

“A time of revenge” in northern Mali in wake of French invasion

Friday 8 February 2013, by [ANNIS Roger](#), [CHASE Steven](#), [CLARK Cambell](#), [FRANCE 24](#), [HARDING Luke](#), [WATT Nicholas](#)
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Also, below, ‘special forces’ from U.S., Britain, Canada pouring into Mali and neighbouring countries

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January 29, 2013-The enclosed report from the FRANCE 24 news network provides what is undoubtedly only a glimpse of the human rights violations that the French/Mali army invasion has unleashed against the Touareg and other national minorities in northern Mali. It reports on pillaging of shops as well as undefined attacks on civilians who are Arab or Touareg in Timbuktu. Further below is a link to photos in Le Monde daily of the pillaging. National minorities make up a large part of the population in northern Mali. The historic struggles for rights and national self-determination throughout west Africa are one of the key reasons that France and its allies have launched an invasion of the north of Mali. In the minds of the imperialists, national rights get in the way of exploiting the vast reserves of gold, uranium and other prized resources they covet.

As FRANCE 24 also reports, there is a long history to this story. Last year at the time of a declaration of independence of northern Mali by the Touareg national liberation movement, the MNLA, national minorities fled from the Mali capital Bamako in fear of reprisals. Readers will recall the demand at the outset of the French invasion by the MNLA that the Mali army not be allowed into the north of the country in the wake of the French invasion forces because of its notorious human rights record. It is thus exceptionally hypocritical for officials of the French government to express “concern” or surprise over the reprisals, including summary executions, now being conducted by that army (and perhaps by French soldiers?).

Meanwhile, “special forces” of the U.S., British and Canadian militaries are pouring into Mali, as reported below. The U.S. is establishing drone operation centers in neighbouring Niger. These are among the same forces that for years have been “training” this very Mali army and militarizing the entire region of west Africa.

The British decision comes one week after Prime Minister David Cameron said Britain would not intervene militarily and as hundreds of Iraqis detained and tortured by British soldiers in Iraq from 2003 to 2008 are doggedly pursuing legal redress in British courts [1], including demanding a public inquiry.

The vast reporting in recent days of the alleged damage or destruction of cultural and literary artefacts in Timbuktu by fleeing Islamist fundamentalist forces is eerily reminiscent of the lurid

reporting justifying the two invasions of Iraq, in 1990 and 2003. The subsequent looting and destruction of the national museum in Baghdad in 2003 while U.S. military forces stood by and watched, for example, gives today's observer some perspective on who might be responsible for whatever destruction to humanity's patrimony that may have taken place in Timbuktu. Why was it apparently left to ordinary Mali citizens to safeguard them? Would the artefacts been safer had the U.S./Europe/ Canada-trained Mali army not blazed a trail of human rights violations in the preceding years in the city and region? What connections do the groups destroying artefacts have to Algerian, U.S. and European police agencies? [2] What if a fraction of the expenditures in the past ten years on militarizing Mali and the rest of west Africa had instead been spent on social, economic and cultural development?

Roger Annis

After the fall of Timbuktu, 'a time of revenge'

By FRANCE 24, Tuesday, Jan. 29, 2013

Looters in Timbuktu broke into shops owned by ethnic Arabs and Tuareg Tuesday, a day after French and Malian troops gained control of the historic northern Malian city amid simmering ethnic tensions in the region.

A day after French and Malian troops gained control of Timbuktu from rebels, tensions were rising in the historic northern Malian city as hundreds of people broke into shops owned by ethnic Arabs and Tuareg on Tuesday in a backlash against perceived collaborators. "After Timbuktu fell yesterday, the situation is now very different," said FRANCE 24's Matthieu Mabin, reporting from the centre of Timbuktu. "It's a time of revenge here and we can see people - everybody, children, old men, women - attacking Arab shops in a misguided idea that those shops were linked to Islamist fighters, which is absolutely not true in many cases."

According to Mabin, French and Malian troops around the city were stretched thin. "At the moment, most of the Malian troops and all of the French troops are around the city to secure the battlefield," said Mabin. "The war is not over around the region of Timbuktu. Hundreds of pickups [bearing rebels] left the city a few days ago. Some left just yesterday [Monday] morning. So, the Malian and French troops are very busy at the moment securing the area around the city."

Human rights concerns mount

A vast, multi-ethnic West African nation, Mali is home to a variety of ethnic groups, including the Tuaregs and other ethnic groups of North African Berber origins, which comprise about 10 per cent of Mali's total population of 14 million. Signs of a backlash against the Tuareg and other lighter skinned groups - commonly called Arabs - were evident nearly 10 months ago in the capital of Bamako shortly after northern Mali fell to a motley mix of Tuareg and Islamist rebels [3].

In the wake of the French-led military intervention this month, there have been concerns of human rights abuses by the poorly trained Malian military. Earlier this week, FRANCE 24's Mehdi Chebil documented a case of Malian soldiers targeting an elderly man mistakenly assumed to have Islamist links in the central Malian city of Diabaly.

The Paris-based International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) is currently investigating cases of

alleged summary executions by Malian soldiers of individuals believed to have links with the Ansar Dine Islamist group.

Responding to reports of looting and targeting of civilians in the newly liberated areas, French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said France was in favour of rapidly deploying international observers to ensure that human rights are respected in Mali. "Our troops have been told to show extreme caution in responding to acts of violence," Ayrault told parliament on Tuesday. "I point out though that the International Committee of the Red Cross has not so far confirmed acts that have been reported on this subject by some non-governmental organisations," he added.

But in a sign of the difficulties facing troops trying to secure northern Mali, Mabin noted that in some Timbuktu shops, he saw "some ammunition and weapons" being removed by Malian troops. It was not known if the weapons confiscated from the Arab-owned shops were used or stored by Islamist militants.

International community issues pledges for Mali

The tensions in Timbuktu came as French President François Hollande called on African troops to be on the forefront of the mission to secure northern Mali. "It is time for the Africans to take over," Hollande told a news conference in Paris on Monday.

Hollande's call came a day before an international donors conference opened at the African Union (AU) headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Tuesday. According to a senior AU official, attending nations pledged \$455.5 million for the United Nations-authorized, African-led Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA). The AU says AFISMA requires an initial budget of \$461 million.

The pledges came from African nations such as Ethiopia, Ivory Coast and Gambia, as well as developed countries such as the US, Japan, Germany and the UK.

In terms of force deployments, there are currently around 3,500 French troops and 1,900 African soldiers - including Chadians and troops from Niger - deployed alongside the Malian army. In total, some 8,000 African soldiers are expected, but their deployment has been hampered by funding and logistical problems.

Speaking in Addis Ababa Tuesday, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, head of the African Union Commission, noted that the situation in Mali requires a "fast and efficient" response because it "threatens Mali, the region, the continent and beyond".

All eyes on Kidal

Meanwhile in Timbuktu, order was somewhat restored by Tuesday afternoon when Malian troops finally moved in. Electricity had not returned and residents said there was no water supply since water-pumps were not working. The telephone network has also not been in service over the past few days and there were still food shortages.

With Timbuktu controlled by French and Malian forces, the north-eastern city of Kidal is the last major northern Malian city still under rebel control. Rebels from a Tuareg separatist group have told FRANCE 24 that they are in control of the city and are ready to negotiate with French troops. However, the MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) said it would not allow Malian soldiers into Kidal, underscoring the political challenges that continue to confront Mali.

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<http://www.france24.com/en/20130129-mali-timbuktu-looting-revenge-tuareg-ethnic-arab-french-mal>

[ian-troops](#)

See also these 11 photos from *Le Monde* newspaper of scenes of pillage of Arab and other shops in Timbuktu on Jan. 29, 2013 [4].

Canadian soldiers in Mali's capital

Special forces guard Canadian diplomats as aid minister attends donors' conference in Ethiopia

By Steven Chase and Campbell Clark, *Globe and Mail*, page one, Jan 29, 2013

Canadian special-forces soldiers are on the ground in Mali to protect this country's diplomats as more details emerge about the extent of Canada's deployment to this conflict-ridden region of Africa. Confirmation of this military footing comes as Canada's development aid minister prepares for a donors' conference in Ethiopia on Tuesday where Western nations will be asked to contribute cash to help African troops fight Islamist rebels, who have plagued Mali and surrounding countries.

France is beginning to restore government control over rebelheld territory in northern Mali, including the northern city of Timbuktu, and has received new pledges of help from Western allies - including troops from Britain and drone support from the United States. Canada has already sent a heavy military transport to help France beat back Islamist extremists in Mali but has vowed to avoid joining combat operations there.

The Canadian government refuses to publicly comment on any special-forces presence in Mali but insists it has not changed its policy on combat. However, special-forces troops are guarding Canadian diplomats in the Malian capital of Bamako. The government announced last week that it had reduced the embassy to a skeleton staff, and evacuated diplomats' families. "We have been clear, there will be no combat mission in Mali," Rick Roth, spokesman for Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird, said. "Steps have been taken to ensure our mission and Canadian personnel are protected. We cannot comment on security specifics."

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, who has said Canada will not send a "direct" military mission to Mali, reiterated in the House of Commons that he does not intend to deploy troops for a combat mission - and pledged that any change of those plans will be discussed in the House of Commons and its committees.

Canada is still preparing a response to requests made of Western nations for cash to help underwrite the training and deployment of Malian and other African troops to combat Islamist rebels in Mali. "At the same time, we are providing technical assistance to French and other military forces who are there," Mr. Harper told the Commons. "We have committed heavy-lift aircraft to that engagement, which is being done under a United Nations mandate."

He said that Parliament will be consulted on "any further steps that need to be taken." MPs on the Commons foreign affairs committee discussed plans to start hearings on Mali on Thursday.

The fighting in Mali has not touched Bamako, but in early January there were fears that Islamist

fighters, advancing south, could take the capital - until French forces intervened. Canada's special forces training troops in Niger as part of a counterterrorism mission have also passed along vital information to allies, according to the French station FR2.

Mr. Harper has dispatched International Co-operation Minister Julian Fantino to Addis Ababa for a conference Tuesday where Canada and other nations are being pressed to pledge \$400-million to fund African military intervention in Mali. Foreign diplomats said Ottawa has privately indicated they will contribute to financing African forces - although it's not clear how much.

Leaders at an African Union summit, also in the Ethiopian capital, said they will contribute \$50-million for a mission estimated to cost \$450-million. The UN has estimated a similar price tag for efforts to both reequip the depleted Malian forces and fund a force of 3,500 West African troops.

The United States and the European Union are expected to pledge to bear the largest chunks of the cost, but Canada, long one of Mali's biggest aid donors, is being pressed to contribute a significant portion. Canada cut off direct aid to Mali's government after a March military coup displaced the elected government. It provided \$110million in aid in the 2010-11 fiscal year, but officials said Ottawa has provided \$57-million in aid since the coup.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/canadian-soldiers-on-ground-in-malis-capital/article7930840/>

British troops to join French in Mali mission

By Nicholas Watt, Luke Harding, *The Guardian*, Jan. 29, 2013

Sévaré, Mali-Britain is prepared to take the risk of sending a "sizeable amount" of troops to Mali and neighbouring West African countries as David Cameron offers strong support to France in its operation to drive Islamist militants from its former colony. As news emerged that insurgents retreating from Timbuktu had set fire to a library containing thousands of priceless historic manuscripts, Downing Street said the prime minister told François Hollande on Sunday night Britain was "keen" to provide further military assistance to France.

Cameron despatched Sir Kim Darroch, his national security adviser, to Paris on Monday to discuss what help Britain could provide. Government sources said decisions on troop deployments were expected to be made in the coming days as France confirms its exact requirements. One source said that Britain could easily dispatch 200 troops if France requested such a number.

Britain is prepared to provide hundreds of troops to help the operation and is considering a few options:

- Forming part of an EU military training mission in Mali. The British contribution to this would be in the "tens", according to Downing Street.
- Training troops from the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) in neighbouring countries for possible operations on Mali. This is likely to be the main focus of Britain's contribution because Ecowas members include many countries with strong links to Britain. British troops could

be used to train Nigerian forces.

- Providing “force protection” for the trainers. This would be armed protection but would not amount to a combat role.

Downing Street is adamant that British troops will play no part in combat. A spokesman said: “We have the capability and capacity to do that. We have the ability to contribute a sizeable amount if required.”

Britain initially put two RAF C17 transporter aircraft at the disposal of France for the transport of troops and material to Mali. One of these is still dedicated to the Mali mission. Britain has also sent one RAF Sentinel surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft to Senegal to help with the mission. The Guardian reported last week that a small number of British special forces soldiers were on the ground in Mali advising the French.

The help from Britain came as the mayor of Timbuktu spoke of a “devastating blow” to world heritage after insurgents torched two buildings that held the city’s manuscripts, some of which dated back to the 13th century. The manuscripts that survived the fire were reportedly taken away by the rebels.

Hallé Ousmani Cissé said al-Qaida-allied fighters on Saturday also burned down the town hall, the governor’s office and an MP’s residence, and shot dead a man who was celebrating the arrival of the French military.

French troops and the Malian army reached the gates of Timbuktu on Saturday and secured the town’s airport. But they appear to have got there too late to rescue the leather-bound manuscripts that were a unique record of sub-Saharan Africa’s rich medieval history. The rebels attacked the airport on Sunday, the mayor said. “This is terrible news,” Cissé said. “The manuscripts were a part not only of Mali’s heritage but the world’s heritage. By destroying them they threaten the world. We have to kill all of the rebels in the north.”

On Monday French army officers said French-led forces had entered Timbuktu and secured the town without a shot being fired. A team of French paratroopers crept into the town by moonlight, advancing from the airport, they said. Residents took to the streets to celebrate.

Downing Street said Cameron made his offer of further help in a telephone call with Hollande on Sunday evening. The spokesman said: “On Mali the French president gave an update on the progress that Mali and French forces have been making. He also thanked the prime minister for the transport assistance which the UK has provided.

“The prime minister made clear that we fully support the French government’s actions working with the Malian government at their request to deny terrorists a safe haven in Mali. The prime minister went on to explain that we are keen to continue to provide further assistance where we can, depending on what French requirements there may be.

“With regard to that, the UK national security adviser is in Paris today for discussions with French authorities on what further assistance we may be able to provide to them.”

The spokesman said Britain’s position on having no combat role in Mali remained “absolutely unchanged”. But he said No 10 was prepared to provide more help “around logistics, intelligence and surveillance support”.

He added: “It is very much discussing about what more we may be able to do, subject to requests

from the French government. We very strongly support the French intervention. If there is more we can do we are keen to do what we can to help within the sphere of what the prime minister set out very clearly previously in the House [of Commons].”

* <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/28/british-troops-mali-mission>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/jan/29/iraqi-detainees-demand-uk-inquiry?INTCMP=SRCH>

[2] <http://newint.org/features/2012/12/01/us-terrorism-sahara/>

[3] <http://www.france24.com/en/20120411-fearing-backlash-bamako-tuareg-community-dwindles>

[4] http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/portfolio/2013/01/29/scenes-de-pillage-a-tombouctou_1824188_3212.html