

**Main Developments in Theaters of Jihad:
Mali, North Africa, Somalia, the Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza
Strip, and the Northern Caucasus**

Introduction

Al-Qaeda's nature and goals are transnational, as is evidenced by its threats and operations not being confined to particular countries or regions. Rather, through its many affiliates and adherents, Al-Qaeda has been able to extend its reach to many geographic locations, each of which has served a different purpose for the group – from bases of operations, to new frontiers, to potential locations for Islamic emirates.¹ In recent testimony before the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, RAND Corporation analyst Seth Jones stated that, "There has been a net expansion in the number and geographic scope of Al-Qaeda affiliates and allies over the past decade, indicating that Al-Qaeda and its brand are far from defeated."² Al-Qaeda's decentralization has cultivated this expansion, with local affiliate groups often launching autonomous operations under the strategic guidance of the core leadership.

This article summarizes the main activities and developments of Al-Qaeda during the past six months in the following theaters of jihad: Mali, North Africa, Somalia, The Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, and the Northern Caucasus. While some of these theaters have seen a relative lull in jihadist activities, others have become more volatile and seen an increased influx of mujahideen [jihadist fighters]. In Mali, for example, Islamist rebels with ties to Al-Qaeda wrested control of the country's north from the central government, sparking a French-led military offensive that eventually pushed them out. However, concerns have since intensified that the rebels are regrouping in the restive North African countries of Libya, Tunisia and Algeria. In the US, the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013 by militant brothers Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, who apparently had ties to the Islamist-jihadist Caucasus Emirate, embodied a new wave of independent, individual "lone wolf" jihadist attacks, as envisioned by Al-Qaeda theoretician Abu Musab al-Suri.³ These incidents suggest that while Al-Qaeda may have been eliminated in one part of the world, it has surfaced elsewhere – evidence of its resilience. These and other major developments will be examined below.

¹ Al Qaeda: Theaters of Jihad. (n.d.). Critical Threats Project. Retrieved July 27, 2013, from American Enterprise Institute (AEI) website: <http://www.criticalthreats.org/Al-Qaeda-theaters-jihad>

² Jones, S. G. (2013, July). Re-examining the Al Qaeda threat to the United States. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT396>, p. 1.

³ Dickey, C. (2013, May 28). The master terrorist we gave away. The Daily Beast. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/05/28/the-master-terrorist-we-gave-away.html>; and Arquilla, J. (2013, April 22). Small cells vs. big data: Can information dominance crush terrorism? ForeignPolicy.com Retrieved from http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/22/small_cells_vs_big_data?page=0,0

Mali

In January, French-led forces launched a military campaign against Al-Qaeda-linked rebels who had taken over northern Mali following a March 2012 coup in the capital, Bamako. The Islamist seizure of Mali's north sparked fears that the area could turn into a springboard for terrorist attacks against the West.⁴ The three main jihadist groups known to be operating in the area were Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); Ansar Al-Din, a local Tuareg group; and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), an offshoot of AQIM.⁵ AQIM denounced the French offensive as a "Crusader intervention".⁶ Similarly, Muhammad al-Zawahiri, the brother of Al-Qaeda Emir Ayman al-Zawahiri and himself a prominent Egyptian Islamist, warned France that if it continued its operation, "the first to burn will be the Western people".⁷

After nearly a month of fighting, the French captured Kidal, the last major rebel stronghold.⁸ Shortly thereafter, Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno announced that his country's troops, who had participated in the French offensive, had killed Abou Zeid and Mokhtar Belmokhtar, two top Islamist leaders in Mali.⁹ France confirmed Abou Zeid's death,¹⁰ but Belmokhtar's name resurfaced two months later when a militant claiming to be him took responsibility for planning a suicide attack in Niger.¹¹ In addition, some 600 Islamist fighters were killed in the French

⁴ Rukmin, C. & Ahmed, B. (2013, January 14). France Mali intervention: French widen bombing campaign, enter country's center. The Associated Press. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/14/france-mali-intervention-bombing-campaign_n_2471022.html

⁵ Facts: Islamist groups present in northern Mali. (2013, January 13). AFP. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jc2_8exR_RPJ74YoBORSQWvTmY_A?docId=CNG.a501c43080aa337116c8686dbf98acf7.7f1&hl=en

⁶ Mali and France 'push back Islamists'. (2013, January 12). BBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20991723>

⁷ Joscelyn, T. (2013, January 25). Mohammed al Zawahiri threatens West, condemns Mali intervention. The Long War Journal. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/01/mohammed_al_zawahiri.php#ixzz2aHOTuBxL

⁸ Mali profile: Timeline. (2013, July 23). BBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881978>

⁹ Key dates in French-led Mali intervention. (2013, March 11). AFP. Retrieved from <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130311/key-dates-french-led-mali-intervention>

¹⁰ France confirms death of Al-Qaida chief Abou Zeid. (2013, March 23). The Associated Press. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fgw-abou-zeid-20130323,0,6473195.story>

¹¹ Nossiter, A. (2013, May 24). Militant says he is behind attack in Niger. The New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/world/africa/militant-says-he-is-behind-fatal-niger-attack.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&src=twrhp&adxnnlx=1374951778-X5ypSJhsG6Qw3h4UpRfbYq

offensive, according to the Malian military.¹² Analysts report that the loss of jihadist leaders and mujahideen is a major setback for AQIM. In mid-March, an AQIM communiqué called on jihadists in North Africa [the Maghreb] to join the jihad in Mali rather than that in Syria – a sign that the Al-Qaeda affiliates there were struggling to regain their foothold.¹³ After successfully thwarting the advance of Islamist fighters in Bamako and recapturing northern Mali, France began to withdraw its troops in April, leaving behind a small contingent to assist a regional African force and UN peacekeepers in ensuring Mali's security.¹⁴

Despite the setbacks to the mujahideen, AQIM has vowed to continue fighting in Mali "until we liberate it from the crusader French operation or perish before our children, women and brothers".¹⁵ While many Islamist rebels were killed or pushed out of northern Mali's towns during the French campaign, as noted, many also managed to escape to mountainous and desert hideaways in northeastern Africa, where analysts say they have been regrouping.¹⁶ The rebels have continued to launch sporadic suicide and guerilla attacks against French, Chadian and Malian forces, suggesting they do not plan to retreat from the region.¹⁷ According to the *Long War Journal*, these terrorist attacks are meant to send a message to Malian and African Union security forces that the mujahideen have redeployed in the north, and that "the attacks will continue, and the jihadist groups are not leaving anytime soon."¹⁸ The rebels have further promised to drag Western militaries and African governments into a ruthless Afghanistan-style war

¹² Daniel, S. (2013, March 27). 63 Mali soldiers, 600 Islamists 'killed this year'. AFP. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gBxelN6XyhvuiqLmcGQ6URFhViKq?docId=CNG.0077e59a44fac29c058fd71408558d92.501&hl=en>

¹³ Lahcen, M. (2013, March 29). Al-Qaeda eyes Tunisia front. Magharebia. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/03/29/reportage-01; and Mali: Hard-pressed al-Qaida calls for aid. (2013, March 25). UPI. Retrieved from http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/03/25/Mali-Hard-pressed-al-Qaida-calls-for-aid/UPI-27421364234761/

¹⁴ Mali profile: Timeline. (2013, July 23).

¹⁵ Larson, K. (2013, April 18). AL-QAEDAIM warns France, allies face threat after Mali. The Associated Press. Retrieved <http://abcnews.go.com/m/story?id=18992639&sid=76>

¹⁶ Al Qaeda finds new stronghold in rugged mountains of Mali as it regroups in Africa. (2013, March 3). FoxNews.com. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/03/03/malian-mountains-provide-perfect-antuary-for-Al-Qaeda-report-finds/#ixzz2aHBVJ5xC>; and Lewis, D. (2013, March 13). Insight: Islamist inroads in Mali may undo French war on al Qaeda. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/13/us-mali-rebels-recruits-idUSBRE92C05V20130313>

¹⁷ Roggio, B. (2013, May 10). Jihadists launch 3 suicide attacks in Mali. The Long War Journal. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat-matrix/archives/2013/05/jihadist_launch_3_suicide_atta.php#ixzz2aHDpFBv8

¹⁸ Ibid.

in Mali.¹⁹ Moreover, US counterterrorism officials have expressed concern that the French operation in Mali has actually dispersed mujahideen far and wide, to new havens and staging areas, especially in Libya, where they have been able to exploit the government's lack of control.²⁰

North Africa: Libya, Tunisia, Algeria

Algeria experienced a surge in jihadist activity in January when an Al-Qaeda affiliate identified as the Masked Brigade took over a gas field in the eastern part of the country in an attack that left at least 37 hostages dead.²¹ The group said it had launched the attack in retaliation for Algeria's support of the French operation in Mali.²² According to Algerian officials, the Masked Brigade is a multinational group of fighters from all over North Africa.²³

In response to a February AQIM communiqué calling on mujahideen to fight local secularists and government forces in Algeria and Mali, the Tunisian group Ansar Al-Sharia declared its allegiance to AQIM.²⁴ This was reportedly the first time Tunisia's Salafi-jihadist movement had announced its allegiance to Al-Qaeda, although some of its leaders, such as fugitive Abu Iyad, are known to have ties to the organization.²⁵ Following warnings by outgoing Africa Command (AFRICOM) chief General Carter Ham that AQIM was seeking to form a base in Tunisia, the Tunisian government announced it was forming special units to monitor and

¹⁹ Felix, B. & Sage, A. (2013, January 14). Mali Islamists counter attack, promise France long war. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=mali-islamists-counter-attack-promise-france-long-war/>

²⁰ Schmitt, E. (2013, June 26). International effort seeks to counter jihadists in Africa. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/27/world/africa/nations-focus-antiterrorism-efforts-on-west-and-north-africa.html>

²¹ Ouali, A. & Schemm, P. (2013, January 18). Details emerge in militant takeover, rescue operation at Algeria gas field. The Associated Press. Retrieved from <http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2013/01/18/16590460-details-emerge-in-militant-takeover-rescue-operation-at-algeria-gas-field>

²² Al Qaeda-linked group holding at least 3 Americans hostage after taking control of Algerian gas field. (2013, January 16). FoxNews.com. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/01/16/islamist-militants-from-mali-reportedly-kidnap-8-foreigners-at-algerian-gas-1052027220/#ixzz2aHGb2l5b>

²³ Nossiter, A. (2013, January 19). Hostages dead in bloody climax to siege in Algeria. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/20/world/africa/algeria-militants-hostages.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>

²⁴ Ghanmi, M. (2013, March 21). Tunisian salafist announce Al-Qaeda support. Magharebia. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/03/21/feature-02

²⁵ Ibid.

combat terrorist activity in its interior and along its borders.²⁶ The move coincided with Algeria's efforts to increase its counter-terrorism operations, to stem the flow of jihadists from Mali to the Jebel Chaambi region along its border with Tunisia.²⁷

In Libya, the flow of arms to Al-Qaeda-linked fighters has accelerated since the ouster of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. According to terrorism experts, poor security conditions in North Africa and the massive stockpile of weapons in Libya have enabled local, poorly armed guerilla-style jihadist groups to become small armies.²⁸ In the large, lawless Sahel, with its permeable borders, intelligence analysts find it difficult to track the flow of arms from Libya.²⁹ AFRICOM counter-terrorism chief Francisco Caetano Jose Madeira said in June that Libya had become a transit point for terrorists and weapons moving throughout North Africa, and that "some terrorists in Mali consider Libya as a refuge and a place to regroup".³⁰ Security officials also note that this power vacuum has enabled AQIM-linked militants fleeing Mali to set up a safe haven in southern Libya. As noted by a senior advisor to the Malian president in May, "the south of Libya is what the north of Mali was like before".³¹

According to terrorism analysts, the mujahideen who have poured into Libya from Mali are regrouping and replenishing their ranks.³² In May, the Nigerien president blamed Al-Qaeda for twin suicide bombings in Niger that killed at least 20 people, and added that the entire Sahel was at risk of destabilization.³³ Efforts by the Libyan government to maintain security in both urban centers and along the

²⁶ Tunisia sets up cells to combat Al Qaeda threat. (2013, March 28). The Peninsula. Retrieved from <http://thepeninsulaqatar.com/middle-east/230938-tunisia-sets-up-cells-to-combat-Al-Qaeda-threat-.html>

²⁷ Algerian army kills seven militants in al Qaeda stronghold. (2013, May 8). Reuters. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/algerian-army-kills-seven-militants-Al-Qaeda-stronghold-142052285.html>

²⁸ Wood, D. (2013, February 21). Libyan weapons arming Al Qaeda militias across North Africa, officials say. The Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/20/libyan-weapons-Al-Qaeda-north-africa_n_2727326.html

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Libya has become terrorism transit hub: African Union. (2013, June 25). AFP. Retrieved from <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130625/libya-has-become-terrorism-transit-hub-african-union>

³¹ Lewis, D. (2013, May 31). Insight: Libya becomes 'the new Mali' as Islamists shift in Sahara. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/insight-libya-becomes-mali-islamists-shift-sahara-105910263.html>

³² Al-Qaeda swaps Mali for Libya. (2013, June 7). Magharebia. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/06/07/reportage-01

³³ Al-Qaeda swaps Mali for Libya. (2013, June 7). Magharebia.

southern border appear to have failed, igniting the fear that attacks on targets in Libya and neighboring countries will intensify.³⁴

Moreover, Al-Qaeda has used the fighting in Mali and Syria to boost recruitment from North Africa.³⁵ Young recruits are being trained in Mali, armed in Libya, and then sent to Syria to join the war against the Assad regime. Analysts say that although various Al-Qaeda affiliates attract the new recruits, the group's principal aim is to have them enter Syria, which it is trying to turn into a breeding ground for global jihad.³⁶ According to Micah Zenko, an expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, recruiters have been able to take advantage of "diminished counter-terrorism capabilities, porous borders, and internal stresses, most especially a high proportion of unemployed young males" in North Africa and the Sahel to boost recruitment.³⁷ Tunisian authorities estimate that hundreds of young Tunisians have traveled to Syria in recent months to join the fight against the Assad regime. In response, Tunisian and Algerian authorities have taken measures to prevent their citizens from going to the Levant.³⁸ Nevertheless, jihadist networks persist in actively recruiting mujahideen from North Africa through Internet forums – a clear indication of the crucial role played by the Internet in Al-Qaeda's recruitment scheme.³⁹

Commenting on the increase of terrorist activities in North Africa during the past year, one Forbes blogger wrote that the attack on the US Embassy in Benghazi, Libya, the Islamist takeover of northern Mali, and the Algerian gas field hostage incident "all point to north Africa as the geopolitical hotspot of 2013 — where the Arab Spring has morphed into the War On Terror".⁴⁰ Frederic Wehrey and Anouar

³⁴ Fordham, A. (2013, June 12). Libya's porous borders worry its neighbors with extremists and smugglers on rise. *The National*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/libyas-porous-borders-worry-its-neighbours-with-extremists-and-smugglers-on-rise>

³⁵ Lahcen, M. (2013, March 8). Maghreb youth answer Al-Qaeda call. Magharebia. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/03/08/reportage-01

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Zenko, M. (2013, March 13). Worldwide threats briefing highlights. Council on Foreign Relations (CFR.org). Retrieved from <http://blogs.cfr.org/zenko/2013/03/13/worldwide-threats-briefing-highlights/>

³⁸ Fordham, A. (2013, April 13). Tunisia struggles to stem flow of fighters abroad. *The National*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/tunisia-struggles-to-stem-flow-of-fighters-abroad#page1>

³⁹ Ramzi, W. (2013, April 25). Algeria cracks down on Syria recruiting networks. *Al-Shofra.com*. Retrieved from http://al-shofra.com/en_GB/articles/mei/features/2013/04/25/feature-03

⁴⁰ Helman, C. (2013, January 18). Algeria attack shows the Arab Spring morphing into the war on terror. *Forbes*. Retrieved from

Boukhars, scholars in the Carnegie Endowment's Middle East Program, also note that these terrorism incidents have opened a new front in the struggle against Al-Qaeda – one that the UN Security Council has termed an "arc of instability",⁴¹ which extends from the Western Sahara to Somalia and the Sinai Peninsula. "If left unchecked..." they note, "this front] could transform the continent into a breeding ground for extremists and a launch[ing] pad for larger-scale terrorist attacks around the world".⁴²

Somalia

The Al-Qaeda affiliate in Somalia, Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen, was driven out of Mogadishu in 2011, but still controls areas in Somalia's southwest, from which it continues to carry out attacks around the country.⁴³ In April, Al-Shabab claimed responsibility for an attack at a Mogadishu courthouse that left over 30 people dead.⁴⁴ The militants stormed the court building, opened fire and set off bombs as they clashed with security forces. The attack was the most severe in Mogadishu since Al-Shabab had been pushed out of the capital.⁴⁵ Hours after the attack, a suicide car bomber crashed into a vehicle carrying Turkish citizens. These events prompted the government to issue a travel warning for Somalia, and proved that Al-Shabab was able to launch a well-coordinated assault despite having been pushed to the sidelines.⁴⁶ Outside of Somalia, one of the two main suspects in the May 22 murder of a British soldier in London apparently had ties to Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen.⁴⁷ He was arrested in 2010 as he tried to cross the border from Kenya into Somalia to join the group.

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherhelman/2013/01/18/algeria-attack-shows-the-arab-spring-morphing-into-the-war-on-terror/>

⁴¹ 'Arc of instability' across Africa, if left unchecked, could turn continent into launch pad for larger scale terrorist attacks, security council told. (2013, May 13). U.N. Security Council Meeting. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11004.doc.htm>

⁴² Wehrey, F. M., & Boukhars, A. (2013). *Perilous desert: Insecurity in the Sahara*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Forward.

⁴³ Nor, M. S. (2013, March 1). Blasts kill two at Mogadishu beach. Radio France Internationale (RFI). Retrieved from <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20130301-somalia-twin-blasts-kill-two-mogadishu-beach>

⁴⁴ Sheikh, A. & Omar, F. (2013, April 15). Somali militants threaten more attacks after killing 30. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/15/us-somalia-blast-idUSBRE93E0IS20130415>

⁴⁵ Somalia supreme court attack kills at least 20. (2013, April 14). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/14/somalia-supreme-court-attack-kills>

⁴⁶ Nine gunmen killed in Somalia court attack. (2013, April 14). The Associated Press. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2013/04/14/somalia-court-attack.html>

⁴⁷ Odula, T. & Hui, S. (2013, May 27). Kenya: UK soldier killing suspect arrested in 2010 near border with Somalia. The Associated Press. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/kenya-uk-soldier-killing-suspect-arrested-2010-near-081009311.html>

According to terrorism analyst Peter Bergen, although Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen remains a potential threat to Somali and Western targets in East Africa, the group lost considerable territory and influence in Somalia.⁴⁸ Bergen also notes that Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen has not launched a mass-casualty attack outside of Somalia since its 2010 bombings in Uganda. Moreover, the group suffers from deep internal divisions. In April a senior foreign member of Al-Shabab posted an open letter to Al-Shabab leader Ahmed Abdi Godane (aka Mukhtar Abu al-Zubayr), in which he claimed there were “problems” within the group, and criticized the arrest of some Al-Shabab mujahideen “for no reason”.⁴⁹ Terrorism analysts also cite the rift between the group’s leadership and Omar Hamammi (aka al-Amriki), an American who fought with the group for years before becoming estranged from it 2012, and predict that tensions will grow between Al-Shabab’s local and foreign members.⁵⁰

The Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip

In 2012, Israel’s Internal Security Service (Shin Bet) reported an increase in the number of terrorist attacks originating in the Sinai Peninsula, and added that global jihad operatives were using the Sinai as a base from which to launch attacks against Israel.⁵¹ The Shin Bet believes most of these attacks are being initiated by a group that calls itself Ansar Bayt Al-Maqdis.⁵² Mohamed Jamal al-Kashef, a veteran Egyptian member of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, and Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri reportedly call Sinai “the next frontier of conflict with the Zionists and Americans”.⁵³

⁴⁸ Bergen, P. (2013, July 16). From Benghazi to Boston: The state of the jihad. CNN.com. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/16/opinion/bergen-jihad-status/index.html>

⁴⁹ Somalia: Open letter to Al-Shabab leader reveals - 'Yes, there are problems'. (2013, April 30). AllAfrica.com. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201305010472.html?viewall=1>

⁵⁰ American jihadist Omar Hammami in Somalia tweets he's 'just been shot' by al-Shabab. (2013, April 26). The Associated Press. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57581575/american-jihadist-omar-hammami-in-somalia-tweets-hes-just-been-shot-by-al-shabab/; and Stuster, D. (2013, April 30). Rapping jihadist's tweets showcase al-Shabab's internal divisions. ForeignPolicy.com. Retrieved from http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/04/30/rapping_jihadist_s_tweets_showcase_al_shabab_s_internal_divisions?wp_login_redirect=0

⁵¹ Barnett, D. (2013, January 24). Shin Bet: Rise in attacks from the Sinai in 2012. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/01/shin_bet_rise_in_att.php#ixzz2aK7NIhri

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Fahmy, M. F. (2013, March 29). Egyptian Salafist considers Sinai the 'next frontier'. Al-Monitor. Retrieved from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/egyptsalafistsanaiusconsulatebenghazi.html#ixzz2aK7qdKKu>

The ouster of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2011 created a power vacuum in the Sinai Peninsula, which has enabled jihadist militants, many of whom have ties to Al-Qaeda, to increase their activity there. The deteriorating security situation in the Sinai has been exacerbated by the flow of weapons smuggled from Libya⁵⁴ – one of the ways Hamas has found to rearm following its break with Iran.⁵⁵ According to Israeli military officials, although the quantity of arms entering the Gaza Strip has decreased, their quality has improved.⁵⁶ In a show of increasing concern over the destabilization of the Sinai Peninsula, an Egyptian court ruled in February that the government would have to destroy all of the smuggling tunnels connecting the Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip. Even Hamas's natural ally, the Muslim Brotherhood, which ruled Egypt until recently, has feared that the two-way flow of arms through the tunnels placed Egypt's security at risk.⁵⁷

Now that the Muslim Brotherhood-backed president of Egypt, Mohammed Morsi, has been removed from power, Al-Qaeda ideologues in Egypt have received "the leverage needed to once again raise a call to arms", according to analysts at the Southwest Initiative for the Study of Middle East Conflicts (SISMEC).⁵⁸ According to a July SISMEC report, continuous regime change in Egypt during a period of less than three years has shattered the already fragile security situation in the Sinai Peninsula, providing fertile ground for Salafists who assert that Morsi's overthrow proves that democracy rejects political Islam. The report states: "This combination of ingredients – a lack of organic security in the Sinai, along with Islamist protests following Morsi's arrest, and a concurrent deployment of U.S. troops to the region, may prove more combustible than a Molotov cocktail".⁵⁹

The Northern Caucasus

⁵⁴ Perry, T. & Mohamed, Y. (2013, May 22). Militants release seven Egyptians kidnapped in Sinai. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/22/us-egypt-soldiers-idUSBRE94L05O20130522>

⁵⁵ Ginsburg, M. (2013, June 10). With ties to Iran in shambles, Hamas finds new ways to rearm. The Times of Israel. Retrieved from <http://www.timesofisrael.com/with-ties-to-iran-in-shambles-hamas-finds-new-ways-to-rearm/>

⁵⁶ Ginsburg, 2013.

⁵⁷ Cairo: Court orders Gaza tunnels destroyed. (2013, February 27). Ynet.com. Retrieved from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4350462,00.html>

⁵⁸ Al-Qaeda loyalists and U.S. troops together at last in the Sinai. (2013, July 20). The Southwest Initiative for the Study of Middle East Conflicts (SISMEC), University of Arizona. Retrieved from <http://www.sismec.org/2013/07/20/Al-Qaeda-loyalists-and-u-s-troops-together-at-last-in-the-sinai/>

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Russian security forces continue to crack down on Islamist militants in the Northern Caucasus on a daily basis.⁶⁰ In one recent incident, a rabbi was shot and wounded in Dagestan by alleged jihadist rebels. Although the Russian government reinstated its control of the region a decade ago, Islamist rebels persist in using it to launch attacks. In a July video posted online, the leader of the Al-Qaeda-linked Caucasus Emirate, Doku Umarov, reiterated his plans to thwart the Winter Olympics, which are slated to be held in Sochi in 2014. Umarov said, "They (Russia) plan to hold the Olympics on the bones of our ancestors, on the bones of many, many dead Muslims, buried on the territory of our land on the Black Sea, and we as mujahideen are obliged to not permit that, using any methods allowed us by the almighty Allah".⁶¹ The Caucasus Emirate has taken responsibility for several attacks in Russia, among them suicide attacks at a Moscow airport in 2011 and in the Moscow subway system in 2010.⁶²

It has been alleged, in part by the FBI, that the perpetrators of the Boston Marathon bombings this April, Dzhokhar and Tamerlan Tsarnaev, had ties to the Caucasus Emirate. However, the Emirate denies any connection with the brothers, and insisted it does not wage militant activities against the US.⁶³ It has been discovered that the brothers watched YouTube video clips propagating radical Islamic ideology. Tamerlan, who was killed during the manhunt for the two, visited Dagestan for six months in 2012, where he reportedly met with Islamist extremists.⁶⁴ Dzhokhar Tsarnaev admitted to authorities that he and his brother learned how to build bombs from *Inspire* magazine, a popular English-language Al-Qaeda publication.⁶⁵ In fact, the isolated act of the Tsarnaev brothers, and their "self-radicalization", in part through Al-Qaeda materials, reflects the concept of "individual jihad" promulgated by Al-Qaeda theoretician

⁶⁰ Russia says kills Chechen rebel leader, two militants. (2013, March 7). Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/07/us-russia-chechnya-idUSBRE9260VM20130307>

⁶¹ Grove, T. (2013, July 3). Islamist rebel vows "maximum force" to stop Sochi Olympics. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/07/03/russia-olympics-sochi-militants-idINDEE96204J20130703>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Zaks, D. (2013, April 21). North Caucasus rebels deny link to Boston attack. AFP. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hz0tmpokJ_dZ-S6DbTJa6nmUJpsA?docId=CNG.018e1625845b5f1688282300d99320f1.4d1&hl=en

⁶⁴ Russian sources tell congressman Boston suspect met with two Chechen extremists. (2013, May 9). CNN.com. Retrieved from http://thelead.blogs.cnn.com/2013/05/09/russian-sources-tell-congressman-boston-suspect-met-with-two-chechen-extremists/?hpt=hp_c2

⁶⁵ Investigators discover Boston bombs were detonated by a remote control as suspect admits he learned to build the devices from al Qaeda propaganda magazine. (2013, April 23). *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2313782/Dzhokhar-Tsarnaev-Boston-Marathon-bomber-admits-learned-build-bomb-Inspire-magazine.html#ixzz2aKCupMec>

Abu Musab al-Suri,⁶⁶ who issued a "global Islamic resistance call" encouraging jihadists to form independent, self-generating cells that would engage in violence against Western targets.⁶⁷

It should also be noted that jihadist militants from Chechnya and Dagestan have poured into Syria to fight alongside the Al-Nusra Front, an Al-Qaeda affiliate, which opposes President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Another Syrian rebel group, the Muhajiroun Brigade, is led by Abu Omar al-Chechen, who is from the Russian Caucasus⁶⁸ and comprises members from the Caucasus Emirate. During the past year, the Brigade has been involved in several attacks on Syrian military targets.⁶⁹

Conclusion

The developments of the past six months in the jihadist theaters of Mali, North Africa, Somalia and the Northern Caucasus suggest that the threat posed by Al-Qaeda cannot be eliminated simply by removing the jihadist groups from any one country or region. As noted, Al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and the "lone wolves" it inspires, threaten many parts of the world, from the Middle East to Africa, from the Caucasus to the West. This global threat emphasizes what many terrorism analysts have repeated: Only a combination of military, economic, law enforcement, diplomatic and information measures, together with sustained international collaboration, will be effective in defeating Al-Qaeda.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Dickey, 2013; and Arquilla, 2013.

⁶⁷ Samuels, D. (2012, April 6). The new mastermind of Jihad. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303299604577323750859163544.html>

⁶⁸ Roggio, B. (2013, February 20). Chechen commander leads Muhajireen Brigade in Syria. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/02/chechen_commander_le.php

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Jones, 2013, p. 2

References

- Algerian army kills seven militants in al Qaeda stronghold. (2013, May 8). Reuters. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/algerian-army-kills-seven-militants-Al-Qaeda-stronghold-142052285.html>
- Al Qaeda finds new stronghold in rugged mountains of Mali as it regroups in Africa. (2013, March 3). FoxNews.com. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/03/03/malian-mountains-provide-perfect-anctuary-for-Al-Qaeda-report-finds/#ixzz2aHBVJ5xC>
- Al Qaeda-linked group holding at least 3 Americans hostage after taking control of Algerian gas field. (2013, January 16). FoxNews.com. Retrieved from <http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/01/16/islamist-militants-from-mali-reportedly-kidnap-8-foreigners-at-algerian-gas-1052027220/#ixzz2aHGb2I5b>
- Al-Qaeda loyalists and U.S. troops together at last in the Sinai. (2013, July 20). The Southwest Initiative for the Study of Middle East Conflicts (SISMEC), University of Arizona. Retrieved from <http://www.sismec.org/2013/07/20/Al-Qaeda-loyalists-and-u-s-troops-together-at-last-in-the-sinai/>
- Al-Qaeda swaps Mali for Libya. (2013, June 7). Magharebia. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/06/07/reportage-01
- Al Qaeda: Theaters of Jihad. (n.d.). Critical Threats Project. Retrieved July 27, 2013, from American Enterprise Institute (AEI) website: <http://www.criticalthreats.org/Al-Qaeda-theaters-jihad>
- American jihadist Omar Hammami in Somalia tweets he's 'just been shot' by al-Shabab. (2013, April 26). The Associated Press. Retrieved from http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-201_162-57581575/american-jihadist-omar-hammami-in-somalia-tweets-hes-just-been-shot-by-al-shabab/
- 'Arc of instability' across Africa, if left unchecked, could turn continent into launch pad for larger scale terrorist attacks, security council told. (2013, May 13).

- U.N. Security Council Meeting. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2013/sc11004.doc.htm>
- Arquilla, J. (2013, April 22). Small cells vs. big data: Can information dominance crush terrorism? ForeignPolicy.com Retrieved from http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2013/04/22/small_cells_vs_big_data?page=0,0
- Barnett, D. (2013, January 24). Shin Bet: Rise in attacks from the Sinai in 2012. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/01/shin_bet_rise_in_att.p#ixzz2aK7Nlhri
- Bergen, P. (2013, July 16). From Benghazi to Boston: The state of the jihad. CNN.com. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/07/16/opinion/bergen-jihad-status/index.html>
- Cairo: Court orders Gaza tunnels destroyed. (2013, February 27). Ynet.com. Retrieved from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4350462,00.html>
- Daniel, S. (2013, March 27). 63 Mali soldiers, 600 Islamists 'killed this year'. AFP. Retrieved from <http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gBxelN6XyhvuiQLmcGQ6URFhViKg?docId=CNG.0077e59a44fac29c058fd71408558d92.501&hl=en>
- Dickey, C. (2013, May 28). The master terrorist we gave away. *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved from <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2013/05/28/the-master-terrorist-we-gave-away.html>
- Facts: Islamist groups present in northern Mali. (2013, January 13). AFP. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5jc2_8exR_RPJ74YoBORSDWQvTmYA?docId=CNG.a501c43080aa337116c8686dbf98acf7.7f1&hl=en

- Fahmy, M. F. (2013, March 29). Egyptian Salafist considers Sinai the 'next frontier'. Al-Monitor. Retrieved from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2013/03/egyptisalafistsanaiusconsulatebenghazi.html#ixzz2aK7qdKKu>
- Felix, B. & Sage, A. (2013, January 14). Mali Islamists counter attack, promise France long war. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=mali-islamists-counter-attack-promise-france-long-war/>
- Fordham, A. (2013, April 13). Tunisia struggles to stem flow of fighters abroad. The National. Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/tunisia-struggles-to-stem-flow-of-fighters-abroad#page1>
- Fordham, A. (2013, June 12). Libya's porous borders worry its neighbors with extremists and smugglers on rise. *The National*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenational.ae/news/world/middle-east/libyas-porous-borders-worry-its-neighbours-with-extremists-and-smugglers-on-rise>
- France confirms death of Al-Qaida chief Abou Zeid. (2013, March 23). The Associated Press. Retrieved from <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fgw-abou-zeid-20130323,0,6473195.story>
- Ghanmi, M. (2013, March 21). Tunisian salafist announce Al-Qaeda support. Magharebia. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/features/2013/03/21/feature-02
- Ginsburg, M. (2013, June 10). With ties to Iran in shambles, Hamas finds new ways to rearm. The Times of Israel. Retrieved from <http://www.timesofisrael.com/with-ties-to-iran-in-shambles-hamas-finds-new-ways-to-rearm/>
- Grove, T. (2013, July 3). Islamist rebel vows "maximum force" to stop Sochi Olympics. Reuters. Retrieved from

<http://in.reuters.com/article/2013/07/03/russia-olympics-sochi-militants-idINDEE96204J20130703>

Helman, C. (2013, January 18). Algeria attack shows the Arab Spring morphing into the war on terror. *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/christopherhelman/2013/01/18/algeria-attack-shows-the-arab-spring-morphing-into-the-war-on-terror/>

Investigators discover Boston bombs were detonated by a remote control as suspect admits he learned to build the devices from al Qaeda propaganda magazine. (2013, April 23). *Daily Mail*. Retrieved from <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2313782/Dzhokhar-Tsarnaev-Boston-Marathon-bomber-admits-learned-build-bomb-Inspire-magazine.html#ixzz2aKCupMec>

Jones, S. G. (2013, July). *Re-examining the Al Qaeda threat to the United States*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation. Retrieved from <http://www.rand.org/pubs/testimonies/CT396>

Joscelyn, T. (2013, January 25). Mohammed al Zawahiri threatens West, condemns Mali intervention. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/01/mohammed_al_zawahiri.php#ixzz2aH0TuBxL

Key dates in French-led Mali intervention. (2013, March 11). AFP. Retrieved from <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130311/key-dates-french-led-mali-intervention>

Lahcen, M. (2013, March 8). Maghreb youth answer Al-Qaeda call. *Magharebia*. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/03/08/reportage-01

Lahcen, M. (2013, March 29). Al-Qaeda eyes Tunisia front. *Magharebia*. Retrieved from http://magharebia.com/en_GB/articles/awi/reportage/2013/03/29/reportage-01

Larson, K. (2013, April 18). AL-QAEDAIM warns France, allies face threat after Mali. The Associated Press. Retrieved <http://abcnews.go.com/m/story?id=18992639&sid=76>

Lewis, D. (2013, March 13). Insight: Islamist inroads in Mali may undo French war on al Qaeda. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/13/us-mali-rebels-recruits-idUSBRE92C05V20130313>

Lewis, D. (2013, May 31). Insight: Libya becomes 'the new Mali' as Islamists shift in Sahara. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/insight-libya-becomes-mali-islamists-shift-sahara-105910263.html>

Libya has become terrorism transit hub: African Union. (2013, June 25). AFP. Retrieved from <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/afp/130625/libya-has-become-terrorism-transit-hub-african-union>

Mali and France 'push back Islamists'. (2013, January 12). BBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-20991723>

Mali: Hard-pressed al-Qaida calls for aid. (2013, March 25). UPI. Retrieved from http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/03/25/Mali-Hard-pressed-al-Qaida-calls-for-aid/UPI-27421364234761/

Mali profile: Timeline. (2013, July 23). BBC News. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13881978>

Nine gunmen killed in Somalia court attack. (2013, April 14). The Associated Press. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2013/04/14/somalia-court-attack.html>

Nor, M. S. (2013, March 1). Blasts kill two at Mogadishu beach. Radio France Internationale (RFI). Retrieved from <http://www.english.rfi.fr/africa/20130301-somalia-twin-blasts-kill-two-mogadishu-beach>

- Nossiter, A. (2013, January 19). Hostages dead in bloody climax to siege in Algeria. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/01/20/world/africa/algeria-militants-hostages.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>
- Nossiter, A. (2013, May 24). Militant says he is behind attack in Niger. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/25/world/africa/militant-says-he-is-behind-fatal-niger-attack.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&src=twrhp&adxnnlx=1374951778-X5ypSJhsG6Qw3h4UpRfbYg
- Odula, T. & Hui, S. (2013, May 27). Kenya: UK soldier killing suspect arrested in 2010 near border with Somalia. *The Associated Press*. Retrieved from <http://news.yahoo.com/kenya-uk-soldier-killing-suspect-arrested-2010-near-081009311.html>
- Ouali, A. & Schemm, P. (2013, January 18). Details emerge in militant takeover, rescue operation at Algeria gas field. *The Associated Press*. Retrieved from <http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/news/2013/01/18/16590460-details-emerge-in-militant-takeover-rescue-operation-at-algeria-gas-field>
- Perry, T. & Mohamed, Y. (2013, May 22). Militants release seven Egyptians kidnapped in Sinai. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/05/22/us-egypt-soldiers-idUSBRE94L05O20130522>
- Ramzi, W. (2013, April 25). Algeria cracks down on Syria recruiting networks. *Al-Shofra.com*. Retrieved from http://al-shorfa.com/en_GB/articles/meii/features/2013/04/25/feature-03
- Roggio, B. (2013, February 20). Chechen commander leads Muhajireen Brigade in Syria. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/02/chechen_commander_le.php#ixzz2aKENRzV3
- Roggio, B. (2013, May 10). Jihadists launch 3 suicide attacks in Mali. *The Long War Journal*. Retrieved from <http://www.longwarjournal.org/threat->

matrix/archives/2013/05/jihadist_launch_3_suicide_atta.php#ixzz2aHDpFBv8

Rukmin, C. & Ahmed, B. (2013, January 14). France Mali intervention: French widen bombing campaign, enter country's center. The Associated Press. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/14/france-mali-intervention-bombing-campaign_n_2471022.html

Russia says kills Chechen rebel leader, two militants. (2013, March 7). Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/03/07/us-russia-chechnya-idUSBRE9260VM20130307>

Russian sources tell congressman Boston suspect met with two Chechen extremists. (2013, May 9). CNN.com. Retrieved from http://thelead.blogs.cnn.com/2013/05/09/russian-sources-tell-congressman-boston-suspect-met-with-two-chechen-extremists/?hpt=hp_c2

Samuels, D. (2012, April 6). The new mastermind of Jihad. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702303299604577323750859163544.html>

Schmitt, E. (2013, June 26). International effort seeks to counter jihadists in Africa. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/27/world/africa/nations-focus-antiterrorism-efforts-on-west-and-north-africa.html>

Sheikh, A. & Omar, F. (2013, April 15). Somali militants threaten more attacks after killing 30. Reuters. Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/04/15/us-somalia-blast-idUSBRE93E0IS20130415>

Somalia: Open letter to Al-Shabaab leader reveals - 'Yes, there are problems'. (2013, April 30). AllAfrica.com. Retrieved from <http://allafrica.com/stories/201305010472.html?viewall=1>

Somalia supreme court attack kills at least 20. (2013, April 14). *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/14/somalia-supreme-court-attack-kills>

Stuster, D. (2013, April 30). Rapping jihadist's tweets showcase al-Shabab's internal divisions. ForeignPolicy.com. Retrieved from http://blog.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/04/30/rapping_jihadist_s_tweet_s_showcase_al_shabab_s_internal_divisions?wp_login_redirect=0

Tunisia sets up cells to combat Al Qaeda threat. (2013, March 28). *The Peninsula*. Retrieved from <http://thepeninsulaAl-Qaedaatar.com/middle-east/230938-tunisia-sets-up-cells-to-combat-Al-Qaeda-threat-.html>

Wehrey, F. M., & Boukhars, A. (2013). *Perilous desert: Insecurity in the Sahara*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Wood, D. (2013, February 21). Libyan weapons arming Al Qaeda militias across North Africa, officials say. The Huffington Post. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/20/libyan-weapons-Al-Qaeda-north-africa_n_2727326.html

Zaks, D. (2013, April 21). North Caucasus rebels deny link to Boston attack. AFP. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5hz0tmpokJ_dZ-S6DbTJa6nmUJpsA?docId=CNG.018e1625845b5f1688282300d99320f1.4d1&hl=en

Zenko, M. (2013, March 13). Worldwide threats briefing highlights. Council on Foreign Relations (CFR.org). Retrieved from <http://blogs.cfr.org/zenko/2013/03/13/worldwide-threats-briefing-highlights/>