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Spring 4-11-2014

Terrorism: Libya's Role in The Instability of The Region

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Terrorism: Libya's Role in The Instability of The Region

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Abstract

When media focuses its attention on the subject of terrorism, the country of Libya is not typically at the forefront of the discussion. However, Libya has a deep hand in terrorism dating back to when Colonel Muammar Qaddafi took control of the country in 1969. During the years that Qaddafi was in control, he financially backed terrorist organizations, who repeatedly aimed their sights on the United States and their allies. Even after the fall of Qaddafi's regime, terrorism is still a part of the governmental strategy in the country. The attack in Benghazi against an American compound, which resulted in 4 American deaths shows that terrorism is alive and well within Libya. In this analysis, I will show the history of Libya prior to Qaddafi's regime, and terrorism during and after Qaddafi's regime. I will also show the connections between terrorism and the instability of the region following the fall of Qaddafi. The findings of this investigation, will inform the academic research, as well as the counter-terrorism efforts in Libya.

Terrorist & Extremist Groups

These groups have been known to operate or are currently operating in the Maghreb and The Sahel regions:

- Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)
- Al-Mulathameen Brigade
  - ❖ Al-Qaeda affiliate
- Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)
  - ❖ Linked to al-Qaeda
- Ansar Dine
  - ❖ Islamist militant group
- Ansar al-Sharia Organization
  - ❖ Has al-Qaeda ties
  - ❖ Involved in 2012 attack on US Consulate in Benghazi

AQAP's (al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula) tenth edition of Inspire magazine featured the September 2012 assaults on US diplomatic facilities.

http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/01/state_department_des_2.php#xzz2x6bEuiWT

Pre-Qaddafi Regime

- During the 16th Century, Libya became part of the Ottoman Empire
- Between 1911 and 1912 Italy took control of Libya, away from the Ottomans (Gascoigne, 2001)
  - ❖ This ignited what turned out to be a 20 year insurgency, lead by Omar al-Mukhtar of Libya
- Italians surrendered in 1947
- United Nations (UN) awarded Libya their independence in 1949 (Davis, 1990)
- 1969 Muammar Qaddafi takes control of Libya after overthrowing King Idris I
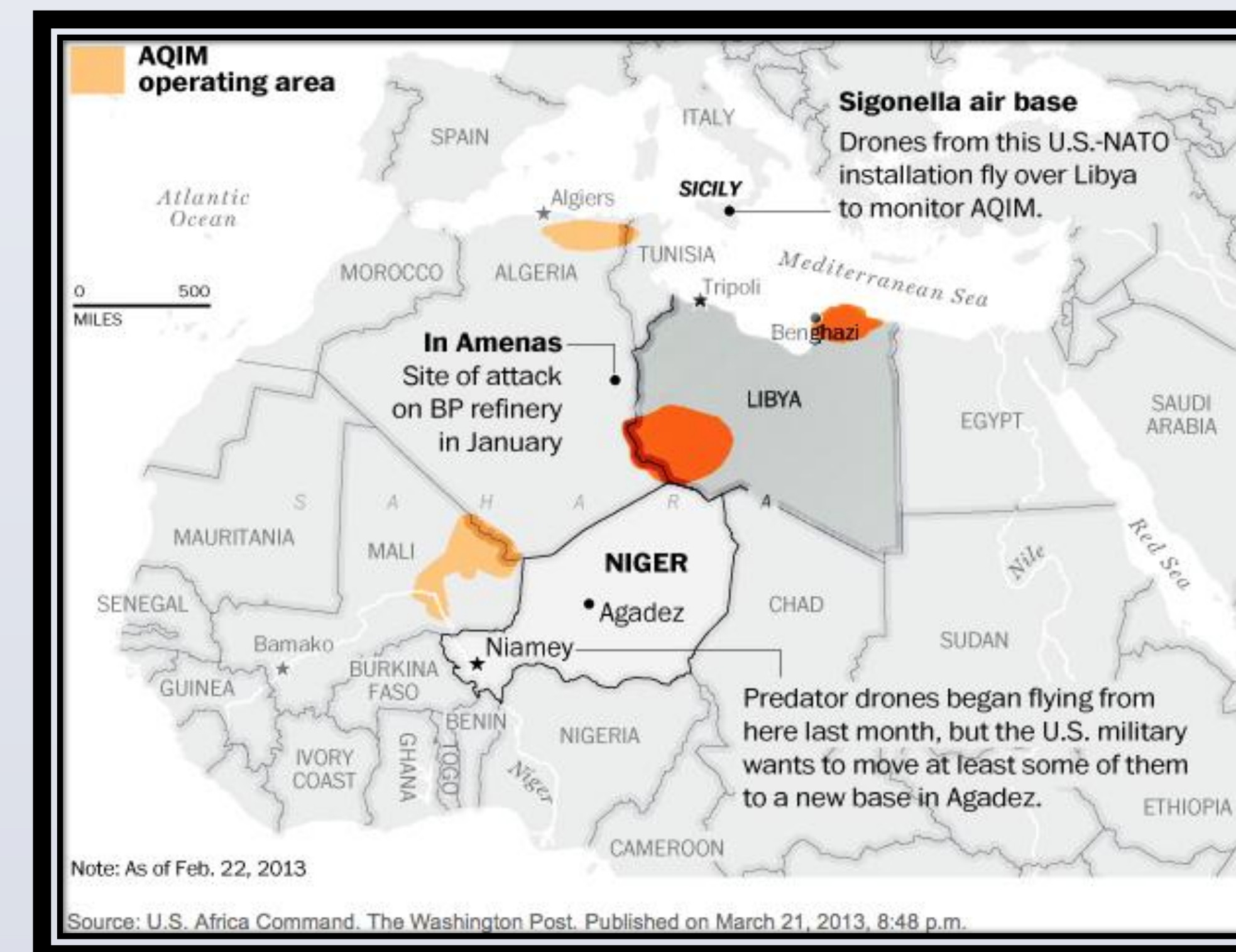
Qaddafi & Terrorism

- Financially backed terrorist organizations (Davis, 1990; Cortright & Lopez, 2007)
  - ❖ The Fatah
  - ❖ Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)
  - ❖ Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)
  - ❖ Abu Nidal Organization (ANO)

- Qaddafi successfully created the National Arab Youth for the Liberation of Palestine (NAYLP)
  - ❖ Responsible for some of the most brutal acts in Palestinian international terrorism (Davis, 1990)

- Libya was added to the "state-sponsors" of terrorism list by President Ronald Regan of the United States

- April 5, 1986: La Belle Discotheque nightclub in West Berlin was bombed and destroyed.
  - ❖ Libya was held accountable for the terrorist act
  - ❖ The nightclub was frequented by US servicemen
  - ❖ Many US servicemen were injured and 2 were killed in the bombing

- At the G7 summit, Libya was publically labeled as a supporter of international terrorism (Cortright & Lopez, 2007)

- September 5, 1986
  - ❖ ANO terrorists attempt to hijack Pan Am flight 73 while it was refueling and loading new passengers in Karachi, Pakistan (Cortright & Lopez, 2007)
  - ❖ 22 passengers killed, 3 of which were Americans
  - ❖ 150 people injured

- December 21, 1988
  - ❖ Pan Am flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland
  - ❖ Explosion killed all 270 people aboard, including many Americans
  - ❖ 11 other people were killed in Lockerbie, Scotland due to the trauma of falling debris (Matar & Thabit, 2004)

- In 2003 Libya renounced terrorism and also abandoned its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Program

- May 2006
  - ❖ Libya was officially removed from the United State's state-sponsors of terrorism list

Instability of The Region

Libya

- February 5, 2011: anti-government protest erupted in Benghazi, Libya
- Armed conflict between rebels and the Libyan government ensued in the following months
- February 20, 2011: rebels took control of Benghazi
  - ❖ Used the city as a based to launch attacks on Qaddafi strongholds (Arsenault, 2011)
- October 20, 2011 Qaddafi and his son were captured and executed (World Report 2012: Libya, 2012)
  - ❖ This marked the fall of Qaddafi's 42 year-old regime
- September 11, 2012: US Consulate attack in Benghazi
- "In 2013, a total of 145 major terrorist attacks were recorded, including kidnappings, assassinations, bombings, and direct assaults on government facilities and personnel."(Alexander, 2014, p.6)

Source From: http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/aqim-area-of-influence/2013/03/21/18c74f16-928a-11e2-9cfd-36d6c9b5d7ad_graphic.html
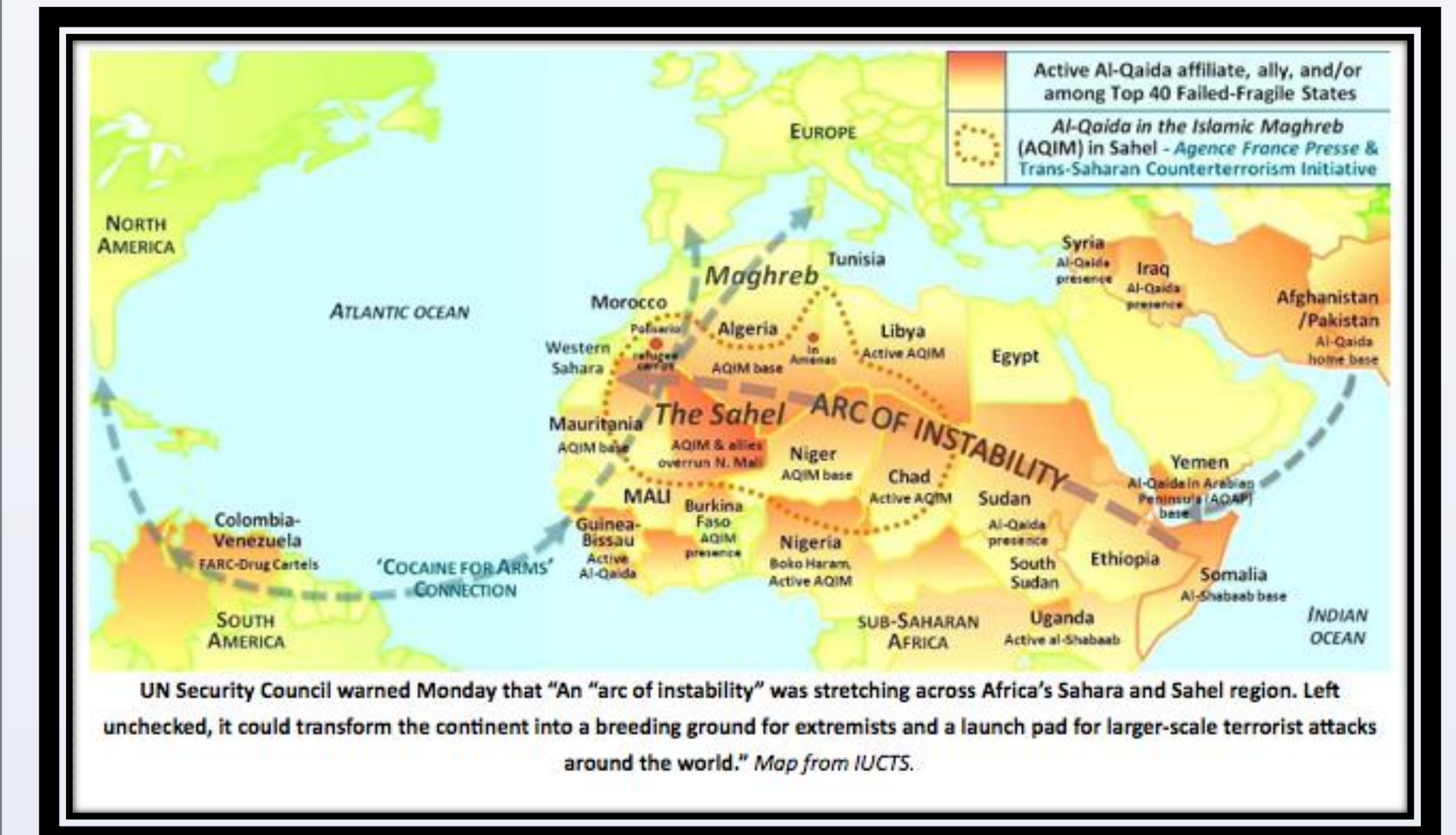
Algeria

- January 16, 2013: Hostage crisis at the In Amenas gas field British Petroleum, 2013)
- "Algerian military and security services are focusing a great deal of energy on securing its borders with Morocco, Libya, Mali, and Tunisia to reduce infiltration, the flow of arms and smuggled goods" (Alexander, 2014, p.7)

Mali

- New failed state, the size of Texas
- "Northern Mali had fallen under the control of various Salafi jihadist organizations including AQIM, MUJAO, Ansar Dine, Al-Qaida's El Moulethemine Brigade, and the Libyan extremists of Ansar Al-Sharia" (Alexander, 2014, p.9)

Arc of Instability

Source From: http://moroccoonthemove.com/2013/05/18/africas-arc-of-instability-an-investigative-report-by-the-toronto-star/#sthash.RksW72EZ.dpbs

Data Table

Data Table: Terrorism Incidents in Maghreb & Sahel since Sept. 11, 2001														
TIMELINE	YEAR	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
NORTH & WEST/CENTRAL AFRICA NATIONS	Totals: 1,662 attacks	21 attacks	55 attacks	31 attacks	44 attacks	104 attacks	153 attacks	161 attacks	152 attacks	204 attacks	178 attacks	185 attacks	144 attacks	230 attacks
ALGERIA	1,285 attacks	20	54	28	39	93	120	110	121	185	168	164	132	51
CHAD	58 attacks				3	6	28	14	6	1				
LIBYA	152 attacks							1					6	145
MALI	70 attacks				1	1	2	3	10	11	9	4	8	5	16
MAURITANIA	27 attacks					1	3		4	4	6	2	7	
MOROCCO	9 attacks			2				5				2		
NIGER	40 attacks					1	18	9	4	3	3	1	1	
TUNISIA	21 attacks	1		1								1		17

Source From: Alexander, 2014 : pg13.

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