ALGERIA: **IN AMENAS**

BP JV WET GAS FACILITY ATTACK

16 – 20 JANUARY 2013

Initial Open Source Briefing & Assessment
Prepared by Seven Questions Consulting Limited
ALGERIA: IN AMENAS ATTACK 16 – 20 JANUARY 2013

AIM

1-1. The aim of this briefing note is to provide an interim background brief on the recent terrorist incident at the JV Tiguentourine gas plant and make recommendations for clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1-2. It is recommended that clients:

a. Review vulnerability assessments for ‘at risk’ sites and wargame attack options;

b. Conduct-after-attack training and briefings should be reviewed in order to improve survival chances for employees caught in similar incidents in the future;

c. Crisis management plans and exercises may need to be more ‘multi-dimensional’ in order to capture the true level of complexity of similar incidents in the future.

BACKGROUND

1-3. Recent Terrorist Events in Algeria. The following table summarises the most significant recent terrorist events in Algeria (highly likely to have been planned and conducted by al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29 Jun 12</td>
<td>Ouargla</td>
<td>VBIED attack on military base</td>
<td>1x ALG Gendarme killed, 1x bomber killed (self-detonation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>23 Oct 11</td>
<td>Tindouf</td>
<td>Kidnap</td>
<td>3x European workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>26 Aug 11</td>
<td>Cherchel</td>
<td>PBIED attack on military academy</td>
<td>18x soldiers killed, 21X soldiers injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16 Jul 11</td>
<td>Borgj Menaiel</td>
<td>PBIED attacked with secondary follow-up arrack of PBIED on motorbike</td>
<td>3x police officers killed, 1x civilian killed, 2x attackers killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Apr 11</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>40x dismounted AQIM gunmen launch attack on barracks</td>
<td>17x soldiers killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>04 Feb 11</td>
<td>Djanet</td>
<td>Italian national and Algerian driver kidnapped</td>
<td>Freed – 17 Apr 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>25 Jul 10</td>
<td>Tizi Ouzou</td>
<td>PBIED on security barracks</td>
<td>36x killed/wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>11 Jun 10</td>
<td>Timizar</td>
<td>PBIED attack on police barracks</td>
<td>9x killed, 20x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>07 Mar 09</td>
<td>Tizi Ouzou</td>
<td>PBIED attack on police barracks</td>
<td>2x killed, 8x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>28 Sep 08</td>
<td>Dellys</td>
<td>PBIED attack on police VCP</td>
<td>3x killed, 6x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>03 Aug 08</td>
<td>Tizi Ouzou</td>
<td>PBIED (first female)</td>
<td>4x police officers wounded, 21x civilians wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>03 Mar 07</td>
<td>??</td>
<td>Transgaz convoy attacked</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>04 Jun 08</td>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>PBIED attack on police barracks</td>
<td>5x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>29 Jan 08</td>
<td>Thenia</td>
<td>VBIED of police VCP</td>
<td>4x killed, 23x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>02 Jan 08</td>
<td>Naciria</td>
<td>PBIED attack on police station</td>
<td>4x police officers killed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1-4. AQIM Activity in Algeria. Algeria’s police recorded 175 terrorist events in 2012, representing a significant reduction from 200 in 2011. Although the recent trend has been towards a reduction from the peak of activity in 03-07, up until the this most recent attack the terrorist activity in Algeria has been characterized as being PBIED/VBIED attacks on military and police targets. Kidnapping for ransom has continued to remain a threat with operations over the last decade earning perpetrators between US$50M and US$90M in revenue. OSINT reporting over the last 360 days is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SER</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>OUTCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>11 Dec 11</td>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>2x PBIED attack UN offices and court building</td>
<td>30+ killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>08 Sep 07</td>
<td>Dellys</td>
<td>PBIED attack on naval barracks</td>
<td>28x killed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>06 Sep 07</td>
<td>Batna</td>
<td>PBIED attack</td>
<td>15x killed 70x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>11 Apr 07</td>
<td>Algiers</td>
<td>Multiple PBIED attacks on PM’s office, Interpol HQ and HQ Algerian Special Police</td>
<td>33x killed 245x wounded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>10 Dec 06</td>
<td>Bouchaoui</td>
<td>Anti-vehicle ambush on convoy containing bus carrying contractors. IED neutralised lead security vehicle, gunmen opened fire on bus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1-5. French-led Intervention in Mali. Although the attack was claimed to have been launched in revenge for the French-led intervention in Mali, the scale and complexity of the attack suggests that it has been some time in the planning, perhaps as early as Dec 12 when the group that carried it out was formed. The link to Mali provided a convenient and timely ‘hook’ for the attack. Comment: The execution of the plan may have been brought forward to amplify link to Mali.

1-6. Environment - Personnel. The Tiguentourine plant was a JV between: BP; Statoil (NOR); Sonatrach (ALG) and JGC (JAP). The site was supported by a range of contractors and services companies of differing nationalities. In all there were approximately 700 personnel working at the site of different nationalities with an approximate 20:80 split between ex-patriot workers and Algerian nationals.
1-7. **Environment – Ground.** The large plant was located in SE Algeria 40km SW from the small town of In Amenas in the central belt of Algeria and only 80km from the country’s Eastern border with Libya. The plant sits on a spur road off the N3 Highway which is the only route between the plant and In Amenas and used for regular (and probably predictable) administrative traffic and moving personnel between the plant and the airfield located 8km East of In Amenas town itself.

**ADVERSARY**

1-8. **Suspect Organisation.** Katibat Muawi’in bil Dam (Signers with Blood Brigade) led by former AQIM commander Mokhtar Belmokhtar\(^v\) (split from AQIM in 2012 and formed new group (also known as ‘Masked Brigade’) in December last year)\(^vi\).

1-9. **Adversary Taskorg.** The group carrying out the attack were equipped and organized as follows:

a. **Personnel.** Initial estimates place the number of adversaries at ±33. This large group may have been sub-divided into two or three smaller task-based groups. These large-scale dismounted attacks are not uncommon (note the Apr 11 Algeria attack and recent attacks by TTP in Pakistan). Background of the attackers is unknown but it is reported that two members were Canadian nationals and five Algerian nationals.

b. **Vehicles.** Although vehicles were used in the various phases of the operation there is no information to suggest at this stage that they were used for anything other than transportation and logistics.

c. **Weapon Systems.** A large range of weapon systems were deployed during the attack *inter alia* assault rifles, MMG, LMG (PKM variants), RPG-7 Algerian news media visually confirmed the spectrum of weapons recovered from the site (see image captured below)\(^vii\). The volume and range of
weapon systems deployed indicates that the adversaries were intent on a
violent and prolonged battle with any forces sent to resolve the situation.

d. Obstacle Deployment. Anecdotal reporting suggests that an array of anti-
personnel obstacles were deployed during the later phases of the terrorist
operation. It is likely that a range of victim-operated booby traps (rudimentary
tripwire detonated fragmentation grenades) and AP Mines were deployed on
likely approach routes and entry points to the site. The purpose behind the
use of these obstacles would have been twofold: firstly, to create maximum
delay to the Algerian government response and secondly, create maximum
casualties. Some reporting suggests that a form of ‘reserve demolition’ may
have been prepared to destroy the gas plant. Comment: Whilst the
adversary had sufficient time and equipment to prepare a reserve
demolition of the gas facility, no such event occurred, either because
Algerian Government intervention disrupted the attempt or because the
attempt failed due to poor planning/execution.

e. Hostages and IED Deployment. Reporting confirms that a number of
foreign nationals held hostage had been restrained and forced to wear
explosive belts. The purpose of this action is unclear. If this fact was made
known through negotiators to the Government then it would have been used
to delay/deter intervention and rescue. However, if this fact was not made
known and only discovered post event or through surveillance of the target
then the motivation would have been to create casualties during any rescue
attempt and increase the ‘media impact’ of the event.

1-10. The Target. The target for the attack should be divided into the tactical target
and the strategic target or target audience.

a. Tactical Target. The tactical level target for the operation was foreign
employees at the In Amenas plant. Algerian/local/Muslim employees were
collateral.

b. Strategic Target. The strategic target (audience) for the attack was
assessed as being European Governments (who by inference are supportive
of US, and latterly French, CT operations in Central Africa/Maghreb) and compliant regional governments.

Assumed Mission Statement

A possible mission statement for the attack may have been:

**Al-Mulathamin Brigade** is to ATTACK the gas plant at **IN AMENAS**:

- NEUTRALISE security force
- SECURE gas plant ‘factory’ site [Tigantourine]
- SECURE accommodation area [Al-Hayat]
- SECURE and separate foreign and local workers at both locations
- DELAY armed response/intervention
- CREATE maximum casualties
- COMMUNICATE message and gain maximum media coverage

Be prepared to:

- DEFEND secure locations for 12-24 hours
- DESTROY the gas plant (and co-located hostages)

In order to influence **US and EU strategy for Central Africa and the Maghreb**.

1-11. **Scheme of Manoeuvre**. From reporting to date the overall Scheme of Manoeuvre for the attack could be broken down into the following phases:

a. **Phase 1 – Planning & Reconnaissance**. Detailed planning and reconnaissance conducted over a number of months. This activity would have included physical reconnaissance of the target locations, monitoring of routines and possibility the recruitment of an insider to gain further detailed information. Activity at this stage would also have included the logistic planning for the move of the 30+ militants with weapons and equipment.

Main Effort: Identifying locations and capabilities of security force.
Phase Ends: On D Day (16 Jan 2013)

b. **Phase 2 – Secure Compounds**. Infiltrate Algeria from Libya. Establishment of a roadblock on the only access road between the Tigantourine and Al-Hayat compounds and the N3 East to In Amenas in order to isolate the site before neutralizing the (armed) security. Militants then to split into two groups and round up all workers in both locations, separating foreign nationals from Algerians/North Africans. Hostages to be dispersed around site under guard. Hostage security details required in both the main site and accommodation site. If possible the maximum number of foreign hostages are to be transported quickly form the Al-Hayat site East and over the border into Libya for dispersal. Concurrently, the remainder of the force is to secure the main Tigantourine facility including the use of booby traps and ‘human shields’. A small group are to prepare demolition charges for maximum damage around the gas facility itself.

Main Effort: Securing a large group of foreign nationals that must include US citizens.
c. **Phase 3 – Negotiate & Prepare for Response.** Concurrent activity to secure the site and guard hostages continues. Demands to be passed via sympathetic news agencies and channels of negotiation open with Algerian Government. Leverage to be applied on the basis of hostages at the Tigantourine facility and those previously moved to Libya. Algerian/Muslim hostages to be released.

**Main Effort:** Gaining time, concessions and forcing Algerian/international governments to negotiate with militants.

**Phase Ends:** When Algerian Government launch rescue attempt.

d. **Phase 4 – Final Resistance.** Conduct of a violent delay battle with the intention to create maximum casualties and maximum destruction (including the destruction of the gas plant itself).
1-12. Timeline of the Operation. Key timings (approximated) for the attack and the Algerian Government response are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME (L)</th>
<th>EVENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 16 Jan | 0500 | * Bus departing the Al-Hayat accommodation compound engaged by militants and a UK and Algerian national are killed.  
* Mounted assault of the Al-Hayat accommodation compound by up to 40 armed attackers. One British and one French national killed during initial assault (possibly armed site security). |
| 16 Jan | 0900? | * Algerian Government response initiated (?). |
| 16 Jan | 1220 | * Unconfirmed reports in media of multiple foreign nationals held. |
| 16 Jan | 1300 | * BP establishes it Crisis Management Team |
| 16 Jan | 1345 | * UK COBRA meeting to discuss situation |
| 16 Jan | 1430 | * UK Foreign office statement confirms UK nationals involved in developing incident.  
* Impact on UK political agenda as Foreign Secretary returns early to UK and PM cancels significant foreign policy speech. |
| 16 Jan | 1700? | * Sahara media Agency informed that 41 Westerners of 9 or 10 nationalities but including 7 Americans held hostage. Five being held in ‘factory’ the balance in living accommodation. |
| 16 Jan | 1900 | * Algerian Government reject demands and refuse to negotiate. |
| 17 Jan | 0500 | * 30 Algerian and 15 foreign hostages escape (probably from the Al-Hayat accommodation camp to the South of the facility itself). |
| 17 Jan | 1200 | * Militants attempt to move hostages in five vehicles towards border from the Al-Hayat compound. Reporting indicates that Algerian helicopter gunships engaged these vehicles destroying four of them (perhaps assuming them to be militants on the move). |
| 17 Jan | 1200 | * Algerian security forces begin operation to recapture accommodation compound [Al-Hayat] and possibly gas plant [Tigantourine]. Response includes deployment of a squadron of T72 MBT. |
| 18 Jan | 0500 | * Algerian forces isolate both sites with cordon.  
* Intermittent exchanges of fire between militants and Algerian forces reported by hostages. |
| 19 Jan | 0500 | * Algerian SF initiate final assault on gas plant [Tigantourine] after reports that hostages being killed  
* Algerian media report that last 11 militants killed final 7 hostages before being killed themselves.  
* Final toll reported as being 32 militants killed and 685 Algerians and 107 foreign nationals released. |
| 20 Jan | 0500 | * Independent media reports of a further 25 or 30 more bodies being identified at the site(s) |
| 21 Jan | 0500 | * Algerian PM statement: 37 foreign nationals (from eight countries) killed, one Algerian killed and five foreigners still missing. 29 militants killed and three arrested. |
1-13. **Schematic of Events.** The outline schematic of events is below:

![Schematic of Events](image)

**Key to Schematic**

1. Militant cordon/block engages vehicle carrying workers/security staff
2. Militants neutralise site security
3. Facility and accommodation secured and hostages taken
4. 4/5 vehicles moving hostages engaged and destroyed by Algerian HIND
5. Algerian security forces retake accommodation compound
6. Algerian SF retake and secure facility
1-14. **Impact.** The key features of the immediate impact of the attack were:

- 57 hostages killed.
- 32 adversaries killed (this suggest that there are either ±8 bodies to be discovered or some members of the assault force escaped). Two of the dead militants are alleged to have been Canadian nationals\textsuperscript{xii}.
- Major BP JV operating site closed down and others placed on restricted operations.
- Temporary evacuation of majority of foreign workers from Algeria further impacting upon the operational efficiency of O&G and other JV.

1-15. **Lessons.** The following lessons can be identified:

- **Force Ratios.** The assessed capability mounted by the adversary in this attack (force numbers, capability and intent) would have overwhelmed most civilian commercial security systems. Wargaming increasing levels of threat against ‘vulnerable’ sites to determine the best mix of physical, procedural and armed/unarmed response to inform a review of security systems may be necessary.

- **Access Control.** This attack highlights the challenges faces by isolated infrastructure served by a single road. This inherent vulnerability can be mitigated by avoiding patterns in road use, random VCP and increasing the protection available to road moves when the threat level rises.

- **Complex Crisis Management.** The multilevel response to the crisis (commercial, diplomatic, military, site) underscores the complexity and difficulty in everything from strategic media communications to HR and staff welfare. Whilst internal ‘one-dimensional’ crisis response exercises are necessary, consideration should be given to developing a more multi-dimensional approach, through a combination of wargaming and remote play, to understand the challenges and constraints placed upon decision makers in this type of crisis. Established sites identified, as being vulnerable, should consider refreshing liaison with local security forces and refining intervention plans to improve the effectiveness of retake options for sites.

- **Staff Self-Reliance.** A significant proportion of the site staff managed to either escape or avoid capture. Whilst this is testament to the self-reliance of individuals engaged in this industry in challenging environments, consideration should be given to basic security awareness/induction packages developing lessons and ‘best practice’ to enhance this natural self-reliance and improve survival chances.

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\textsuperscript{i} All mapping acknowledged copyright of Google Maps.

\textsuperscript{ii} http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2011/07/aqim_suicide_bombers.php#ixzz2IhlN6Z7e
Sixthly: We confirm to our Muslim brothers for the necessity of staying away from all the companies and Western companies to maintain their safety and especially the French ones, and that was emphasized to our Muslim brothers working there by the Fedayeen brothers when they seized the location.

Fifthly: The operation was being prepared for some time after an intelligence survey for many locations in different regions, and this location was chosen after it became clear the participation of Algeria with France against our people in Mali, and violating its skies and land by the French, and closure of the borders to besiege the Muslim Azawadi people, that was what pushed to give the signal to begin the operation in Algeria.

Fourthly: The fallacy of the Algerian regime to the Western countries, and deluding them that the executing group is foreigners and petroleum companies stationed between the two targeted locations, but they stunned before courage of the Fedayeen and their swiftness in executing the operation.

Thirdly: We confirm the false claims of the Algerian security and interior ministry of controlling the borders. And according to our information that general is the one who supervised the operation.

Secondly: We offered negotiations with the Westerners and Algerians and gave them safety from the beginning of the operation, but one of the senior intelligence officials confirmed to us in a telephone call that they will destroy the place with those who are in it. And according to our information that general is the one who supervised the operation.

So the helicopters shelled the convoy that was moving the hostages to the factory, and destroyed it with those who are in it in a brutal way and was directly killed.

That is an indication that the army isn't concerned in preserving the lives of the captives as it claims and the Fedayeen group remained present in the factory, offering to negotiate once again and mentioned legitimate demands:

-To stop the aggression on the Muslims in Mali and releasing our captives held by the crusaders, but the Algerian army didn't respond to these legitimate demands, but rather it began to storm the gas factory which led to the death of the hostages.

Hence we confirm the following:

Firstly: The states participating in the crusade against the Muslims and Islam didn't have a goal except striking the young Islamic project in Mali, and in every country that implemented the Sharia, but they didn't interfere to protect the unarmed Syrian people who are being killed and displaced for two years, and that is a proof for their new colonial greed.

OSINT intelligence monitoring service from www.sevenquestions.co.uk
Finally: We threaten all the states that participated in the crusade against the Azawad region if it didn’t withdraw its decision of more operations...

"And they who act unjustly shall know to what final place of turning they shall turn back".

Al-Mulathamin Brigade

xi Stated aims and demands made during operation did include attempts to exchange kidnapped US nationals for AQ(IM) members being held by the US. Demands were also made to allow militants and hostages safe transit out of Algeria and to cease counter-militant operations in Mali.

xii http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/middle-east-live/2013/jan/21/algeria-hostage-death-toll-rises-live-updates