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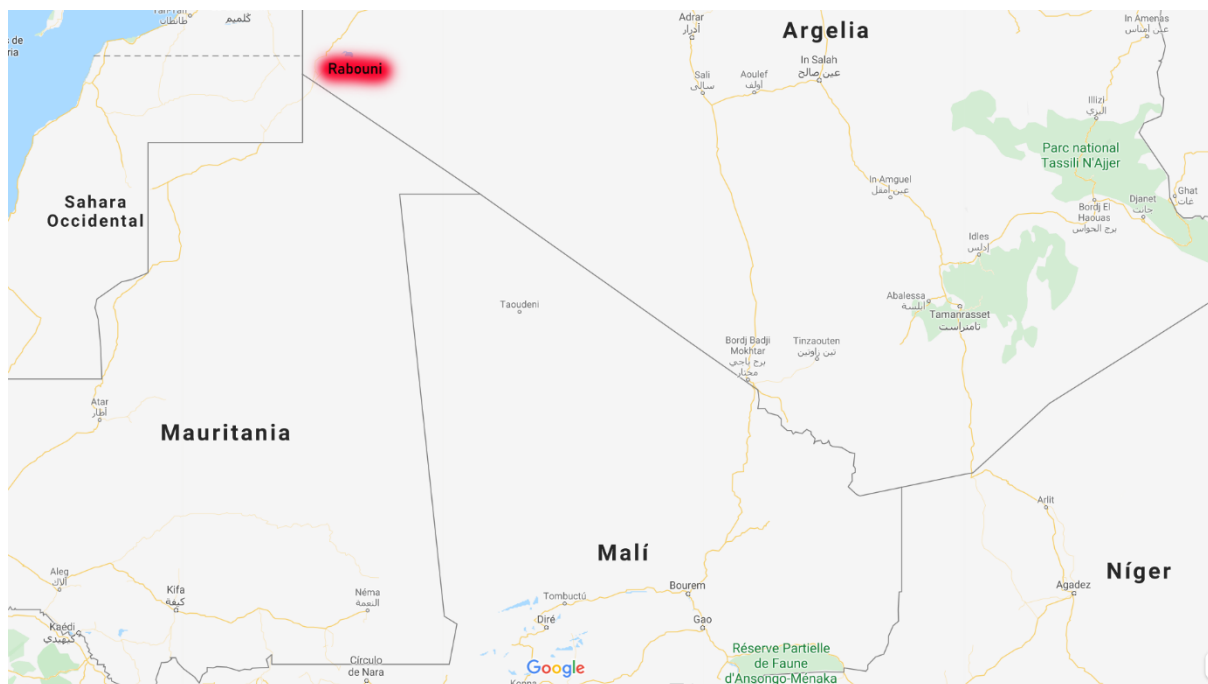
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Subject: TERRORIST THREAT IN WESTERN SAHARA

Background:

The present terrorist threat in Western Sahara is the outcome of the Saharan ethnicity of many of the leaders aligned with the terrorist group *Islamic State of Great Sahara (ISGS)*, currently operating in Mali, as well as in Niger and Burkina Faso.

Knowing such Saharan terrorist leaders the international implication of the Saharan conflict, **they try to capitalize the publicity that a terrorist action could provide them in this international scenario.** In 2011, these Saharan, registered then under the initials of another terrorist group known as *al-Morabitoun*, carried out a kidnapping in Rabouni, the administrative capital of Western Sahara, near Tindouf. This kidnapping affected two Spanish aid workers and a young Italian woman, who were finally transferred to Mali for custody before they were released.



Evidences:

One of those Saharan, years ago in *al Morabitoun* and currently emir of the ISGS, Adnan Abou Walid, promoted in 2018 to carry out a terrorist attack in Tindouf. An attempt was made to carry it out in

December, coinciding with the seasonal presence of internationals on these dates, taking advantage of the nice temperatures of the Saharan winter. The month of December concentrates ethnic and political events, parties, protocol visits and family reunions with Saharan displaced mostly from Spain in the region.

A cell of three Saharan attached to ISGS moved from Mali to Tindouf with the intention of executing the attack against international participants in some event. For this action, they had light weapons and ammunition, in addition to explosive vests. Polisario Front leaders could be also object of the attack, as well as it was contemplated the possibility of kidnapping of a Westerner. That attack failed and the three members of the cell were arrested, as well as their weapons and materials were requisitioned.

A second terrorist attack was also conceived at the end of 2019, to be carried out in the same scenario. This attack was not finally carried out by unknown circumstances in this C-IED CoE.

The engagement and protection of the Algerian Army over the Saharan people entails the Algerian commitment in the security of the area, mainly with regard to the access to the area from Tindouf.

Concerning to Morocco, possible terrorist attack in Western Sahara could possibly be used by Moroccan authorities to spread internationally the message about the low capability of Polisario's leaders to offer security in its own region.

Prospects and recommendations:

Until now, the terrorist threat over Western Sahara has focused on the ISGS terrorist group, as the result of the Saharan ethnicity of its leaders. **No known indication of a possible alternative terrorist action to ISGS, nor of the organization of a terrorist attack by local youth people.** The significant disappointment that the evolution of the Saharan conflict generates among most of the young Saharan does not precisely lead to the constitution of any local terrorist group. International immigration, as well as its involvement in the multiple international traffics in the region are their real escape facing the adversity.

The intention to perpetrate a terrorist action in Western Sahara is therefore a fixation by the current ISGS leadership. It will predictably last as long as the Saharan go on holding the leadership of the ISGS. The operational and military success of the Barkhane Force, as well as the so-called Takouba Force, promoted in this case by the EU/France, will affect the ISGS and its ability to operate in other scenarios. **The neutralization of the Saharan leadership of the ISGS seems vital in depriving this terrorist group of its obsession to attack in Western Sahara.**

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