# Crisis In Mali

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August 16, 2012

**Congressional Research Service**
7-5700
www.crs.gov
R42664

**CRS Report for Congress**
*Prepared for Members and Committees of Congress*

# Summary

The West African country of Mali is mired in overlapping crises. A military coup overthrew Mali's democratically elected government in March 2012 and insurgent groups seized its vast and sparsely populated northern territory. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a regional criminal-terrorist network and U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization, has expanded its presence in the north, along with two other radical Islamist organizations and the remnants of an ethnic Tuareg separatist group. The factors that drove these developments were complex; among them was the collapse of Muammar al Qadhafi's regime in Libya, which sparked the return of Tuareg combatants to Mali and a reported surge in regional weapons flows.

Congress influences U.S. policy toward Mali through the authorization and appropriation of foreign aid and through its oversight activities. The prospect of an expanded safe-haven for AQIM and other extremists and criminal actors in Mali is a principal concern of U.S. policymakers, as it presents a serious threat to regional security and, potentially, to Western targets and interests in the region. The United States and other international actors are also concerned about the humanitarian implications of the turmoil in Mali: the conflict in the north has displaced over 420,000 people and placed additional pressures on an already dire regional food security emergency. To date, the interim government and military remain in disarray, while political rivalry and limited capacity have hindered efforts to forge an effective regional response.

The situation in Mali challenges U.S. goals of promoting stability, democracy, civilian control of the military, and effective counterterrorism in Africa, and raises questions regarding the strategic design and effectiveness of existing U.S. efforts to do so. Policymakers continue to debate whether, and how, the United States should respond to Mali's crisis as it evolves. At present, U.S. policy seeks the return of a legitimate government in the south, and supports efforts led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to mediate a way out of Mali's political collapse and contain violent extremism from spreading more widely in the region. The United States may provide support for an eventual ECOWAS stabilization force, depending on its scope and with the consent of Mali's interim government; to date, State Department officials have called on ECOWAS to better articulate its plans and needs for the mission. Direct U.S. assistance to the Malian security forces—in addition to several other types of foreign aid—has been suspended in line with congressionally mandated restrictions triggered by the coup. The aid suspensions do not include humanitarian assistance, including for health and food security, of which the United States is a leading provider in Mali and the region.

With regard to the current crises, Congress may consider issues related to U.S. and international aid to Mali, support for ECOWAS, and humanitarian assistance in response to evolving conditions in the Sahel. Congress may also consider the possible implications of the situation in Mali for the design, emphasis, and evaluation of U.S. counterterrorism and good governance efforts in Africa.

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# Overview

The West African country of Mali faces multiple overlapping crises. The country's political leadership has been uncertain and disputed since a military coup on March 22, 2012, overthrew a democratically elected government in the capital, Bamako. The coup was nominally motivated by the government's failure to devote adequate resources toward fighting a rebellion in the vast, sparsely populated north by a loose alliance of predominantly ethnic Tuareg separatists and Islamist extremists. After the coup, the insurgents took advantage of the power vacuum to seize control of the north. The insurgency has since fragmented along ideological lines, with extremist groups increasingly outmaneuvering the separatists. The former include Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a regional criminal-terrorist network that is a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization. The conflict places additional pressure on an already dire regional food security emergency, having displaced over 420,000 people.[1] Congress influences U.S. policy toward Mali through the authorization and appropriation of foreign aid and through its oversight role, and has focused on democracy, regional stability, and terrorism issues in Africa, all of which are pertinent to U.S. policy deliberations on Mali.

Regional and Western leaders have warned of a rising threat to international security associated with an expansion of AQIM's influence and scope of operations, a possible spread of violent extremist ideology, and state fragmentation.[2] The open presence of AQIM commanders in northern cities, along with reports of foreign fighters traveling to Mali from Nigeria, Somalia, Pakistan, and elsewhere, have raised acute concerns that Mali could become a training ground and launching pad for transnational terrorist attacks. Extremist groups in the north have also targeted historic and cultural sites, including UNESCO World Heritage-designated ancient mosques and tombs;[3] imposed harsh behavioral and dress codes on local residents, inspired by an extremely conservative interpretation of *sharia* (Islamic law); recruited child soldiers; and committed other abuses (see "Human Rights" below). While these groups are rejected by many Malians, they appear to benefit from local support in some areas.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has attempted, with mixed results, to induce Mali's military to return to the barracks, empower a fragile civilian-led transitional government, and facilitate negotiations toward a settlement of the conflict in the north. ECOWAS has also proposed a regional military intervention to protect Malian state institutions and potentially counter extremist groups. The intervention force has been slow to materialize, however, and donor and Malian reactions have been mixed (see "Regional Responses" below).

## U.S. Policy Challenges and Issues for Congress

The ongoing crises in Mali challenge long-standing U.S. policy goals and create new regional security risks. Prior to the coup, the U.S. government viewed Mali as a relatively democratic

[1] U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), "OCHA Calls for a Paradigm Shift to Avert a Humanitarian Disaster in Mali," July 26, 2012; Refugees International, *Malian Refugees: Underfunded Response Adds Stress to Sahel Food Crisis*, June 26, 2012.

[2] Reuters, "West Africa to Seek U.N. Mandate for Action on Mali," June 11, 2012.

[3] UNESCO is the U.N. Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. For information on its endangered sites in Timbuktu, Mali, see http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/119.

success story, despite governance challenges, particularly in the north, and indications that the Malian public increasingly resented what it viewed as government corruption and cronyism. Mali has been a longtime recipient of U.S. development aid, with modest gains achieved by health, education, and governance programs. U.S. military professionalization training emphasized civilian control and respect for human rights. The coup may bring into question the effectiveness of these programs—coup leader Captain Amadou Sanogo received U.S. military training—and the current unrest has jeopardized joint U.S.-Malian accomplishments in all of these areas.[4]

In the near term, international concern is focused on the fact that unrest in Mali is dealing a serious setback to regional stability. As state authority in Mali has withered, transnational violent extremists and drug traffickers have pressed their advantage.[5] U.S. defense officials have recently expressed growing concern over purported collaboration between AQIM and other Al Qaeda-affiliated groups, and over the challenges Mali presents with regard to counterterrorism.[6] A key issue for the United States is therefore whether, and how, to respond. The United States has expressed support for ECOWAS mediation efforts and has ended certain aid programs in line with congressionally mandated restrictions triggered by the coup (see "U.S. Policy" and "U.S. Foreign Aid" below). However, the interim government and military remain in disarray, while ECOWAS actions to date have revealed the regional organization's internal divisions and underscored its operational shortcomings. A delay in confronting armed groups in the north, including terrorist actors, could enable them to consolidate or expand their hold, potentially into neighboring states; it could also lead to open conflict among the various entities vying for control. Yet military action—Malian, regional, or otherwise—carries significant potential for unintended consequences. A military response would be operationally challenging due to the harsh and remote Saharan terrain, and could provoke otherwise non-cohesive armed groups to rally around anti-southern or anti-Western sentiment as a tool to boost recruitment, or to create a new focus on U.S., Western, or regional targets.

The United States is a leading bilateral donor of emergency assistance in response to the regional food security crisis, and has provided funds to help Malian refugees fleeing the conflict. The issue of humanitarian access could rise on the international policy agenda if active fighting breaks out among armed groups; if these groups intensify their objections to the presence of aid agencies; or if concerns arise over the potential diversion of aid to terrorist groups.[7]

More broadly, Mali's quick slide, while catalyzed in part by external factors such as the flow of arms and combatants from Libya, raises questions concerning the design and effectiveness of U.S. policy interventions in the Sahel region. Despite a decade of U.S. assistance aimed at fostering greater stability, democracy, and counterterrorism capacity in the Sahel, three focus countries of these efforts (Mali, Mauritania, and Niger) have experienced military coups in the past four years. Moreover, regional security cooperation continues to be stymied by limited state capacity and mutual distrust among partner governments. AQIM's presence in the region, which

[4] Agence France Presse, "Mali Coup Leader Trained with US Military: Pentagon," March 27, 2012.

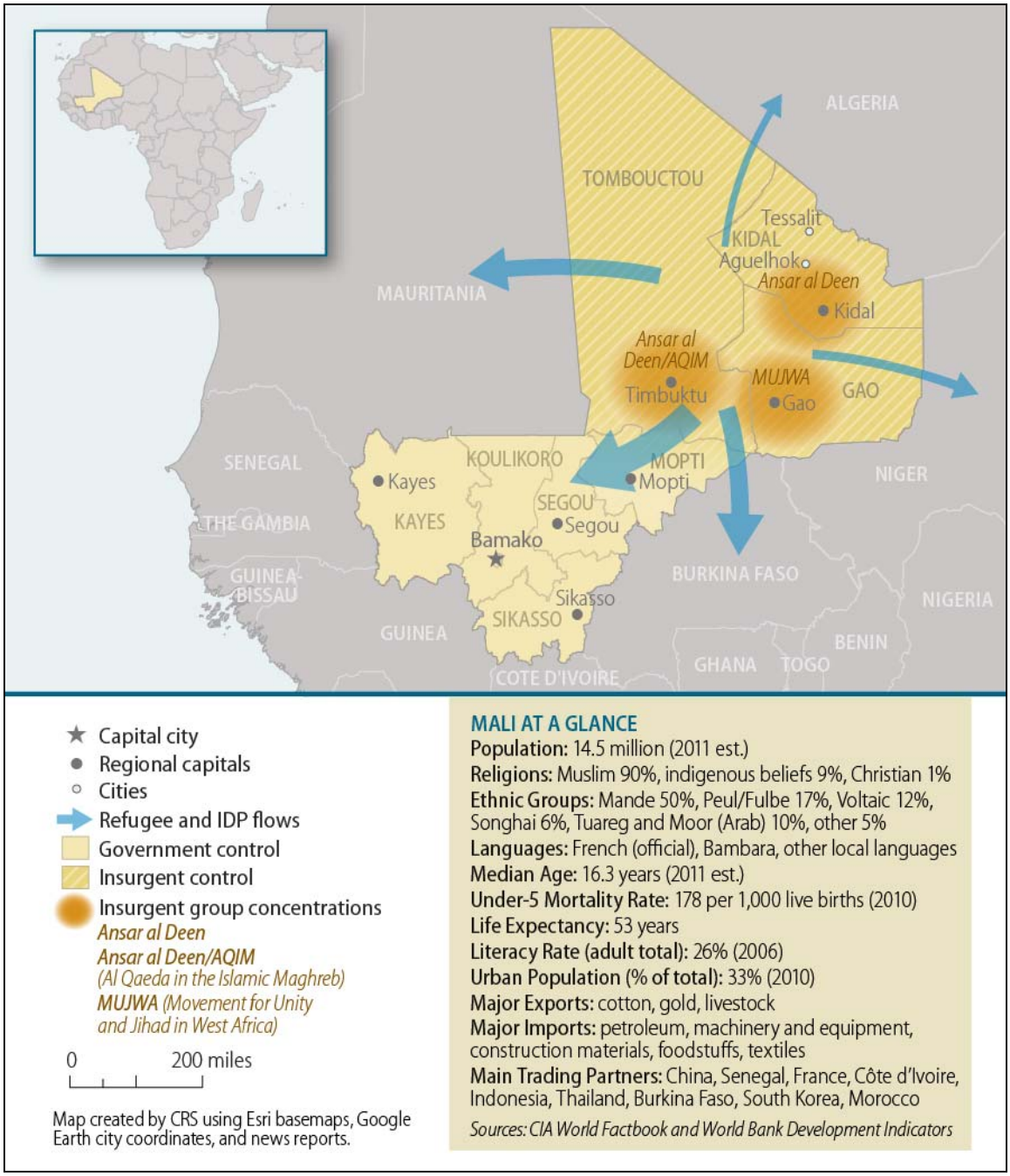
[5] Mali—like other countries in West Africa—is a significant regional transit point in the flow of cocaine between South America and Europe. Some reports reference possible AQIM involvement in the trafficking. See, for example, the Mali country report in State Department, *2012 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR)*, March 7, 2012.

[6] David Lewis, "Al Qaeda's Richest Faction Dominant in North Mali-US," Reuters, July 26, 2012; Adam Entous and Drew Hinshaw, "U.S. Sets Sights on Al Qaeda in Mali," *The Wall Street Journal,* July 27, 2012; Bloomberg, "North Africa is Central Focus in Terror War, U.S. Says," August 1, 2012.

[7] See CRS Report R42046, *Horn of Africa Region: The Humanitarian Crisis and International Response*, coordinated by Rhoda Margesson.

dates back to at least 2003, has expanded. The contrast between Mali's collapse and its previous reputation for democracy and stability may also have implications for U.S. policy elsewhere on the continent, which seeks to promote democratic governance and economic growth.[8]

**Figure 1. Map of Mali**




**Note:** IDP refers to Internally Displaced Persons. There are also significant IDP flows within the north.

[8] The White House, *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa*, June 2012.

## Background on Mali

**Politics.** Mali gained independence from France in 1960, initially in a short-lived federation with Senegal. Founding President Modibo Kéïta installed a one-party, socialist-leaning dictatorship. In 1968, Kéïta was ousted in a military coup by Moussa Traoré, who went on to serve as president for over two decades. Starting in 1989, Malians increasingly began calling for multiparty democracy, echoing movements that emerged across Africa at the end of the Cold War. In 1991, Amadou Toumani Touré (popularly known as ATT) overthrew Traoré in a military coup and organized democratic elections in which longtime opposition activist Alpha Oumar Konaré became president. Mali's growing reputation for democratic rule was enhanced in 2002, when Konaré stepped down at the end of two constitutionally permitted terms, and ATT, running as an independent and leveraging his reputation as Mali's "soldier of democracy," was elected president.[9] It was Mali's first democratic transition between civilian leaders.

ATT, who was re-elected in 2007, pursued a broad and flexible ruling coalition and a style that he referred to as "consensus" politics, in the absence of clear ideological preferences or platforms among political parties. This system appears to have provided incentives for corruption among political elites, or at least contributed to growing public perceptions that the system was corrupt. Civil society, likewise, largely revolved around the centers of political power and state patronage. As of early March 2012, the future of the "consensus" system was uncertain, given ATT's stated determination to step down once elections scheduled for April 2012 were held, and his lack of a clear successor. Anxiety over an anticipated political vacuum may have explained the prevalence of speculation in the local press, around the time of the military seizure of power, that ATT—despite all reports to the contrary—was secretly plotting to prolong his time in office indefinitely by citing the rising insecurity in the north.[10]

**The Tuareg Issue.** Members of the semi-nomadic and diverse Tuareg community, who inhabit parts of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Algeria, and Libya, have periodically launched armed rebellions against the Malian state and in neighboring Niger. Tuaregs are a small minority within Malian society; no precise population figures are available. Tuareg rebel groups have claimed the right to control what they see as their historic homeland in the north, which they refer to as *Azawad*. At times, *Azawad* has been defined to include Tuareg areas across the region. They have also complained of neglect and discrimination by the Malian government, which has been dominated by southern ethnic groups since independence. Most recently, negotiated settlements in the early 1990s and 2006-2009—mediated by the government of Algeria—laid the groundwork for fragile peace by promising greater regional autonomy, the integration of Tuareg combatants into the national military, and increased government aid for the impoverished north. However, these agreements were never fully implemented, and non-implementation became a grievance unto itself. Prospective control over potential oil and gas resources in northern Mali may have fueled conflict as well.

**Islam in Mali.** Mali's population is 90% Muslim, with animist and Christian communities making up the remaining 10%. The pre-colonial Mali and Songhai empires played a key role in the spread of Islam in West Africa. Notably, the Saharan city of Timbuktu, then a vital cross-roads of regional commerce, was a major center of Islamic scholarship between the 12th and 16th centuries. The Malian state is secular (although it plays a role in regulating religious activities), and moderate approaches to Islamic beliefs, associated with the Maliki school of Sunni Islam, and with syncretic and Sufi practices, are culturally predominant. Yet more radical and conservative views have also increased in recent years.[11] In 2005, the International Crisis Group warned that although, in its view, the risk of Islamist extremism in West Africa had been overstated by some Western policymakers, Mali "runs the greatest risk of any West African country other than Nigeria of violent Islamist activity."[12] While this risk is currently most vividly on display in the north, it has also affected politics in Bamako. For example, in 2009, a draft family code that would have expanded and guaranteed a number of women's rights was fiercely opposed by Malian civic and religious groups, despite being a signature initiative of then-President Touré. A revised version, prepared with input from religious leaders and lacking many of the more progressive provisions of the first version, was enacted in December 2011.

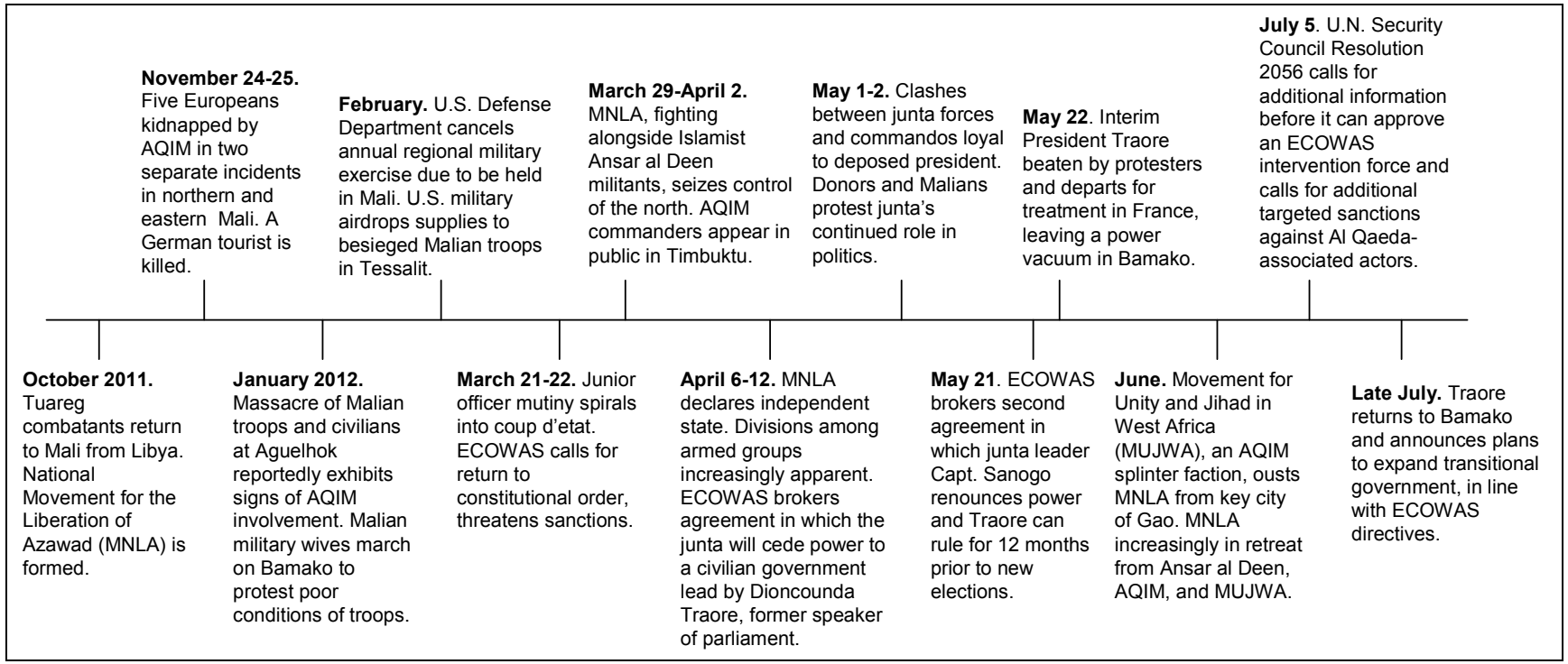
[9] Konaré, who remains a respected regional figure, served as Chairman of the African Union Commission until 2008.

[10] See, e.g., Kader Toé, "Intime conviction : La République poignardée par ses privilégiés," *Le Matin*, March 22, 2012.

[11] "Bamako Under Growing Pressure From Islamist Thinking, Practices," *Libération* (France) via U.S. government Open Source Center (OSC), June 4, 2012. The conservative Salafist movement has been present in Mali for over 60 years, and to date has reportedly made the greatest inroads among urban populations and in communities recently converted to Islam. Homegrown Islamist movements have also evolved amid domestic and transnational influences.

[12] International Crisis Group (ICG), *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?*, March 31, 2005.

## Figure 2. Mali: Timeline of Selected Recent Events




**Source:** News accounts, multilateral organization reports, CRS interviews.

**Notes:** Further analysis of recent events is available from CRS on request.

# Current Issues

## The Political and Military Situation

The government is currently led by Interim President Dioncounda Traoré, the former speaker of parliament and a close associate of deposed President Amadou Toumani Touré. Traoré returned to Bamako in late July after two months of medical treatment in France, following a physical assault on him by youth protesters in May. The assault took place in the presidential palace, reportedly in full view of Malian soldiers assigned to protect him. Under international pressure, junta leaders have agreed to relinquish their claim on state power and to recognize Traoré's leadership, but reports suggest that coup leader Captain Amadou Sanogo—a previously obscure military language instructor—and other officers associated with the coup continue to act unilaterally and to interfere in politics. Sanogo appears to benefit from public esteem among many Malians angry at an elite political class perceived as corrupt and ineffective. Some politicians of marginal stature have also attempted to benefit from such sentiments by openly supporting the junta.

The roughly 7,700-person[13] military remains in disarray due to internal tensions, the impact of military defeats and desertions in the north, and political uncertainty. The military has not initiated operations to reclaim the north to date. Open clashes in May between troops loyal to the former junta and "Red Beret" soldiers close to deposed President Touré point to the challenges inherent in efforts to reestablish command and control and address deeper structural issues. Soldiers supportive of the coup have also been accused of abuses (see below).

Prior to the recent coup, Mali's democratic example was frequently cited among donors as a success, despite extremely low state capacity, rising corruption, apparent citizen disenchantment with the political system, and recurrent conflict in the north.[14] A long-running process of government decentralization, aimed at enhancing responsiveness and service-delivery, was never fully implemented. Under former President Touré, reports of official complicity in transnational drug trafficking further undermined public confidence, and allegedly burgeoning corruption among military commanders contributed to discontent within the armed forces.[15] In 2011, an assessment by U.S.-based democracy organizations concluded that "weak political parties and limited vehicles for citizen participation have led to widespread political disengagement and Malian citizens' increasingly evident dissatisfaction with the state of their country's nascent democracy."[16] Voter turnout in the past decade has hovered in the 30%-40% range.[17]

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[13] *Military Periscope*, "Mali: Armed Forces Structure," 2012.

[14] *Slate Afrique*, "Mali: La menace d'un effondrement de l'Etat," May 24, 2012. A United Nations Development Program (UNDP) study noted that "Even though it is not a recent phenomenon, corruption seems to have worsened with the democratization process, higher levels of development assistance and the growth of the private sector... In addition, the search for compromise, which characterizes the social, political and economic life in Mali, has generated a culture of tolerance and impunity." UNDP, *Mali: Réforme de l'administration publique, accès à l'information et gouvernance électronique*, 2010.

[15] One analysis alleged that the army "was riven by nepotism, mismanagement and corruption. Money from the USA to train and equip soldiers to fight the Tuareg rebellion and jihadist terrorism was siphoned off by high-ranking officers with disastrous implications for the logistics of the northern garrisons." Such allegations have not been publicly acknowledged or addressed by U.S. officials, and are difficult to verify. *Africa Confidential*, "Mali: Rebels and Putschists," March 30, 2012.

[16] International Republican Institute (IRI), International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), National Democratic (continued...)

## Tuareg Rebellion

In 2011, regional fears of a new Tuareg insurgency arose in Mali and Niger with the flight of thousands of Tuaregs from Libya following Qadhafi's fall. Tuareg combatants, some of whom had fought in Qadhafi's military or looted military stocks during Libya's conflict, reportedly carried heavy weaponry back into Mali. In 2011, they joined with other former rebels to form a new force, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which claimed to be fighting for a pan-ethnic independent state in the north. In early 2012, the MNLA, supported by a nascent Tuareg-led Islamist group, *Ansar al Deen* ("Protectors of the Faith," alt: *Ansar/Ançar Dine* or *Ansar Eddine*), launched attacks on Malian military outposts. Rebel gains, combined with mismanagement and corruption within the senior command, reportedly demoralized many Malian troops and undermined support for President Touré. The rebellion also reportedly spurred many Tuareg soldiers in the national military—some of whom had only recently been integrated under previous peace accords—to desert and join the MNLA and/or *Ansar al Deen*. In January 2012, dozens of Malian soldiers and civilians were gruesomely murdered in the northern town of Aguelhok. Military commanders' failure to protect troops from the massacre, which some analysts saw as having AQIM involvement, entrenched grievances within the ranks and among military families. These factors appear to have laid the groundwork for the March coup d'état.

## Terrorism

At present, control over Mali's vast and sparsely populated northern territory is shared among three Islamist extremist groups: AQIM; a splinter faction known as the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA, or MUJAO after its French acronym); and *Ansar al Deen*, whose leadership also has ties to AQIM. The relationships and balance of power among these groups are uncertain, but there have been few overt clashes among them since the military was routed from the north in late March. They have split from and outmaneuvered the MNLA, whose presence in the north is greatly reduced. The Islamist groups appear to be well armed and embedded among the local population, and have threatened to carry out attacks against governments in the region that would commit troops to a military intervention (see below).[18] These developments could provide AQIM with expanded terrain in which to operate, recruit new fighters, launch cross-border attacks, and enhance its prestige and connections to other extremist groups.

AQIM, which has been present in northern Mali for roughly the past decade, is thought to pose the most significant transnational terrorist threat in the Sahel, although the degree to which it poses a direct threat to the United States and European countries is more uncertain. The group's origins date to Algeria's civil conflict of the 1990s, and AQIM retains a presence in northeastern Algeria as well as in the Sahel. MUJWA, which declared its existence in late 2011, has also

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Institute (NDI), and Internews, "CEPPS Mali 2012 General Elections Support: Pre-Election Assessment Report," July 8, 2011. CEPPS refers to the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening, a cooperative agreement, supervised by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), under which contracts for most USAID contracts for support to elections and political processes are negotiated.

[17] The 2011 CEPPS assessment (op. cit) noted that many Malian stakeholders believed actual turnout to be even lower. Turnout was low under Konaré as well. In contrast, the 2007 presidential vote in neighboring Senegal had voter turnout of over 70%.

[18] AFP, "Mali Islamists Threaten Countries Supporting ECOWAS Military Intervention Force," June 29, 2012; "Al Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb Issues Mali Warning," *Dawn* online [Pakistan] via OSC, July 1, 2012.

carried out kidnappings in the region and terrorist attacks in Algeria. The United States designated AQIM, under its former moniker, the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) in 2002.[19] AQIM raises funds by kidnapping for ransom; through involvement in trans-Sahel trafficking of arms, vehicles, cigarettes, persons, and, allegedly, narcotics; and, reportedly to a more limited extent, from supporters abroad, notably in Western Europe.[20] These lucrative activities have recently led U.S. defense officials to refer to AQIM as "Al Qaeda's best funded, wealthiest affiliate," although estimates of the group's resources vary.[21] It is not clear what AQIM's connection with core Al Qaeda means in practice.[22]

The Sahel has long provided AQIM with terrain in which to move and conduct training, as well as a base from which to advance its regional ambitions. The degree of coordination and ideological cohesion among AQIM cells is uncertain. AQIM's Sahel- and Algeria-based commanders may be rivals as much as comrades, or they may operate relatively autonomously. Purported links between AQIM and the violent extremist Nigerian group Boko Haram also appear to have raised the latter's profile among U.S. officials.[23]

Among the Sahel states most affected by AQIM (Mali, Niger, and Mauritania), Mali has long been seen as the least militarily capable of countering the group's presence. According to multiple open-source accounts, AQIM leaders in the Sahel have cultivated extensive family, personal, and business ties with northern Malian ethnic communities, including Tuareg and Arab groups. For example, *Ansar al Deen*'s leader, Iyad ag Ghali, is a Malian Tuareg who is reportedly closely related to an AQIM commander. Despite its participation in U.S.-supported counterterrorism initiatives prior to the coup, the Malian government at times appeared reluctant to confront AQIM head-on. Some analysts attributed this apparent reticence to fears of provoking AQIM attacks in the south and of upsetting fragile ethno-political détente in the north, particularly with regard to Tuareg groups. These dynamics entrenched mutual mistrust among governments in the region and, along with limited military capacity, hindered the implementation of sometimes disparate U.S. and Algerian efforts to foster regional security cooperation. Some analysts saw an improvement in Malian counterterrorism efforts and in regional security cooperation after the last Tuareg rebellion ended in 2009; still, AQIM attacks in Mali accelerated between 2011 and 2012.[24] AQIM also increased its presence in Mali, from which it launched attacks into Mauritania.

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[19] FTOs are designated by the Secretary of State in accordance with section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act. The legal criteria for a group to be designated are the following: (1) it must be a foreign organization; (2) it must engage in terrorist activities, as statutorily defined, or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism; and (3) the organization's terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security of the United States. See State Department, *Country Reports on Terrorism*, at http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/index.htm.

[20] State Department, *2011 Country Reports on Terrorism*, released July 31, 2012.

[21] David Lewis, "Al Qaeda's Richest Faction Dominant in North Mali-US," Reuters, July 26, 2012. The State Department's *2011 Country Reports on Terrorism* stated, in contrast, that "AQIM is significantly constrained by its poor finances and lack of broad general appeal in the region."

[22] The Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, in its analysis of selected communications by Osama bin Laden, stated that "while there is mention of [AQIM] in the documents released to the CTC, these discussions are not substantive enough to inform an understanding of the relationship between al-Qa'ida's senior leaders and these groups." The CTC study also cites at least one appeal by Bin Laden for financial support from AQIM. *Letters from Abbottabad: Bin Ladin Sidelined?*, May 3, 2012.

[23] See CRS Report RL33964, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy* , by Lauren Ploch Blanchard.

[24] In January 2011, an individual claiming AQIM connections attacked the French Embassy in Bamako with a handgun and an improvised-explosive device, injuring two persons. In November 2011, a German was killed and a three other European nationals were kidnapped in Timbuktu, while two French nationals were kidnapped in Hombori, in eastern (continued...)

## Regional Responses

ECOWAS continues to pursue negotiations aimed at resolving the political impasse in the south and brokering an agreement between the interim government and Malian-led armed groups in the north. A proposal for a regional stabilization force, submitted by ECOWAS and the African Union (AU), is also pending before the U.N. Security Council, but international support has been inhibited by the lack of sufficient information concerning the proposed mission's structure and the ability of participants to carry it out.[25] Moreover, Mali's interim leaders have issued mixed messages with regard to their attitude toward an ECOWAS or other foreign deployment, and members of the former junta have opposed the idea.[26] ECOWAS's effectiveness has been further undermined by a lack of consensus among its member states on the appropriate course of action in Mali, and the fact that Mali's neighbors Mauritania and Algeria are not ECOWAS members. Furthermore, many Malians appear to object to outside interference in their domestic affairs and perceive ECOWAS as having acted unilaterally to install Interim President Traoré, who is closely associated with the unpopular former ruling elite.

Burkina Faso's President Blaise Compaoré is leading ECOWAS mediation efforts. Compaoré is a powerful and ambivalent figure in the region, in part due to his role in fomenting civil wars in West Africa in the 1990s before turning regional peacemaker. Some regional leaders reportedly view his role in Mali with suspicion.[27] The scope of Compaoré's negotiation efforts and their prospects for success—and for the acceptance of any deal by Malian elites and the military—remain to be seen. Within ECOWAS, the government of Niger has been the biggest supporter of a regional military response. A July 2012 analysis by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group stated that "most actors, observers and diplomats consider that the intervention by ECOWAS [referring to the post-coup diplomatic response], and particularly by Burkina Faso, has mainly had a negative impact," and warned that a regional military operation would likely lead to increased civilian casualties and a greater "contagion and radicalization" of the conflict.[28]

In the absence of effective ECOWAS coordination, other regional groupings have emerged. The role of Algeria, the region's preeminent military power, has notably drawn international interest. Algeria favors negotiations among the interim government and Malian-led insurgent groups, and has expressed opposition to a regional military intervention. The Algerian government has attempted to muster an alternate regional response to the situation in Mali, focused primarily on enhancing border security through its joint operational command structure with Sahel states (established in 2010 and known as the CEMOC after its French acronym), and through a new association of frontline states with Mauritania and Niger. Algeria played a key role in mediating past Malian peace accords with Tuareg groups, and in recent years has attempted to coordinate a regional response to AQIM (an Algerian-origin group) and other security threats. Yet the

(...continued)

Mali. AQIM also reportedly continues to hold in northern Mali several hostages kidnapped in other countries.

[25] U.N. Security Council Resolution 2056, adopted on July 5, 2012, noted the AU and ECOWAS request for a mandate, but called for information "regarding the objectives, means, and modalities of the envisaged deployment and other possible measures."

[26] On August 14, Mali's military rejected the idea of an ECOWAS deployment in the south, saying any regional intervention would have to be in the north and in support of Malian military deployments. Reuters, "Mali Army Says Regional Intervention Only Welcome in North of Country," August 14, 2012.

[27] See *La Lettre du Continent*, "Omnipotent, Compaoré Dérange," May 17, 2012.

[28] ICG, *Mali: Avoiding Escalation*, July 18, 2012.

relationship between Algeria and its poorer Sahel partners—and between Algerian and Malian leaders in particular—has often been strained. Algerian leaders' preoccupation with domestic political issues and the opacity of Algeria's decision-making apparatus have also complicated Algeria's claims to regional leadership.[29]

## Human Rights

Reports of widespread human rights violations have emanated from northern Mali since the MNLA and then-allied Islamist groups launched their rebellion in early 2012. In January 2012, at the outset of conflict, rebel forces summarily executed at least 70 Malian soldiers and civilians in the northeastern town of Aguelhok after taking control of the local military base.[30] In March and April, combatants who appeared to be with the MNLA abducted and raped women, used child soldiers, and looted medical facilities and government and private buildings in the towns of Gao and Timbuktu.[31] *Ansar al Deen* and MUJAO reportedly took measures to protect civilians from MNLA abuses. Allegations against Islamist groups are rife as well. In a July report, UNICEF found Islamist groups' recruitment and use of child soldiers to be on the rise.[32] After it conquered Gao in late June, MUJWA reportedly laid mines outside the town, possibly to prevent reentry of the MNLA or any future peacekeeping force, or to prevent civilian residents from leaving.[33] MUJWA and AQIM continue to hold European and Algerian hostages kidnapped over the past several years, and the MNLA holds Malian prisoners of war.[34]

As Islamist groups consolidated territory in the north, they began to implement an extremist interpretation of *sharia*, or Islamic law, in areas under their control. Consumption of alcohol, adultery, socializing among unmarried men and women, and violations of certain dress codes have been subject to harsh punishment, including executions, amputation, public floggings, and at least one stoning. *Ansar al Deen* also sparked international condemnation when its members began to destroy Timbuktu's numerous UNESCO-designated Sufi shrines, citing Salafist prohibitions against saint worship. Since June 30, *Ansar al Deen* followers have destroyed at least 8 of 16 mausoleums that were hundreds of years old, as well as a door at Timbuktu's Sidi Yahya mosque that was seen as sacred. Human rights groups have conveyed reports from local residents that armed groups in some areas have looted churches and other Christian institutions, and destroyed church icons, provoking Christian residents to flee.[35] A U.N. Human Rights Council resolution in July 2012 cited the destruction of cultural and religious sites, as well as violence

[29] See CRS Report RS21532, *Algeria: Current Issues*, by Alexis Arieff; Laurence Aïda Ammour, *Regional Security Cooperation in the Maghreb and Sahel: Algeria's Pivotal Ambivalence*, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, February 2012; and Arieff, *Algeria and the Crisis in Mali*, Institut Français des Relations Internationales (IFRI), July 2012.

[30] Estimates of the number of deaths at Aguelhok have varied. Human Rights Watch cited at least 70 deaths, while al Jazeera and several other news sources reported 82. The France-based International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Malian Association for Human Rights (AMDH) reported at least 153 deaths. A Malian police investigation concluded it could not determine authoritative numbers of dead. Madiba Keita, "Exécutions sommaires de Aguel'hoc: La Commission d'enquête remet son rapport au chef de l'état," *L'Essor,* February 22, 2012.

[31] Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Mali: War Crimes by Northern Rebels," April 30, 2012.

[32] Claude Olivier Volluz,, "Jihadis' New Recruits in Northern Mali are 10 Years Old," *Rue89*, July 10, 2012.

[33] Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme-Federation Internationale des Ligues des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH-FIDH), *Crimes de guerre au Nord-Mali*, July 12, 2012.

[34] AFP, "Red Cross Gains Access to Military Hostages in Mali," July 31, 2012.

[35] HRW, "Mali: War Crimes by Northern Rebels," op. cit.

against women, killings, hostage-taking, theft, and difficulties concerning humanitarian access.[36] In July, the International Criminal Court (ICC) opened a preliminary inquiry, following a Malian government request.[37]

Reports of serious human rights violations are not limited to northern Mali. Advocacy groups have accused soldiers loyal to coup leader Captain Sanogo of torture, sexual abuse, and psychological abuse, and of "forcibly disappearing" soldiers linked to an alleged failed counter-coup.[38] Journalists reporting on military issues have also cited growing intimidation, abductions, and physical assaults, which they have attributed to forces loyal to Sanogo.[39]

## Humanitarian Impact

Similar to other Sahel countries, Mali is vulnerable to recurrent drought and chronic food insecurity due to a complex mix of factors such as weak state capacity, poor governance, infrastructure shortfalls, property rights regimes, and low investment in key agricultural inputs. Experts suggest that global climate change may be worsening drought dynamics.[40] Currently, Mali's crises are aggravating a burgeoning regional food security emergency, notably through the displacement of some 170,000 people within Mali and 250,000 Malian refugees into neighboring countries.[41] Meanwhile, insecurity and objections by some armed groups to the presence of international aid workers continue to create challenges to aid delivery in the north.[42] The degree to which armed groups have attempted to directly provide services and aid to populations under their control has varied. Humanitarian conditions in the north have reportedly worsened, although 80% of humanitarian needs are in the more densely populated south, which is also experiencing severe food insecurity and coping with internally displaced populations.[43] Recent reports indicate that a locust infestation making its way south and west from Algeria and Niger could worsen conditions; cholera outbreaks are also increasing in the region with the advent of this year's rains. Donors and local governments are currently mobilizing resources to respond to needs during the current lean season.[44]

[36] U.N. Human Rights Council, *Situation des droits de l'homme en Republique du Mali*, July 3, 2012.

[37] Mali is an ICC state party and, on January 13, 2012, became the first African state to sign an agreement that allows it to accept and intern sentenced persons.

[38] HRW, "Mali: Security Forces 'Disappear' 20, Torture Others," July 25, 2012.

[39] Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "In Mali, Journalists Attacked in Coup Aftermath," March 30, 2012, and "In Mali, Masked Gunmen Kidnap, Beat Journalist," July 9, 2012; Human Rights Watch, "Mali: Security Forces 'Disappear' 20, Torture Others," July 25, 2012.

[40] See Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), "Security implications of climate change in the Sahel," at http://www.oecd.org/swac/climatechange.

[41] The current regional food crisis stems from a number of factors on top of the aforementioned structural issues, including a recent drought, high global food prices, and a drop in remittances from migrants due to the global economic slowdown and population inflows from Libya

[42] UNOCHA, "Mali Complex Emergency Situation Report No. 12," July 25, 2012. International aid groups have been able to administer assistance in the north, notably through local staff and partnerships with local organizations.

[43] UNOCHA, "OCHA Calls for a Paradign Shift...," op. cit.

[44] U.S. Agency for International Development, USAID, *Sahel – Humanitarian Update #28*, June 20, 2012; and USAID, *Food Insecurity Outlook and Security Flashpoints in the Sahel* [map], June 20, 2012. See also Oxfam, "Food Crisis in Sahel," at http://www.oxfam.org/en/emergencies/sahel-food-crisis.

The U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), in its June 2012 mid-year review, increased its appeal to $1.6 billion for regional humanitarian funding in response to the food crisis and spillover of Mali's conflict, stating that some 19 million people in Mali, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and The Gambia were vulnerable and may be in need of assistance. Acute malnutrition levels are between 10% and 15% across the region, with some areas exceeding the World Health Organization (WHO) "emergency threshold" level of 15%. As of June, up to 4.6 million people within Mali potentially faced serious food shortages, including 1.6 million in the conflict-affected north.[45] According to UNOCHA, there is a significant shortfall of donor funds, so far, compared to the appeal.[46]

## Economic Impact

An arid and landlocked country, Mali depends economically on gold mining, cotton production in the Niger River area, and foreign aid. Despite a government focus on economic development and an annual growth rate of 4%-6% in recent years, poverty remains widespread.[47] About 80% of the labor force is engaged in farming and fishing, most of it small-scale. Tourism in various areas of the country (including the north) previously provided significant revenues and employment, but security concerns have devastated the industry over the past decade. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has provided multi-year concessional financing and technical assistance, and has largely positively evaluated Mali's fiscal and macroeconomic policies. However, IMF analysts at the start of the year noted risks from the vulnerable agricultural sector, and criticized insufficient diversification and tax revenue collection, as well as "a poor business environment, marked by weak physical infrastructure, shallow financial intermediation, a persistently high incidence of corruption and a feeble judicial system."[48]

Prior to the coup, Mali's government was generally favorable to foreign investment and took steps to improve the environment for it. However, major hurdles remained, including corruption, a high tax burden, and poor protections for investors. Mali received $148 million in foreign direct investment (FDI) in 2010, with total FDI stock for 2010 of $1.2 billion.[49] The main destination of FDI is the mining sector, with the largest from Australia, Canada, Great Britain, India, Japan, and South Africa. In 2011, the government voided several large agricultural land deals with foreign firms, which had drawn criticism because of Mali's scarce arable land; a lack of transparency; the impact on local farmers who would have been removed from the affected tracts; and plans to use the land for growth of biofuel and export crops instead of food for local markets. U.S. exports to Mali were valued at $55 million in 2011, and U.S. imports from Mali at just $4 million.[50]

As Mali's gold mines are concentrated in the country's southwest, operations in its most lucrative export industry have continued largely insulated from the consolidation of rebel control in the north and the political tumult in Bamako.[51] However, the unrest has set back recent inroads into

[45] USAID, *Sahel—Food Insecurity and Complex Emergency*, Fact Sheet #10, Fiscal Year (FY) 2012; June 15, 2012.

[46] Voice of America (VOA), "Donors Focus on Sahel Food Crisis," June 18, 2012; U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Funding Shortfall Threatens Mali Operation," June 15, 2012.

[47] In 2011, Mali ranked 175 out of 187 countries assessed on the UNDP's *Human Development Index*.

[48] IMF, *Mali: Seventh Review Under the Extended Credit Facility and Request for a new Three-Year Arrangement Under the Extended Credit Facility—Staff Report*, January 2012.

[49] United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), "World Investment Report."

[50] U.S. International Trade Commission data.

[51] Henry Lazenby, "Randgold Undeterred by Mali Unrest, Lifts Profit," Miningweekly.com, August 9, 2012.

iron and other mining elsewhere. A recent uptick in infrastructure investment may also be stymied by uncertainty. In June, a senior U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) official stated in congressional testimony that "according to some estimates, 2012 economic growth projections have dropped from previous estimates of 6% to negative 1%. It is also estimated that government revenues are one-fourth the level they were just one year ago and accordingly, government provision of basic social services has sharply fallen."[52] Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently stated during a trip to Africa that "by some estimates, [the current crisis] could set back Mali's economic progress by nearly a decade."[53]

# U.S. Policy

Prior to the March 2012 coup d'etat, the State Department depicted U.S.-Malian relations as "excellent and expanding ... based on shared goals of strengthening democracy and reducing poverty through economic growth." Mali was described as a "leading regional partner in counterterrorism."[54] The U.S. response to Mali's crisis is focused on restoring a legitimate government in Bamako, which State Department officials view as a prerequisite to addressing the situation in the north; supporting ECOWAS's efforts to mediate an end to Mali's political crisis and formulate a viable stabilization plan; aiding regional partners to contain the spread of extremist groups; and providing humanitarian assistance.[55] Certain bilateral aid programs have been suspended or terminated (see below), the U.S. Peace Corps program was evacuated, and targeted U.S. travel restrictions have been imposed on dozens of individuals involved in the coup or otherwise perceived as impeding a return to democratic rule.

In recent testimony before Congress, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson stated that "the feasibility of a lasting negotiated settlement will depend on the presence of a legitimate government interlocutor," and urged ECOWAS to focus on supporting transitional institutions in the south, characterizing a prospective ECOWAS counterinsurgency mission in the north as "ill-advised and not feasible." (France, which is arguably more directly threatened by AQIM, has taken a more assertive public position in support of a regional military force.)[56] Carson noted that "the vast and ungoverned territory of northern Mali provides a safe haven for AQIM and other extremist groups who may prove increasingly effective at targeting Western interests or aligning themselves with those who do," adding that, "while AQIM has not demonstrated the capability to threaten U.S. interests outside of West or North Africa and it has not threatened to attack the U.S. homeland, we are nevertheless working to counter its influence."[57] As noted above, U.S. defense officials have expressed growing concern over

[52] Earl Gast, USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa, testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on African Affairs, Global Health, and Human Rights, June 29, 2012.

[53] Reuters, "Clinton Says Africa Must Live Up to Democratic Promise," August 1, 2012.

[54] State Department, "Background Note: Mali," January 3, 2012.

[55] Testimony of U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Johnnie Carson before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on African Affairs, Global Health, and Human Rights, June 29, 2012.

[56] French President François Hollande has personally conferred with regional leaders and with Mali's interim prime minister, and French officials have offered logistical aid in support of a regionally-led mission, if it is carried out under a U.N. mandate. In July 2010, following a failed French military operation to free hostages held by AQIM, then-Prime Minister François Fillon declared that France was "at war" with Al Qaeda and would step up its "fight" against AQIM in the Sahel. See France24.com, "François Fillon déclare la France 'en guerre contre Al-Qaïda,'" July 27, 2010.

[57] Carson testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on African Affairs, Global Health, and Human Rights, op. cit.

purported collaboration between AQIM and other Al Qaeda-affiliated groups, and over the challenges Mali presents with regard to counterterrorism efforts.[58]

## U.S. Foreign Aid

Bilateral aid appropriated for Mali in FY2012 to State Department and USAID accounts totaled $143.8 million, not including emergency humanitarian aid. Because aid is not necessarily disbursed the same year as it is appropriated, some $311 million of cumulative aid funding was pending delivery to Mali at the time of the coup. Approximately $160 million of those funds have been either terminated due to legal restrictions pending a return to a democratically elected government, or suspended due to policy determinations that certain programs should not continue in the current environment.[59] The United States had been among the largest bilateral donors to Mali; U.S. aid has focused on good governance, agricultural development, health, education, and security assistance. Implementation of Mali's five-year, $461 million Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compact—which focused on improving agricultural development along the Niger River and constructing a new international airport in Bamako—has also been terminated, months before its slated completion.[60]

Legal restrictions stem from Section 7008 of the FY2012 Consolidated Appropriations Act, P.L. 112-74, which bars U.S. foreign assistance to the government of any country in which a military coup or decree has overthrown a democratically elected government.[61] Aid terminated under Section 7008 notably includes programs that involved working directly with the Malian government. Administration officials continue to examine, on a case-by-case basis, whether other aid programs suspended due to policy considerations can, should, or should not resume. Humanitarian aid—which, in the case of Mali, has been defined to include global health and food aid programming—is permitted and has continued. The State Department and USAID have provided over $353.4 million in emergency humanitarian assistance for populations in the Sahel affected by food insecurity and the Malian conflict. Of this, at least $87 million has been allocated for drought- and conflict-affected Malians.[62]

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[58] David Lewis, "Al Qaeda's Richest Faction Dominant in North Mali-US," Reuters, July 26, 2012; Adam Entous and Drew Hinshaw, "U.S. Sets Sights on Al Qaeda in Mali," *The Wall Street Journal,* July 27, 2012; Bloomberg, "North Africa is Central Focus in Terror War, U.S. Says," August 1, 2012.

[59] Information provided to CRS by the State Department and USAID, May 2012.

[60] MCC, "MCC Board Authorizes Termination of the Mali Compact," May 7, 2012. The MCC compact was signed in 2006 and entered into force in late 2007. According to the MCC, the compact was "intended to serve as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction through key infrastructure investments that capitalize on two of Mali's major assets: The Bamako-Sénou International Airport, gateway for regional and international trade, and the Niger River, for irrigated agriculture." See MCC, http://www.mcc.gov/pages/countries/program/mali-compact.

[61] Similar provisions have been included in annual foreign operations appropriations legislation since at least 1985. Section 7008 reads: "None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available pursuant to titles III through VI of this Act shall be obligated or expended to finance directly any assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected head of government is deposed by military coup d'etat or decree or, after the date of enactment of this Act, a coup d'etat or decree in which the military plays a decisive role: Provided, That assistance may be resumed to such government if the President determines and certifies to the Committees on Appropriations that subsequent to the termination of assistance a democratically elected government has taken office: Provided further, That the provisions of this section shall not apply to assistance to promote democratic elections or public participation in democratic processes." Indirect aid, which does not go to the government, may be exempt from legal restrictions but limited due to policy decisions. Many types of humanitarian aid are exempt due to the authorities governing their appropriation.

[62] Information provided to CRS by USAID, August 2012. See also USAID, *Sahel—Food Insecurity and Complex Emergency*, Fact Sheet #3, FY2012, August 3, 2012.

U.S. security cooperation programs have been suspended, although some defense personnel appear to remain on the ground.[63] Mali was previously a significant beneficiary of such programs as a focus country of the U.S. regional security initiative, the inter-agency Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), and of the Defense Department's Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans Sahara (OEF-TS), which complements TSCTP.[64] The U.S. Defense Department's annual flagship multinational military exercise in the Sahel, known as Flintlock, was due to be held in Mali in February, but was canceled due to insecurity. In light of Mali's crisis, the State Department is increasing support under TSCTP for Mauritania and Niger, whose governments it characterizes as committed to the fight against regional terrorism.[65] Administration officials have acknowledged that the suspension of security assistance detracts from the Malian army's capacity to deploy in the north.[66]

### The Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership: Background and Policy Debates

The inter-agency Trans Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) was conceived as a successor to the 2002-2004 Pan Sahel Initiative, which focused on enhancing the border security and counterterrorism capabilities of four West African states: Mali, Mauritania, Niger, and Chad. TSCTP was launched in 2005 and expanded the list of partner countries to also include Algeria, Burkina Faso, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia. TSCTP aims to counter violent extremism in North-West Africa through a range of security assistance, development, and governance-focused activities; the goal has been to design multi-faceted programs that take into account the region's complex developmental and security context. Under OEF-TS (now referred to as Operation Juniper Shield), U.S. military forces work with their regional counterparts to improve intelligence, coordination, logistics, border control, and targeting. Total State Department- and USAID-administered funding for the program is estimated at about $52 million in FY2012, drawn from multiple accounts; the annual budget for OEF-TS is about $46 million.[67]

Although TSCTP aims to take a holistic approach to countering violent extremism, the program has suffered since its inception from challenges in establishing a comprehensive strategic design, transcending a more traditional bilateral style of foreign assistance, ensuring interagency coordination, and evaluating outcomes.[68] As the Mali situation illustrates, the disruption of funds due to political or human rights concerns in partner countries presents a challenge to program continuity and capacity building efforts. Mali is the third TSCTP focus country to undergo a military coup since 2008 (after Mauritania and Niger), meaning that security cooperation with these countries has been subject to unplanned shifts over time. More broadly, some critics have accused TSCTP of focusing on military assistance to the detriment of other types of U.S. engagement, resulting in what critics allege has been a "militarization of U.S. policy" in the region or a misbalancing of U.S. resources.[69] Recent developments have also led some observers to question TSCTP's effectiveness.

[63] U.S. News and World Report, "Pentagon: All U.S. Elite Commandos in Mali 'Accounted For,'" March 23, 2012.

[64] OEF-TS was recently renamed Operation Juniper Shield, which is part of the Defense Department's North West Africa Campaign.

[65] Assistant Secretary Carson testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, June 29, 2012, op. cit.

[66] State Department daily news briefing, March 23, 2012.

[67] State Department, *Congressional Budget Justification, Foreign Operations*, FY2013; CRS Report RL34003, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, by Lauren Ploch Blanchard.

[68] See Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership*, GAO-08-860, July 31, 2008. A 2011 evaluation of USAID's counter-extremism programs under TSCTP concluded that the impact of such programs on "higher-level goals, measured through surveys on attitudes toward extremism," were positive but limited. The evaluation also noted that "implementation of the TSCTP has coincided with a worsening of the terrorist threat in parts of the Sahel." USAID, *Mid-Term Evaluation of USAID's Counter-Extremism Programming in Africa*, February 1, 2011.

[69] See, for example, Concerned Africa Scholars, *US Militarization of the Sahara-Sahel Security, Space & Imperialism*, Spring 2010; Ron Capps, *Drawing on the Full Strength of America: Seeking Greater Civilian Capacity in U.S. Foreign Affairs*, Refugees International, September 2009; and ICG, *Islamist Terrorism in the Sahel: Fact or Fiction?* op. cit.

# Outlook

The degree to which an expanded AQIM presence in Mali—compared to AQIM's more limited but long-standing presence in the region—represents a threat to U.S. national security remains to be seen. Still, as this report describes, the situation in Mali presents significant challenges to a range of U.S. policy and foreign aid objectives; yet the U.S. government arguably has few effective tools at its disposal to address the roots of the burgeoning regional crisis. More broadly, Mali's situation can be examined in the context of ongoing efforts to measure the effectiveness of U.S. policies and aid programs aimed at enhancing regional stability, good governance, and counterterrorism capacity in many parts of Africa, including the Sahel region. Looking ahead, Congress may consider issues related to U.S. and international aid to Mali, support for ECOWAS, and humanitarian assistance in response to evolving conditions in the Sahel. Congress may also consider the possible implications of the situation in Mali for the design, emphasis, and evaluation of U.S. policy efforts in the Sahel and throughout Africa.

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