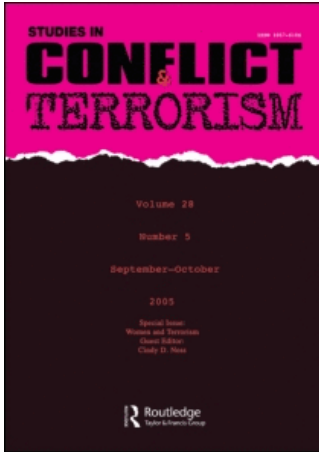


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Counterterrorism Strategy in the Sahel

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The GSPC—more recently titled Al Qaeda in the Maghreb—has maintained a small but significant level of terrorist unrest in the countries of the Sahel for a number of years. Although GSPC activities have been rather small-scale, they have added to the host of other security failures plaguing the region. The United State has begun devoting more attention to the regional security gaps and has started to implement an overall strategy in response. The more broadly-based approaches to dealing with security, economic, and political problems show promise, but only if the United States and regional countries maintain their focus on the long term.

The countries of the Sahel region of Africa continue to face significant security problems, with terrorist groups adding to their insecurity. Although terrorist operations have been small-scale in the region, they add to the host of difficulties in governing the area. In response to the perceived increased threat, the U.S. government has begun providing more security assistance to the region. Unless the ongoing U.S. support programs are carefully planned and demonstrate a long-term commitment, however, they are likely to be unsuccessful and possibly even counterproductive.

The U.S.-proclaimed Global War on Terror commonly is viewed as encompassing Afghanistan and (however arguably) Iraq almost exclusively.¹ The reality, however, is that U.S. military forces are increasingly active in training and supporting other countries' security forces in a wide geographical spread. These have included countries in Latin America, Central Asia, the Horn of Africa, and Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines. One additional area that is receiving increased attention is the Sahel region of Africa.

The Sahel region borders the Sahara desert and comprises Mali, Mauritania, Chad, and Niger. Its strategic importance involves several factors. The first is that the countries straddle a critical region between North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa; long-established trade and migration routes run through the area.² The Sahel borders several countries—most notably Algeria and Sudan—with serious internal security problems that can spill over. Most Sahelian countries are lightly governed outside their capitals, giving potential access to terrorist groups in outlying areas. Finally, the region has the potential for being a source of important natural resources, particularly oil. All these factors have significantly increased U.S. attention to the region. This article is intended to survey the terrorism environment in the Sahel, the U.S.'s strategy for supporting regional counterterrorism efforts, and potential issues with this strategy.

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The Perceived Terrorist Threat

The principal terrorist group of concern in the Sahel region is the Salafist Group for Preaching (or Call) and Combat (GSPC). Formed in 1998, the GSPC is a rump group of the most hard-core remaining members of the former Algerian insurgents of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). Many GSPC members received training in camps in Afghanistan and have had links to Al Qaeda, and its leaders signed a pledge of allegiance to Al Qaeda in 2003. In 2007, the group formally renamed itself as Al Qaeda in the Maghreb. Actual practical linkages between the GSPC and Al Qaeda are, however, likely minimal or nonexistent. At its maximum, the GSPC likely has not had a strength of over 300 to 500 members.³

There has been some debate as to the security significance of the GSPC. Some analysts have argued that the group is in decline; with both security and political efforts of the Algerian government bearing fruit.⁴ There have been reports of defections and splits within the organization, with many members surrendering to the government under amnesty programs. The Algerian army conducted a major offensive against GSPC and GIA groups in June 2004, killing the GSPC leader Nabil Sarhaoui and other senior leaders. Sarhaoui was succeeded by Abou Mossab Abdelwadoud, who reportedly is a “fervent” supporter of Al Qaeda. Since the leadership change, there have been several attacks by the GSPC within Algeria resulting in some significant civilian casualties; however, the group’s operations certainly have not been as widespread (or as bloody) as that of the GIA in the worst days of the Algerian civil war.

If the GSPC’s activities have been somewhat curtailed within Algeria itself, it has had a continuing impact on other regional countries. The GSPC has been quite active both in the fringe areas of Algeria and in neighboring countries in the Sahel. Between February and March 2003, the GSPC seized 32 European tourists in southern Algeria, holding them for six months until releasing them in Mali. The kidnappers fled into Chad, whereupon a senior GSPC leader Ammar Saifi—also known as Abderazzak el Para for his service as an Algerian paratrooper—was captured by a rebel group in Chad and sent to Algeria.⁵ In March 2004, the Chadian army fought members of the group along the Libyan border, killing 28. Also in 2004, Nigerian police killed three GSPC members, and there were clashes between Malian soldiers and the GSPC along the Algerian border. In June 2005, some 150 members of the GSPC attacked a military base in Mauritania, killing 15 Mauritanian soldiers. In a statement from the group, the GSPC announced that the attack was “revenge for our brothers who were rounded up by the Mauritanian regime and in support for oppressed Muslims in that country” and that it was “a message which implies that our activity is not restricted to fighting the internal enemy, but all the enemies of the religion wherever they are.”⁶

The GSPC has conducted few operations in 2006. GSPC leaders have, however, continued their threats. In early 2006, Mukhtar Bilmukhtar, also known as Khaled Abu al Abbas, issued a threat on the internet to attack U.S. military targets in the Sahel and Sahara.⁷ The capability of the GSPC to launch major operations—given its limited strength and probable isolation in remote areas—is questionable.

It should be noted that at least one analyst has called GSPC involvement in the Sahel into question. Even though the GSPC website claimed responsibility for the 2005 attack in Mauritania, Jeremy Keenan, a British scholar on the Sahara, has asserted that this claim was false and that in fact “Probably 90% of the Saharan population just knows that the GSPC is just a pseudonym for the Algerian security services, and there’s a lot of truth in that.”⁸ The underlying logic of this argument is that the GSPC-attributed attacks in the Sahel were false-flag operations launched by the Algerian security services in an effort to receive additional U.S. support. This argument is almost certainly overstated, because

the GSPC clearly has an independent identity and many of its attacks have not served the Algerian government's interests.

At the same time, however, governments in the Sahel certainly have a vested interest in stressing the threat from the GSPC and other Islamist groups. In some cases, the crackdown on Islamist "terrorists" has been very problematical, with virtually any oppositionist groups—particularly those based around mosques, which commonly provide the major political space with some level of independence—branded as terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. Mauritania has provided some of the most egregious examples of this, including a crackdown in May 2005 that involved the arrest of at least 30 suspects, at least most of whom appeared to be unconnected to any terrorist groups.⁹

Also, the remaining GSPC groups have been marginalized into remote areas, most commonly around the national borders. Since populations in the Sahel region tend to be concentrated, this lessens both the number of targets and the number of potential recruits for the groups. On the other hand, however, these remote areas mean that governments involved have difficulties in conducting operations and that the groups are more likely to retain relatively secure areas in which to rest and regroup. Additionally, as noted later, all the Sahelian countries have other significant internal security issues. The presence of even relatively peripheral terrorist cells can have an impact beyond their numbers in terms of adding to the overall environment of instability.

Broader Security Issues

The larger internal security issues within the various Sahelian countries can have a significant impact on counterterrorism planning against possible Al Qaeda-linked groups. One potentially significant group in the overall security environment is the Tuareg. The Tuareg are a nomadic group of about 1.3 million that straddles the borders of several countries, including southern Algeria, southwest Libya, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali.¹⁰ They are particularly significant in northern Mali. The Tuareg engaged in uprisings in both Niger and Mali in the early 1990s. In Mali, the Tuareg faced particularly severe government security force operations, including destruction of their villages and reported massacres. As a result, many thousand Tuareg became refugees in neighboring countries.¹¹ After the uprising in Mali, the government and the Tuareg rebel group reached an accord, but integration of the Tuareg into the political, social, and economic systems of the country remained weak. As an official of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs noted, "The peace agreements signed after the Tuareg rebellions were not fully respected, reintegration was not adequately implemented and the political systems did not take into account the aspirations of the inhabitants."¹²

A major result of this lack of integration is a situation that approaches a security vacuum in Tuareg areas. Banditry has increased in the area, and "Cigarette, fuel and weapon smuggling is carried out by the population."¹³ The amount of smuggling in Mali has been exacerbated significantly because there are no customs posts along the Mali-Algeria border. There have in fact been some armed clashes in the Sahel area between security forces and "bandits." Increased security measures in the Tuareg regions—even if directed at other groups—likely will not be received well by those involved in banditry to survive. Also, the fact that Tuareg kinship groups extend across borders makes it very difficult to control national borders.

There are few indications of any particular sympathies among the Tuareg for Al Qaeda or the GSPC. In part, this is due to the moderate form of Islam practiced by the Tuareg; as Ag Hindi, a professor at the University of Bamako, noted, the Tuareg "are Muslim by

conformity, not by conviction.”¹⁴ It also likely results from the brutalities inflicted on their fellow Berber-speaking cousins in Algeria by the GIA and AIS during the war in Algeria (although it should be noted that the Berbers also suffered at the hands of the Algerian security forces). As such, thus far there has been no indication of potential alliances between the Tuareg and the GSPC.

Nevertheless, according to one regional diplomatic source, “The Tuareg movement is an opposition movement fighting for territory, autonomy and resource management, and nothing a priori links them to groups such as the GSPC. However, you cannot rule out the possibility that the GSPC has started planting seeds among them.”¹⁵ Also, there has been a marked increase in proselytizing among the Tuareg by the Islamic group Jama’at al Tabligh; although this group is ostensibly apolitical and has no record of violence, its activities are viewed with considerable suspicion by many governments.¹⁶

Other groups within the region also have received more attention from Islamists. Most Muslim Sahelians traditionally have practiced a moderate form of Sufism. Recent years, however, have been marked by an increase in Wahhabi proselytizing and groups preaching a stricter form of Islam, whether Wahhabi or Salafist.¹⁷

Internal security issues unassociated with the GSPC or Al Qaeda affiliates also play a role in the overall environment. Beyond the issue of the Tuareg, other internal groups pose some level of security concerns, notably Chad’s internal rebel group, the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (MDJT). More recently, the Chadian government faced a significant coup attempt. In March 2006, rebel army officers reportedly tried to shoot down President Deby’s plane to seize control of the country.¹⁸ This followed similar unrest and smaller scale unrest among the military.

Complicating the situation has been one of the legacies of French colonial rule. When the French turned over power, they essentially did so to the non-Muslim Sara tribe in the South.¹⁹ Much of the internal unrest in Chad has emanated from Muslim ethnic groups struggling to gain more power. More recently, additional signs of internal fissures within the military in Chad indicate an even greater prospect for turmoil in the country and the possibility of additional armed opposition.²⁰

Events in Mauritania also emphasize internal security problems that could have a major impact on U.S. security plans in the region. The coup on 3 August 2005 that ousted President Maaouiya Ould Sid’ Ahmed Taya, a pro-U.S. leader who also had established good relations with Israel, has significantly complicated efforts to build regional coalitions. Although Ould Taya was widely unpopular and the coup appeared to have significant popular support, his removal introduced fresh political uncertainties.²¹ The intentions of the new military government as to future counterterrorism cooperation with the United States—and with other regional governments—remain rather unclear, despite initial statements indicating that it plans to continue supporting the coalition.²² Even if the Mauritanian regime wants to work with the United States, the political and diplomatic fallout of a U.S. relationship with a military government could outweigh joint counterterrorism operations. The potential good news for the United States is that the military rulers have pledged an early return to democracy, and the Mauritanian government has agreed to work with the African Union on a program to expedite stepping down.

Also, countries in the Sahel face broader problems that affect the overall security environment. Economic problems, food shortages, and repeated famines are rife in the region. Although not commonly viewed as a direct security issue, these problems in fact could be directly connected to the spread of terrorism in the region.²³ In fairness, these broader issues have not been ignored by the U.S. government. For example, Ambassador

Cofer Black, the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, has noted that “the struggle against terrorism is also in part the struggle for a better society” and that “anti-corruption efforts are as essential to the struggle against terrorism as the struggle against poverty.”²⁴

Although most of the cross-border security threats in the Sahel commonly are viewed as emanating from Algeria, other countries’ problems also impact the overall environment. Niger must deal with potential unrest in its southern neighbor Nigeria. Chad of course faces the fallout from the rebellion in the Darfur region of Sudan. Mali has been impacted by the war in Cote d’Ivoire.²⁵ To a greater or lesser degree, all these problems within bordering countries must be incorporated in Sahel security planning.

U.S. Strategy in the Sahel

U.S. military forces have been increasingly active in the Sahel. The initial principal Defense Department counterterrorism program in the region was the Pan Sahel Initiative (PSI), launched in 2002. The U.S. partners in the PSI were Chad, Niger, Mali, and Mauritania, with Algeria as an observer. The PSI received relatively low levels of funding of \$7.75 million. Some further assistance was provided through the U.S. Antiterrorism Assistance Program, with about \$6.6 million provided to Sahel civilian law enforcement agencies.²⁶ Funding constraints clearly had a significant impact on the type and extent of training.²⁷

The PSI training program was very limited, albeit at a higher level of U.S. attention to the Sahel countries than previously displayed. It essentially provided basic training to a rapid reaction company in each country. Training included marksmanship, operational planning, communications, first aid, land navigation, communications, and patrolling. U.S. trainers have included both Special Forces and Marine Corps units.²⁸ Small Air Force elements provided medical and dental support for members of local units and neighboring residents. The program also provided non-lethal equipment including Toyota Land Cruisers, uniforms, and global positioning system devices.

According to reports from the U.S. trainers, starting the military training at a rather basic level was a necessity in most cases. In the case of Chad, for example, a significant number of casualties in recent operations reportedly were a result of their own troops accidentally shooting others in the back as they advanced.²⁹ At the same time, however, the capabilities of the troops being trained reportedly developed rapidly, and considerable progress was made during the training programs.

The United States reportedly also has provided more operational support to countries in the Sahel. During operations in 2003 and 2004 in which Sahelian armies were chasing GSPC members along their borders, U.S. reconnaissance aircraft reportedly provided support to the local forces, along with U.S. personnel advising the units.³⁰ For obvious reasons, full details of U.S. field support have not emerged, but suggest that the United States is willing to take a more active military role in the region if deemed critical.

The PSI received considerable justified criticism for its complete focus on military training. Also, of course, the actual number of troops trained was miniscule in comparison with the requirements. These weaknesses were acknowledged by the Defense Department, with Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs calling it a “little bit of a Band-Aid approach.”³¹ In response to these shortfalls, the United States has announced a follow-on program called the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI). This program represents a significant expansion of U.S. involvement in the region.

The TSCTI—with its military component labeled as Operation Enduring Freedom—Trans Sahara (OEF-TS)—was launched in June 2005 with a military exercise called

Flintlock 2005. The official goals of this exercise were to “plan and execute command, control and communications systems in support of future combined humanitarian, peacekeeping and disaster relief operations.”³² It is interesting that these stated goals of Flintlock are not specifically related to those of the overall objectives of TSCTI, that include “enhanc[ing] their capabilities to halt the flow of illicit goods and human trafficking in the region; and prevent[ing] terrorists from establishing sanctuary in remote areas.”³³ Broader strategic goals are to “help strengthen regional counterterrorism capabilities, enhance and institutionalize cooperation among the region’s security forces, promote democratic governance, and ultimately benefit our bilateral relationships with each of these states.”³⁴ Even though the stated objectives differ, the more traditional objectives stated for Flintlock instead of the broader missions for TSCTI likely are more palatable diplomatically in the short term. Also, the skills exercised in Flintlock (particularly regional cooperation) are transferable to the counterterrorism and TSCTI mission.

Along with the original four countries in the PSI, the TSCTI also includes Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, and Nigeria. There also are official hopes that as the U.S. relationship with Libya improves, it will join the program.³⁵ Funding for TSCTI was \$16 million for 2005, with plans for \$30 million in 2006, and \$100 million a year for the remaining five years until 2011.³⁶ Plans are for expansion of the early efforts of the PSI both in military training and in other forms of support. Military training will expand from company level to battalion level.

More significantly, the TSCTI expands the PSI into non-military counterterrorism activities. The U.S. Agency for International Development, State Department, and Department of the Treasury each have been assigned specific activities to support the TSCTI. The extent of these additional programs remains somewhat unclear, along with the amount of funding that they are likely to receive. There clearly is an increased stress on involving more U.S. government agencies into a coordinated effort, to address both immediate issues and those that can fester as a root cause of terrorism.³⁷

One stress for the U.S. strategy in the Sahel is improved coordination among the regional governments. During the Flintlock Exercise, one senior U.S. commander noted, “It’s not a hugely hi-tech solution we are trying to impose on these countries. It is about developing the relationships we need between their militaries.”³⁸ The U.S. European Command sponsored a major conference in Stuttgart, Germany in 2004 that brought together security and intelligence officials from Niger, Chad, Mali, and Mauritania. Other meetings and planning sessions have been held not only among the Sahel countries, but also other African countries in the extended region. There also reportedly have been planning meetings and agreements among the Sahel governments in addition to those sponsored by the United States.³⁹ A EUCOM official has suggested that these efforts may ultimately lead to a regional Sahel headquarters for counterterrorism.⁴⁰

Although details are rather sketchy, cooperation between the United States and France in dealing with the Sahel countries’ counterterrorism operations appears to be very solid. According to an unattributed French security source:

This is a genuine action to fight against terrorism that responds to a need. The threat is consistent . . . This program [PSI] will help enhance security in the sub-region. They can do it whereas we can’t. Why not let them do it? We’ll cooperate with the U.S. through an exchange of information, and we’re glad to do it.⁴¹

Given that the countries in the region are former French colonies and that the French continue to have military ties with most of the countries, this cooperation is very significant in building common strategies. Some other multilateral support programs for Africa—primarily for peacekeeping training—have involved some of the PSI and TSCTI countries.⁴² Military observers from four unspecified European countries also reportedly attended the Flintlock exercise.⁴³ Broader cooperation between the United States and other outside countries in dealing with security in the Sahel remains very limited, however.⁴⁴

Potential Issues with the U.S. Strategy in the Sahel

A number of issues can impact on the success of U.S. efforts to build a counterterrorism coalition in the Sahel region. The first is the extent to which the program addresses issues beyond the purely military. As is frequently noted, conducting successful counterterrorism campaigns requires a multidisciplinary approach involving security, political, social, and economic aspects in a coordinated program. This was the glaring weakness of the PSI. Thus far, as one commission noted, “Antiterrorism programs have been primarily military in nature without adequate political oversight or complementary political, public diplomacy, or economic programs.”⁴⁵

Although the TSCTI is planned to be much broader—with only some 20 to 30 percent of it being purely military under the rubric of Operation Enduring Freedom—Trans Sahara—it still only addresses a segment of the overall environment. It is far from clear that other multinational programs dealing with policing and intelligence coordination are being well coordinated with the TSCTI.

Senior military leaders certainly have expressed the necessity of a broad approach to counterterrorism, particularly in Africa. For instance, General James Jones noted:

Current crisis-driven activity focusing on limited, short-term solutions is no longer adequate for dealing with the major challenges in Africa. The United States, in association with partner nations, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations, must assist African leaders to strengthen their states, revitalize their civilian institutions, and rebuild traumatized societies and economies to restore stability and security. While Africans themselves must ultimately achieve these objectives the United States needs a comprehensive, multinational, interagency approach to help make them successful.⁴⁶

There are other U.S. government programs that do provide various forms of economic and social support to countries in the region. The issue becomes how well these other programs are integrated with “purer” forms of counterterrorism in an overall strategy. Although in theory broader economic and social assistance programs do not require incorporation into the TSCTI, providing a “package deal” offers smoother strategic planning and lessens the chances of duplication and gaps. It also is likely to engender increased cooperation and support from regional countries, many of which understandably view economic issues as a greater immediate issue than terrorism.

Even with well-coordinated efforts, too much success in dealing with larger economic and social issues might well also have bad repercussions:

Unfortunately, American-led Sahel operations may also have the effect of cutting off benign grey market trading networks on which thousands of Saharans depend for a living. . . . Likewise, a concerted regional effort to stem the flow of Saudi clerical funding to Islamist NGOs in the Sahel appears to have

succeeded—so well, in fact, that Chad is reported to have seen a 50–75 percent drop in Saudi cash flow into the country’s Islamic relief organizations over the past three years. This is good news inasmuch as Wahhabi-style indoctrination of Chadians may be sharply reduced. But the ensuing void in humanitarian relief is also bad news for the country’s wobbly economy—unless an alternate network of workers and funds is made available to fill the gap.⁴⁷

One perverse issue may well have developed in the Sahel: increased U.S. presence can result in increased interest by terrorist groups. As one Mauritanian journalist argued in different terms, “Wherever the Americans are, whether it’s Iraq or wherever, an Islamic resistance rises up, and perhaps it’s this Islamic resistance that we are seeing appearing in Mauritania today.”⁴⁸ Although somewhat histrionic, this statement does touch on a very real problem. U.S. support for governments in the region that is viewed as too heavy handed or one-sided can in fact lead to opposition, especially given the current scramble for oil. Typically, the surest way for another government to get the attention of the U.S. government—together with concomitant economic and security support—is to emphasize the threat posed to it by Al Qaeda–linked groups. At the same time, the increased U.S. support can mark the country as a more viable target by transnational Islamist groups.

Marc Sageman has raised a separate issue dealing with the TSCTI. This is whether or not it truly makes strategic sense to focus on training local forces to deal with the limited number of terrorists in the area:

EUCOM should consider unilaterally eliminating the well defined pocket of terrorists camping out in the middle of the Sahara desert. There are just a few dozen of them without any natural hiding place and could be eliminated in a very short action by very few Special Forces. Training local governments to do this job takes far too long and does not guarantee success or even fulfill another strategic goal of the U.S.⁴⁹

As he notes correctly, poverty and other economic issues do not necessarily have much impact on jihadist terrorism, therefore these broader programs may have only limited impact on the existing terrorists. In a sense, however, his approach likely is too short term. Eliminating current terrorists certainly is worthwhile; ignoring larger social and political issues, though, can lead to continuing unrest in the region leading to continued and probably expanded terrorist or insurgent movements, whether directly associated with current jihadist movements or not.

The US government must also conduct an active information operations campaign to overcome what might be natural skepticism as to its underlying motives for involvement in the area.⁵⁰ “Buy ins” from the governments of the region appear to be reasonably firm (even with the coup in Mauritania), but for success, other elements of the societies should understand the rationale and the goals of the program. Without some base level of popular support, little progress is likely.

Perhaps the most critical factor is that of long-term commitment. The United States has launched a number of previous initiatives in Africa, and sustainment typically has been poor to nonexistent.⁵¹ This likely will be a potential danger with the TSCTI, particularly given that its principal funding will not take effect until later. Actual allocation of the funds in “out years” will remain very subject to other budgetary priorities. The TSCTI certainly is no panacea, but if properly resourced and sufficiently broad, it could address some significant regional security issues. By doing so, it would also serve broader U.S.

counterterrorism strategies. Clearly, for the foreseeable future, the major thrust of U.S. counterterrorism efforts will be in other regions. For a relatively limited involvement of money and personnel, however, U.S. strategic involvement in the Sahel could prove fruitful.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the ISSC Conference, Denver, CO, 28 October 2005.

2. For a good analysis of these linkages that increase the Sahel region's importance, see Ricardo Laremont and Hrach Gregorian, "Political Islam in Western Africa and the Sahel," *Military Review* (January–February 2006).

3. Emily Hunt, "Al-Qaeda's North African Franchise: The GSPC Regional Threat," Policy Watch 1034, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 28 September 2005. Stephen Ulph, "Disarray in the Algerian GSPC," *Terrorism Focus* 1(7) (29 October 2004) provides a higher figure of 500 to 1,000 GSPC members.

4. For example, see Ed Blanche, "Are the Salafists Finally Running out of Steam?" *The Middle East*, January 2005, p. 25, and Ulph, "Disarray in the Algerian GSPC."

5. For details on the turn over of el Para to the Algerian government, which was a very complicated affair involving the rebels and the governments of Libya and Algeria, see Blanche, "Are the Salafists Finally Running out of Steam?"

6. Jason Motlagh, "Analysis: Mauritania Raid Linked to al-Qaida," United Press International, 6 June 2005.

7. Andrew McGregor, "GSPC Leader Issues New Threat to U.S. Military Bases in North Africa," *Terrorism Focus* III(19) (17 May 2006), p. 3.

8. Catherine Fellows, "US Targets Sahara 'Terrorist Haven'," BBC News, 8 August 2005.

9. For example, see Voice of America, "Mauritania's Detained Terror Suspects Await Charges, Journalist Released," 23 May 2005.

10. It should be noted that there are other nomadic groups in the area, including the Bororo, Wodaabe, Tubu, and Mbororo. In general, however, the Tuareg are the most significant group in security terms. Some of the other groups were caught up in the violence surrounding the Tuareg uprising.

11. For details, see Jacky Rowland, "The Tuareg Rebellion," *Africa Report* 37(4) (July/August 1992).

12. "West Africa: Famine not Fanaticism Poses Greatest Terror Threat in Sahel," IRINnews.org, 29 September 2005, available at (www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=43679), accessed 5 October 2005.

13. *Ibid.*

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*

16. For a detailed discussion of this group and its activities in Mali, see International Crisis Group, Africa Report number 92, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact of Fiction?*, 31 March 2005, pp. 8–10 and 16–17.

17. Further discussion on these groups is in Laremont and Gregorian, "Political Islam in Western Africa and the Sahel," pp. 31–34.

18. For details, see UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Chad: Coup Attempt Foiled, Government Says," 23 July 2006, at IRINnews.org.

19. Laremont and Gregorian, "Political Islam in Western Africa and the Sahel," p. 33.

20. Reuters, "Chad Ruler Dissolves Presidential Guard," 31 October 2005. Although details are somewhat sketchy as of this writing, a number of soldiers—40 by government count and 600 by self-count—deserted their duties and formed a group in eastern Chad called the Platform for Change, National Unity, and Democracy (SCUD). In response, President Deby dissolved the Republican

Guard, evidently doubting their loyalty to the regime. Deby himself gained power through a coup in 1990, and there also was a short-lived army mutiny in May 1994.

21. For details of the coup and its leadership, see Mary Motta, "Mauritania Coup," *Voice of America*, 4 August 2005; and BBC News, "Mauritania's New Military Leader," 8 August 2005; the initial communiqué of the new leaders is available at (<http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk/mpapps/pagetools/print/news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4742777.stm>).

22. For details of the press conference (reportedly the first ever by a Mauritanian head of state) held by the new leader, Colonel Ely Ould Mohamed Vall, see IRINnews.org, "Mauritania: Junta Leader Vows to Fight Terrorism, Confirms Ties with Israel," UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 11 October 2005, available at (www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=49486).

23. A detailed argument for this position is in the ICG Report.

24. Ambassador Cofer Black, "Remarks at the Second Intergovernmental High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism in Africa," Algiers, Algeria, 13 October 2004, U.S. State Department. Released on 20 October 2004.

25. One Mali police official noted in discussions that there was considerable concern within Mali security services as to weapons flows coming into Mali from Cote d'Ivoire.

26. Testimony of William P. Pope, Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism, before the House International Relations Committee, Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, Washington, DC, 10 March 2005.

27. "Stripes' Q&A on DOD's Pan Sahel Initiative," *Stars and Stripes*, European Edition, 5 April 2004. COL Vic Nelson, the country director for West Africa, provides interesting details about the compromises and frustrations involved in managing the program on a shoestring budget.

28. For accounts of the training programs, see 1st Lt. Phillip Ulmer, "Special Forces Support Pan Sahel Initiative in Africa," *Armed Forces Information Service*, 8 March 2004; CPL Lameen Witter, "US Marines Start Training in Niger," *Marine Forces Europe Public Affairs* release, 10 August 2004.

29. Martin Plaut, "Battling Terrorism in Chad," *BBC News*, 6 August 2004.

30. Robert D. Kaplan, "America's Africa Rifles," *The Atlantic Monthly* April 2005, p. 91.

31. Donna Miles, "New Counterterrorism Initiative to Focus on Saharan Africa," *Armed Forces Press Service*, 16 May 2005.

32. Headquarters United States European Command Press Release, "Exercise Flintlock 05 Under Way in Africa," 9 June 2005.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Statement of Rear Admiral Hamlin B. Tallent, US EUCOM, before the US House of Representatives Committee on International Relations Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, 10 March 2005.

35. Statement of General James L. Jones, USMC, Commander United States European Command, before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, 28 September 2005. Available at (www.dod.mil/dodgc/olc/docs/test04-09-23Jones.pdf).

36. Headquarters United States European Command Press Release, "Flintlock Exercise Trains Africans to Handle Defense," 20 June 2005. The sharp funding increase in out years leads to some skepticism as to whether or not that amount of funding will actually materialize.

37. For example, see the *Strategy Statement* of the U.S. Agency for International Development, Bamako, Mali, 30 April 2006. This document stresses the focus on addressing root causes of terrorism in the country, and emphasizes working with other U.S. government agencies, particularly the Defense Department.

38. Nick Tattersall, "Hi-Tech Meets Low-Tech as U.S. Trains African Troops," *Reuters*, 15 June 2005.

39. Discussion with a regional military officer, July 2005.

40. Lauren Gelfand, "Washington Warns Against Salafists' Threat," *Middle East Online*, 26 July 2005, available at (www.middle-east-online.com/english/algeria/?id=14107=14107&format=0), accessed 8 October 2005.

41. ICG Report, p. 32.

42. For details of these various programs, see ISS Monograph No. 33, *Constructive Disengagement*, December 1998, available at ([www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No33/Western Responses.html](http://www.iss.co.za/Pubs/Monographs/No33/WesternResponses.html)). Many of these training programs also are potentially transferable to counterterrorism missions.

43. Nick Tattersall, "Hi-Tech Meets Low-Tech as U.S. Trains African Troops."

44. A report from the U.K. Parliament argues that the British government and the EU increase their cooperation with and support of the region's governments and the United States in security issues. The United Kingdom Parliament, Select Committee on Foreign Affairs Sixth Report, May 2004, p. 4.

45. Council on Foreign Relations, *More than Humanitarianism: A Strategic U.S. Approach Toward Africa*, December 2005, p. 7.

46. "Statement of General James L. Jones, USMC, Commander, United States European Command, Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee," 28 September 2005, pp. 9–11.

47. Joseph Braude, "How to Fight Poverty and Terrorism in Africa," *The New Republic* online, posted 11 August 2005, available at (www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=w050808&s=braude081105=64k).

48. Moussa Ould Ham, editor of *Le Calame*. Quoted in Catherine Fellows, "US Targets Sahara 'Terrorist Haven'," BBC News, 8 August 2005.

49. Marc Sageman, "Fighting the Right War," Paper presented at the National Defense University 2006 Joint Operations Symposium, 16–17 March 2006, p. 3. Available at (<http://www.ndu.edu/inss/symposia/joint2006/sageman.pdf>).

50. For an example of this skepticism, accusing the United States of being interested only in securing the potential oil resources of the area, see Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee Report, *US Military & Oil Interests Affect the Human Rights of Saharan Indigenous People*, 2004, available at (www.ipacc.org.za/resources/publications/psi2004.asp). Also see West African Regional Network of Indigenous Nomads, *West African Conference of Indigenous Peoples of the Sahara and Sahel*, 20–25 February 2006, pp. 45–46.

51. For examples of this problem, see the CFR Report, pp. 13–14.