

## AQIM Media Official Blames Niger-France for Death of French Hostages

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Al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb [AQIM] has presented its account of the abduction of the two French hostages and killing few days ago in clashes between Al-Qaeda members on the one hand and the French and Nigerien forces on the other. In an audio recording attributed to the AQIM media official, he said that the battle led to the killing of the two hostages and a number of French and Nigerien soldiers.

A group of hero mujahidin of the masked squad [Al-Mulathimin] carried out a brave operation in the heart of the Nigerien capital, Niamey on Friday 7 January. The squad broke into the fortified diplomatic neighborhood and succeeded in abducting two French nationals, with God's grace. Although the mujahidin, while [word not clear] sent cables to the French and Nigerien officials warning them against any attempt of military interference, Sarkozy and his reckless government did not understand the lessons of past failures and repeated the same foolishness. Two heroic battles took place between the mujahidin and the French-Nigerien forces leading to drastic failure in the attempt to rescue the hostages. The two abducted French and two members of the French Special Forces were killed, and others were wounded. Twenty-five Nigerien soldiers, among them their leader, were either killed or wounded, and a French helicopter was destroyed. As for the mujahidin, only two brothers were martyred. They are Muhammad Bin-Hamdi al-Azawadi and Al-Mustafa al-Ansari of the Niger Tuareg, may God have mercy on their souls.

