



# AL-QA'IDA IN THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB



## Background

- Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) became al-Qa'ida's North Africa affiliate in 2007. AQIM was formerly known as the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat, a splinter group of the Armed Islamic Group, both of which fought against Algeria's secular government.
- Abdelmalek Droukdel has led AQIM and its predecessor groups since 2004. He cited religious motives for his group becoming an al-Qa'ida affiliate; this strategic decision also unified loosely connected brigades, enhancing recruitment and fundraising.
- In 2015, AQIM reconciled with al-Mourabitoun, a terrorist group led by former AQIM member Mokhtar Belmokhtar. Since then, AQIM has conducted operations against civilians, including Westerners, in public places such as hotels and restaurants.



*AQIM leader Abdelmalek Droukdel*

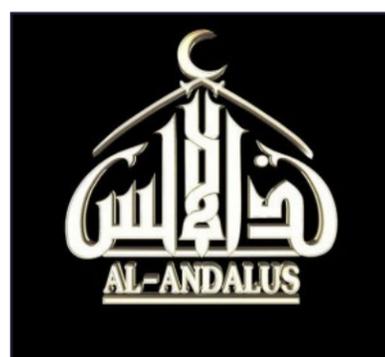


*Mokhtar Belmokhtar,  
al-Mourabitoun's leader*

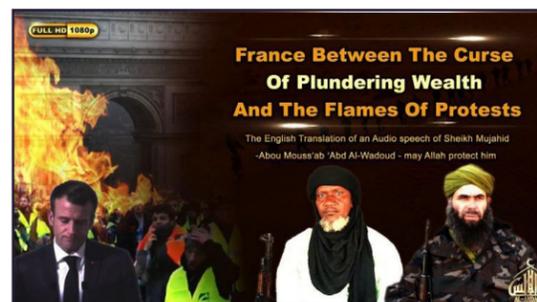
## Threat to New Jersey: Low

*AQIM's threat to New Jersey is low, as the group lacks the capability to direct attacks against the United States and continues to focus operations on Western interests in the Sahel region, as well as Libya and Tunisia.*

- Following its merge in 2017 with several other factions in the Sahel region, AQIM focused on operations in Mali, Mauritania, Libya, Tunisia, and Niger.
- Attacks conducted in 2018 mainly involved improvised explosive devices or suicide bombings targeting police and government elections in Mali and Tunisia. In October, a female suicide bomber attacked Tunisia's capital, injuring nine. In November, two Malian soldiers were killed and another injured in an attack on a checkpoint in the Segou Region of Mali.
- The group has targeted European security forces—primarily French and Spanish—and European civilians. AQIM finances operations through drug smuggling, protection rackets, and weapons trafficking, as well as the kidnapping and ransom of Westerners in North and West Africa.



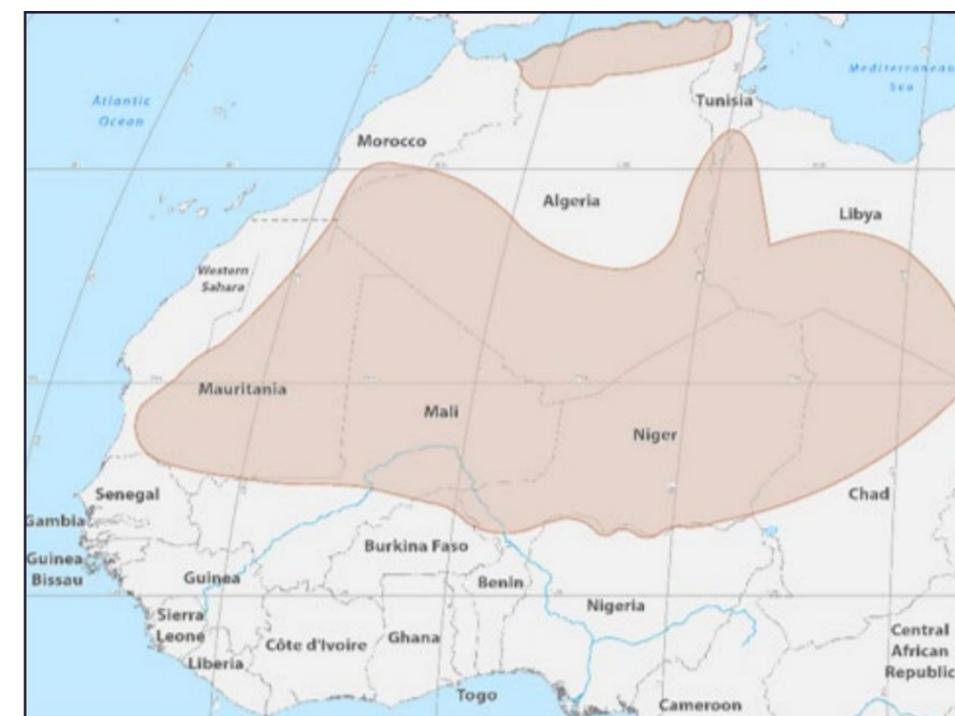
*Al-Andalus Media logo,  
media wing of AQIM*



*AQIM propaganda*

## US Nexus

- AQIM has never attacked the United States; however, the group's leadership continues to reinforce targeting Western interests as it follows the precepts of al-Qa'ida core.
- There are no known US citizens in AQIM's ranks and unlike fellow al-Qa'ida affiliate al-Shabaab in Somalia, there is no large diaspora community in the United States for AQIM to leverage for recruitment or operations.



*AQIM's areas of operation and influence*

## Additional Resources

[2019 Terrorism Threat Assessment](#)

[Persistent Threat - Evolving Strategies Of International Terror Groups](#)