



Mali: The Next Front in the War on Terror

THE CASE FOR FULLY FUNDING UN PEACEKEEPERS IN MALI

SEPTEMBER 2013

INTRODUCTION: A NOTE FROM PETER YEO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In January 2013, three Americans were killed when terrorists attacked an Algerian BP gas facility. The plan for the attack was conceived in the North African nation of Mali, and a Mali-based jihadist with ties to Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility. Regrettably, this was neither the first nor likely the last threat to Americans coming from Mali.

This unforgivable tragedy is one important reason why this past spring, the United States urged the United Nations to authorize a peacekeeping mission to Mali.

However, the U.S., for all its support of this mission, which deployed in July, did not anticipate the size and scope of it when crafting the President's Fiscal Year 2014 budget request. As a result, as peacekeepers now work to restore stability and peace to Mali, the U.S. has fallen dangerously behind on its bills. In fact, absent congressional action, we could fall more than \$300 million short on funding to fuel this mission.

U.S. Rep. Michael McCaul, Chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee and the Representative of one of the slain Americans recently noted that "North Africa is the next theater of operations in the War on Terror," and that this tragedy reminds us that "we must never grow complacent."

Indeed, now is the time for Congress to heed these words by providing the U.S. share of funds needed for the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)—the mission we asked for. This is an essential step towards ensuring that security is restored to this region.

We at the Better World Campaign are committed to fostering a strong U.S.-UN relationship that promotes core American interests and builds a more secure, prosperous, and healthy world. We look forward to working together as Congress and the Administration consider this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Yeo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Yeo
Executive Director
Better World Campaign

BACKGROUND: A RAPID DETERIORATION OF STABILITY IN MALI

The West African country of Mali has been in a protracted state of crisis since March 2012, when its democratically elected president was overthrown in a military coup. In the security vacuum that followed, secular Tuareg rebels, who have long accused the Malian government of marginalization and neglect, seized control of the northern two-thirds of the country—a vast desert region that is roughly the size of Texas—and declared an independent Tuareg state. These forces were later pushed aside, however, by a collection of well-armed radical Islamist groups, including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), the North African franchise of the notorious international terrorist organization. AQIM and its allies imposed a harsh interpretation of Sharia law in the territories they controlled—including the fabled Saharan trading outpost of Timbuktu—reportedly carrying out inhumane punishments such as flogging, stoning, and amputations.

The ethnic and political turmoil caused by this string of events took a devastating toll. The conflict left hundreds dead and forced nearly 500,000 people to flee their homes. Beyond the human toll taken by the fighting, Islamist extremists also carved a path of cultural destruction through northern Mali, culminating in actions that seriously damaged Timbuktu’s famed centuries-old Muslim mausoleums. Perhaps most disturbingly, however, Mali’s instability left a safe haven for radical Islamist terrorists to organize and carry out further attacks.

THREAT TO AMERICAN INTERESTS IN MALI

The threat of terrorism burgeoning in northern Mali—funded through narcotics trafficking and kidnappings of westerners in the region—places a return to stability at the forefront of U.S. foreign policy priorities.

In testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Amanda J. Dory, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs, stated, “Beyond the obvious threat to Mali’s citizens and its neighbors, the growing terrorist presence in Mali also threatens U.S. citizens and interests in the region, to include the ability to attack embassies and conduct kidnapping operations.”

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– Amanda J. Dory, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for African Affairs

She noted that, as northern Mali has become a safe haven for extremist and terrorist groups, AQIM and associated groups have been enabled to “recruit supporters more easily and to export extremism.” She added, “It also gives them greater control over illicit trafficking networks that provide part of their funding.”

Loss of American Life

Not long after Dory provided her testimony, the urgency of addressing the threats in the region became even clearer. On January 16, 2013, approximately 40 Al-Qaeda affiliated terrorists entered Algeria from northern Mali and Libya and attacked two buses transporting employees to a natural gas facility in the eastern Algerian town of In Amenas.

Later that morning, the terrorists seized the plant, taking the facility's 800 employees hostage.

"This region is the next frontier in the War on Terror. The mission of these Islamist extremists to kill Americans and disrupt our way of life has not changed, and our efforts to defend the homeland, both at home and abroad, must reflect this reality."

– Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX)

The standoff lasted four days, finally ending when the Algerian army raided the complex. In all, 37 foreign hostages were killed, including three Americans: Victor Lynn Lovelady, 58, of Nederland, Texas; Gordon Lee Rowan, 59, of Sumpter, Oregon; and Frederick Buttaccio, 58, of Katy, Texas.

In response to the attack, Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX), chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security and Congressman of one of the fallen Americans, stated that North Africa had become "the next frontier in the war on terror," and clear evidence exists that "terrorist franchises" have found "new safe havens allowing them to reconstitute" in open areas across Africa. President Obama, speaking just a few days after the crisis, proclaimed that "this attack is another reminder of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and other violent extremist groups in North Africa."

The U.S. remains concerned that northern Mali will continue to be used as an operating base against U.S. interests and allies in the region. AQIM has been linked to other deadly assaults, including the attack in Benghazi, Libya that killed U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans last September, as well as suicide bombings in Niger this past May at an army barracks and French-operated uranium mine.

A Well-Funded Threat: Kidnappings and Narcotics Trafficking

This attack is another reminder of the threat posed by Al-Qaeda and other violent extremist groups in North Africa."

– President Barack Obama

Terrorists in Mali have been funding their activities largely through illicit activities like kidnapping and narcotics trafficking. As a result, workers in multinational companies operating in northern Africa, such as those in the BP facility, face a continual threat. In fact, AQIM has amassed an estimated \$90 million or more in kidnapping ransoms over the past decade, enabling it to become one of the region's most well-armed and dangerous militant groups.

In 2012, the African Center for Strategic Studies reported that narcotics traffickers were working hand-in-hand with extremist groups in the Sahel region, who use the profits to fund terrorist

activities. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) further reports that 60 tons of cocaine are trafficked through West Africa every year, and 400 kg of heroin was trafficked through the region in 2011 alone. According to UNODC, these activities contribute to the \$900 million that criminal networks bring into the region.

Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who presently serves on the Ghana-based Commission on the Impact of Drug-Trafficking on Governance, Security, and Development in West Africa, has stated that “organized criminal networks are deeply involved in the trafficking. Experience elsewhere in the world suggests that these groups will try to infiltrate political, security and financial institutions to secure their profits.”



MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) fighter stands guard outside the local regional assembly, where members of the rebel group met with the Malian army, the UN mission in Mali and French army officers, in Kidal June 23, 2013. *Photo credit: Reuters*

Maintaining Gains Yielded through U.S. Investments to Date

Over the last twenty years, the U.S. provided bilateral support to promote economic development, good governance, and peace-building efforts in Mali. In addition, American businesses have developed some trade interests in Mali: in 2011, for example, the U.S. exported nearly \$55 million worth of goods to the West African nation.

Throughout this crisis, the Obama Administration has sustained its support, while simultaneously stating that the U.S. will not put boots on the ground for combat missions in Mali. The Administration has provided \$180 million in humanitarian assistance to Mali and Malian refugees. In support of the French counterinsurgency operation, the U.S. provided 8.6 million pounds of fuel for French fighter aircraft. The U.S. military also flew more than 1,000 people and 1,500 tons of equipment and supplies to the region in support of the French effort. In February, about 100 armed combat troops were deployed to the neighboring country of Niger, where a drone base was established to gather intelligence that was shared with the French forces.

PURSuing SOLUTIONS THROUGH UN PEACEKEEPING

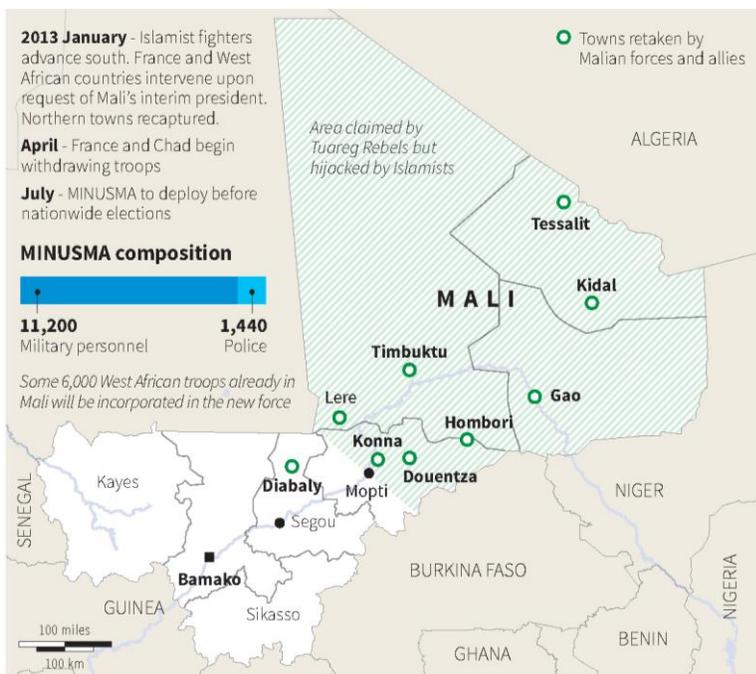
With American lives unacceptably lost, the U.S. must accept nothing less than an intensive effort to confront the threat posed by extremist groups that have made a home for themselves in northern Mali. Currently, the United Nations Multidimensional Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA)—which began deploying on July 1 and currently has around 6,300 boots on the ground—is working to address these issues and help restore stability in Mali.

MINUSMA began its mission this summer by providing logistical and technical support to the first presidential elections Mali has held since the 2012 coup: transporting election materials, facilitating the deployment of election observers, and helping retrieve ballots for the final vote

counts. Moving forward, MINUSMA will be working with partners, such as the European Union, to reform the country's security sector by training Mali's military and state police force. MINUSMA is also working to secure northern Malian population centers liberated from extremist groups as well as disarm militias to prevent a reoccurrence of violence.

In addition to these essential efforts to promote security and the return of democratic governance, MINUSMA is also working to support peace talks between the Malian government and Tuareg separatists, facilitate humanitarian assistance to civilians that have been displaced by the conflict, and preserve cultural and historical sites. These types of activities are critical to ensuring long-term stability in northern Mali and preventing terrorist groups from using the vast desert territory, with its extremely porous borders, as a safe haven and launch pad for attacks throughout the wider region.

Chronology of the UN Mission in Mali



Source: Reuters *National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad

C. Inton, 26/04/2013

REUTERS

The mission was first set in motion in December 2012, when the UN Security Council—with strong U.S. support—adopted Resolution 2085, authorizing the establishment of an African-led force, known as AFISMA, to assist Malian-led efforts to retake the north. The resolution did not specify a timeline for military action, however, because the Malian army was in disarray due to the March coup and needed to be rebuilt and retrained.

In early 2013, however, Islamist militants launched an unexpected advance south towards the capital of Bamako. At the request of Mali's interim government, France initiated a military intervention, halting the rebel offensive with airstrikes before sending in ground troops who advanced north with Malian forces.

In response to these developments, AFISMA accelerated its own deployment. These actions were successful in driving Islamist militants out of the country's northern population centers, though periodic clashes have erupted in some areas and militants have resorted to the use of suicide bombings on several occasions to target foreign and Malian troops.

Given these security gains and the end of major combat operations in northern Mali, in early April France began to withdraw some of the 4,000 troops it had dispatched to the troubled country, and called for AFISMA to be transitioned into a UN peacekeeping force responsible for longer-term stabilization activities. The U.S. and a number of other African and European countries expressed support for this proposal.

On April 25, 2013 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2100, establishing the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). On July 1, MINUSMA deployed to Mali to help restore stability, promote democracy, engender respect for human rights, and support efforts to reconcile the Malian government and Tuareg rebels. France has agreed to support MINUSMA by keeping approximately 1,000 soldiers in the country to carry out counterinsurgency operations against the remaining extremist groups within the region.

Rebuilding Democracy

In addition to these responsibilities, MINUSMA was also tasked with helping to restore democratic governance by facilitating free and fair national elections. Given the important role played by the March 2012 coup in deepening and prolonging the disorder in the country's northern regions, the election of a legitimate civilian government was viewed by the international community as a crucial piece of a more comprehensive strategy to bring long-term stability to Mali. While there remains much work to be done in terms of rebuilding state institutions, extending their authority over recently liberated areas of the north, reforming the country's

security sector, and rooting out corruption, with the help of the UN the people of Mali took a historic step forward on the governance front this summer when they elected a new president.



UN peacekeepers unload electoral materials in Kidal, Mali, for the presidential elections. Photo credit: UN

On July 28, Malians went to the polls to choose between 27 contenders for the position, with the top two candidates facing off against each other in a run-off scheduled for August 11. In spite of challenges and concerns regarding security, the short timeline for organizing the elections, and accurate voter registration figures, both rounds were widely deemed successful by the international community. Overall, the elections proceeded in a relatively peaceful and orderly fashion, and international observers from both the European Union and the African Union praised them for their transparency. In addition, both races were marked by a historic level of turnout: in a country where voter participation had previously

never broken 40 percent, the first and second rounds enjoyed turnout rates of nearly 50 percent and 46 percent, respectively.

Throughout the electoral process, MINUSMA provided significant technical and logistical support to Mali's Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI), facilitated the transportation of electoral materials and deployment of domestic and international observers, and transferred voting cards to Malian refugees in Mauritania to allow them to participate. In addition, UN peacekeepers, in cooperation with Malian security forces, helped secure nearly 21,000 polling stations throughout the country.

Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, a former Prime Minister, won the August 11 runoff with nearly 78 percent of the vote. Crucially, Mr. Keita's challenger, former Finance Minister Soumaila Cissé,

graciously accepted the results and conceded defeat the next day, helping to avoid a potentially drawn-out challenge to the electoral process and sending a promising signal for the restoration of political stability in Mali. In a statement praising the elections for their credibility and peacefulness, President Obama called on the Malian government “to use this election as a foundation for further progress on democracy, national reconciliation, and addressing the security and humanitarian crises in the north.”

AN UNFUNDED MANDATE

The UN mission in Mali was strongly supported by the United States in the Security Council. The U.S. voted for it, and when our allies committed to sending their troops far from their homes and into harm's way, we applauded the effort as fundamental to restoring peace and security.

Indeed, these actions are necessary, timely steps to weed out terrorists in a volatile region. However, the U.S., for all its support of the mission—and for all of the mission’s progress to date—did not anticipate the size and scope of it when crafting the President’s Fiscal Year 2014 budget request.

While there has been some support for funding the mission in Congress, there remains a possibility that the mission will be short of necessary funding in FY 2014.

In its FY’14 budget request to Congress, the Obama Administration requested \$2.095 billion for the State Department’s Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA) account, which funds U.S. dues payments to UN peacekeeping operations. However, this figure was released before the Security Council authorized MINUSMA and thus does not

reflect the United States’ true share of ongoing UN peacekeeping costs. The Mali mission is expected to be the UN’s third largest, the U.S. portion of which is projected to reach \$340 million over the coming fiscal year. This gap in budgetary timelines has left Congress the task of appropriating funds for the mission and ensuring the U.S. pays its treaty-obligated dues on time and in full.

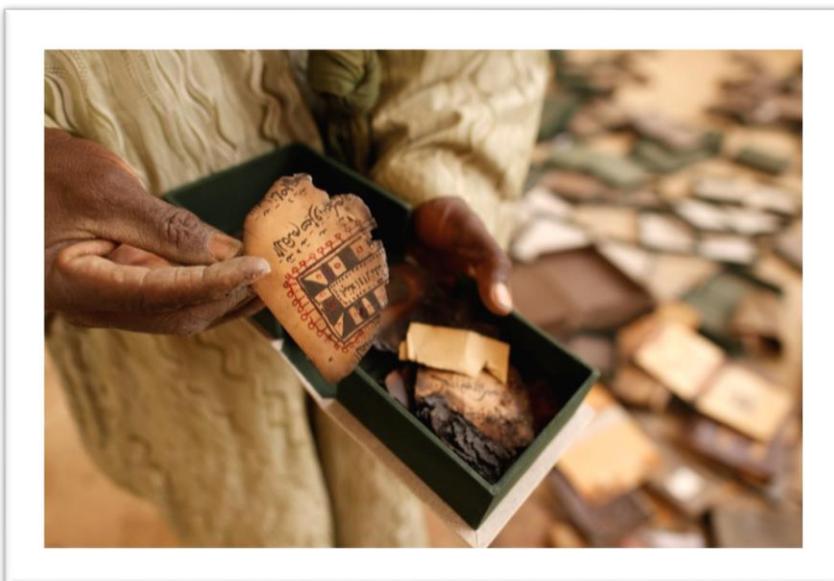
While there has been some support for funding the Mali mission in the House and Senate, there remains a possibility that the mission will be short of necessary funding in FY 2014.

On the positive front, the Senate State/Foreign Operation (SFOPS) appropriations bill, which cleared the committee in July of this year, funds CIPA at the President’s requested level and, in addition, establishes a new \$575 million Complex Foreign Crises Fund, a portion of which could be used to fund MINUSMA. Funding for the Mali mission was also included under the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account. In addition, in its FY’14 Foreign Relations Authorization Act, the House Foreign Affairs Committee authorizes CIPA funding at \$1.9 billion, \$300 million of which is intended for the Mali mission. The inclusion of funding specifically for the Mali mission in this measure was welcomed by Committee members, including Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), who argued that peacekeeping deployments there would “make a difference” in ensuring that “people who have suffered so much in Mali don’t continue to suffer.”

Unfortunately, while the Senate SFOPS bill would fully fund MINUSMA and UN peacekeeping more generally, its House counterpart only provides \$1.68 billion for CIPA in the coming fiscal

year. This represents a shortfall of nearly \$278 million from the President’s request, \$839 million from the Better World Campaign request, and assumes no funding for the Mali mission, effectively putting the U.S. into arrears at the UN. In addition, our ability to stay current on U.S. peacekeeping dues could also be impacted by shortfalls stemming from the final FY’13 funding bill passed this spring. That legislation failed to lift the arbitrary, Congressionally-imposed 25 percent cap on U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping activities, leaving us \$90 million short of our anticipated needs. Should Congress fail to agree on language lifting the cap in FY’14, or refrain from making it retroactive to account for the shortfall accumulated in FY’13, the U.S. could once again fall into arrears. Another potential threat to U.S. funding for the Mali mission stems from the likelihood that Congress could choose to fund the government in FY 2014 through a Continuing Resolution (CR) based on FY 2013 funding levels. Passing a FY 2014 CR based on last year’s CIPA levels of \$1.88 billion—when MINUSMA did not exist—and at a time when overall CIPA needs for this year are estimated by the Better World Campaign at \$2.5 billion, would make it extremely difficult to fund the Mali mission.

Given the deep differences between the current House and Senate SFOPS bills, the possible lack of a fix for shortfalls originating in FY’13, and the potential for a CR based on the previous year’s peacekeeping needs, there is a real possibility that MINUSMA will not be fully funded in FY’14.



*A burned artifact from the destruction at Timbuktu
Photo credit: Reuters*

SHARING THE BURDEN

The insecurity in Mali allowed radical Islamists a stronghold from which to plan and perpetrate the Algerian hostage crisis, costing American lives. In facing these kinds of threats, the U.S. must utilize all of its best foreign policy tools, including drawing upon the support of the United Nations and UN peacekeepers.

MINUSMA’s mandate calls for action to “stop the offensive of terrorist, extremist and armed groups towards the south of Mali” and restore the country’s “territorial integrity.” This was contingent on the understanding that France would continue to carry out counter-terrorism operations while MINUSMA would secure northern Mali’s main population centers, such as Timbuktu and Gao, promote dialogue between the Malian government and Tuareg rebels, and help the country return to democracy. This dialogue has already proved productive, as the UN

was critical in brokering a deal between Tuareg separatists and the Malian government that allowed the UN-facilitated national elections to take place.

The U.S. is fatigued by the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and in a time of increased fiscal constraint, the U.S. should not be expected to bear the burden of global security alone. However, U.S. policymakers have assessed the situation in Mali to be a threat to our interests. The country could again become a terrorist safe haven if the U.S., UN, and international community are not persistent in helping to restore democracy and security to the people of Mali.

Over the past two decades, the U.S. government has been a strong supporter of efforts to foster economic development and good governance in Mali, and is a significant contributor to international efforts to improve the humanitarian situation in Mali in the wake of last year's disorder. As a permanent, veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council, the United States authorized and championed the creation of MINUSMA. The international community has also signaled its willingness to share in this sacrifice with Chad, Togo, and Nigeria providing troops for the MINUSMA mission. Twenty-three EU countries are contributing 550 personnel to Mali to help retrain the Malian army. China has also publically pledged to make an individual contribution to the struggling nation, pledging a contingent of 500 peacekeepers, including 155 engineers.

The U.S., on the other hand, will not be providing troops. However, it can play an instrumental role in Mali by appropriating FY 2014 funds for the mission. Given the significant funding needs, it is no exaggeration to say that the mission's success depends upon it. And the operation's success, as has been made clear by the President and members of Congress, is directly in our national interest.

The threat of terror in Mali is real, and it is dangerous. However, through our support of UN peacekeeping, we can address it head on.