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KIDNAPPING REPORT (KR)



French Engineer Kidnapped in Niger
22 Apr. 2010 - v1.2
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26 Jul. 2010
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NOTE:

THIS IS A DYNAMIC WORKING DOCUMENT AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE. Questions or comments can be directed to Ben Venzke at benv@intelcenter.com or ben.venzke@leo.gov. The latest release can be found at <http://www.intelcenter.com>.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 22 Apr. 2010, French national Michel Germaneau and his Algerian national driver were abducted by al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) rebels in northern Niger near the town of Inabangaret close to the Algerian border. One week later on 29 Apr. 2010, AQLIM released the Algerian national in Mali. On 13 May 2010, AQLIM released a written claim of responsibility for the kidnapping of Germaneau. In addition to the written claim, AQLIM also released a photo of Germaneau and of his passport along with a 0'48" video containing an audio appeal from Germaneau. On 11 Jul. 2010, AQLIM issued a written statement entitled, "Last Ultimatum for France Regarding Michel Germaneau" threatening to kill Germaneau unless France agrees to a prisoner exchange by 27 Jul. 2010. Five days before the deadline on 22 Jul. 2010, Mauritanian security forces assisted by French security forces launched a failed rescue operation near the Mauritanian-Malian border. Three days later on 25 Jul. 2010, AQLIM Emir Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud announced in a video featuring an audio statement aired on al-Jazeera that the group had executed Germaneau the day before in retaliation for the rescue attempt. The following day, French President Nicholas Sarkozy confirmed Germaneau had been killed.

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OVERVIEW

On 22 Apr. 2010, French national Michel Germaneau and his Algerian national driver Ouaghi Abidine were abducted by al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) rebels in northern Niger near the town of Inabangaret close to the Algerian border. A Niger security official said, "It was Taleb Abdoukrim's men who did this. It is Abdoukrim's group that is responsible for kidnapping the Frenchman and the Algerian". Taleb Abdoukrim is suspected AQLIM leader operating out of northern Niger.

One week later on 29 Apr. 2010, AQLIM released Algerian national Ouaghi Abidine in Mali. A military official said, "Some people riding camels found him wandering. After some explanations, they took him to Algeria".

On 13 May 2010, AQLIM released a written claim of responsibility for the kidnapping of Germaneau. In addition to the written claim, AQLIM also released a photo of Germaneau and of his passport along with a 0'48" video containing an audio appeal from Germaneau.

On 11 Jul. 2010, AQLIM issued a written statement entitled, "Last Ultimatum for France Regarding Michel Germaneau" threatening to kill Germaneau unless France agrees to a prisoner exchange by 27 Jul. 2010. The statement said, "The mujahideen decided to grant a final extension to France that will not be repeated and will not exceed 15 days, starting on Monday [12 Jul. 2010]. At the end of this period and the non-response to our legitimate demands, then France will have sentenced its citizen to death."

Just before dawn on 22 Jul. 2010, Mauritanian security forces assisted by approximately 20-30 French security forces launched a failed rescue operation at an AQLIM camp near the Mauritanian-Malian border. The French Defense Ministry issued a statement saying France had provided "technical and logistical support" to the Mauritians. Six rebels were killed and one injured in the operation. Following the failed rescue attempt, a French military official reportedly said documents, cell phones, explosives material,

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assault rifles and ammunition were recovered at the campsite but soldiers found no evidence of Germaneau being held there. A senior Malian security forces official said, “The operation was carried out on the ground, without helicopters, and lasted only a few minutes. All the indications were that we would also find Germaneau there. But no, there was not the slightest sign of captivity.”

Three days later on 25 Jul. 2010, AQLIM Emir Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud (a.k.a. Abdelmalek Droudkel) announced in a video featuring an audio statement aired on al-Jazeera that the group had executed Germaneau the day before in retaliation for the rescue attempt. Droudkel said, “we announce that we killed the French hostage called Michel Germaneau today, Saturday, 24 Jul. 2010. This is retaliation for killing our six brothers in the recent French operation.” Germaneau was reportedly beheaded. A Malian security official said, “Yes, it’s true, after the failure of the Franco-Mauritanian raid on Thursday, AQIM executed the French hostage. He was decapitated.” On 26 Jul. 2010, French President Nicholas Sarkozy confirmed the Germaneau had been killed and said his murder would not go unpunished. Sarkozy said, “I condemn this barbarous act, this odious act which has put an end to the life of an innocent man there to help the local population. Dear compatriots, this crime against Michel Germaneau will not go unpunished.”

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INCIDENT TIMELINE

- On 22 Apr. 2010, French national Michel Germaneau and his Algerian national driver were abducted by al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) rebels in northern Niger near the town of Inabangaret close to the Algerian border.
- On 29 Apr. 2010, AQLIM released the Algerian national in Mali. A military official said, "Some people riding camels found him wandering. After some explanations, they took him to Algeria".
- On 13 May 2010, AQLIM released a written claim of responsibility for the kidnapping of Germaneau. In addition to the written claim, AQLIM also released a photo of Germaneau and of his passport along with a 0'48" video containing an audio appeal from Germaneau.
- On 11 Jul. 2010, AQLIM released a written statement entitled, "Last Ultimatum for France Regarding Michel Germaneau" threatening to kill Germaneau unless France agrees to a prisoner exchange by 27 Jul. 2010.
- On 22 Jul. 2010, Mauritanian security forces assisted by approximately 20-30 French security forces soldiers launched a failed rescue operation at an AQLIM camp near the Mauritanian-Malian border. Six rebels were killed and one injured in the operation. Following the failed rescue attempt, a French military official reportedly said documents, cell phones, explosives material, assault rifles and ammunition were recovered at the campsite but soldiers found no evidence of Germaneau being held there.
- On 22 Jul. 2010, a senior Malian security forces official said, "The operation was carried out on the ground, without helicopters, and lasted only a few minutes. All the indications were that we would also find Germaneau there. But no, there was not the slightest sign of captivity."
- On 24 Jul. 2010, AQLIM executed Germaneau. The French hostage was reportedly beheaded.
- On 25 Jul. 2010, AQLIM Emir Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud announced in a video featuring an audio statement aired on al-Jazeera that the group had executed Germaneau the day before in retaliation for the rescue attempt. Germaneau was reportedly

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beheaded. A Malian security official said, “Yes, it’s true, after the failure of the Franco-Mauritanian raid on Thursday, AQIM [AQLIM] executed the French hostage. He was decapitated.”

- On 26 Jul. 2010, a Malian security forces official said, “He [Germaneau] was still alive during the raid, but hidden in a mountainous zone in the Kidal region, near the Algerian border. The place is an impregnable fortress, where the Islamists have laid lines minds and built shelters to protect themselves from any air attack.”
- On 26 Jul. 2010, French President Nicholas Sarkozy confirmed Germaneau had been killed and said his murder would not go unpunished.

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HOSTAGE

- Michel Germaneau
- French national
- Retired engineer, worked previously in oil sector in Algeria
- 78 years old
- Reportedly suffered from heart condition
- Reportedly ran a charity organization in Niger
- Reportedly beheaded by AQLIM on 24 Jul. 2010

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13 MAY 2010 AQLIM CLAIM

On 13 May 2010, al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM) released a 0'48" video entitled, "Kidnapping Retired French Engineer Michel Germaneau" in which the group says, "a group of mujahideen in northern Niger successfully kidnapped retired French engineer Michel Germaneau". Michel Germaneau was kidnapped with his Algerian driver while vacationing in northern Niger of 22 Apr. 2010. In the written statement, AQLIM says it will announce its "legitimate demands" to a French negotiator.

A full transcript of the written statement is below.

BEGIN STATEMENT

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Al-Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb

Kidnapping of Retired French Engineer Michel Germaneau

Praise be to God. Prayers and peace be upon the messenger of God, master of the messengers and imam of the mujahideen, and upon his virtuous family and companions.

On 7 Jumada al-Awwal 1431, while the forces of apostasy were holding their private meeting in Tamanrasset [Algeria] to wage war on jihad and the mujahideen in order to please their Crusader masters, a group of mujahidin in northern Niger (not far from the place of the collaborators' meeting) successfully kidnapped retired French engineer Michel Germaneau, who worked in the Algerian oil sector. He currently runs a charity in Niger that is unaware of the true objectives of its activities. In this statement, we announce our legitimate demand from France in exchange for the release of its citizen:

The release of our prisoners, a list of whose names will be sent to the French negotiator.

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We have included with this statement a plea from the French hostage to his president Sarkozy on the following links: The Plea of the Hostage

To Sarkozy we say: You are first and foremost responsible for the life of your citizen. We are dedicated to setting free our prisoners who have been unjustly sent away to your prisons and the prisons of your apostate collaborators in our lands. If you wish [to keep] the hostage safe, all you have to do is quickly meet the legitimate demand of the mujahideen. He who gives warning is forgiven.

[Signed] al-Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb
Wednesday, 28 Jumada al-Awwal 1431, corresponding to 13 May 2010
al-Andalus Establishment for Media Production

END STATEMENT

Stills from the written claim and video are included below.



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نداء إلى ساركوزي
رئيس دولة فرنسا

Appel à Sarkozy
le president de la France



المختطف الفرنسي "ميشيل جرمانو"
L'otage français : Michel Germaneau



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11 JUL. 2010 WRITTEN STATEMENT

On 11 Jul. 2010, AQLIM issued a written statement in Arabic threatening to kill Germaneau unless France agrees to a prisoner exchange by 27 Jul. 2010. The statement said, “The mujahideen decided to grant a final extension to France that will not be repeated and will not exceed 15 days, starting on Monday [12 Jul. 2010]. At the end of this period and the non-response to our legitimate demands, then France will have sentenced its citizen to death.”

The full statement is below.

BEGIN STATEMENT

Last Ultimatum for France Regarding Michel Germaneau

Praise be to God. Prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of God, his household, his companions, and those who follow him,

Today, more than two month and a half have passed since the mujahidin captured the French citizen Michel Germaneau in northern Niger. However, the French Government seemed completely careless regarding the life of its citizen. It justified this carelessness by saying that the man was not important for it and had no considerable value.

The following is the pretext [given by the French Government] that the French people have to know clearly: [French President Nicolas] Sarkozy differentiates between his people and splits them into two classes. A first class that is worthy of being saved and a second class that deserves to die at the hands of the mujahideen, while the French Government should not move a muscle to save it.

Since the requests of the mujahideen in this case have been reasonable and simple and since we want to make the final evidence against the French Government and give it an excellent opportunity to save its citizen, the mujahideen have decided to issue a last

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ultimatum, which is neither extendable nor renewable, for France. A 15-day time limit starts today, Monday, 12 July 2010.

Should this ultimatum end with our request not being met, France will have sentenced its citizen to death and Sarkozy will have finally decided to make the same stupid mistake that Golden Brown had made regarding his British citizen.

In the end, we reiterate our invitation for the French public opinion and the family of the captive to put pressure on their reckless government. It is a priceless and unique last chance from the mujahideen to save that man. We have done our best to find an acceptable solution and he who warns is excused.

God's prayers and peace be upon our Prophet Mohammed, his household, and all his companions.

END STATEMENT

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25 JUL. 2010 ABDELMALEK DROUDKEL AUDIO STATEMENT

On 25 Jun. 2010, Emir Abdelmalek Droudkel (a.k.a. Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud) announced in a video featuring an audio statement aired on al-Jazeera that the group had executed Germaneau the day before in retaliation for the rescue attempt. Droudkel said, “we announce that we killed the French hostage called Michel Germaneau today, Saturday, 24 Jul. 2010. This is retaliation for killing our six brothers in the recent French operation.”

The full statement is below.

BEGIN STATEMENT

Sarkozy has failed to free his citizen through this failed operation. However, through this operation, he has certainly opened one of the gates of hell to himself, his people, and his country. To prove that we do what we say, and in quick and fair response to France's despicable action, we announce that we killed the French hostage called Michel Germaneau today Saturday, 24 July 2010. This is in retaliation for killing our six brothers in the recent French operation.

END STATEMENT

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AL-QAEDA IN THE LAND OF THE ISLAMIC MAGHREB (AQLIM)

- Sunni jihadist rebel group operating in North Africa
- The group evolved from the Algerian rebel group Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). It originated as an armed Islamist resistance movement positioned against the secular Algerian government
- In Sep. 2006, the GSPC joined al-Qaeda; Ayman al-Zawahiri announced the “blessed union” between the two groups, declaring that they would together fight French and American interests
- In Jan. 2007, GSPC announced its name change to reflect its joining al-Qaeda
- AQLIM’s goals include establishing a theocratic government in Algeria and the Middle East, and expelling non-Muslims from historically Muslim territory
- The current head emir of AQLIM is Abdelmalek Droudkel (a.k.a. Abu Musab Abd al-Wadoud)
- Primary methods of operations include the use of improvised explosive devices, kidnappings and guerrilla activity against civilian and military targets

AQLIM has conducted operations and/or has active rebel cells operating in the following countries:

- Algeria
- Chad
- Libya
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Morocco
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal
- Tunisia

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Major attacks include:

- On 28 Dec. 2009, suspected AQLIM gunmen killed four Saudi tourists in Niger
- On 18 Dec. 2009, gunmen kidnap two Italian nationals in Mauritania
- On 29 Nov. 2009, gunmen kidnap three Spanish nationals in Mauritania
- On 25 Nov. 2009, gunmen kidnap one French national in Mali
- On 29 Jul. 2009, gunmen killed in 14 Algerian security forces personnel
- On 23 Jun. 2009, gunmen killed US aid worker Chris Lenget in Mauritania
- On 17 Jun. 2009, gunmen killed 18 Algerian security forces personnel in ambush
- On 22 Jan. 2009, gunmen kidnap four European tourists in Mali
- On 14 Dec. 2008, gunmen kidnap two Canadian diplomats in Niger
- On 22 Feb. 2008, gunmen kidnap two Austrian tourists in Tunisia
- On 1 Feb. 2008, gunmen attack Israeli Embassy in Mauritania, injuring five bystanders
- On 24 Dec. 2007, gunmen kill four French tourists in southern Mauritania
- On 11 Dec. 2007, a suicide bomber attacks UN building in Algiers, killing 26
- On 6 Sept. 2007, a suicide bomber attempts to assassinate Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, killing 28 and injures 30
- On 11 Apr. 2007, IEDs detonate near two government buildings in Algiers, killing 33 and injures more than 200
- On 10 Dec. 2006, gunmen attack a US contractor vehicle, killing one and injuring nine
- On 8 Apr. 2005, gunmen kill 13 civilians and burn five vehicles in Tablat
- On 12 Feb. 2004, gunmen ambush a police patrol in Tighremt, killing seven police officers and injuring three

AQLIM has recently intensified efforts to kidnap Europeans throughout northern Africa in the past year, making kidnappings the group's highest profile activity, now surpassing large-scale IED attacks and other attacks.

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RECENT AQLIM KIDNAPPINGS

Prior to 2007, AQLIM kidnappings of foreign nationals was limited, but did include the significant 2003 kidnapping of 32 European tourists in Algeria. The hostages were later released after the German government reportedly paid a large ransom. Other kidnappings typically targeted wealthy local business persons for financial purposes. Since 2007, AQLIM has increasingly targeted foreign nationals, particularly Westerners, for kidnapping in northern Africa and the Sahel for both financial and political purposes.

Recent kidnappings include:

- 18 Dec. 2009: Two Italian nationals kidnapped in Mauritania
 - Claimed 28 Dec. 2009 (10 days)
- 29 Nov. 2009: Three Spanish aid workers kidnapped in Mauritania
 - Claimed 8 Dec. 2009 (9 days)
- 25 Nov. 2009: French researcher kidnapped in Mali
 - Claimed 8 Dec. 2009 (13 days)
- 22 Jan. 2009: Four European tourists kidnapped in Mali
 - Claimed 18 Feb. 2009 (27 days)
- 14 Dec. 2008: Two Canadian tourists kidnapped in Niger
 - Claimed 18 Feb. 2009 (65 days)
- 22 Feb. 2008: Two Austrian nationals kidnapped in Tunisia
 - Claimed 10 Mar. 2008 (16 days)

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AREA INFORMATION

- US nationals living or traveling in Niger are encouraged to register with the US Embassy or consulate
- US nationals are advised by the US Department of State to avoid travel along the border area between Niger and Mali as neither government is able to provide security in this region.
- Since 17 May 2007, US Embassy personnel are not permitted to travel into areas on Niger north of Abalak due to increase rebel activity. All US nationals are strongly advised to follow the same guidelines.
- On 14 Dec. 2008, two Canadian diplomats were kidnapped by AQLIM while driving back to Niamey after visiting a Canadian-operated goldmine in northern Niger
- On 22 Jan. 2009, four European tourists were kidnapped by AQLIM after attending a cultural festival in the Malian town of Anderamboukane near the Niger-Mali border

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