

Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)



OVERVIEW

AS OF JUNE 2026

Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is a North Africa-based Sunni designated Foreign Terrorist Organization that seeks to eliminate governments and Western influence in the region and to establish sharia (Islamic law). It has conducted attacks across North and West Africa that have killed hundreds, including Americans.

AQIM's predecessor group formed in 1998 as the Algeria-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), a faction of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA). The GSPC aligned itself with al-Qa'ida in September 2006 and assumed the name AQIM in January 2007. Although AQIM is an al-Qa'ida affiliate, it maintains a largely autonomous command structure and targeting strategy. AQIM elements underwent various periods of schism and reconciliation between 2011 and 2017, one of which resulted in the merging of AQIM's Sahel branch, the terrorist group al-Murabitun, and two other groups to establish Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM).

Operating Area

AQIM historically operated in the coastal areas of northern Algeria and in Libya and Tunisia, but counterterrorism efforts have forced AQIM largely into the Sahel region, including Mali.

Members

A few hundred fighters, excluding those operating under JNIM's umbrella

Tactics And Targets

AQIM employs small arms, machineguns, rockets, landmines, mortars, and IEDs, conducting guerrilla-style ambushes against military and civilian targets that include tourist areas and UN peacekeeping bases. Members have been responsible for kidnap-for-ransom operations against foreign and local targets and, in some cases, have executed their hostages. The group has also obtained revenue by extorting drug-trafficking groups and engaging in illicit arms markets.

Terrorist Group Designation

The US Department of State designated AQIM as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on 20 February 2008. It was originally designated in March 2002 under its previous name, the GSPC.



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KEY LEADERS



Abu 'Ubaydah Yusuf al-'Annabi

Amir 2020-present; designated by the US Department of State as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on 9 September 2015



Abdelmalek Droukdal [DECEASED]

Amir 2004-20



Nabil Sahraoui [DECEASED]

GSPC amir 2003-04



Hassan Hattab [DETAINED]

GSPC founder and amir 1998-2003

NOTABLE ATTACKS

13 March 2016

Grand-Bassam, Côte d'Ivoire

AQIM gunmen attack a coastal resort, killing at least 16 civilians and three special forces soldiers.

15 January 2016

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

AQIM militants attack a luxury hotel and police station, killing 30 people and taking approximately 100 hostages.

20 November 2015

Bamako, Mali

AQIM and al-Murabitun attack the Radisson Blu Hotel, taking at least 100 hostages and leaving 27 people dead, including a US international development worker.



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NOTABLE ATTACKS *(continued)*

16 January 2013

Eastern Algeria

AQIM splinter group al-Mulathamun Battalion seizes the In-Amenas natural gas plant, and 37 hostages die during a rescue attempt by Algerian forces.

11 December 2007

Algiers, Algeria

AQIM attacks UN offices and Algeria's Constitutional Court with car bombs, killing 60 people.

