

Mali – Sahel: March 2017 Violent Incidents Related to AQIM, Ansar al-Din, JNIM, and Other Security Incidents

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Security situation in Mali and Sahel in general was overshadowed by the creation of new jihadist coalition on 02 March 2017. The new group is called “Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen, translated to “Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims,” and now abbreviated as JNIM. JNIM was formed by joining forces between AQIM Sahara Branch, Ansar al-Din, al-Murabitoun, and Ansar al-Din Macina brigade.

In addition to surviving the ongoing aggressive counterterrorism operations in Mali, groups making the core of new alliance already been enjoying operational success in different parts of the country and all operate in different regions. Ansar al-Din operates mainly in Kidal Region where carries regular attacks against French and MINUSMA forces. Sahara branch of AQIM remains present in Timbuktu Region where its focus not only MINUSMA, French, and Malian forces, but also acts of intimidation against locals and members of armed groups collaborating with foreign and Malian security forces. Macina brigade operates almost exclusively in Mopti and Segou Regions where since January 2015 number of its attacks increased significantly and focused largely on Malian forces small units based in the area. Its attacks also included attacks on MINUSMA logistical convoys. Lastly, al-Murabitoun carried limited number of attacks mainly in Gao Region.

In a short-term, despite being labeled as Sahel jihadist coalition, JNIM will mostly, if not only, impact the security situation in Mali. This is more about Mali than whole Sahel Region, especially with the clear attempt by Al-Qaeda to maximize its access to local communities. Relying on local groups is nothing new and AQIM’s [localization approach](#) was its signature since started penetrating northern Mali in early 2000s and continued to recent years with the creation of Ansar al-Din and Macina brigade.

Leaders of the new coalition, led by Iyad Ag Ghali, know more than anyone else the importance of sending that message of unity. This comes at a critical time as different parties involved in the peace process continue to struggle to achieve just that [unity]. Creation of JNIM is also more than competition, if there is any, with so-called Islamic State. It’s been almost two years since Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahraoui pledged allegiance to ISIS and never really imposed a similar threat, at least for now, as Al-Qaeda affiliates in Mali and neighboring countries. Al-Sahraoui’s men might have been credited deadly attack in Niger but the group itself never released official statement to claim such important attack for its propaganda.

- **Going forward violent extremist groups (VEOs) in Mali will continue to seek opportunities to carry spectacular attacks to cause high number of casualties. These attacks will target MINUSMA, French, Malian, and armed groups by relying on suicide missions conducted by small number of militants.**

- Sahel MeMo recorded 11 attacks by violent extremist organizations in March 2017. However only 5 attacks were officially claimed by JNIM. During these attacks at least 20 Malian soldiers killed and 6 injured, while also 2 civilians killed. While the use of improvised explosive devices (IED) was militant groups' main weapon, March 2017 witnessed only one IED attack, in Mopti Region.
- March 2017 witnessed several arrests by Barkhane and Malian security forces, notably in Timbuktu Region.
- Burkina Faso witnessed 2 violent attacks related to VEOs.
- Malian problem is more than just VEOs. Sahel MeMo recorded at least 18 armed robberies mainly in central and northern Mali. Non-government organizations (NGOs) were also victim of at least 3 armed robberies.
- Despite progress made implementing interim authorities, Timbuktu witnessed tensions between armed groups and Malian Army, including violent clashes. CJA and MAA seized number of checkpoints around Timbuktu before the intervention of MINUSMA that led negotiations resulting an agreement of installing interim authorities in Taoudeni and Timbuktu Regions.
- Members of CMPFR1 held three of their leaders hostage in protest of former rebels integration.
- Intercommunity violence resulted death of at least 10 civilians and more than 20 injured. This took place in Central Mali where at least three violent incidents were recorded between Bambara and Fulani communities.

- **JNIM:** Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen
- **AQIM:** Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
- **MINUSMA:** United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
- **CMA:** Coordination for the Movement of Azawad
- **GATIA:** Self-Defense Imghad Tuareg Group and Allies
- **MNLA:** National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad
- **MAA:** Arab Movement of Azawad
- **CJA:** Congress of Justice in Azawad
- **CMPFR1:** Coordination of Movements and Fronts of Patriotic Resistance (Platform)

[05 MAR 17](#): At least 13 Malian soldiers killed during an attack on Malian security forces post at Boulkessi, Mopti Region. Though initially Ansarul Islam suspected to be behind the attack, JNIM [released](#) a statement on 09 MAR 17 claiming responsibility. JNIM claimed to have killed 17 soldiers, seized 5 vehicles and destroyed 6 others, and captured other arms and weapons. This was the first claim by the group since its creation on 02 MAR 17.

[05 MAR 17](#): Rockets fired at MINUSMA camp in Amachach base, Tessalit, Kidal Region. 2 rockets fell outside the camp, no casualties, and no physical damages.

[05 MAR 17](#): Rockets fired at MINUSMA camp in Aguelhoc, Kidal Region. 5 rockets fell outside just southeast of the camp, no casualties, and no physical damages.

[10 MAR 17](#): Malian security forces arrested an alleged AQIM supplier who was in Bamako to collect his father's pension according to local observers familiar with the suspect.

[13 MAR 17](#): Unknown gunmen attacked Fafa weekly market near Ansongo. 2 Malian soldiers and 2 civilians killed.

[14 MAR 17](#): Barkhane forces arrested 7 suspects belonging allegedly to unidentified jihadist group 400km north of Timbuktu, at Foum al-Alba village. [Citing](#) Timbuktu airport [Barkhane base] employee, 8 [not 7] prisoners were arrested.

[15 MAR 17](#): French defense ministry said to have discovered and destroyed 40 tubes of rocket launchers, 5000 rounds of ammunition, 6 mortar shells, and 6 rocket launchers at In-Tachdait, Kidal Region.

[15 MAR 17](#): Barkhane discovered and destroyed an IED made of 15kg of explosives near Al-Moustarat, Gao Region.

[15 MAR 17](#): Barkhane discovered and destroyed 122mm rocket launcher near Tessalit, Kidal Region. According to the same report, the launcher was remotely controlled by cellphone.

20 MAR 17: Unknown gunmen attacked Malian Army checkpoint at Tonka between Timbuktu and Goundam, Timbuktu Region.

[18 MAR 17](#): CMA released statement reporting the assassination of one of its combatant, Toukannas Ag Mohammad, by unknown gunmen at Ouzzeyane, Abeibera Commune, Kidal Region. Victim is reportedly cousin of late Cheick Ag Aoussa, killed in an IED attack on 08 OCT 16 in Kidal. Reportedly, the victim was also a member of an MNLA anti-terrorism unit trained by Barkhane.

[20 MAR 17](#): Barkhane forces arrested 3 suspected AQIM members north of Timbuktu.

[22 MAR 17](#): Malian Army arrested an alleged jihadist in Gao in possession of arms and fake GATIA identification.

25 MAR 17: JNIM claimed to have destroyed Malian Army vehicle after an IED attack in Mopti Region. 2 Malian soldiers killed.
(Right: JNIM statement)

25 MAR 17: JNIM claimed to have clashed with members of Dozo community backed by Malian Army. The group said to have seized weapons and motorcycles while killed dozens of Dozo militia members.

[25 MAR 17](#): Malian Army post attacked and destroyed by unknown militants at Al-Moustarat. 3 Malian soldiers killed and 4 injured while arms also seized.

#مؤسسة_الزلاقة

الأحد 27/06/1438

تدمير سيارة للجيش المالي بتفجير لغم ارضي ليلة البارحة في ولاية #موبتي مما أدى الى وقوع عدد من #القتلى والجرحى.

#تحصنة_الإسلام_والمسلمين.

#مؤسسة_الزلاقة

الأحد 27/06/1438

أشترك المجاهدون يوم أمس في منطقة ماسينا مع مليشيات #البوترو المدعومة من قبل الجيش المالي مما أدى إلى #توقيع عشرات من القتلى والجرحى في صفوف هذه المليشيات #مجموعة عشرات الدراجات وعدد من الأسلحة والناظر #توحرقت بعض الدراجات وسيارة لهذه المليشيات .

#تحصنة_الإسلام_والمسلمين

[26 MAR 17](#): Gunmen attacked gendarmerie checkpoint at Djenné, Mopti Region. JNIM claimed responsibility. The group claimed to have seized weapons and unknown amount of cash. (Right: JNIM statement)

[29 MAR 17](#): Gunmen on motorcycles attacked Malian security forces post at Boulkessi near borders with Burkina Faso. 2 gendarmes killed. JNIM claimed responsibility. (Right: JNIM statement)

[31 MAR 17](#): Malian gendarme mistakenly fired their weapons and killed 2 civilians returning from local market at Konna, Mopti Region. The 2 civilians were taken for jihadists wanting to attack Konna gendarmerie post.

#مؤسسة_الزلاقة

الأحد 27/06/1438

هجوم الأسبوع الماضي على بوابة الدرك في منطقة #جنى ولاية #موتني مما أدى الى السيطرة على الموقع و #غنيمة بعض الأسلحة والكثير من المعدات العسكرية ومبلغ من المال #توفرار جند الطاعوت من الموقع #نصرة_الإسلام_والمسلمين

#مؤسسة_الزلاقة

السبت 04/07/1438

تمكنت سرية من المجاهدين يوم الأربعاء الماضي من الهجوم على مركز للدرك المالي في #بلوكسي التابعة لمنطقة #دونزا القريبة من الحدود مع بوركينا، وأدى الهجوم إلى #مقتل ثلاثة من الدرك و#غنيمة بعض الأسلحة والذخيرة .

#نصرة_الإسلام_والمسلمين

March 2017 attacks in Burkina Faso related to violent extremist organizations

[20 MAR 17](#): Unknown militants carried an attack on Burkinabe Army post at Nassoumbou, located 40km from Djibo, Sahel Region. 1 soldier lightly injured.

[19-20 MAR 17](#): Burkinabe security forces ambushed by unknown gunmen at Petega, 25km of Djibo. 1 gendarme injured.

[01 MAR 17](#): Three unknown armed bandits assaulted then robbed passengers aboard two civilian transportation buses between Ansongo and In-Delimane (Ansongo – Ménaka route). According to witnesses more than \$16,300.00 seized.

[04 MAR 17](#): Unknown gunmen attacked vehicle at Karwassa village near Gossi. Bandits fired at the vehicle killing 1 civilian.

04 MAR 17: Allegedly, unknown militants killed 2 individuals and kidnapped 3 others under unclear circumstances at Funtonde village near Boni, Mopti Region.

[06 MAR 17](#): Malian Army checkpoint attacked by members of the CJA and MAA outside of Timbuktu. 1 MAA officer and 2 civilians killed.

[06 MAR 17](#): Three Ganda Koy [also known as CMFPR1] leaders captured hostage by members of the group and demanded more information about the establishment of mixed patrols in Timbuktu.

11 MAR 17: Unknown gunmen attacked and seized Malian Red-Cross (CRM) vehicle near Gao. Driver killed and ICRC employee injured.

[14 MAR 17](#): Six gunmen on motorcycles seized 4x4 vehicle belonging to Tilemsi Technology company at Petaka, 11km from Douentza. Driver was also taken but then released hours later.

15 MAR 17: Unknown gunmen destroyed Orange and Malitel network towers at Simbi, Mopti Region.

[16 MAR 17](#): Three unknown gunmen assassinated GATIA commander at Ménaka. Victim was identified as Almahdi Ag Lengach. [Allegedly](#), this is more of in response to his previous abuse of a rival community.

16 MAR 17: Clashes reported between members from Bambara and Fulani communities near Dogofri, Mopti Region.

[20 MAR 17](#): Armed bandits attacked and robbed civilian vehicle between Niafunké and Tonka. Bandits initially attempted penetrating the village of Koiratao before being chased by local residents.

[21 MAR 17](#): Vehicle belonging to Luxembourg Development NGO was taken by 7 gunmen in front of city hall at Bara village, Ansongo Circle. The attackers arrived in motorcycles.

[21 MAR 17](#): Vehicle belonging to the Director General of Tilemsi Company at Forgho, Gao Circle by three gunmen. Passengers were also robbed of their belongings.

[22 MAR 17](#): Local NGO Kisal reported clashes between Fulani and Bambara communities at Wouro Hamadi and Weli Gara [Banikoro] villages, Niono Circle, Segou Region. 10 Bambara and 20 Fulanis killed.

[22 MAR 17](#): Six armed bandits attacked internally displaced population camp of Tillaha, located 15km from Naifunké, Timbuktu Region. The camp is mainly made of Tuareg and important quantity of food was reportedly taken.

[25 MAR 17](#): Two civilian transportation buses attacked by armed bandits between Gossi and Doro, near In-Tahaka while heading to the city of Gao. Passengers robbed of their goods while 1 civilian passengers died after being injured during the attack.

26 MAR 17: Local NGO Kisal reported that traditional leader of Mondoro village, Mopti Region, assassinated in his house by unknown gunmen. This comes during days of violent tensions between Fulani and Dozo communities.

[26 MAR 17](#): Unknown gunmen attacked and robbed group of local youth council of Bourem at Al-Moustarat, Gao Region. The group of youth were traveling to Tarkint to raise awareness about peace and reconciliation.

[26 MAR 17](#): Gunmen attacked customs post of Ouélessebougou, Koulikoro Region, 80km south of Bamako. 2 customs agents [killed](#).

[29 MAR 17](#): Unknown gunmen attacked vehicle belonging to *Centre d'Animation Pédagogique* of Douentza. The incident took place 40km from Douentza toward Sévaré while 3 members of the center injured.

29 MAR 17: Local NGO Kisal reported that armed bandits attacked and damaged network towers at Dinangourou, Koro Circle, Mopti Region. Internet and Cellphone coverage interrupted.

31 MAR 17: Clashes occurred at In-Khalil under unclear circumstances while [local observer](#) said it was a result of settling accounts between drug traffickers due to previous clashes occurred on 14 MAR 17.

[30 MAR 17](#): Gunmen assassinated local imam of Missabougou-Balobougou neighborhood of commune 6 of Bamako District.