

Morocco Combats Terrorism at Home and Abroad

- Morocco's counterterrorism efforts involve close cooperation with the US, the EU, and other regional neighbors. As the US Department of State affirms, "Morocco was among the first Arab and Islamic states to denounce the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States and declare solidarity with the American people in the war against terror."
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5431.htm>
- Moroccans were outraged by the May 16, 2003 attacks on foreign and Jewish targets in their country. More than one million citizens participated in a peaceful march through Casablanca, demonstrating the country's unity and resolve to fight terrorism.¹
- Recognizing the role of economic marginalization on the attraction of terrorism, Morocco launched the National Initiative for Human Development was launched in 2005 to fight poverty and generally improve economic conditions in the poorest neighborhoods.
<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2005/64344.htm>
- Noting the value of Morocco as a partner in combating terrorism, the US has doubled military assistance to the country, signed the Morocco-US Free Trade Agreement in 2004, and honored Morocco with "major non-NATO ally status," which qualifies Morocco for increased US military cooperation.
- By reducing the wave of jihadist recruits to Iraq from North Africa and by implementing successful counter-terrorism measures, Morocco established itself a key player in the global war on terrorism. In 2005, Morocco joined the Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership Initiative (TSCPTI), fully cooperating in the US efforts to prevent and combat terrorism in the Sahel region.
http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/news/awi/newsbriefs/general/2007/02/18/newsbrief-01
- Morocco has continued to be a staunch ally. On a 2006 visit to Morocco, then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld expressed America's gratitude for Morocco's friendship and cooperation in the fight against terrorism, both in Morocco and abroad.
<http://www.defenselink.mil/Transcripts/Transcript.aspx?TranscriptID=960>
- This strategic relationship has been strengthened by subsequent terrorist attacks in Morocco. On March 11, 2007 there was an explosion in an internet café in Casablanca that resulted in the death of a suicide bomber and the arrest of his accomplice. This event only served to reinforce Morocco's aggressive anti-terrorism strategy and increase its measures of security against such violence. Another terrorist attack on April 28, 2011 at a café in Marrakesh, which killed 15 people, only hardened Morocco's resolve to keep up the fight against extremism.
http://www.magharebia.com/cocoon/awi/xhtml1/en_GB/features/awi/features/2007/03/13/feature-02
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/28/marrakech-tourist-cafe-terrorist-attack>

¹ Marvinne Howe, *The Islamist Awakening and Other Challenges*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, p. 323.

This information has been produced by the Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP). www.moroccoonthemove.com

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Additional information is available at the Justice Department in Washington, D.C.

- Morocco has taken a variety of approaches to combating terrorism. In addition to the anti-terrorist activities of its security forces, efforts are being made to block terrorists' access to financial resources, restrict illegal immigration, accelerate democratization of the political process, and promoting economic growth, seeking to include all members of society and to encourage tolerance for all faiths and ethnicities.

<http://documents-ddsny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N04/571/30/pdf/N0457130.pdf?OpenElement>
- Charities and religious organizations are also closely monitored and must register with the government to ensure that all donations are directed to their intended causes, and not used to finance terrorist activities.

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N03/657/87/PDF/N0365787.pdf?OpenElement>
- Moroccan-American joint efforts at counterterrorism in the Maghreb region are vital given the reality that since September 1, 2001, terrorist attacks by al-Qaeda and other militant extremists based in North Africa have increased by more than 500% from their low point - hitting a high of 204 in 2009. In 2011, the number of terrorist attacks remained dangerously high, increasing from 2010's number of 178 to 185. In total, over the decade 1,288 terrorists bombings, murders, kidnappings, and ambushes – against domestic and international targets – claimed more than 2,000 lives and 8,000 victims in Algeria, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia.

http://www.potomac institute.org/attachments/863_2011%20REPORT%20UPDATE%20Maghreb%20%20Sahel%20Terrorism.pdf
- This reality makes it all the more essential to resolve the conflict in Western Sahara, a territory located at the crossroads of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's (AQIM) terrorist nexus. In a letter to the Group of Friends in August 2010, Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary General for the Western Sahara, Christopher Ross, emphasized the dangers of failing to resolve the conflict, noting, "the risk of a drift toward extremism or criminal activities among Sahrawi youth is growing. The danger that a military or paramilitary adventure could escalate into hostilities increases the longer diplomacy fails to produce progress."

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20100820/wl_africa_afp/moroccowsaharaspainun
- Since Ambassador Ross' warning, conditions in the region have deteriorated further and there has been increased evidence of Polisario member collusion with terrorists and traffickers in the region. In October 2011, insiders affiliated with the Polisario Front reportedly helped an AQIM offshoot kidnap three Western aid workers from the Polisario-run refugee camps near Tindouf, Algeria, supplying assailants with arms and directions to the victims. The incident was the most egregious of reported illicit action by Polisario members, who have engaged in drug and arms smuggling, fighting as mercenaries for Qaddafi in Libya, and kidnappings and collaborating with AQIM. Security experts warn AQIM's expanding network of terrorist ties to militants in the Sahel – Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia, and Polisario members in Algeria – is a threat to the region and beyond. AFRICOM head US General Carter Ham calls it a "very, very dangerous outcome" and "threat to the US." UK Foreign Secretary William Hague says it could have a "profoundly destabilizing effect on countries in North Africa and the Gulf."

http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gfskPTIqBS_IQzBQK_R-Fdj_z0A?docId=CNG.fb5674e8c48dbb7ef3f59c256d4c3f07.531
<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=48788>
<http://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFTRE7AR29020111128?sp=true>

- Recent events in the Sahel, including the coup in Mali and subsequent takeover of northern Mali by al-Qaeda linked groups, have further exacerbated security and terrorism threats in the region. In October 2012, AFP reported that hundreds of jihadists have been pouring into northern Mali to support the Islamists of AQIM and MUJAO, including militants from the Polisario-run camps near Tindouf. Reports of increased trafficking by Sahrawi networks close to the Polisario have also been documented, creating a volatile security situation in the Sahel.
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iKv6nQ28GeXS3g6FlueGWHfzdzjw?docId=CNG.46aa49b0d9ec1aa0315758bc1eb223b5.221>
http://carnegieendowment.org/files/sahel_sahara.pdf
- This reality is now understood at the highest levels. In November 2012, Personal Envoy the UN Secretary General for the Western Sahara Christopher Ross emphasized the dangers of failing to resolve the conflict, arguing that it, “would be a serious miscalculation (to maintain the status quo), especially since the status quo is not threatened by the rise of extremist, terrorist, and criminal elements in the Sahel region. This dispute, if left to fester in this new situation, could spark renewed violence or hostilities that would be tragic for the people of Western Sahara and for North Africa as a whole.”
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5htH7sXEM6mE9j-NsimrXas4hWToQ?docId=CNG.714d6206df93e4c0d2493c2c67d87693.311>
- On April 9, 2013 UN leader Ban-Ki Moon underscored these sentiments and called for urgent international efforts to end the Western Sahara conflict because of fears the Mali war will spill over into the territory. In a report to the 15-member Security Council, Ban argued, "The rise of instability and insecurity in and around the Sahel requires an urgent settlement of this long-standing dispute." The report continued, "All governments consulted raised serious concerns over the risk that the fighting in Mali could spill over into neighboring countries and contribute to radicalizing the Western Saharan refugee camps," with one government leader in the region calling the Western Sahara camps "a ticking time bomb."
http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iOnupKvBuc8I_WTR3J5BnNCFnmEw?docId=CNG.566cbe22180951c72bc8d9c6ad6fd9d1.d1
- It is becoming increasingly clear that the only way to stop the spread of terrorism and trafficking in the region is through regional cooperation. Unfortunately, continued deadlock over the Western Sahara has prevented coordination between Algeria and Morocco, the two countries best qualified to help their weaker southern neighbors in the fight against terrorism. At a recent security conference in Morocco, several analysts noted that, “the ideal solution was for Algeria and Morocco to solve their main row - over the future of the disputed territory of Western Sahara -- and help the region fight al- Qaeda.”
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/01/23/us-africa-sahel-idUSTRE80M1NK20120123>

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