

Al-Mourabitoun

Name: Al-Mourabitoun

Type of Organization:

- Insurgent
- non-state actor
- religious
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

Ideologies and Affiliations:

- Islamist
- jihadist
- Qutbist
- Sunni
- Salafist

Place of Origin:

West Africa

Year of Origin:

2013

Founder(s):

Mokhtar Belmokhtar and Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi

Places of Operation:

Algeria, southwestern Libya, Mali, and Niger

Overview

Also Known As:

- Al-Mulathamun Brigade¹
- Al-Mulathamun Masked Ones Brigade²
- Al Murabitoon - Al Qaeda in West Africa^{3,4}
- Al-Murabitoun⁵
- Al-Muwaqqi'un bil-Dima⁶
- Khaled Abu al-Abbas Brigade⁷
- Masked Men Brigade⁸
- Signatories in Blood⁹
- Signed-in-Blood Battalion¹⁰
- The Sentinels¹¹
- Those Signed in Blood Battalion¹²
- Those who Sign in Blood¹³
- Witnesses in Blood¹⁴

Executive Summary:

Al-Mourabitoun (“The Sentinels”) is a violent, jihadist terrorist group in West Africa that aims to implement sharia (Islamic law). The group was formed from a 2013 merger between al-Mulathamun (“The Masked Men”) Battalion (AMB) and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO).¹⁵ Both groups were offshoots of [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#).¹⁶

Mokhtar Belmokhtar split his AMB from AQIM in 2012.¹⁷ AMB orchestrated a January 2013 attack on a gas facility near In Amenas, Algeria, that killed 38 civilians, including three U.S. citizens.¹⁸ In May 2013, AMB and MUJAO carried out twin

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suicide bombings in Niger that killed at least 20 people.¹⁹

After AMB's August 2013 merger with the Mali-based MUJAO to form al-Mourabitoun, the newly formed group claimed that the region's jihadist movement is "stronger than ever."²⁰ Al-Mourabitoun announced its intentions to "rout" France and its allies in the region.²¹ The group carried out attacks against French interests in the region, African military units coordinating against Islamist forces, and African civilians.

A U.S. airstrike in Libya reportedly killed Belmokhtar on June 14, 2015, although the United States has not confirmed his death.²² Al-Mourabitoun later denied Belmokhtar had been killed and declared him its official leader in July 2015.²³

On two other occasions, Belmokhtar's death has been declared. In 2013, the government of Chad announced Belmokhtar had been killed in an antiterrorism operation in Mali. And in early October 2015, an Algerian news channel reported that Belmokhtar's death had been announced by an al-Qaeda spokesman in a recorded audio message.

According to the U.S. State Department, al-Mourabitoun poses "the greatest near-term threat to U.S. and Western interests in the Sahel."²⁴

Doctrine:

Al-Mourabitoun believes it has a "Shari'a-based duty" to unite Africa's Muslims and Islamic movements against secular and non-Muslim influences, according to the Australian government.²⁵ In particular, the group targets France and French interests in the region.²⁶ The group's stated goal is to "rout" France and its regional allies.²⁷ Al-Mourabitoun accused France of killing "peaceful children, women and old men" during its 2013 intervention in Mali.²⁸

Both groups originated as splinter groups of al-Qaeda's affiliate in the region, AQIM.²⁹ MUJAO's stated goal was to spread jihad across West Africa.³⁰ According to the Australian government, MUJAO objected to Algerian dominance of AQIM's leadership.³¹

Al-Mourabitoun initially allied itself with al-Qaeda. Co-founder Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi declared the group's allegiance to [ISIS](#) in May 2015.³² Co-founder Mokhtar Belmokhtar rejected the pledge and said the group's shura (advisory) council had not yet ruled on an ISIS alliance.³³ Al-Mourabitoun officially allied itself with al-Qaeda in July 2015, and renamed itself "Al Murabitoun - Al Qaeda in West Africa."³⁴

Organizational Structure:

Al-Mourabitoun's specific leadership structure is unknown. The group appears to be governed by an emir and a shura council that sets the organization's agenda. Al-Mourabitoun has not publicly named most of its leaders,³⁵ although co-founder Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi described himself as the group's emir in a May 2015 declaration of al-Mourabitoun's allegiance to ISIS.³⁶ Co-founder Mokhtar Belmokhtar rejected the pledge a week later, raising the question of whether al-Sahrawi or Belmokhtar is more senior in the group's hierarchy.³⁷ Belmokhtar revealed that al-Mourabitoun has a governing shura council, which he said had not yet approved the pledge to ISIS.³⁸

Al-Mourabitoun issued an online statement in July 2015 that its shura council had elected Belmokhtar the group's new leader.³⁹

Financing:

Al-Mourabitoun is likely funded through kidnapping ransoms and criminal activities, according to the U.S. State

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Department.⁴⁰ The group also likely receives funding through its connections to other terrorist organizations.⁴¹ MUJAO had previously received funding through regional drug smuggling.⁴² MUJAO had also been involved in a 2011 kidnapping of three aid workers in Algeria who were later released in exchange for a ransom payment.⁴³

Recruitment:

Al-Mourabitoun largely consists of former AQIM members who left with AMB and MUJAO.⁴⁴ Al-Mourabitoun's primary recruiting area includes northern and western Africa, particularly Algeria, Mauritania, Mali, and Niger.⁴⁵ The group's exact recruiting methods are unknown, but one likely tactic is the promise of fighting French influence and interests in the region.

Training:

When the two groups were integrated into AQIM, al-Mulathamun and MUJAO likely utilized al-Qaeda training camps in the region. AQIM had run a training camp in Timbuktu, Mali until the camp was destroyed in an airstrike.⁴⁶ Recruits ate, slept, and trained together in the camp.⁴⁷ Al-Qaeda also utilizes proxy training facilities provided by like-minded groups.⁴⁸

Al-Mourabitoun's leadership has maintained contact with AQIM, particularly with Djamel Akkacha, AQIM's coordinator of groups associated with AQIM in northern Mali.⁴⁹ While not confirmed, the groups may continue to share training facilities.

¹ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

² "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

³ Thomas

⁴ Joscelyn, "Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads 'Al Qaeda in West Africa,'" Long War Journal, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.

⁵ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁶ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁷ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁸ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁹ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

¹⁰ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

¹¹ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

¹² "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

¹³ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

¹⁴ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

¹⁵ "Terrorist Designation of the Al-Mulathamun Battalion," U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.htm>.

¹⁶ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

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- ¹⁷ “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ “Terrorist Designation of the Al-Mulathamun Battalion,” U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.htm>.
- ¹⁹ “Terrorist Designation of the Al-Mulathamun Battalion,” U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.htm>.
- ²⁰ “Belmokhtar’s militants ‘merge’ with Mali’s Mujao,” BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>.
- ²¹ “Belmokhtar’s militants ‘merge’ with Mali’s Mujao,” BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>.
- ²² Reuters, “Libya Says ‘Uncatchable’ Veteran Militant Killed in U.S. Strike,” *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-usa-libya.html>.
- ²³ Thomas Joscelyn, “Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads ‘Al Qaeda in West Africa,” *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.
- ²⁴ “Terrorist Designation of the Al-Mulathamun Battalion,” U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.htm>.
- ²⁵ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ²⁶ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ²⁷ “Belmokhtar’s militants ‘merge’ with Mali’s Mujao,” BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>.
- ²⁸ Robbie Corey-Boulet, “Website: Terror group threatens France over Mali,” *Associated Press*, January 6, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/website-terror-group-threatens-france-over-mali>.
- ²⁹ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ³⁰ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ³¹ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ³² Agence France-Presse, “Belmokhtar’s jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS,” *Yahoo News*, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>.
- ³³ Reuters, “Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>.
- ³⁴ Thomas Joscelyn, “Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads ‘Al Qaeda in West Africa,” *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.
- ³⁵ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ³⁶ Agence France-Presse, “Belmokhtar’s jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS,” *Yahoo News*, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>.
- ³⁷ Reuters, “Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>.
- ³⁸ Reuters, “Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report,” *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>.
- ³⁹ Thomas Joscelyn, “Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads ‘Al Qaeda in West Africa,” *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.
- ⁴⁰ “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.
- ⁴¹ “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.
- ⁴² “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ⁴³ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ⁴⁴ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- ⁴⁵ “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

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⁴⁶ "Al-Qaeda," Counter Extremism Project, accessed June 18, 2015,
<http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁴⁷ "Al-Qaeda," Counter Extremism Project, accessed June 18, 2015,
<http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁴⁸ "Al-Qaeda," Counter Extremism Project, accessed June 18, 2015,
<http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁴⁹ "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015,
<http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

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Key Leaders



Mokhtar Belmokhtar
Emir, co-founder



Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi
Co-founder

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History:

- **January 15, 2016:** Militants attack a hotel in Burkina Faso and a police station outside of the capital, killing 30 people of 18 nationalities.
The attack is believed to be carried out by al-Mourabitoun, in conjunction with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Source: Nadia Khomami, "Burkina Faso hotel attack: 18 nationalities among dead," *Guardian* (London), January 16, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/15/security-forces-battle-suspected-jihadists-in-burkina-faso-capital>; Jason Burke, "Burkina Faso attack signals spread of Islamist menace," *Guardian* (London), January 16, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/16/burkina-faso-attack-signals-spread-of-islamist-menace>; Tim Lister, "Burkina Faso attack demonstrates al Qaeda revival in Africa," CNN, January 16, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/16/world/burkina-faso-attack-al-qaeda/>; Drew Hinshaw and Zoumana Wonogo, "Al Qaeda Attacks in Burkina Faso Kill at Least 30," *Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 2016, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/operation-ends-at-burkina-faso-hotel-seized-by-al-qaeda-1452936866>.
- **November 20, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility for a deadly gun and hostage attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, allegedly as part of a joint attack with AQIM.
According to U.N. spokesman Olivier Salgado, 21 people were killed in the attack when gunmen stormed the hotel using counterfeit diplomatic license plates. Faith Karimi and Erin Burnett, "Mali hotel attack: Gunmen barged in, shot at 'anything that moved,'" CNN, November 22, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/21/africa/mali-hotel-attack/>.
- **July 21, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun releases an online statement naming Belmokhtar its official leader.
The organization signs the statement, "Al Mourabitoun - Al Qaeda in West Africa." Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads 'Al Qaeda in West Africa,'" *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.
- **June 14, 2015:** The United States carries out an airstrike in Libya targeting Belmokhtar.
The Libyan government reports that Belmokhtar was killed in the airstrike. Sources: Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Airstrike in Libya Targets Planner of 2013 Algeria Attack," *New York Times*, June 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/15/world/middleeast/us-airstrike-targets-qaeda-operative-in-libya.html>; Reuters, "U.S. Confirms Militant Belmokhtar Was Target of Libya Air Strike," *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-libya-usa-target.html?_r=0; Reuters, "Libya Says 'Uncatchable' Veteran Militant Killed in U.S. Strike," *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-usa-libya.html> <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-usa-libya.html>.
- **May 18, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun announces it kidnapped a Romanian citizen on April 4 in Burkina Faso.
Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Belmokhtar's jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS," Yahoo News, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>; Reuters, "Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report," *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>; Rukmini Callimachi, "Militant Group Says It Has Romanian Hostage," *New York Times*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/19/world/middleeast/militant-group-says-it-has-romanian-hostage.html>.
- **May 2015:** An Arabic-language news website posts a recording of al-Mourabitoun leader Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi pledging the group's allegiance to ISIS.
A week later, Belmokhtar rejects the pledge. Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Belmokhtar's jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS," Yahoo News, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>; Reuters, "Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report," *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>; Rukmini Callimachi, "Militant Group Says It Has Romanian Hostage," *New York Times*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/19/world/middleeast/militant-group-says-it-has-romanian-hostage.html>.
- **April 15, 2015:** An attack on a U.N. peacekeeping base in Ansogo, Mali kills three people and wounds 16.
Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility. Source: Tiemoko Diallo and Adama Diarra, "Islamist group claims attack on U.N. peacekeepers in Mali," Reuters, April 18, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/18/us-mali-un-idUSKBN0N90F920150418>.
- **March 13, 2015:** Malian security forces are attacked while trying to arrest Mohamed Tanirou Cisse, the suspected driver who drove attackers to the La Terrasse a week earlier.
Cisse is killed while resisting arrest. Source: Baba Ahmed, "Special forces kill Mali attack suspect, army official says," Reuters, March 13, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/fbfd43635d6e40e8975a9b948067e9a2/special-forces-kill-mali-attack-suspect-army-official-says>.
- **March 7, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility after an attack on the La Terrasse restaurant in Bamako, Mali, kills five people, including a Frenchman and a Belgian.
Source: Baba Ahmed, "Mali officials: 1 killed, 3 injured in attack in north," Associated Press, April 5, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/bc94eff4a46f40ebdbba8c74ebf1f9e3/mali-officials-1-killed-3-injured-attack-north>.
- **January 2015:** Belmokhtar praises the Islamist attacks on French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* and kosher grocery store Hyper Cacher.
Source: "Veteran Algerian militant hails Paris killings," Reuters, January 12, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/12/us-france-shooting-militant-idUSKBN0KLOE020150112>.
- **April 11, 2014:** Al-Mourabitoun sends Mauritania's ANI news agency a video of one of three Algerian diplomats it is holding hostage.
MUJAO had kidnapped seven diplomats in April 2012 in Mali. Three were released and one was reportedly executed. The video is the first proof of life since January 2013. Source: Laurent Prieur, "Saharah Islamists release video of Algerian diplomat hostage - agency," Reuters, April 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/13/algeria-islamist-kidnapping-idUSL6N0N500F20140413>.
- **February 8, 2014:** Al-Mourabitoun kidnaps five Malian aid workers near Gao, Mali.
Source: Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014,

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<http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrnt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.

- **January 4, 2014:**Al-Mourabitoun threatens to target the interests of “France and her allies” in a statement sent to the Mauritanian website Nouakchott Information Agency.
Source: Robbie Corey-Boulet, “Website: Terror group threatens France over Mali,” Associated Press, January 6, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/website-terror-group-threatens-france-over-mali>.
- **November 21, 2013:**French forces kill Mokhtar’s second-in-command, Hacene Ould Khalil, a Mauritanian also known as Jouleibib.
Source: Adama Diarra, “French troops kill deputy to veteran Islamist Belmokhtar,” Reuters, November 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/21/us-mali-france-islamists-idUSBRE9AK0Q520131121>.
- **November 14, 2013:**Sultan Ould Badi, a Malian formerly affiliated with MUJAO and currently affiliated with AMB, claimed responsibility for a vehicle-borne IED that detonated at the Malian Solidarity Bank in the northern city of Kidal. The explosion killed two Senegalese MINUSMA troops and injured seven Malian Armed Forces who were guarding the bank. The perpetrator died in the bombing.Source: Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.
- **November 2013:**A suicide bomber attacks the French barracks in Menaka, Mali.
Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility and asserts the bombing killed French soldiers. The French military says only the bomber was killed.Source: “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- **November 2013:**Four soldiers die in an IED attack on a Malian army vehicle between Asongo and Menaka.
Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility.Source: “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- **October 23, 2013:**Four suicide bombers detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs) near a military camp in Mali’s Kidal region.
The bombers target a Chadian contingent of forces in MINUSMA (the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali). Two Chadian soldiers, one Malian civilian, and the four bombers are killed, while at least six others are wounded. AMB claims responsibility in the press.Source: Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.
- **October 2013:**Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility for firing rockets at the Gao airport in Mali.
The group also fires mortar shells at two bridges in Gao, destroying one.Sources: “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>; Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.
- **August 22, 2013:**AMB and MUJAO merge to form al-Mourabitoun.
The group releases a statement that the region’s jihadist movement is “stronger than ever.” Al-Mourabitoun announced its intentions to “rout” France and its allies in the region.Sources: “Belmokhtar’s militants ‘merge’ with Mali’s Mujao,” BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>; “Sahara jihadist groups merge, threaten French interests – report,” Reuters, August 22, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/22/northafrica-islamists-idUSL6N0GN20Q20130822>.
- **July 2013:**The United States offers a \$5 million reward for Belmokhtar’s capture.
Source: “Belmokhtar’s militants ‘merge’ with Mali’s Mujao,” BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>.
- **July 2013:**MUJAO releases a video of two of its members encouraging Muslims in France and the United States to carry out terrorist attacks.
Source: “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- **May 23, 2013:**AMB and the Mali-based MUJAO jointly carry out twin suicide attacks in Niger on a military camp and uranium mine run by the French company Areva.
The attacks kill 24 soldiers and one civilian.Sources: “Niger attacks launched from southern Libya - Niger’s president,” Reuters, May 25, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/25/niger-attacks-libya-idUSL5N0E60DD20130525>; “The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee,” U.N. Security Council, last modified May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.
- **February 2013:**A MUJAO car-bombing targets Tuareg separatist group the Liberation of the Azawad (MNL) at In-Khalil, Mali.
MUJAO reportedly believed the MNL was allied with French troops.Source: “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- **January 2013:**AMB takes over 800 people hostage during a four-day siege of the Tiguentourine gas facility in southeastern Algeria.
Thirty-nine civilians, including three U.S. citizens, are killed. Belmokhtar claims responsibility for what is considered one of the worst international hostage crises in decades.Sources: “Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations,” U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>; Lamine Chikhi, “WRAPUP 6-Algeria hostage crisis death toll hits 80, could rise further,” Reuters, January 20, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/20/sahara-crisis-idUSL6N0A037H20130120>; Lamine Chikhi, “WRAPUP 8-Algeria accuses Canadian, puts hostage toll at 38,” Reuters, January 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/21/sahara-crisis-idUSL6N0AP4TU20130121>.
- **December 2012:**MUJAO claims responsibility for the kidnapping of a Portuguese-French citizen in Mali.
Source: “Al-Murabitun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

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- **December 2012:** Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a commander in AQIM, leaves the group and forms the al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB). He creates a sub-battalion called al-Muwaqi'un Bil Dima ("Those Who Sign in Blood") and threatens to fight against Western interests. Source: "Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.
- **June 30, 2012:** MUJAO claims responsibility for a suicide bombing of the Algerian national gendarmerie headquarters in Ouargla, Algeria. Source: "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.
- **April 2012:** MUJAO kidnaps seven Algerian diplomats in Mali. Source: Laurent Prieur, "Saharah Islamists release video of Algerian diplomat hostage - agency," Reuters, April 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/13/algeria-islamist-kidnapping-idUSL6N0N500F20140413>.
- **December 2011:** The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) splinters from al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), reportedly over objections to Algerian dominance of AQIM's leadership. MUJAO declares its goal is to spread jihad across West Africa. Source: "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

Al-Mourabitoun

Violent history:

- **April 2012:** MUJAO kidnaps seven Algerian diplomats in Mali.⁵⁰
- **June 30, 2012:** MUJAO claims responsibility for a suicide bombing of the Algerian national gendarmerie headquarters in Ouargla, Algeria.⁵¹
- **December 2012:** MUJAO claims responsibility for the kidnapping of a Portuguese-French citizen in Mali.⁵²
- **January 2013:** AMB takes over 800 people hostage during a four-day siege of the Tiguentourine gas facility in southeastern Algeria. Thirty-nine civilians, including three U.S. citizens, are killed.⁵³ Belmokhtar claims responsibility for what is considered one of the worst international hostage crises in decades.⁵⁴
- **February 2013:** A Mujao car-bombing targets Tuareg separatist group the Liberation of the Azawad (MNL) at In-Khalil, Mali. The Mujao reportedly believed the MNL was allied with French troops.⁵⁵
- **May 23, 2013:** AMB and the Mali-based MUJAO (Movement for Oneness and Jihad) jointly carry out twin suicide attacks in Niger on a military camp and uranium mine run by the French company Areva. The attacks kill 24 soldiers and one civilian.⁵⁶
- **July 2013:** MUJAO releases a video of two of its members encouraging Muslims in France and the United States to carry out terrorist attacks.⁵⁷
- **October 2013:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility for firing rockets at the Gao airport in Mali. The group also fires mortar shells at two bridges in Gao, destroying one.⁵⁸
- **October 23, 2013:** Four suicide bombers detonate IEDs near a military camp in Mali's Kidal region. The bombers target a Chadian contingent of MINUSMA forces. Two Chadian soldiers, one Malian civilian, and the four bombers are killed, while at least six others are wounded. AMB claims responsibility in the press.⁵⁹
- **November 2013:** Four soldiers die in an IED attack on a Malian army vehicle between Asongo and Menaka. Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility.⁶⁰
- **November 2013:** A suicide bomber attacks the French barracks in Menaka, Mali. Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility and asserts the bombing killed French soldiers. The French military says only the bomber was killed.⁶¹
- **November 14, 2013:** Sultan Ould Badi, a Malian formerly affiliated with MUJAO and currently affiliated with AMB, claimed responsibility for a vehicle-borne IED that detonated at the Malian Solidarity Bank in the northern city of Kidal. The explosion killed two Senegalese MINUSMA troops and injured seven Malian Armed Forces who were guarding the bank. The perpetrator died in the bombing.⁶²
- **January 4, 2014:** Al-Mourabitoun threatens to target the interests of "France and her allies" in a statement sent to the Mauritanian website Nouakchott Information Agency.⁶³
- **February 8, 2014:** Al-Mourabitoun kidnaps five Malian aid workers near Gao, Mali.⁶⁴
- **April 11, 2014:** Al-Mourabitoun sends Mauritania's ANI news agency a video of one of three Algerian diplomats it is holding hostage. MUJAO had kidnapped seven diplomats in April 2012 in Mali. Three were released and one was reportedly executed. The video is the first proof of life since January 2013.⁶⁵
- **March 7, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility after an attack on the La Terrasse restaurant in Bamako, Mali, kills five people, including a Frenchman and a Belgian.⁶⁶
- **March 13, 2015:** Malian security forces are attacked while trying to arrest Mohamed Tanirou Cisse, the suspected driver who drove attackers to the La Terrasse a week earlier. Cisse is killed while resisting arrest.⁶⁷
- **April 15, 2015:** An attack on a U.N. peacekeeping base in Ansogo, Mali, kills three people and wounds 16. Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility.⁶⁸

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- **May 18, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun announces it kidnapped a Romanian citizen on April 4 in Burkina Faso.⁶⁹
- **November 20, 2015:** Al-Mourabitoun claims responsibility for a deadly gun and hostage attack on the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, allegedly as part of a joint attack with AQIM. According to U.N. spokesman Olivier Salgado, 21 people were killed in the attack when gunmen stormed the hotel using counterfeit diplomatic license plates.⁷⁰
- **January 15, 2016:** Militants attack a hotel in Burkina Faso and a police station outside of the capital, killing 30 people of 18 nationalities. The attack is believed to be carried out by al-Mourabitoun, in conjunction with AQIM.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Laurent Prieur, "Saharah Islamists release video of Algerian diplomat hostage - agency," Reuters, April 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/13/algeria-islamist-kidnapping-idUSL6N0N500F20140413>.

⁵¹ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁵² "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁵³ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Lamine Chikhi, "WRAPUP 6-Algeria hostage crisis death toll hits 80, could rise further," Reuters, January 20, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/20/sahara-crisis-idUSL6N0A037H20130120>; Lamine Chikhi, "WRAPUP 8-Algeria accuses Canadian, puts hostage toll at 38," Reuters, January 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/21/sahara-crisis-idUSL6N0AP4TU20130121>.

⁵⁵ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁵⁶ "Niger attacks launched from southern Libya - Niger's president," Reuters, May 25, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/25/niger-attacks-libya-idUSL5N0E60DD20130525>; "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last modified May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

⁵⁷ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁵⁸ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>; Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁵⁹ Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁶⁰ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁶¹ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁶² Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁶³ Robbie Corey-Boulet, "Website: Terror group threatens France over Mali," Associated Press, January 6, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/website-terror-group-threatens-france-over-mali>.

⁶⁴ Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.ibtimes.com/isis-threatens-eliminate-indias-central-bank-governor-raghuram-rajn-report-18843http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-s crt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.

⁶⁵ Laurent Prieur, "Saharah Islamists release video of Algerian diplomat hostage - agency," Reuters, April 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/13/algeria-islamist-kidnapping-idUSL6N0N500F20140413>.

⁶⁶ Baba Ahmed, "Mali officials: 1 killed, 3 injured in attack in north," Associated Press, April 5, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/bc94eff4a46f40ebbd8c74ebf1f9e3/mali-officials-1-killed-3-injured-attack-north>.

⁶⁷ Baba Ahmed, "Special forces kill Mali attack suspect, army official says," Reuters, March 13, 2015, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/fbfd43635d6e40e8975a9b948067e9a2/special-forces-kill-mali-attack-suspect-army-official-says>.

⁶⁸ Tiemoko Diallo and Adama Diarra, "Islamist group claims attack on U.N. peacekeepers in Mali," Reuters, April 18, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/18/us-mali-un-idUSKBN0N90F920150418>.

⁶⁹ Rukmini Callimachi, "Militant Group Says It Has Romanian Hostage," *New York Times*, May 18, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/19/world/middleeast/militant-group-says-it-has-romanian-hostage.html>.

⁷⁰ Faith Karimi and Erin Burnett, "Mali hotel attack: Gunmen barged in, shot at 'anything that moved,'" CNN, November 22, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/21/africa/mali-hotel-attack/>.

⁷¹ Nadia Khomami, "Burkina Faso hotel attack: 18 nationalities among dead," *Guardian* (London), January 16, 2016,

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<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/15/security-forces-battle-suspected-jihadists-in-burkina-faso-capital>;

Jason Burke, "Burkina Faso attack signals spread of Islamist menace," *Guardian* (London), January 16, 2016,

[://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/16/burkina-faso-attack-signals-spread-of-islamist-menace](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/16/burkina-faso-attack-signals-spread-of-islamist-menace);

Tim Lister, "Burkina Faso attack demonstrates al Qaeda revival in Africa," CNN, January 16, 2016,

<http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/16/world/burkina-faso-attack-al-qaeda/>; Drew Hinshaw and Zoumana Wonogo, "Al Qaeda Attacks in Burkina Faso Kill at Least 30," *Wall Street Journal*, January 17, 2016,

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/operation-ends-at-burkina-faso-hotel-seized-by-al-qaeda-1452936866>.

Al-Mourabitoun

Designations:

Designations by U.S. Government:



October 24, 2003: The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Mokhtar Belmokhtar a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.⁷²

December 7, 2012: The U.S. Department of State designated the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA, also known by MUJAO) a Specially Designated Global Terrorist under Executive Order 13224.⁷³

December 7, 2012: The U.S. Department of State designated MUJAO leaders Hamad el Khairy and Ahmed el Tilemsi Specially Designated Global Terrorists under Executive Order 13224.⁷⁴

December 18, 2013: The U.S. Department of State designated the “al-Mulathamun Battalion” a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a Specially Designated Global Terrorist entity. The State Department included “al-Murabitoun” as an alias of AMB.⁷⁵

Designations by Foreign Governments:



November 7, 2013: Canada designated “al-Muwaqi’un Bil Dima” a terrorist organization.⁷⁶

June 2, 2014: Canada designated “al-Murabitoun” a terrorist organization.⁷⁸

June 2, 2014: Canada designated “Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa” a terrorist organization.⁸⁰



December 5, 2012: New Zealand designated “Mouvement pour l’Unification et le Jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest (MUJAO)” a terrorist organization.⁷⁷

June 2, 2014: New Zealand designated al-Mourabitoun a terrorist organization.⁷⁹

June 2, 2014: New Zealand designated al-Mulathomoun a terrorist organization.⁸¹

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April 2, 2014: The United Arab Emirates designated al-Mourabitoun a terrorist organization.⁸²



June 16, 2014: The United Kingdom added al-Mourabitoun to its list of proscribed terrorist organizations.⁸³



June 2, 2014: The United Nations added al-Mourabitoun to its Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities list.⁸⁴



November 5, 2014: Australia listed “al-Murabitoun” as a terrorist organization.⁸⁵

⁷² “U.S. Designates Three Individuals And One Organization Involved In Terrorism In Algeria,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, October 24, 2003, <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js944.aspx>; “Recent OFAC Actions,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, October 24, 2003, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/pages/20031024.aspx>.

⁷³ “Terrorist Designations of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, Hamad el Khairy, and Ahmed el Tilemsi,” U.S. Department of State, December 7, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/12/201660.htm>.

⁷⁴ “Terrorist Designations of the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, Hamad el Khairy, and Ahmed el Tilemsi,” U.S. Department of State, December 7, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/12/201660.htm>.

⁷⁵ “Terrorist Designation of the Al-Mulathamum Battalion,” U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.htm>.

⁷⁶ “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.

⁷⁷ “Designated individuals and organisations,” New Zealand Police, May 23, 2015, <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/designated-entities-23-05-2015.pdf>.

⁷⁸ “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.

⁷⁹ “Designated individuals and organisations,” New Zealand Police, May 23, 2015, <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/designated-entities-23-05-2015.pdf>.

⁸⁰ “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>.

⁸¹ “Designated individuals and organisations,” New Zealand Police, May 23, 2015, <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/designated-entities-23-05-2015.pdf>.

⁸² “Government bans three alleged terrorist groups,” BBC Democracy Live, April 2, 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/democracylive/house-of-commons-26852754>.

⁸³ “Proscribed Terrorist Organizations,” U.K. Home Office, last modified March 27, 2015, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417888/Proscription-20150327.pdf.

⁸⁴ “The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee,” U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

⁸⁵ “Al-Murabitoun,” Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015,

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<http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

Al-Mourabitoun

Associations:

Ties to Extremist Entities:



[Al-Qaeda](#)

Mokhtar Belmokhtar is a former commander in al-Qaeda's North African franchise, AQIM. He left the group to form the al-Mulathamun Battalion in December 2012.⁸⁶

MUJAO is also a splinter group of AQIM.⁸⁷ Al-Mourabitoun coordinated with al-Qaeda and AQIM in its May 2013 attack in Niger.⁸⁸ The United Nations added al-Mourabitoun to its Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities list on June 2, 2014.⁸⁹ Al-Mourabitoun released an online statement declaring al-Qaeda-aligned

Belmokhtar its official leader on July 21, 2015. The statement was signed "Al Murabitoon - Al Qaeda in West Africa,"⁹⁰ signaling the group's official alignment with al-Qaeda.



[Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#)

Mokhtar Belmokhtar is a former commander in AQIM. He left the group to form the al-Mulathamun Battalion in

December 2012.⁹¹ MUJAO is also a splinter group of AQIM.⁹² Al-Mourabitoun coordinated with al-Qaeda and AQIM in its May 2013 attack in Niger.⁹³ Al-Mourabitoun also maintains contact with AQIM leaders, such as Yahia Djouadi, Ahmed Deghdegh, Mohamed Belkalem, Tayeb Nail, and Djamel Akkacha, AQIM's coordinator of groups associated with AQIM in northern Mali.⁹⁴



[Boko Haram](#)

Boko Haram has reportedly provided support to MUJAO.⁹⁵



[ISIS](#)

Al-Mourabitoun co-founder Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi reportedly pledged the group's allegiance to ISIS in May 2015. A week later, Mokhtar Belmokhtar rejected the pledge.⁹⁶

Ties to Extremist Individuals:

Al-Mourabitoun



[Ayman al-Zawahiri](#)

Al-Mourabitoun co-founder Mokhtar Belmokhtar has repeatedly sworn allegiance to al-Qaeda leader al-Zawahiri.⁹⁷ The two groups that merged to form al-Mourabitoun, al-Mulathamun and MUJAO, are both AQIM splinter groups.⁹⁸



[Abdelmalek Droukdel](#)

Droukdel is head of AQIM, which spawned al-Mulathamun and MUJAO. He is one of the leaders with whom al-Mourabitoun maintains contact.⁹⁹

⁸⁶ "Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>; Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁸⁷ "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁸⁸ "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

⁸⁹ "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

⁹⁰ Thomas Joscelyn, "Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads 'Al Qaeda in West Africa,'" Long War Journal, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.

⁹¹ "Currently Listed Entities," Public Safety Canada, last updated March 24, 2014, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx>; Country Reports on Terrorism 2013: Chapter 6: Foreign Terrorist Organizations," U.S. Department of State, April 2014, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>.

⁹² "Al-Murabitun," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Al-Murabitun.aspx>.

⁹³ "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

⁹⁴ "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

⁹⁵ "Boko Haram," Australian National Security, accessed June 17, 2015, <http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/Listedterroristorganisations/Pages/Boko-Haram.aspx>.

⁹⁶ Agence France-Presse, "Belmokhtar's jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS," Yahoo News, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>; Reuters, "Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report," *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>.

⁹⁷ Reuters, "Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report," *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>.

⁹⁸ "Terrorist Designation of the Al-Mulathamun Battalion," U.S. Department of State, December 18, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/218880.htm>.

⁹⁹ "The List established and maintained by the 1267/1989 Committee," U.N. Security Council, last updated May 22, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/1267.pdf>.

Al-Mourabitoun

Media Coverage:

Al-Mourabitoun's Emergence

In response to rumors that Mokhtar Belmokhtar's al-Mulathamun Brigade (AMB) had split with al-Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb (AQIM) in early 2013, analyst Aaron Zelin told Reuters that AQIM appeared to have initiated a "controlled fragmentation."¹⁰⁰ The August 2013 merger of the AMB with the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) to form al-Mourabitoun received widespread coverage because of Belmokhtar's infamy as an al-Qaeda commander and the AMB/MUJAO joint attack on a French uranium mine earlier that year.¹⁰¹ Since its emergence, al-Mourabitoun has specifically targeted French interests in the region, attracting the attention of Western media.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Myra MacDonald, "Belmokhtar burnishes jihadi credentials with Algeria attack," Reuters, January 17, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/17/sahara-crisis-belmokhtar-idUSL6N0AMCX620130117>.

¹⁰¹ "Belmokhtar's militants 'merge' with Mali's Mujao," BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>; "Sahara jihadist groups merge, threaten French interests - report," Reuters, August 22, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/22/northafrica-islamists-idUSL6N0GN20O20130822>.

¹⁰² Robbie Corey-Boulet, "Website: Terror group threatens France over Mali," Associated Press, January 6, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/website-terror-group-threatens-france-over-mali>; Adama Diarra, "French troops kill deputy to veteran Islamist Belmokhtar," Reuters, November 21, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/11/21/us-mali-france-islamists-idUSBRE9AK0Q520131121>.

Mokhtar Belmokhtar

[Mokhtar Belmokhtar](#) is repeatedly referred to in the media as one of Africa's "best known jihadists."¹⁰³ In January 2013, less than two years after the death of Osama bin Laden, Reuters' Myra MacDonald wrote that al-Mourabitoun co-founder Mokhtar Belmokhtar had "burnished his jihadi credentials by showing that al Qaeda remains a potent threat to Western interests despite" bin Laden's death.¹⁰⁴

The Libyan government reported Belmokhtar had been killed in a June 14, 2015, U.S. airstrike in the country.¹⁰⁵ U.S. media reported the claims with the caveat that U.S. officials had not yet confirmed Belmokhtar's death.¹⁰⁶ Media reports keyed in on Belmokhtar's connection to the 2013 Algeria attack that killed over 20 people.¹⁰⁷ Al-Mourabitoun later denied Belmokhtar had been killed and declared him its official leader in July 2015.¹⁰⁸

Sean Naylor called Belmokhtar's suspected death a "potentially significant U.S. counterterrorism win."¹⁰⁹ He argued in a June 15, 2015, *Foreign Policy* piece that Belmokhtar's reported death offered the United States an opportunity to target al-Mourabitoun before it regroups from the loss.¹¹⁰ Al-Mourabitoun's alleged pledge of allegiance to ISIS in May 2015¹¹¹ and Belmokhtar's reported death a month later drew media speculation that ISIS had "eclipsed" al-Mourabitoun's infamous co-founder.¹¹² *Time's* Jared Malsin wrote in June 2015 that "ISIS and other groups have come to eclipse Belmokhtar and those loyal to him..."¹¹³

The June 2015 strike was not the first time Belmokhtar has been presumed killed. Chadian forces claimed to have killed him in Mali on March 3, 2013.¹¹⁴ At the time, Western media eulogized Belmokhtar as a key leader in the global jihadist movement, without whom the movement could collapse. In an analysis piece for Reuters, Myra MacDonald wrote Belmokhtar's death "would be a serious blow to al Qaeda's efforts to recover its cohesion as a force for global jihad."¹¹⁵ Belmokhtar, she wrote, "proved al Qaeda remained a potent threat to Western interests."¹¹⁶

¹⁰³ Reuters, "Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report," *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>; Jared Malsin, "Jihadist Believed Killed By U.S. Air Strike Had Been Eclipsed by ISIS," *Time*, June 15, 2015, <http://time.com/3921560/mokhtar-belmokhtar-isis/>.

¹⁰⁴ Myra MacDonald, "Belmokhtar burnishes jihadi credentials with Algeria attack," Reuters, January 17, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/17/sahara-crisis-belmokhtar-idUSL6N0AMCX620130117>.

¹⁰⁵ Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Airstrike in Libya Targets Planner of 2013 Algeria Attack," *New York Times*, June 14, 2015,

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<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/15/world/middleeast/us-airstrike-targets-qaeda-operative-in-libya.html>; Reuters, "U.S. Confirms Militant Belmokhtar Was Target of Libya Air Strike," *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-libya-usa-target.html?_r=0; Reuters, "Libya Says 'Uncatchable' Veteran Militant Killed in U.S. Strike," *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-usa-libya.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Reuters, "U.S. Confirms Militant Belmokhtar Was Target of Libya Air Strike," *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-libya-usa-target.html?_r=0; Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Airstrike in Libya Targets Planner of 2013 Algeria Attack," *New York Times*, June 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/15/world/middleeast/us-airstrike-targets-qaeda-operative-in-libya.html>.

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, "U.S. Confirms Militant Belmokhtar Was Target of Libya Air Strike," *New York Times*, June 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/06/15/world/africa/15reuters-libya-usa-target.html?_r=0; Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Airstrike in Libya Targets Planner of 2013 Algeria Attack," *New York Times*, June 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/15/world/middleeast/us-airstrike-targets-qaeda-operative-in-libya.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Joscelyn, "Mokhtar Belmokhtar now leads 'Al Qaeda in West Africa,'" *Long War Journal*, August 13, 2015, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2015/08/mokhtar-belmokhtar-now-leads-al-qaeda-in-west-africa.php>.

¹⁰⁹ Sean D. Naylor, "Will the U.S. Go After Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Network?" *Foreign Policy*, June 15, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/15/militants-death-would-present-united-states-with-a-dilemma/>.

¹¹⁰ Sean D. Naylor, "Will the U.S. Go After Mokhtar Belmokhtar's Network?" *Foreign Policy*, June 15, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/15/militants-death-would-present-united-states-with-a-dilemma/>.

¹¹¹ Agence France-Presse, "Belmokhtar's jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS," *Yahoo News*, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>; Reuters, "Sahara Islamist Leader Belmokhtar Dismisses Islamic State Pledge: Report," *New York Times*, May 17, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/reuters/2015/05/17/world/africa/17reuters-sahara-militants.html>.

¹¹² Jared Malsin, "Jihadist Believed Killed By U.S. Air Strike Had Been Eclipsed by ISIS," *Time*, June 15, 2015, <http://time.com/3921560/mokhtar-belmokhtar-isis/>.

¹¹³ Jared Malsin, "Jihadist Believed Killed By U.S. Air Strike Had Been Eclipsed by ISIS," *Time*, June 15, 2015, <http://time.com/3921560/mokhtar-belmokhtar-isis/>.

¹¹⁴ Myra MacDonald, "Belmokhtar burnishes jihadi credentials with Algeria attack," Reuters, January 17, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/17/sahara-crisis-belmokhtar-idUSL6N0AMCX620130117>.

¹¹⁵ Myra MacDonald, "Belmokhtar burnishes jihadi credentials with Algeria attack," Reuters, January 17, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/17/sahara-crisis-belmokhtar-idUSL6N0AMCX620130117>.

¹¹⁶ Myra MacDonald, "Belmokhtar burnishes jihadi credentials with Algeria attack," Reuters, January 17, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/17/sahara-crisis-belmokhtar-idUSL6N0AMCX620130117>.

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Rhetoric:



[Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi, May 18, 2015](#)

*Offering terms to the Romanian government on the release of a Romanian man kidnapped the month prior: “The Romanian government will be entirely responsible for the fate of the hostage if it does not take the opportunity given to free its citizen.”*¹¹⁷



[Adnan Abu Waleed al-Sahrawi, May 18, 2015](#)

*Pledging al-Mourabitoun’s allegiance to ISIS and its self-appointed caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: “We call upon all the jihadi groups to pledge allegiance to the Caliph, to unify the word of the Muslims and align the ranks in front of the enemies of religion.”*¹¹⁸



[Statement, May 2015](#)

*“The Al-Murabitoun movement pledges its allegiance to the caliph of Muslims Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (IS leader), thereby banishing divisions and dissent within the (Muslim community).”*¹¹⁹



[Statement, April 2015](#)

*“We, the Mourabitoun group, announce the martyrdom operation that one of our knights, Ibrahim al-Ansari, undertook at the headquarters of the Nigerian forces.”*¹²⁰



[Mokhtar Belmokhtar, March 2015](#)

*“[Claiming responsibility for the shootout attack in Mali’s capital that killed five: This attack was a reprisal attack] against the heathen West which has offended our prophet.”*¹²¹



[Statement, January 4, 2014](#)

*“The mujahedeen will not rest with arms crossed facing this situation, even if, today, the voice of injustice prevails.”*¹²²



[Mokhtar Belmokhtar, August 22, 2013](#)

*“We say to France and its allies in the region ... the Mujahideen have met and agreed to defeat your armies and destroy your plans and projects.”*¹²³



[Statement, August 2013](#)

*“Your brothers in Mujao and Al-Mulathameen [Masked Men Brigade] announce their union and fusion in one movement called Al-Murabitoun to unify the ranks of Muslims around the same goal, from the Nile to the Atlantic.”*¹²⁴



[Mokhtar Belmokhtar, August 2013](#)

*“It is the birth of a group that includes Mujahideen and even Muslims in North Africa from the country of the Nile and the Atlantic.”*¹²⁵

Al-Mourabitoun



[Mokhtar Belmokhtar, January 20, 2013](#)

"[Claiming responsibility for lethal hostage crisis at a gas plant in Algeria:] We in al Qaeda announce this blessed operation."¹²⁶



[Mokhtar Belmokhtar, Late 2011](#)

Stresses the need to "attack Western and Jewish economic and military interests."¹²⁷

¹¹⁷ "Islamist group says holding Romanian hostage seized in Burkina," Reuters, May 19, 2015, <http://ca.reuters.com/article/topNews/idCAKBN0041GF20150519>.

¹¹⁸ Associated Press, "Sahara Extremists Pledge Allegiance to Islamic State Group," *New York Times*, May 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2015/05/14/world/middleeast/ap-ml-north-africa-islamic-state.html>.

¹¹⁹ Agence France-Presse, "Belmokhtar's jihadist group in N.Africa vows allegiance to IS," Yahoo News, May 14, 2015, <http://news.yahoo.com/al-qaeda-linked-belmokhtar-group-n-africa-claims-001449854.html>.

¹²⁰ Tiemoko Diallo and Adama Diarra, "Islamist group claims attack on U.N. peacekeepers in Mali," Reuters, April 18, 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/18/us-mali-un-idUSKBN0N90F920150418>.

¹²¹ Associated Press, "3 dead, 12 wounded in attack on UN base in Mali," Fox News, March 8, 2015, <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2015/03/08/mali-3-dead-12-wounded-in-attack-on-un-base-in-northeastern-city-kidal/>.

¹²² Robbie Corey-Boulet, "Website: Terror group threatens France over Mali," Associated Press, January 6, 2014, <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/website-terror-group-threatens-france-over-mali>.

¹²³ "Sahara jihadist groups merge, threaten French interests - report," Reuters, August 22, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/22/northafrica-islamists-idUSL6N0GN20Q20130822>.

¹²⁴ "Belmokhtar's militants 'merge' with Mali's Mujao," BBC News, August 22, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-23796920>.

¹²⁵ Kissima Diagana and John Irish, "Sahara jihadist groups merge, threaten French interests - report," Reuters, August 22, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/22/northafrica-islamists-idUSL6N0GN20Q20130822>.

¹²⁶ Lamine Chikhi, "WRAPUP 6-Algeria hostage crisis death toll hits 80, could rise further," Reuters, January 20, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/20/sahara-crisis-idUSL6N0AO37H20130120>.

¹²⁷ Myra MacDonald, "Belmokhtar burnishes jihadi credentials with Algeria attack," Reuters, January 17, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/17/sahara-crisis-belmokhtar-idUSL6N0AMCX620130117>.