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USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 5 - al-Mulathamun Battalion

Aka 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; alMurabitoun; The Sentinels.

Description: The al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB) was designated as a FTO on December 19, 2013. AMB 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 sub-battalion, “Those Who Sign in Blood.” In August 2013, AMB and the Mali-based Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) announced that the two organizations would merge under the name “alMurabitoun.” In late 2015, AMB announced a re-merger with AQIM. In 2017, the Sahara Branch of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb, al-Murabitoun, Ansar-Dine, and the Macina Liberation Front came together to form Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin.

Activities: AMB's “Those Who Sign in Blood” sub-battalion claimed responsibility for the January 2013 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, AMB cooperated with MUJAO in twin suicide bombings on a northern Nigerien military base and a French uranium mine in Arlit. The coordinated attacks killed at least 20 people, including all of the attackers.

In March 2015, AMB claimed responsibility for an attack at La Terrasse restaurant in Bamako, Mali. A French national, a Belgian national, and three Malians were killed when a masked gunman fired indiscriminately on the restaurant. AMB also claimed responsibility for the August hotel siege in central Mali; 17 people were killed, including four Malian soldiers and nine civilians. In November, AMB 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.

AMB reportedly was 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, AMB claimed responsibility for a suicide car bombing at a military camp in Mali that killed more than 47 people and injured at least 115 in January 2017. In July 2018, AMB was involved in fighting against French forces in Mali.

Strength: AMB’s size is unknown.

Location/Area of Operation: The group operates in 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, AMB is likely funded through kidnapping-for-ransom and other criminal activities.

ecoi.net summary:

Brief description of the al-Mulathamun Battalion (Excerpt of chapter 5 of the country report on terrorism 2018)



Countries:

Algeria, Burkina Faso, Libya, Mali, Niger

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