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## Mali: Africa Must Take The Lead

*(Above link will take you to the NYT)*

This crisis in Mali... first off, this is not just 'another war'. This is a very serious and potent threat to African continental security. While the group who has been initial involved (the Tuaregs) are a relatively small portion of the Mali population (around 10%) it has forged alliances in the region that has allowed to to mount a coup and a significant military operation with the support of other like minded Islamic Jihadists. What should be noted here that has not been well laid out in many news reports is that Mauritaninan and Algerian groups are deeply involved and interestingly, racial issues appear to be one of the real sticking points between various North African and Sub-Saharan (Black) African Jihadist groups. Another fly in the Islamist ointment is the usual internal political power plays within these groups.

*MUJWA has identified a replacement for Hisham Bilal, believed to have been the first sub-Saharan individual to command an al-Qaeda-associated jihadist combat unit. Bilal and a number of his men returned to his native Niger and surrendered to authorities there on November 8, 2012, complaining that the Arab commanders of MUJWA viewed Black African jihadists as "cannon fodder" and believed "a black man is inferior to an Arab or a white"*

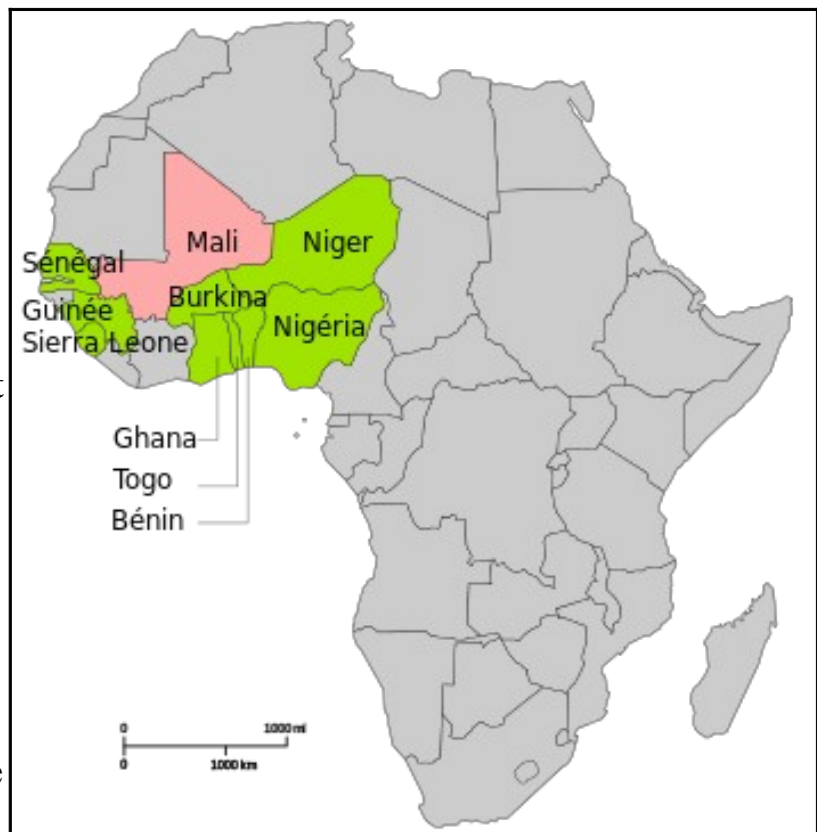
- [Terrorsim Monitor \(Terrorsim Monitor Voume XI, Issue 1\)](#)

The fall of Qaddafi is probably one of the main factors that is causing these groups to become more active now and with the *very* high amount of arms that he once possessed and the Jihadist roots of the new US installed government in Tripoli, it stands to reason that this may be a major source of their arms. If this is the case (and it probably is), it would stand to reason that the US would want to downplay this aspect of the conflict for it would point to a serious point of 'blowback' that many warned about before we went into Libya. It was only after the fall of the Libyan regime that we began to see serious military agitation in Mali for an independent state in Mali's north. They did this after many had returned from the fighting in Libya, armed and battle hardened. It cannot be ignored here that the subtle 'racial superiority' tones are not atypical of many jihadist groups have many similarities to Nazi style fascism we have come to see in many, if not most Islamic militant organizations. Readers of Watson's Web are asked to keep looking into this connection, it is not one you will read about in any major news source but the ideological-historical-spiritual ties between Nazi-ism and today's Islamic militantism are quite real, clearly documented, most troubling and almost universally ignored.

*AFISMA Nations (Wikipedia)*

African states had a mission to reinforce the Mali army, which has suffered significantly since the Coup with various problems coupled with overall general institutional weakness. This operation was called AFMISA and they began a deployment last week that was not due to begin until September.

In many ways this deployment is very significant on a couple of levels. First because these nations are wasting no time because they see a very serious threat to the stability of the entire region. Second because many of these nations are very poor and spending money on troop deployments, however small is a major financial undertaking.



For example Togo:

**Togo Budget:**

*revenues: \$794.9 million*

*expenditures: \$938.2 million (2011 est.)*

*Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):*

*-3.9% of GDP (2011 est.) - Source: [CIA](#)*

Togo is, for all intents and purposes, [a poor country](#). Yet they are sending troops. What do they see? Here is the threat - That Jihadist groups from all over North Africa, from [Somalia](#) (Al Shabab) to [Nigeria](#) (to Boko Haram), to the afore mentioned groups in Algeria could and very well might gain a foothold, consolidate their power and use this area as a major staging area for more armed militantism and terrorism all through Africa.

Before we go on, let's make one thing clear, these are not 'freedom fighters'. The population by and large hate these groups as they are extremely brutal and twisted. Some of these men are clearly mentally ill, they will literally toss a 'toy' to a child that is loaded with explosives so they can watch the child blow up. You have women who are strapped to cannons so when it is fired, the cannon ball rips them apart at their private areas. The villages who offer up any resistance to these rebels are treated in the *most* brutal fashion. So forget about any idea that we are talking about any kind of 'freedom fighters' or path to anti-colonial liberation. Rather we are dealing with a form of mass insanity (probably coupled with demoniac possession) that is typified in some of the most gruesome acts a man can commit against another. We can talk all day about the mental stability of the Sandy Hook shooter, but what is happening in places like Mali is Sandy Hook multiplied by ten thousand... no medicinal psychotropics required, just a Koran and a Rocket Propelled Grenade Launcher.

**Intervention.**

France has intervened and other EU nations are on the hook for at least some kind of support role and as mentioned earlier, [Africa has some troops already there with 'boots on the ground'](#). The Huffington Post has a piece here that gives us a general view on the state of 'support' the west is giving France. In short a lot of fine verbal sentiment, very little real support. The French so far are going it pretty much alone with increasing African support. The NYT piece ([original news link](#)) mentions that Russia may give logistical help to France.

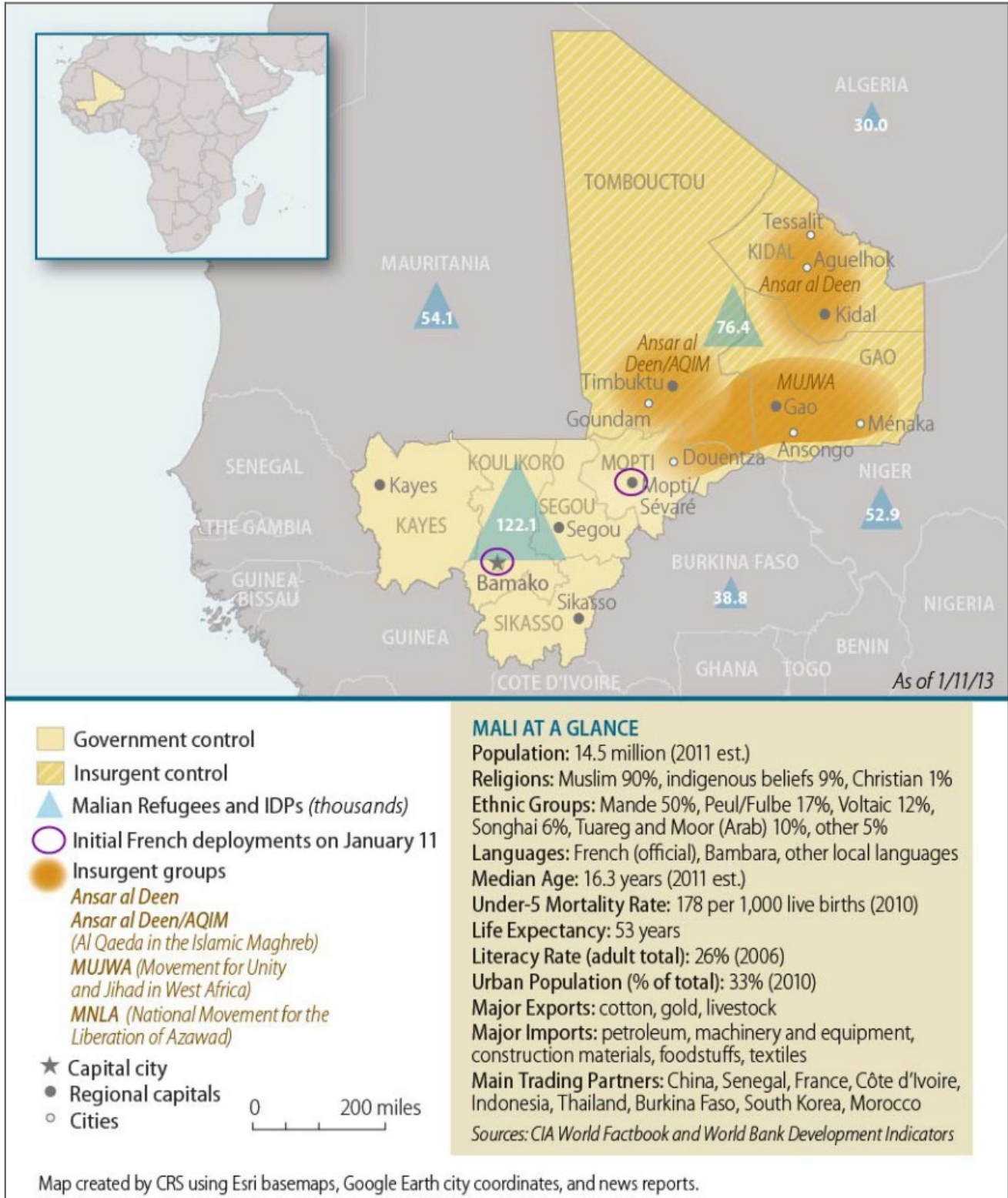
Will the US intervene? Talking to one Senior US official recently I came away with the impression that they think this is exactly what needs to happen because this is an

extremely virulent and violent form of Militantism that if allowed to consolidate and spread, will remain in Africa for decades to come and take power from state to state. They felt clearly that there was absolutely no time to lose to counter this threat. They also praised Algeria's response to the Hostage Crisis, saying that now is the time for solid action, not talk or engage in hand wringing. Since the folks I have talked to have actually been to many of these nations before, they know the lay of the land. I think the President is going to get some recommendations to intervene and significantly, I also think that because China has significant interests in the region and lacks the ability to project power as the US does, I fully expect them to come knocking on America's door for some kind of joint action. China as well cannot allow large swaths of Africa to go under Islamist domination.

Yet, despite the clear danger to Africa, it does not seem likely that the Obama administration will give the kind of ground-troop support many would like to see. The US will probably assist France logistically, diplomatically (trying to get other western nations involved) and with intelligence support, but I do not see this administration getting involved in a new war. America is tired of war, we cannot afford war and this President, I think, is going to focus his second term on America's pressing domestic crisis and issues that must be dealt with.

Do I think we should get involved? Well before I answer that, there are many who believe that America's future is going to lie in Africa and her rich resources. Keeping anti-American, politically and socially retrograde Islamists out of power in Africa is a most desirable goal, but one that may not even be achievable even with massive US intervention. If we should have learned anything in Afghanistan is that there are some severe limits on what US military intervention can accomplish. We can remove leaders, we can degrade or destroy critical infrastructure, we can force mass human migration with our force of arms and even hit remote regions with drones where we think terrorists are hiding. What we *cannot* do is bring in lasting stability where violent tribal and religious undertones are present in conflict zones. We still have not successfully learned how to do that. Consequently, I do not think that we would be able to successfully counter these elements in Africa. We could spend countless billions of dollars of money we don't really have, lose thousands of American lives and tens of thousands of African ones and still pull out in 10 years with pretty much the same result we saw in Afghanistan. The only thing we really accomplished was to enrich a corrupt regime in Afghanistan (and US contractors) and battle-harden Islamic militants. Just as importantly, I think our direct intervention would only make matters worse on the ground as our intervention would be just the kind of magnet that would drive Islamist fighters the world over into the conflict zone for no other reason than to demonstrate their military power and embarrass America's military as being incapable of beating Islamists on the ground. No dear readers, I see a lose-lose situation here, much risk and no realistic upside.

**Figure I. Map as of January 11, 2013**



**Source:** CRS. Basemap created by Hannah Fischer using Esri Data 2012. Projection: Winkle II, November 29, 2012. Sources of information depicted include U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) humanitarian updates, news reports, and CRS interviews.

**Notes:** Insurgent group concentrations are approximate and shifting – particularly in the context of French military operations – and are based on open-source accounts. IDP refers to Internally Displaced Persons.

*For Further Reading*

[The Crisis In Mali - CRS](#)

[Islamist Groups Mount Offensive In Mali - Jamestown Foundation](#)

[France In Mali: Rapid Reaction - I2S2](#)

[Chad Troops Move Towards Border - Reuters](#)

[Tuareg In Mali - Global Security](#)

By,

***Mark S. Watson***

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