide variety of arms, explosives, communications gear, and other military requirements in the gray and black markets, and the use of illicit smuggling networks to transport the purchases.
- Cooperation with major organized crime groups -- such as the Russian and Chechen mafias; Dawood Ibrahim's infamous and talented D-Company; and the Afghan heroin traffickers -- for alternate logistical routes, arms and WMD acquisition, and the trafficking of narcotics and counterfeit currency.

The Islamists' criminal activities, of course, go far beyond this brief list; indeed, most Western governments define everything that Salafist insurgents do as "criminal," so for the West these activities are by definition just an extension of the insurgents essential criminality. This tendency in the West, in fact, is part of its undoing in trying to understand the Islamists. In both the Koran and Sunnah, for example, the Salafi mujahedin can find ample approval and encouragement to fight, in the context of a defensive jihad, alongside those who in peacetime would be spurned as nominal-Muslims, sinners, and pagans. The Prophet Muhammad, for example, enlisted the support of Jews and Bedouins in his wars against the polytheist rulers of the Arab Peninsula; the former ultimately betrayed the Muslims and were punished, while the latter never converted to Islam and fought willingly for the Prophet but only for the promise of loot. More recently, Osama bin Laden publicly explained that it was perfectly acceptable for Islamist fighters to ally with and use the talents of Saddam's Baathist military personnel in the fight the U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. The key point here is that the Salafists believe Islam authorizes its defenders to work temporarily with Islam's lesser enemies if they will join in the fight against the faith's primary enemy. Thus, cooperating with, fighting alongside, and deriving funding from allies who are

less than perfect Muslims -- or even are non-Muslims -- is religiously acceptable, and is the basis on which Islamist mujahedin work with criminals of various sorts, including nacro-traffickers, smugglers, document forgers, and gun runners. To deny to Islam the benefits that would accrue from gaining the assistance of these criminals in the fight against Islam's major enemy would be a much greater sin than working with them.

In the case of the Algerian insurgents, criminality, for several reasons, has been intimately woven into their behavior since their movement took form after 1991. Indeed, one scholar has written that since the insurgency began in 1992 Algerian and Moroccan mafias on both sides of the Mediterranean Sea have been "cash cows" for Islamists on both shores. [3] The reasons for the Islamists to work with criminals is simple -- survival. While blood and guns are needed for an insurgency, funding is an indispensable requirement, and several factors have prompted insurgent leaders to look to criminal groups for income. First, there is little evidence to suggest that the Islamist insurgents have derived any significant funding from Algeria's social and economic elite. While many individuals among the more-religious elites in the Levant and the Gulf donate substantial amounts to Islamist groups, the more-secular Algerian and North African elites are by and large allied with the ruling regimes and seek to help them end the insurgency. Second, as Marc Sageman has pointed out, the Maghreb's Islamist groups are generally the poorest and least educated of any in the worldwide Islamist movement, and, as a result, they have often recruited men with long records of involvement in criminal activities, ranging from the petty to the felonious. [4] Thus from their inception in the form of the GIA, the Algerian insurgents -- as well as Islamist groups in Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, etc. -- have depended on funding derived from criminal activities both in Algeria and the Maghreb and from the organized criminal groups that have been operating for fifty years in the Algerian and other Maghrebian diasporas in western Europe. In his fine book *Inside al-Qaeda*, for example, the former mujahid Omar Nasiri describes how the work of criminal groups in Europe's Moroccan community in such areas as credit-card fraud and trafficking in illicit weapons, narcotics, and stolen cars yields profits that are shared with insurgents in North Africa. [5]

In addition, AQIM and its predecessors always have found a good deal of sympathy and support among the ordinary Algerians and Maghrebians in the European Diaspora, many of whom fled to Europe to escape the repressive, unIslamic police states that rule the Maghreb. [6] The prevalence of petty crime and smuggling in the North African diasporas reported by European law-enforcement authorities -- especially in France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands -- suggests that some percentage of the donations made by individuals to the Islamist groups' representatives in Europe and via mosque collections are derived from petty criminal activity, just as are some portion of the large volume of remittances sent back by Europe-based Maghrebians to their families in North Africa. [7] The Maghreb Diasporas in Europe -- especially that in Spain -- also are vital rear areas for the AQIM in which it conducts recruitment and religious indoctrination of the young. [8] Also working in the insurgents' favor is the reality that Salafism's appeal is growing in the European Diasporas, especially among Algerians and Moroccans, and that growth is encouraged by writings and videos portraying the exploits of Islamist fighters in North Africa and by the missionary activities of Saudi-sponsored preachers in Europe. [9]

Between 1992's cancelled Algerian elections and AQIM's formation in January, 2007, then, criminal activity has been a key and increasingly important component to the Algerian and other Maghreb Islamists' financial, logistical, and safe-haven systems (the European Diaspora often hides fighters who leave Algeria for rest, planning, training, or recuperation from wounds). The ongoing expansion of the Islamist movement across North Africa and the Sahel ensures a continuing symbiotic relationship among Islamist insurgent groups and both Muslim and non-Muslim criminals and criminal organizations. Currently and for the foreseeable future, the West will confront an AQIM that "straddles the Mediterranean" and is "abetted by powerful criminal organizations [on both continents]." [10]

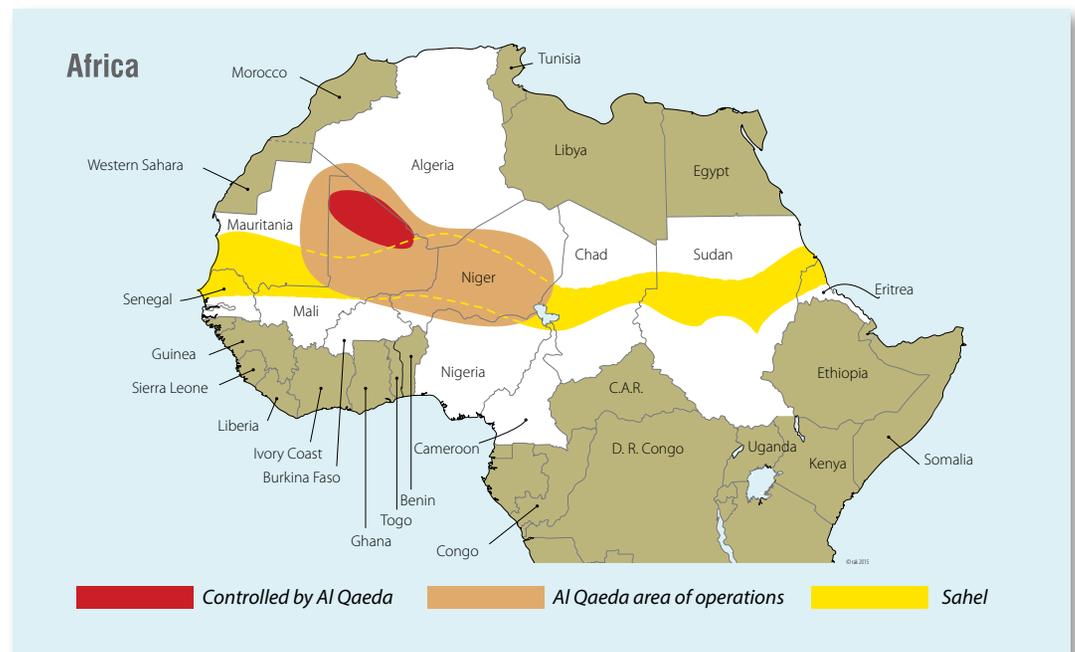
AQIM's geographical expansion and growing criminal ties: To what end?

Since AQIM joined al-Qaeda's network of affiliates in 2007, its emir Abelmalek Droukel (aka Abu Musab Abdul-Wadud) and his lieutenants have shaped a doctrine that now includes a mix of local (Algeria), regional (the Maghreb and Sahel), and international concerns. One scholar has accurately referred to AQIM's current status as that of a "Glocal" -- global and local -- organization. [11] The doctrine reflects AQIM's need to more closely mesh its doctrine with al-Qaeda's strategy of international jihad, and the apparent conclusion by AQIM leaders that regional expansion provides safe havens, manpower resources, and funding opportunities that are remote from the immediate reach of Algeria's military power and political influence and so are the best means of ensuring the organization cannot be defeated by the Algerian regime.

As AQIM has expanded into West Africa and the Sahel it clearly has become involved in what traditionally are categorized as criminal activities: kidnapping and the smuggling of arms, people, narcotics, and other contraband, etc. This increase in criminal activity raises the question of whether AQIM is changing from an organization inspired by Salafi ideology to one that uses Salafist doctrine as a cover behind which it is operating in the manner of a secular organized crime group. The key to making this determination lies in understanding why AQIM has undertaken a program to expand further into the Maghreb and the Sahel.

As noted, at the most basic level AQIM's expansion is meant to ensure its survival. Like al-Qaeda-in-Iraq (AQI), the Algerian Salafists found themselves at the brink of total defeat for two reasons: (1) they fought Algerian regime's military forces head-on too many times and lost too many fighters [12], and (2) they fell under the control of Takfiri leaders during the era when the GIA dominated the Algerian insurgency. Faced with the choice of survival or defeat both groups undertook a sort of expansion and thorough theological reform. In Iraq, some of the al-Zarqawi-less AQI dispersed out of Anbar Province to Diyala and other provinces to the north and east, while other members exited the country temporarily to locations in Jordan, Syria, Palestine, and Lebanon. In Algeria, the newly formed GSPC remained a nationwide organization but focused activities in the country's north, northeast, and south, the former becoming a military bastion and the latter the platform for the organization's expansion into West Africa and the sub-Saharan Sahel.

At least as important as this expansion-to-survive was both groups' headlong ideological retreat from Takfirism that enabled their recovery and expansion. In Iraq, the Takfiri behavior of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi amounted to the only post-9/11 strategic threat to al-Qaeda -- both in Iraq and worldwide -- and was the most important enabler of the U.S. surge's temporary success. Likewise, the Algerian insurgents' ruthless 1990s application of Takfiri doctrines cost them a chance to defeat the Algiers regime, eroded much of their popular support, and provoked the desertion of many fighters who were appalled by the group's barbarous slaughtering of innocents. [13] The reassertion of control by pragmatist Salafist leaders in both countries allowed the groups to slow the hemorrhaging of combatant manpower, popular support, and funding, as well as



to gradually reestablish a theological doctrine that would allow them to not just steady their ships, but begin to recover strength, expand, and attract broader popular support. [14].

The potential benefits from AQIM's expansion are manifold. In terms of its relationship with al-Qaeda, pan-African expansion will provide AQIM with credentials that go beyond the simple parochial goal of defeating the government in Algiers and give it a viable claim to be part of the international Salafi jihad movement. A bastion outside Algeria, moreover, will make it much harder for Algiers to combat the growing AQIM organization. What once had been a strictly Algerian problem that could be addressed unilaterally on sovereign territory by the Algiers regime, now has to be combated via cooperation with other -- and often weaker -- regional regimes, ones that have often been at odds with Algeria over the latter's often arrogant pretensions as North Africa's top regional power. An important benefit for AQIM in relocating to territory that provides reliable non-Algerian and geographically dispersed safe havens is that it makes the organization a far broader and more intractable problem for the Algiers regime by forcing it to operate with African counter-terrorism allies that are less effective in military and security terms and are more corrupt. These allies also have national security interests different than Algeria's, and are reluctant to take direction from those they view as the chauvinists in Algiers.

In practical operational terms, AQIM's expansion is creating an organization that is more difficult for its enemies to decapitate. Algerian political and military authorities -- like those in the United States and other Western countries -- have always put a high priority on killing senior AQIM leaders and have done so with some proficiency. In confronting the expanding, multi-country presence of AQIM, however, insurgent leaders will be more spread out and so less susceptible to the always overrated tactic of killing them one at a time. In addition, AQIM's expansion, as it has unfolded to date, promises to provide the group with an ongoing and highly lucrative source of funding -- payments for protection and logistical assistance provided to Latin American and other drug traffickers [15] -- as well as the opportunity that all branches of al-Qaeda always crave: new platforms from which to plan and launch operations aimed at the United States and Europe [16] and which, simultaneously, act as lures for a greater U.S. and Western military presence focused on preempting the operations and destroying the platforms. AQIM leaders surely are trying to prompt increased and very visible Western military involvement in this highly xenophobic and anti-colonialist region based not only on the group's presence and activities, but also because the region into which AQIM is expanding is rich in oil-and-gas reserves, which are a Western strategic interest, and because piracy targeting boats carrying oil is quickly growing along Africa's west coast. [17]

AQIM's limited criminal ties in Algeria's North and Northeast

Currently, the AQIM has concentrated a large portion of its military forces in the country's north, particularly in the mountainous and heavily forested area east of Algiers -- known as the Kabylie region. This area gives the group defensible positions and easy access to Algiers and to other cities along the Mediterranean coast. In this region, clashes between Islamist insurgents and regime forces are an almost daily occurrence. [18] "[N]ot a day goes by," writes Olivier Guitta, a longtime analyst of Islamism in North Africa, "without the terrorists attacking military personnel, government employees or ordinary civilians, whom they regard as allies of the government." [19] Guitta's statement is a good indicator that AQIM has clearly recognized the nearly fatal cost paid by al-Qaeda in Algeria and Iraq -- where the GSPC and other Maghreb Islamist groups sent hundreds of fighters to help attack the U.S.-led coalition [20] -- for indiscriminate killing, and has decreased civilian casualties by sharpening the focus of attacks to hit government personnel and supporters who are religiously acceptable targets, both doctrinally and to the religious public, because they have sacrificed their Islam by supporting an apostate secular regime.

Although maintaining a strong operational base in the Kabylie region is essential if the AQIM is to regularly engage Algerian forces and threaten the capital, the group continues to have a tenuous relationship with the region's majority Berber population. Although the Islamists and the Berbers

share a deep-seated antipathy toward the Algiers regime and France -- the Berbers fought for Algeria's independence from France in the 1950s and have long seen themselves as persecuted, economically deprived, and culturally oppressed by both -- AQIM forces in the region have shown less concern than its GSPC predecessors to avoid innocent civilian casualties among Kabylie Berbers. Soon after AQIM was born, for example, its forces attacked several sites which were minimally connected to the regime and innocent Berbers were killed. [21] In the past two years, however, AQIM has taken greater care vis-à-vis the Berbers and has refocused on regime-specific targets, killing thirteen Algerian soldiers in an 18 April 2011 ambush in the northern Kabylie region, for example. [22] It must continue to do so if it is to avoid the untenable and perhaps disastrous situation of having to simultaneously fight the regime and the local Berber tribesmen.

In northern Algeria, AQIM has focused on military activities -- attacking regime targets in Algiers and in the mountainous area east of the capital -- rather than on crime. The insurgents' most frequent criminal activity in the north is aimed at raising funds by kidnapping of local businessmen and wealthy individuals and holding them for ransom. [23] But since the early-2011 start of the so-called "Arab Spring," AQIM in the north has had less need to seek the assistance of criminal smuggling organizations to secure supplies because of the breakdown of border-control and internal-security arrangements in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. The steady pace of Islamist attacks on Algerian regime targets in the summer of 2011 suggests the flow of supplies and recruits to AQIM is more than adequate for hit-and-run guerrilla operations. [24] The adequacy of funds, supplies, and manpower for AQIM in the north suggests that the arsenals and prisons that have been opened and looted by Islamists in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya under the cover provided by the "Arab Spring" are proving a godsend for Algeria's insurgents. AQIM's material well being also raises the possibility that the Salafist insurgents are benefiting from the money flowing into the Maghreb from Saudi and other Gulf donors to ensure Islamist power grows in the suddenly destabilized region.

AQIM's growing criminal ties in Algeria's south and beyond

Faced with the need to recuperate from the high losses incurred as the result of recurring and effective Algerian military offensives, AQIM has put priority on establishing a strong bastion in the remote, arid, and barren regions of energy-rich southern Algeria, as well as in northern Mali, which is now described as the group's "central redoubt." [25] Its success to date in this effort has made operations by the regime's forces more physically difficult, because of southern Algeria's difficult topography and harshly arid conditions, and more expensive because of elongated resupply routes needed to support operations. At the same time, the AQIM has pushed east, south, and west out of southern Algeria into Mauritania, northern Mali and other parts of the Sahel. Expansion has improved AQIM's prospects not only for survival but for growth and -- potentially -- for a greater role in the AQ-led international jihad. That said, AQIM's relocation and expansion outside Algeria has brought challenges that necessitate cooperation with a variety of criminal organizations -- indigenous and foreign -- and Muslims who practice a kind of Islam different from that in Algeria and which reflects the Sahel's status as "the bridge between the Arab Maghreb and black Sub-Saharan Africa." [26]

The precise size of AQIM's forces in southern Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, and Chad is unknown, but is estimated to be around 500 men, about 200 of whom are full-time fighters. [27] The severity of the problem this relatively few number of combatants is causing the Algerian authorities is evident in that they have sent additional military units to their southern provinces, as well as an additional 16,000 police personnel to fight AQIM. [28] While Algerian forces -- at times with Malian or Mauritanian security or military units -- and those of the AQIM have dealt blows to each other over the past few years, neither side has attained military dominance in the region. This rough standoff perfectly suits AQIM's need for time in which to ingratiate itself with the leaders, tribes, and organizations resident in its new area of operations.

The AQIM's two major commanders in the south, Mokhtar Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid, appear to be spending much of their time entrenching their organizations' position in the region. Both men also are engaged in criminal activities in the region, although Mokhtar more widely and

aggressively involved than Abu Zeid. Indeed, the latter is reported to believe Belmokhtar's cooperation with narcotics traffickers and other organized criminal gangs is unIslamic, and so has stuck to kidnapping-for-ransom operations. [29] Abu Zeid's attitude has created some tension between the men, but no open and violent break; indeed, both are basically similar in that they see themselves as guests in the region and so are "exceedingly careful not to inadvertently target local communities and interests in the Sahel." [30] In reality, Belmokhtar faces the more difficult and more promising operating environment as his region encompasses the area through which pass two major south-to-north smuggling routes that have "for centuries traditionally been an intense zone of passage and of informal or illegal economic exchanges." [31] Today, these routes are used by Mexican drug cartels, Columbia's narco-terrorist FARC, Lebanese Hizballah, and Lebanese mafias for moving cocaine and other narcotics from the Gulf of Guinea north toward Europe, with one route passing through Morocco to Spain and the other through Algeria to Italy. [32] In addition, the routes are used by the local populations for smuggling cigarettes, undocumented aliens, stolen automobiles, and other varieties of contraband.

In essence, Belmokhtar has placed his forces squarely in the middle of an ancient, very busy, and very lucrative -- for both criminals and the local population -- smuggling environment and by doing so he confronted a choice: He could maintain Islamic "purity" and try -- as did Abu Musab al-Zarqawi in Iraq -- to impose his beliefs and lifestyle on people for whom it was an alien and unwanted import, or he could be pragmatic and place top priority on the AQIM's needs for safe haven, new sources of manpower and funding; a base from which to procure war materials for AQIM forces in Algeria proper; and a platform from which to launch operations in Africa and internationally. [33] Belmokhtar chose the latter course of action and "has put down roots [in the local populations] and established links with traffickers in narcotics and other contraband." [34] Among the methods that AQIM's southern emir has used to accomplish these tasks are:

--He has chosen not to confront "the traditional local structures frontally," [35] adopting a tolerant view of differences in religious practices and social customs, much as Osama bin Laden did with his fighters to win safe haven in Afghanistan and with Pakistan's Pashtun border tribes. AQIM has worked hard to influence "populations which, if not exactly clamoring for AQIM's message, are at least somewhat receptive to it due to both their social, economic, and political marginalization and [their] historical memories of jihad out of the desert." Its success so far has been attested to by a council of local leaders in northern Mali who said "the Salafists control the area better than anyone." [36]

--Belmokhtar has married several local women both from Arab tribes and from the region's nomadic Tuareq peoples. He reportedly chose women from families that have long been associated with the region's smuggling networks. By these marriages, one scholar has written, Belmokhtar has "woven himself into the fabric of the region," and tied himself and AQIM to groups, tribes, and clans that have "a contentious history with local governments." Belmokhtar also is encouraging his fighters to marry local women to further solidify bonds with the regional communities. [37]

--Because AQIM's military threats and actions in the region have hurt tourism and so the region's economy, particularly in Senegal and Mali [38], Belmokhtar has employed numbers of locals in the Sahel -- including men from Western Sahara's Polisario Front [39] -- to support AQIM's activities in such capacities as negotiators in kidnap situations, safe-house keepers, laborers, guards, and mediators in dealing with local political and tribal leaders. [40]

--Belmokhtar -- and Abu Zeid, for that matter --also has penetrated the military and security services of the Sahel governments. Most of these regimes have little power to influence events in areas outside their capital and major cities and so tend to manifest a live-and-let-live attitude toward the insurgent and criminal organizations. [41] The regime in Mali, for example, does not want to confront AQIM, has released AQIM fighters it has captured, and probably will seek a *modus vivendi* of sorts with AQIM to make sure it does

not attack the companies which are beginning to exploit Mali's energy resources. [42] Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid, moreover, have taken advantage of the often-corrupt Sahel regimes to suborn government, military, and security officials, some of whom provide intelligence, arms, and other hardware to the militants. [43]

--Belmokhtar has made "common cause with criminal elements" in the region so as to not disrupt the region's smuggling-dependent economy, as well as to improve AQIM's operational and fund-raising capabilities and its strategic reach." [44] As noted above, AQIM has provided logistical assistance and protection for Mexican, Lebanese, and Columbian narcotics traffickers who are moving cocaine north from the Gulf of Guinea to the Maghreb and then to markets in Europe. AQIM is reported to earn \$4,200 dollars/kilo for its services [45], while simultaneously developing ties with deeply anti-U.S. organizations that possess the ability to move men and material westward across the Atlantic and into the United States through Latin America. AQIM also is reported to assisting the region's people-smuggling networks to move Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, and Indians into Spain. [46]

The foregoing crime-related activities challenge the West's stereotypically view of how a true Isalmist "holy warrior" should behave, but there is no indication that AQIM's post-2007 activities in southern Algeria and the Sahel countries can be judged as abandonment of Salafi jihad principles and the transformation of the AQIM into a traditional organized-crime organization. AQIM forces have continued to raid and ambush Algerian, Malian, and Mauritanian military and police facilities and forces, events that in no way would serve the interests of criminal organization eager to avoid antagonizing local governments. The rhetoric of AQIM leaders also has not deviated from the Salafist ideas and intonations that have long characterized it. As recently as 8 July 2011, for example, AQIM Shura Council member Abu Obaida Yousuf al-Annabi publicly reaffirmed the organization's Salafist worldview, a belief that Muslims are involved in a war of self-defense against a West determined to replace Islamic civilization with secularism. "And its is not hidden from you," Abu Obaida said,

that the ongoing struggle in the Arab and Muslim countries is a struggle between two approaches: a westernization secular approach that aims at removing the ummah from her religion and [to] cover her identity and blank out her roots; and an original Islamic approach that aims at preserving the religion of the ummah and her origins from manipulation and ungodliness. And the war between the two approaches is ongoing on a number of fronts, and it is unimaginable for them to coexist or their followers to live on the same level, and for that confrontation between them will always remain and won't cool down over time. And the plots of the westernization secular current will continue against the Islamic programs, and its efforts in enforcing a secular regime on the Muslim people in Egypt and Tunisia will continue. So, what is needed from the ummah is remain awake and ready for all probabilities... [47]

Perhaps most important, AQIM's rapidly improving media capabilities continue to preach Salafism in several Sahelian languages, and its videos have been produced in manner showing the participation of Sahelian fighters -- especially Malians and Mauritians -- in AQIM attacks, a tack designed to show that the once Algeria-centric jihad has been transformed into a regional Salafist effort that is a component of the al-Qaeda-inspired international jihad. Also arguing against AQIM's re-formation as a quasi-mafia is that the group, unlike the core Al-Qaeda group and AQ's other affiliates, devotes significant resources to proselytizing activities in the Maghreb and the Sahel and is reported to be trying to "influence the ideas, morality, and spirituality of others" by persuasion and behavior, not coercion. [48]

Looking Forward: AQIM will remain a crime-enabled but genuinely Salafist insurgent organization

AQIM appears well on its way to establishing a stable, long-term presence across North Africa and in the Sahel. AQIM Emir Abu Musab Abdul Wadud has pushed the effort forward and, in the south, Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid have accommodated their organizations to the local populations' customs and mores, and have tried to replace jobs lost because of the AQIM's military activities. Most important, they have not disrupted the centuries-old smuggling routes that traverse the region and have created a situation where their fighters are protecting and moving contraband along the routes, creating a win-win-win-win situation: the locals profit from illegal commerce; the Latin American and Lebanese narcotics traffickers move their product to Europe securely; the people smugglers likewise move their cargo effectively; and AQIM derives what appears to be a significant amount of money with which to fund their infrastructure, operations, and fighters inside Algeria and across its expanding theater of operations.

Nothing is forever, of course, and AQIM must make sure to maintain its welcome and security in the region. AQIM leaders can fulfill much of this task by paying close attention to protecting local communities, ensuring smuggling routes remain open and profitable, recruiting fighters from all states in the region to further de-emphasize AQIM's Algerian origins; and preventing any of their members from slipping back into the takfiri behavior that destroyed the Armed Islamic Group in the 1990s. Belmokhtar will be the key to maintaining vigilance against a return to takfiri behavior; Belmokhtar left the Armed Islamic Group to join the GSPC because of the former's savage and indiscriminate violence. [49] None of these things are easy to accomplish, but there are two major factors that will assist AQIM's efforts.

First, the AQIM's expansion has been effective in undermining the strengths of the Algerian regime, which possesses the region's most powerful and sophisticated military, security, and police services. Because AQIM now has a regional presence Algiers's can no longer wage war against it unilaterally; it must cooperate with the other Maghreb and Sahel states to effectively pursue and attack the insurgents. This cooperation is slowly evolving but the Algerian regime has long been regarded by its neighbors as arrogant and reluctant to respect the interests and concerns of other governments. Algeria's aid for the Polisario Front in Western Sahara, for example, has long caused animosities between it and Morocco, the region's second strongest power. [50] Rivalries and disputes generally characterize inter-state relations in the Maghreb and Sahel regions, and these may well prevent consistently effective counter-terrorism cooperation against AQIM. [51]

The second factor is how much the growth of AQIM power and influence in the Maghreb and Sahel will serve as a "lure" for intervention by Western powers, especially the United States and France. AQIM's current leader Abu Musab Abdul Wadud and his southern commanders Mokhtar Belmokhtar and Abu Zeid are committed to making the organization a key component of al-Qaeda and a strong player in the international jihad. Belmokhtar, in fact, has been the key channel of communication between Algerian insurgents and al-Qaeda since he was trained in AQ camps in Afghanistan in 1993. [52] The best way for AQIM to ensnarl the West in Africa is not by killing troops from Algeria, Mauritania, and other regional states, but by prompting events and exploiting realities in the region to entice the West into intervening. Washington's concerns with the threat AQIM poses to the region's energy resources (a threat the group is trying to expand to Nigeria through its ties to Boko Haram group [53]); the growing presence in West Africa of such anti-U.S. organizations as FARC, the Mexican cartels, and Lebanese Hizballah; and the nearing-Somalia levels of piracy in "resource-rich West African waters of the Gulf of Guinea" [54] are all potential spurs to U.S. intervention in the region. France, too, has longstanding political and economic interests in its former colonies in West Africa which could prompt French intervention if they are threatened. In particular, France procures forty-percent of the uranium used by its domestic nuclear industry -- which produces eighty-80 percent of the country's electricity -- from Niger's mines. [55] AQIM already has kidnapped several Frenchmen working at the uranium mines in Niger, and there is no question that AQIM's ability to operate in the vicinity of the mines raises concerns in the West about the Islamists' potential to acquire WMD-related materials.

Even without direct intervention, Washington is in the process of transforming itself from the “far” to the “near” enemy in the eyes of many in the Maghreb and West Africa through its involvement in providing counter-terrorism assistance to the region’s governments via the U.S. military’s African Command (AFRICOM). By the mid-1990s, the Algerian regime’s acceptance of anti-insurgent assistance from France and other European states caused the Algerian insurgents and its supporters to see the regime as “a postcolonial lackey at war with Islam. This conflict, for them [the insurgents], would be a war that would transcend nationalist concerns.” [56] Since 9/11, when the U.S. government embraced Algeria as a counter-terrorist ally, and the start of AFRICOM’s counter-terrorism assistance program -- which is complemented by similar programs by France, Spain, and the Netherlands [57] -- AQIM’s increasingly effective media operations have identified AFRICOM’s activities as new form of anti-Islamic colonialism. In regard to Algeria, one scholar has argued that the “increasingly close cooperation discredits both the USA and the Algerian government in the eyes of the Algerian population ... [weakens] the credibility of the local rulers suffers because they allow the American military to operate on Algerian soil.” [58] It seems likely that the ongoing expansion of AFRICOM’s will permit AQIM to appeal the deeply anti-colonial sentiments of the region’s people, identifying U.S. and Western counter-terrorism assistance as a new era of colonialism that is aimed at destroying Islam.

At the end of the day, AQIM still is very much the underdog in its war against the forces of the Maghreb and Sahelian governments and their allies. Notwithstanding the advantages noted above, the key factor for AQIM’s continued prospering is to maintain its status as an Islamist organization. This is, at base, the source of its most fundamental and compelling appeal to the peoples of the region. To abandon Salafist principles would be to reduce the AQIM’s appeal to that of just another criminal/smuggling organization in a region where such organizations are commonplace. AQIM, to be sure, will continue to engage and support criminal activities in an effort to further weave itself into local communities and to secure a steady flow of profits for the organization, but as one leading scholar has said the West should think of the AQIM’s willingness to engage in criminal activities not as an end in itself, [59] but as a means to an end that remains at base religious and is aimed at the creation of Sahara Emirate. If AQIM maintains a credible religiosity, continues to expand its regional presence, and uses the West African and Sahel smuggling routes and the criminal organizations they attract as a tool for funding and for luring the United States and its Western allies into an intervention, AQIM may well validate the contention of INTERPOL’s General Secretary Ronald K. Noble, who, in late 2010, said that AQIM, together with its Somali brethren, ““will eclipse Afghanistan in terms of terror threats in the next five to 10 years.” [60]

Endnotes:

- 1.) The story of the GIA’s self-immolation is ably and concisely told in Camille Tawil. Brothers in Arms. The Story of Al-Qaida and the Arab Jihadists. London: Saqi Books, 2010, pp. 67-87. Tawil’s book also is the best available history and analysis of al-Qaeda’s long and difficult relationships with militant Islamist groups in the North African states.
- 2.) Jean-Pierre Filiu, “The Local and Global Jihad of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” Middle East Journal, Vol. 63, No. 2, (Spring, 2009), pp. 220-222
- 3.) Anthony N. Celso, “Al Qaeda in the Maghreb: The “newest” front in the war on terror,” Mediterranean Quarterly, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2008), p. 90.
- 4.) Marc Sageman. Understanding Terror Networks. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. See especially, pp. 70-98
- 5.) Omar Nasiri. Inside the Jihad. My Life with Al-Qaeda. A Spy’s Story. New York: Basic Books, 2006. See especially, pp. 9-99

- 6.) Carlos Echeverria Jesus, "The Current State of the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group," CTC Sentinel, Vol. 2, Issue, 3, (March, 2009)
- 7.) Ed Blanche, "Mayhem in the Maghreb," Middle East, Issue 379, (June, 2007)
- 8.) Dario Christiani and Riccardo Fabiani, "AQIM funds terrorist operations with thriving Sahel-based kidnapping industry," Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 8, Issue 4, (28 January, 2010)
- 9.) Celso, op. cit., pp. 80-86
- 10.) Ibid., p. 87
- 11.) Jean-Luc Marret, "Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A 'Glocal' Organization," Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, Vol. 31 (2008), p. 541
- 12.) Camille Tawil, "New Strategies in al-Qaeda's Battle for Algeria," Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 7, Issue 22, (27 July 2009)
- 13.) The Algerian regime made very effective use of the disgust of the Algerian public and most of the Islamic world over the AIG's takfirism. In a series of amnesties, national-reconciliation campaigns, and reeducation programs, the regime attracted both insurgents and their civilian supporters and sympathizers to the government's side. The effectiveness of these programs began to slow with the birth of the GSPC in 2003 and its subsequent abandonment of takfirism, and has continued to slow since the AQIM's formation. Since 2003, for example, amnesties awarded to Islamist prisoners have seen some of the released return to the insurgents' ranks, and both the GSPC and now AQIM have instituted dedicated programs to re-recruit former fighters released by the regime. Andrew Hansen, "Backgrounder: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)," Council on Foreign Relations, 21 July 2009; Tawil, 27 July 2009, op. cit.; Celso, op. cit., p. 92; J. Peter Pham, "Foreign Influences and Shifting Horizons: The Ongoing Evolution of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," Orbis, Vol. 55, Issue 2, (2011)
- 14.) The damage wrought on Islamist groups by takfiri behavior has been debilitating, and at times existence threatening in several locations around the world. Indeed, the only genuine strategic threat al-Qaeda has faced after 9/11 was posed by the takfiri principles applied by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi when he commanded al-Qaeda forces in Iraq. Al-Qaeda, in part, was saved from the impact of al-Zarqawi's mayhem -- not unusually -- when the U.S. military killed al-Zarqawi in 2006; it is likely that if U.S. forces had not killed al-Zarqawi, bin Laden would have either have had him killed or would have promoted him and removed him from Iraq. Such was the Muslim-world-wide damage that al-Zarqawi inflicted on al-Qaeda that his death did not solve the problem. Bin Laden had to publicly and repeatedly denounce Takfirism, publicly apologize to Muslims for al-Zarqawi's behavior, pledge that al-Qaeda would not repeat it, and then appoint replacements for al-Zarqawi who were dependable Salafists. Bin Laden's campaign to undo the damage caused by al-Zarqawi mirrors that which the leaders of the GSPC and now AQIM undertook -- and are still conducting -- to undo the harm inflicted by the GIA's Takfirism. For an examination of how bin Laden dealt with al-Zarqawi's takfirism and the severe damage it did to al-Qaeda, see Michael F. Scheuer. Osama bin Laden. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 141-153.
- 15.) Sebastian Rotella, "U.S. prosecution links drugs to terrorism," Los Angeles Times, 19 December 2009
- 16.) Blanche, Middle East, June2007, op. cit.
- 17.) David Smith, "Piracy off west Africa increases sharply," Guardian (UK), 12 August 2011, and "U.S. African Commander offers Nigeria

Military Assistance,” <http://www.defenceweb.co.za>, 19 August 2011

18.) “A real network of terror?” Economist, 13 September 2008; Pham, Orbis, *op. cit.*; and, “Al Qaeda in North Africa: jihad outlives bin Laden.” Associated Press, 27 May 2011

19.) Hansen, “Backgrounder,” *op. cit.*

20.) Ibid.

21.) Andrew Black, “Al-Qaeda Operations in Kabylie Mountains Alienating Algerian Berbers,” Terrorism Focus, Vol. 5, Issue 16 (23 April 2008)

22.) “Militants kill 13 soldiers east of Algiers: security sources,” Reuters, 16 April 2011

23.) Rajeh Said, “Al-Qaeda turns to crime,” www.maghrebia.com, 22July2011

24.) For example, “Al Qaeda group claims Algerian bombings,” Reuters, 20 July 2011; “Algeria bomb attack injures 30,” Agence France Presse, 14 August 2011; and, “Al-Qaeda claims Algerian bombing,” Associated Press, 18 August 2011

25.) Modibo Goita, “West Africa’s Growing Terrorist Threat: Confronting AQIM’s Sahelian Strategy,” Africa Security Brief, No. 11, (February, 2011), p. 2

26.) Pham, Orbis, *op. cit.*

27.) “Abdelhamid Abu Zeid: Al Qaeda, Islamic Maghreb and the Arab Spring,” <http://www.theafricareport.com>, 14 July 2011

28.) Ed Blanche, “Sarkozy’s war against al-Qaeda,” Middle East, Issue 415, (October, 2010)

29.) Jean-Pierre Perrin: “Growing Integration into Worldwide Jihad: Interview with Jean-Pierre Filiu,” Liberation, 20 November 2010

30.) Goita, *op. cit.*, p. 3

31.) Marret, *op. cit.*, p. 547

32.) Rotella, Los Angeles Times, 19 December 2009, *op. cit.*

33.) Andrew Black, “Mokhtar Belmokhtar: The Algerian Jihad’s Southern Emir,” Terrorism Monitor, Vol. 7, Issue 12, (8 May 2009)

34.) J. Peter Pham, “U.S. Interests in Promoting Security across the Sahara,” American Foreign Policy Interests (AFPI), Vol. 32, (2010). p. 243

35.) Marret, *op. cit.* p. 547

- 36.) Goita, op. cit., p. 4, and Pham, Orbis, op. cit.
- 37.) Pham, Orbis, op. cit.; Black, “Mokhtar Belmokhtar: The Algerian Jihad’s Southern Emir,” op. cit.; and Goita, op. cit., p. 3
- 38.) “Mali to revive tourism hit by Qaeda fears,” Agence France Presse, 7 August 2011, and “Al Qaeda threat hits Mali tourism trade,” Reuters, 1 August 2011
- 39.) Pham, Orbis, op. cit.
- 40.) Goita, op. cit., p. 4
- 41.) Ibid., p. 3
- 42.) Ibid., p. 4, and Agence France Presse, 7 August 2011, op. cit.
- 43.) Goita, op. cit., pp. 2, 6
- 44.) Pham, Orbis, op. cit.;
- 45.) Adam Nichols, “Qaeda narco trio’s ‘\$\$ plot,’” New York Post, 19 December 2009
- 46.) “Special Interview with Abu Obaida Yousuf al-Annabi, Member of the Shura Council and Head of the Organization’s Trustees,” Al-Andalus Media Production Establishment, 8 July 2011.
- 47.) Rotella, Los Angeles Times, 19 December 2009, op. cit.
- 48.) Jamal Oumar, “AQIM launches indoctrination campaign along Mali-Mauritania border,” www.maghrebia.com, 8 May 2011; Imrane Binoual, “Al-Zawahiri threatens Maghreb, expert warns,” www.maghrebia.com, 24 June 2011; and, Jemal Oumar, “Jihadist websites tempt Mauritanian boys,” www.maghrebia.com, 29 July 2011
- 49.) Black, “Mokhtar Belmokhtar: The Algerian Jihad’s Southern Emir,” op. cit.
- 50.) Pham, AFPI, op. cit., p. 242
- 51.) Ibid., p. 245

52.) AQIM's interest in influencing events in Nigeria and assisting the violent Islamist group Boko Haram picked up noticeably after the GSPC merged with al-Qaeda in 2007 and changed its name to AQIM. Before the merger GSPC media operations were "characterized by their irrelevance, negligible activities, and poor product quality" but they improved immediately after the merger. In 2009, Nigeria became a top-priority target of the AQIM's Al-Anadalu Establishment for Media Production; Bin Laden had said publicly that Nigeria was ripe for an Islamist takeover soon after the 9/11 attacks. In February, 2010, for example, AQIM Emir Abu Musab Abdul Wadud told Nigerian Muslims:

Brothers and beloved ones in Nigeria, the path to salvation away from these continuous massacres against you by the Christian minority, and the only solution to gain back your rights and resources, and the legitimate way you will secure your faith, pride, and presence before this wicked Crusader war practiced against you, is to take matters using force, which is represented in preparation and jihad for the sake of Allah, and a good example for you to follow is the experience of your brothers in Somalia who resisted against Christian Ethiopia and we in [the] al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Mahgreb -- in order to fulfill our duty to support Muslims everywhere -- announce the following:

We are ready to train your children to use weapons and will supply them with all we can, including support and men, weapons, ammunitions, and equipment, in order to defend our people in Nigeria and respond against the aggression of the Christian minority. So, push your children to the fields of preparaton to form the vanguards to fight for and defend against the [loss of] the blood and honors of Muslims in Nigeria, which resists, the declared Crusader war.

Then, in October, 2010, AQIM's media began publishing official communiqués for Boko Haram -- the only non-AQIM communiqués published by Al-Andalus -- and has since voiced its support for Boko Haram and Nigerian Muslims against the "crusade" being waged against them by Nigerian Christians. Boko Haram fighters also are reported to have been trained and armed by AQIM in Mali, and the Nigerian authorities claim that Boko Haram's method of configuring improvised explosive devices closely resembles that of AQIM. There also are unconfirmed reports that AQIM fighters kidnapped a Briton and an Italian inside Nigeria in August, 2011. Senior U.S. military officers have noted that there are clear signs of ties between AQIM and Boko Haram, and AFRICOM's commander has said -- probably reflecting growing U.S. dependence on imports of Nigerian crude oil, which amounted to 808,000 barrels/day in May, 2011 -- that such ties "would be the most dangerous thing to happen not only to the Africans, but to us [the United States]." For the foregoing see, Manuel R. Torres Soriano, "The Road to Media Jihad: Propaganda Actions of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," Terrorism and Political Violence, Vol. 23, (2011), pp. 73, 76, 82; Abu Musab Abdul Wadud, "The Annihilation of the Muslims in Nigeria; A New Episode in the Continuous Crusade War," 1 February 2010, www.nefafoundation.org; "Statement by Imam Abubaker Shekau," Shumukh al-Islam Network (Internet), 2 October 2010; Adam Nossiter, "Islamist Threat With Qaeda Link Grows in Nigeria," New York Times, 17 August 2011; Joe Brock, "Britain urgently checking Nigeria hostage video," Reuters, 4 August 2011; and "U.S. general sees Nigeria terror link," www.news24.com, 18 August 2011. For the level of U.S. oil imports from Nigeria, see the U.S. Department of Energy's website: <ftp://ftp.eia.coe.gov>.

53.) Pham, AFPI, *op. cit.*, p. 242, and Guardian (UK), 12 August 2011, *op. cit.*

54.) Black, "Mokhtar Belmokhtar: The Algerian Jihad's Southern Emir," *op. cit.*, and Soha, "Al-Qaeda expands into Niger, www.starcitynews.com, 12 October 2010

55.) Blanche, Middle East, Oct2010, *op. cit.*

56.) Celso, op. cit. p. 89

57.) Blanche, Middle East, Oct2010, op. cit.

58.) Guido Steinberg and Isabelle Werenfels, “Between the ‘Near’ and the ‘Far’ Enemy: Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb,” Mediterranean Politics, Vol. 12, No. 3, (November, 2007), p. 410

59.) Michael Petrou, “Al-Qaeda in North Africa,” Macleans’s, 11 May 2009

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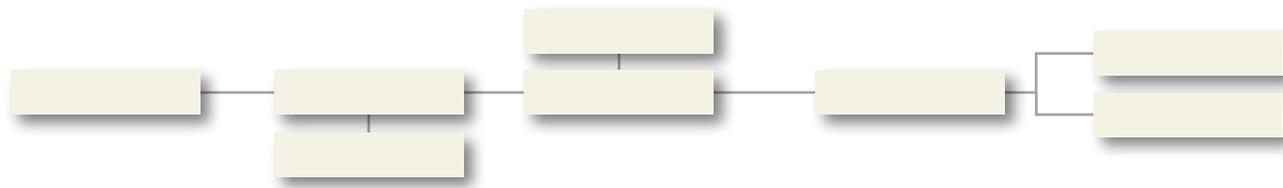
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TRIBAL ANALYSIS CENTER

Traditional anthropological research conducted among tribes inhabiting remote areas where insurgents and criminals operate has become increasingly difficult to implement. Studies carried out among people living in small-scale societies now are nearly impossible due to the physical dangers associated with the civil and religious unrest found in those areas. Swat, for example, has become so dangerous that Frederick Barth's studies only could be repeated at the risk of the investigator's life. Similar research is not feasible among Burma's Rohingya tribes located on both sides of the border with Bangladesh, as well as with the Pashtuns in Afghanistan's interior and within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, where even Pakistan's army enters with reluctance.

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