

The Air Algeria Crash: Libyan BUK Missile Unit Used by Al Qaeda Affiliated Rebels to Down Algerian Passenger Plane?

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After the U.S.-supported ouster of Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi in 2011, Libyan jihadist rebels swarmed through Libyan army weapons depots and helped themselves to Soviet-made portable shoulder-launched missiles and launchers, BUK missile batteries capable of bringing down aircraft flying over 30,000 feet, and other military equipment, including mortars and rocket-propelled grenades.

Some of the Libyan equipment ended up in the hands of Saharan-based insurgent groups such as Al Qaeda in the Maghreb (AQIM) and the Mali-based Ansar Dine. There is a real possibility that anti-aircraft weapons that fell into the hands of U.S.-supported Libyan guerrillas and were subsequently transferred to Saharan-based rebels were used to attack Air Algeria 5017, which was flying over Mali from Burkina Faso to Algeria in what the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration refers to as a «high-risk flight zone.»

Attacks on civilian aircraft using missiles procured from post-Qaddafi Libya were predicted by intelligence and defense specialists. It now appears that those predictions were well-founded with the crash of Air Algeria 5017.

The jihadist group Al-Mourabitoun, formed in 2013 after the merging of the Mulathameen brigade and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJWA), both AQIM affiliates, may be behind the crash of Air Algeria 5017. The Mulathameen Brigade was led by the one-eyed Al Qaeda terrorist Mokhtar Belmokhtar, a veteran of the CIA-led Afghan war against the Soviet Union, who claimed responsibility for a mid-July suicide bombing north of Gao that killed a French soldier. Belmokhtar said Al-Mourabitoun would be led by a younger generation of jihadists, who all swore allegiance to Al Qaeda's leader Dr. Ayman Zawahiri.

With the crash near Gao, Mali of Air Algeria Flight 5017, with 110 passengers and crew of six Spanish nationals, and which was en route from Ougadougou, Burkina Faso, to Algiers, the possibility that BUK missiles from Libya were used in attacking the aircraft cannot be ruled out. Ansar Dine and AQIM have been found in possession of weapons seized from Libyan warehouses and armories to carry out attacks on Malian and Algerian targets, including the 2013 terrorist attack by AQIM on the Ain Amena natural gas plant in the Algerian Sahara. That attack was carried out by Belmokhtar's forces. The jihadists killed 40 Western and Algerian hostages.

In May 2013, Belmokhtar's forces attacked a Nigerien military barracks in Agadez and a

uranium mine in Arlit in the Republic of Niger. A Belmokhtar ally, Seif Allah Ibn Hussein, alias «Abu Ayadh al-Tunis», used weapons stolen from Libya to attack Western targets in Tunisia. Abu Ayadh leads Ansar al Sharia – Tunisia – AAS-T, the Tunisian branch of the Benghazi-based Ansar al Sharia that was supported by the CIA and NATO during the Libyan uprising against Qaddafi.

Fifty one of the 110 passengers on board Air Algerie 5017 were French nationals. Also on the passengers' manifest were 27 Burkinabe, 8 Lebanese, 6 Algerians, 2 Luxembourgers, 5 Canadians, 4 Germans, 1 Cameroonian, 1 Belgian, 1 Egyptian, 1 Ukrainian, 1 Swiss, 1 Nigerian and 1 Malian. Malians near the city of Kidal said they heard a loud explosion around the same time that contact with the MD-83 aircraft. The plane crashed in the foothills of the remote Adrar des Ifoghas Mountains that are known to be hideouts for Belmokhtar's forces.

The MD-83 was owned by the Spanish company Swiftair but leased to Air Algerie.

Thirteen minutes after its 9:17 departure from Ouagadougou airport, the Air Algerie pilot requested permission from air traffic control in Niger to divert its course to avoid another "aircraft" in the area. The other "aircraft" may have been a ground-launched missile picked up by the MD-83's weather radar. The United States operates a Top Secret program codenamed CREEK SAND from the military side of Ouagadougou Airport. From the airport, the U.S. Air Force and Central Intelligence Agency dispatches unmanned drones to fly over Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Visibility for Air Algerie 5017 was hampered by heavy rain clouds along the flight route. There was no contact with the aircraft some 50 minutes after it took off from Ouagadougou.

Obama's and Hillary Clinton's support for Ansar al-Sharia and other Libyan jihadist groups in the overthrow of Qaddafi led to the proliferation of Soviet-made and other weapons throughout the Sahara region. Sufian Ben Qhumu, alias Abu Faris, a former Guantanamo detainee, was released and then permitted by the CIA to form Ansar al-Sharia to battle against Qaddafi's government. His fellow Guantanamo detainee is Abu Ayadh al-Tunis, the leader of Ansar al-Sharia-Tunisia.

Obama, Mrs. Clinton, and other members of the Obama administration bear full responsibility for the distribution of anti-aircraft weapons to radical groups like Ansar al Sharia, Ansar Dine, and in the Sahara region. These weapons include some 480 SA-24 "Grinch" shoulder-launched missiles, as well as the BUK missile system. On September 22, 2011, a senior intelligence official told The Daily Telegraph, "If the SA-24 missiles fall into the wrong hands then no civilian aircraft in the region will be safe from attack."

Direct U.S. and NATO military support to Ansar al-Sharia turned the pan-Sahel region into a dangerous region for civilian aircraft. With the suspicious crash of Air Algerie 5017, the world must isolate and penalize the terrorist-supporting regime in Washington, DC. Governments around the world should issue visa bans against Hillary Clinton, Joe Biden, John McCain, Lindsey Graham, and other supporters of the Libyan terrorists. Assets of the Clinton Foundation held in foreign banks should be frozen and actions should be taken against U.S. defense companies, with asset freezes and travel bans issued against the corporate accounts and private accounts of officials of U.S. defense contractors involved in support for the Lockheed-Martin, Northrop-Grumman, Harris Corporation, Boeing, and other companies involved in operations in support of the rebellion against Qaddafi in Libya. Particularly effective sanctions should be imposed on the most well-known French supporter

of Libyan terrorists, Bernard-Henri Levy.

After the imposition of a sharia law Islamic state in Benghazi in 2012, Western observers and diplomats, according to The New York Times, were stunned to see the advanced weaponry on display by Ansar al Sharia forces. Much of it had been stolen from Libyan armories and warehouses. SA-7 portable shoulder-launched missiles from Libyan warehouses were found by Algerian authorities to be in the hands of jihadist insurgents operating in the Sahara region. Libyan anti-aircraft missiles have also made their way to Syrian rebels under the watchful eye of NATO. On September 14, 2012, The Times of London reported «a Libyan ship carrying the largest consignment of weapons for Syria since the uprising began has docked in Turkey and most of its cargo is making its way to rebels on the front lines.» The cargo included «SAM-7 surface-to-air anti-aircraft missiles and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs).»

Obama and the U.S. military-intelligence establishment must be taught a lesson that military equipment provided to terrorists that is subsequently used to attack civilian airliners, killing innocent passengers and crew members must be at a cost to those who allow terrorists and insurgents to be armed. The blood of innocent French, Burkinabe, Algerian, Canadian, German, and the citizens of other nations is now on Obama's and Mrs. Clinton's hands. They must be called to account before the courts of justice and world public opinion.

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