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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2019 - Chapter 5 - Al-Murabitoun

Aka al-Mulathamun Battalion; al-Mulathamun Brigade; al-Muwaqqi'un bil-Dima; Those Signed in Blood Battalion; Signatories in Blood; Those who Sign in Blood; Witnesses in Blood; Signed-in-Blood Battalion; Masked Men Brigade; Khaled Abu al-Abbas Brigade; al-Mulathamun Masked Ones Brigade; The Sentinels

Description: Al-Murabitoun was designated as an FTO on December 19, 2013, originally under the name al-Mulathamun Battalion. Al-Murabitoun was originally part of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), but became a separate organization in late 2012 after its leader, Mokhtar Belmokhtar, split from AQIM. After the split, Belmokhtar threatened to fight against Western interests and announced the creation of the al-Mulathamun Battalion. In 2013, the al-Mulathamun Battalion and the Mali-based Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) announced that the two organizations would merge under the name “al-Murabitoun.” In 2015, al-Murabitoun announced a re-merger with AQIM. In 2017, the Sahara Branch of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Murabitoun, Ansar al-Dine, and the Macina Liberation Front came together to form Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM).

Activities: In January 2013, what is now known as al-Murabitoun claimed responsibility for the attack against the Tiguentourine gas facility near In Amenas, in southeastern Algeria. More than 800 people were taken hostage during the four-day siege, resulting in the deaths of 39 civilians, including three U.S. citizens. Seven other U.S. citizens escaped.

In May 2013, al-Murabitoun participated in twin suicide bombings on a northern Nigerien military base and a French uranium mine in Arlit. The coordinated attacks killed more than 20 people, including all of the attackers.

In March 2015, al-Murabitoun claimed responsibility for an attack at La Terrasse restaurant in Bamako, Mali that killed a French national, a Belgian national, and three Malians. Al-Murabitoun also claimed responsibility for the August 2015 hotel siege in central Mali that killed 17 people. In November 2015, al-Murabitoun operatives participated in the strike against the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, taking more than 170 people hostage – including U.S. citizens. Nearly 27 people were killed in the attack, among them a U.S. international development worker.

Al-Murabitoun was reportedly involved in the AQIM January 2016 attack on a popular tourist hotel in Burkina Faso that killed nearly 30, including a U.S. citizen. In addition, al-Murabitoun claimed responsibility for a January 2017 suicide car bombing at a military camp in Mali that killed more than 47 people and injured more than 115. In July 2018, al-Murabitoun was involved in fighting against French forces in Mali. Al-Murabitoun remained active in 2019.

Strength: Precise numbers are unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, and Niger

Funding and External Aid: In addition to the support it may receive through its connections to other terrorist organizations in the region, al-Murabitoun is likely funded through kidnapping-for-ransom and other criminal activities.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the Al-Murabitoun (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2019)

Countries:

Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya,
Mali, Niger

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