

# The Moor Next Door

## Maghreb Affairs :: Geopolitics :: International Relations

### Again on Mauritania kidnappings

New information seems to highlight the criminal, rather than ideological and terrorist, aspects of the recent Mauritania kidnappings.

There is a disinterest in whole affair in official and elite circles. The overall attitude looks for “more pressing problems” unrelated to the kidnappings. The chief concern, as far as the kidnappings are concerned, is Mauritania’s image, which many believe is suffering as a result of recent AQIM activities.

Well placed Mauritanian sources have it that the kidnappers were not Mauritians and were not regular AQIM members. Rather the kidnappers were hired guns of multiple west African nationalities (Nigerians being mentioned specifically; it is also said that a least one of the kidnappers was a non-Muslim Nigerian) who were put up to doing the kidnapping for cash. From those hands they were transferred to AQIM in Mali.

That information forces one to ask questions about AQIM recruitment and operation capabilities. For those committed to the government-proxy theory it raises suspicions, given that the kidnappers came from outside Mauritania (and were not from the desert countries). Additionally, for those less attached to the proxy thesis, it raises a number of tactical and operational questions, especially its reach in the south and its connections to international criminal networks in west Africa and perhaps even beyond ([https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/19/world/africa/19narco.html?\\_r=1&hp](https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/19/world/africa/19narco.html?_r=1&hp)). More yet to come.

**Update:** Around 9:00 PM last night two Italians

([https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jsJJFsJJ35\\_yu0iA1MN\\_hLhLA3iQD9CMFB2O0](https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jsJJFsJJ35_yu0iA1MN_hLhLA3iQD9CMFB2O0)), one originally from Burkina Faso were kidnapped

([https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.taqadoumy-fr.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2813&ac=0&Itemid=29](https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.taqadoumy-fr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2813&ac=0&Itemid=29)) in Menssiera

(<https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://www.ani.mr/?menuLink=9bf31c7ff062936a96d3c8bd1f8f2ff3&idNews=7625>) east of Kobenni and near the Malian border. More updates to follow.

Posted in [Africa](#), [AQIM](#), [Maghreb](#), [Mali](#), [Mauritania](#), [Recently in Mauritania](#), [Al Qaeda terrorism](#), [Third World](#) on 18 December, 2009 by [Kal](#).

[19 Comments](#) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140520042332/http://en.wordpress.com/widgets/trackback.php>)

## 19 comments

1. **tidinit** says:

19 December, 2009 at 7:10 am

Thanks Kal for this. The abduction was done exactly like for Fowler and Guay in Niger. They are not Mauritians or regular AQIM members?

They seem already in Mali, according to some move by ATT and an article saying that the same go-between of El Para’s era is brought again to help ( see Temoust).

Never seen so much money spent and not getting a single AQIM before and after ransom payments. No a single one, besides El Para who got caught by chance by hungry Chadian warlords and sold him to Libya as Algeria and the US did not wanted him ...

If this stuff is a criminal act and not an ideological nonsense or manipulation by some idiots for oil and gaz, then we are really dead: money is in and people will never leave this business of ransom and drug trafficking.

REPLY

2. **telefiend** says:

19 December, 2009 at 10:14 am

Allegedly, there was just another in or near Mali. We've only received an SMS via our channels. Don't find any news on the wires yet. Hope it's not true.

REPLY

1. **Kal** says:

19 December, 2009 at 11:15 am

Two Italians, man and wife, in southern Mauritania.

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jsJJEJJ35\\_yu0iA1MN\\_hLhLA3iQD9CMFB2O0](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jsJJEJJ35_yu0iA1MN_hLhLA3iQD9CMFB2O0)

REPLY

3. **tidinit** says:

19 December, 2009 at 2:47 pm

Guys,

This can't be criminals, taking hostages here and there. These are capitals' doing. I've told you that those who took the canadian diplomats were not AQIM and they pretended so. A new player is in the region and borrowed the manipulation tactics from whom you think started this whole business of AQIM and hostage taking.

I would take my time to think about this. This is not definitively our regular razzia (ghazzi or ghazwa) and it is more sophisticated ...

REPLY

4. Pingback: [Sunday Africa Blog Roundup: Guinea, Aminatou Haidar, Mauritania Kidnappings, Sudan Elections « Sahel Blog](#)

5. **Bob Thomson** says:

20 December, 2009 at 3:32 pm

As for another player in the region, see Jeremy Keenan's piece about AQIM actually being a creation of the Algerian DRS and the US. [http://www.environmentalrisk.eu/template/news/article/498/Sahara\\_Focus\\_role\\_in\\_the\\_release\\_of\\_the\\_Canadian\\_diplomats/www.menas.co.uk](http://www.environmentalrisk.eu/template/news/article/498/Sahara_Focus_role_in_the_release_of_the_Canadian_diplomats/www.menas.co.uk)

REPLY

6. **alle** says:

21 December, 2009 at 6:19 pm

Jeremy Keenan clearly knows a lot about Touareg politics and the Sahara, but his constant claims about the AQIM as a DRS-CIA puppet strike me as pure conspiracy theory, and it's kind of a problem that he's the only one ever speaking about these things in the media.

Remember that this guy spent five years constantly ridiculing the notion that there could be any sort of connection between al-Qaida and the GSPC; when Ayman al-Zawahiri then publicly announced their formal merger on a video tape in 2006, was there a mea culpa? No, he just quietly switched his tune to saying that the actual kidnappings are carried out by people posing as al-Qaida...

Whatever government involvement there is in the kidnapping circus in the Sahara (I'm sure there could be much meddling, although direct control is unlikely), it's not any closer to being investigated for Mr. Keenan ranting about the CIA and some nefarious international mega-conspiracy. As I see it, that's just the flip side of how the US brands every Muslim thug with a gun "al-Qaida". It always has to be about "us", never a local phenomenon, always a secret global cabal ... the question is just whether it's in Waziristan or the Pentagon.

In that last report, Keenan apparently imagines himself having forced the release of the hostages because he single-handedly debated Gen. Toufik and the Algerian media into submission.

*Confronted with such evidence, Mediene's response was to distributed further disinformation through his own newspapers. This, in turn, was refuted by Sahara Focus [Keenan] on 5th April and was once again publicly distributed. We believe that this pressure on Mediene afforded him no option but to ensure the release of the hostages as soon as possible and before further damage is done to Algeria.*

7. [Feedback: Update on Sahel Kidnappings & Sahel Blog](#)

8. **tidinit** says:

22 December, 2009 at 12:46 pm

Alle,

Don't throw what Jeremy Keenan is saying, as well as other conspiracy theorists. There is a hand anyway behind all this and AQIM does not exist by itself. Whose hand? That is the question. Keenan would have made some wrong assumptions, but not all 100% is wrong.

REPLY

9. **tidinit** says:

24 December, 2009 at 3:46 am

interesting this manhunt story in Yemen. Why it can't be done after payment of ransoms or the killing of the British hostage?

[http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/12/23/021223fa\\_fact](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/12/23/021223fa_fact)

REPLY

10. **tidinit** says:

25 December, 2009 at 3:15 am

Is this the best way to handle this issue? When the powerful among those interested refuse to sit and discuss the obvious solution with the weaker one. I mean refusing to come to the heads of state security summit called by ATT several time, although Morocco was not invited. I think ATT did his part and I am not certain whether a resolution of the Security Council will solve anything. Wondering why the UN and the African Union (AU) have not pushed for this summit since the start. Too much interference by the powerful in these two bodies? I think so.

[http://www.cridem.org/index.php?](http://www.cridem.org/index.php?id=82&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39219&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=36&cHash=047ed7ac3e)

[id=82&no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=39219&tx\\_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=36&cHash=047ed7ac3e](http://www.cridem.org/index.php?id=82&no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=39219&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=36&cHash=047ed7ac3e)

REPLY

11. **tidinit** says:

25 December, 2009 at 3:20 am

Oops. Bad link above. Sorry. The text is here. Tidinit

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L'Algérie présentera une motion à l'Onu : Le versement de rançon sera pénalisé

Soutenue par des Etats membres du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, la proposition de l'Algérie pourrait aboutir à une résolution de l'Assemblée générale.

Pénalisation de l'acte de versement de rançon aux groupes terroristes, telle est la motion que déposera l'Algérie à l'ONU dans les jours à venir. Et cette proposition a toutes les chances d'aboutir, d'autant qu'elle est soutenue par des Etats membres du Conseil de sécurité, notamment les Etats-Unis, la Russie et le Royaume-Uni.

Cette annonce a été faite, hier, par M.Merouane Azzi, avocat responsable de la cellule chargée du dossier de la Réconciliation nationale à la cour d'Alger. «Une résolution du Conseil de sécurité portant sur la pénalisation du versement de rançon par des Etats aux groupes terroristes privera, à coup sûr, ces derniers de revenus financiers importants», a déclaré Maître Azzi lors d'une conférence sur les droits de l'homme dans le monde, animée au siège du quotidien El Moudjahid à Alger.

Ces derniers temps, Al Qaïda au Maghreb islamique s'est lancée dans le business des otages occidentaux. Cette pratique s'est répandue surtout dans les pays du Sahel. A la fin du mois de novembre dernier, un Français et trois Espagnols ont été enlevés par l'Aqmi.

Le Français, Pierre Camatte, 61 ans, a été kidnappé dans la nuit du 25 au 26 novembre à Ménaka à plus de 1500 km au nord-est de la capitale malienne, Bamako. Pour les Espagnols, ils ont été enlevés le 29 du même mois, à 170 km au nord de la capitale mauritanienne Nouakchott. Ces derniers font partie de l'organisation non gouvernementale, Barcelona Accio Solidaria. La multiplication de ces rapt met en évidence les difficultés financières dont souffrent les groupes terroristes, à l'instar de l'Aqmi.

«Al Qaïda au Maghreb islamique (Aqmi) a besoin d'argent, les otages peuvent devenir un business. D'autres groupes peuvent enlever les Occidentaux pour eux et les leur amener. On a l'impression que cela devient un business dans la zone (Sahel)», a expliqué, à ce sujet, Alain Antil, chercheur à l'Institut français des relations internationales (Ifri) de Paris.

Face à la menace de leur exécution, certains pays occidentaux auraient versé une somme de 10 millions d'euros pour la libération de leurs otages détenus par les groupes terroristes d'Al Qaïda. Cette organisation recourt de plus en plus à la demande de rançon.

L'organisation est «étranglée financièrement, en particulier en Algérie, et est incapable d'atteindre ses objectifs en matière de recrutement», avait affirmé, à la mi-novembre devant le Congrès américain, le coordinateur pour l'antiterrorisme au département d'Etat, Daniel Benjamin. Forte de son expérience, l'Algérie milite pour la mise en place d'un arsenal juridique international pour l'interdiction de versement de rançon aux groupes terroristes.

Septembre dernier, le président algérien, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, a plaidé devant l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU pour «l'interdiction absolue de paiement de rançon aux preneurs d'otages qui a atteint, au cours des dernières années, des proportions inquiétantes». Selon lui, «le produit de ces rançons s'est révélé être, désormais, la principale source de financement du terrorisme».

En ce sens, une résolution du Conseil de sécurité permettra de réduire les capacités de nuisance des groupes terroristes. Ce qui rendra plus facile la lutte antiterroriste dans le monde, surtout dans les pays du Sahel.

Mohamed Sadek LOUCIF

REPLY

12. **tidinit** says:

26 December, 2009 at 2:09 am

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Que pasa?

<http://www.temoust.org/l-armee-prepare-la-succession-de,12981>

REPLY

13. **tidinit** says:

26 December, 2009 at 6:14 am

Here comes Poutine and la Pravda to complicate things. I read last time that Russia wanted to help Niger and I dont know what happened after. I guess Russia is focusing on Niger because it is in the middle of the yet to come Trans Sahara Gaz Pipeline (TSGP). No prospect for peace in this region, unfortunately.

<http://www.temoust.org/usa-to-take-all-of-niger-s-uranium,12984>

REPLY

1. **Kal** says:

26 December, 2009 at 1:38 pm

Thanks for the links, Tidinit. The Russia story strikes me as being immediately linked to the pipeline like you say. It looks like they want to make nice with the countries on the TSGP route to offset any independent or European influence over it when it actually gets up and running. They're interested in Nigeria in a new way too.

REPLY

14. **tidinit** says:

27 December, 2009 at 5:18 pm

Why is Mali negotiating for the release of the hostages? Seems that Ould Sheikh, the go-between in the release of some of the 32 hostages and the Canadian diplomats, is again called to help. This gives credit to Keenan's conspiracy theory and for the rest of us who tend to believe him. Ould Sheikh is the mayor of Tarkint where the cocaine cargo landed. Not certain that the plane had any drug at all. Got the impression that there is a shift to make us believe that AQIM is now more on drug trade and less on religion as that storyline is not holding too much. I may be wrong. Waiting for Kal or Alle giving us some insight on the basis of what we have read so far in the press that is conveying lies told by "informed" sources, that is, the security people in the region's countries. Nothing they say is near the truth.

REPLY

15. **tidinit** says:

28 December, 2009 at 1:35 am

If AQIM is just a bunch of thugs and drug dealers with no support from any capital, why not then get ride of them before or after ransom payment, like what has been done recently in Yemen (see link)? The area is empty, certainly well looked after with spy planes and other human and technological surveillance equipments, no population and therefore no risk for collateral damage to the innocents. Is GWOT in sahara-sahel a serious business or just a game? They seem to be just between 50 and 200 these thugs, if we believe what security people say to the press ...

<http://fr.news.yahoo.com/fc/yemen.html>

REPLY

[http://www.taqadoumy-fr.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2846&ac=0&Itemid=29](http://www.taqadoumy-fr.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2846&ac=0&Itemid=29)

[REPLY](#)

17. [pot effects](#) says:

[30 October, 2012 at 2:17 am](#)

Yes! Finally something about marijuana.

[REPLY](#)

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