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## Transcript Q&A

# US Perspectives on Instability in the Sahel

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### **Question 1:**

I was wondering if you could give us some idea of the scale and scope and nature of the Tuareg insurgency. How many Tuareg are possibly involved in this? Where are they getting their weapons from? Who are their allies and so forth? And the scale, the geographic scale. Thanks very much indeed.

### **Question 2:**

Are you planning to open a political table with MNLA (National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad)?

### **Reuben Brigety:**

On the scale of the Tuareg rebellion, I'm afraid I can't comment intelligently on how many Tuareg there are that may be in active rebellion, what sort of forces they are, how many are part of the MNLA or other groups. Nor can I comment about how they are financed. What I *can* say is that we are obviously deeply concerned about the flow of weapons into the region. I think there is a fair amount of concern that the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya has softened those borders. And thus we are seeing – we are concerned I should say – about the flow of excess weapons out of Libya into northern Mali. But it may very well be as well that weapons and other sorts of support are flowing from other places.

The challenge of course is that we're talking about a vast area geographically, that is even in the best of times very difficult to monitor, borders that are very difficult to control. That is why ultimately regardless of the nature of a military engagement, there must be a political settlement as well so that one has the means to remove the incentives for those sorts of things to flow and cause instability across the entirety of the region.

To your question regarding whether or not there is a plan to engage the MNLA, we in the government of the United States do not have a plan per se to engage the MNLA. But what I would say is that, as I mentioned before, any political process that is meant to stabilize the north and to restore the territorial integrity of Mali, must include parties that are prepared to engage in that process non-violently and that are ultimately prepared to accept the legitimate writ of the central government. And we encourage all parties, all citizens of Mali, to ultimately engage in that process.

Now whether or not the MNLA ultimately decides to engage in such a political process or decides to become more closely allied with AQIM (Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) or other extremist groups frankly remains to be seen, but we very much hope that they will engage politically.

### **Question 3:**

I just want to ask about the strategy of the United States on the long term of what's going to happen to the Al-Qaeda in the [Islamic] Maghreb or the other terrorist groups when they will be, if ever, chased out of Mali. Because anybody with any remote knowledge of the region knows that once you try and get them out, they will cruise around Libya, Algeria, Mauritania, Niger, and ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) cannot maintain this, and West African troops are simply not trained to chase terrorists in the dunes of the Sahara.

### **Question 4:**

What lessons has the United States learned from the experience of Libya which might be relevant to the Sahel?

### **Question 5:**

There have been a number of agreements about the north in the past. And I was just wondering what sort of framework you would envisage for a renewal of this diplomatic engagement for the north. And what sort of lessons have there been from past agreements?

### **Reuben Brigety:**

So to the first question regarding our strategy for AQIM in the Sahel, and your very astute observation that even if we were to chase AQIM out of the north, they're likely to go elsewhere. Let me say two things – three I should say.

The first is that, as I mentioned before, the strategy that we may pursue is not our strategy alone. We have close and deep partnerships with African governments across the regions as well as with the African Union. And as I said from the outset, ultimately any approach to addressing the challenges of northern Mali and indeed in other neighbouring countries in the Sahel, will have to be owned and led by the African states. It is a centrepiece for our African policy and it's one that we intend to apply in this case as well.

Having said that, our general approach to not only AQIM but also to Al-Qaeda and to terrorist extremists elsewhere is largely twofold. The first is to try to continue to work with host governments and host populations to convince them that it is not in their interests to support or to back these groups. AQIM is not indigenous to northern Mali, as we all know. And in fact, I think everything that we can tell from reporting from various groups, is that they are not exactly making themselves welcomed guests from how they're treating the local population. And we think that that frankly is not inconsistent with how we've seen Al-Qaeda operate elsewhere, whether it be in Afghanistan or in Yemen, or in their affiliation with al Shabaab in Somalia or elsewhere.

So in many ways, we actually don't think it's that much of a stretch to say, 'You ought not to work with these guys because they are not there for you. They're there for their own narrow interests.' Which is also part of the reason why we think it's critically important for the government of Mali to address the very legitimate long-term economic and political concerns of folks in northern Mali.

But you are correct, that there will be those who will continue to... those members of Al-Qaeda who, even if they are pushed out of northern Mali will try to go elsewhere, who are implacable, who are not interested in negotiation and who have their own very narrow view of what they're trying to accomplish in the violent way with which they're trying to accomplish it.

Whether it be AQIM or their other Al-Qaeda affiliates elsewhere, we know that their objective – the means to their objective – is creating violence which affects and kills people where they are – kills Malians, kills Libyans, kills Somalis elsewhere. And as part of our overall global counterterrorism strategy, our job is to find and to remove those people who would do harm to us, to our allies, to our friends, for those who refuse to abide by norms of civilized behaviour in the international community.

So the second question. What lessons have we learned with regard to Libya and as it applies to the Sahel? I think that there are two that seem obvious to me. The first is that even as one thinks through addressing the very real and tangible security threats of a situation – in that case it was Libya with Gaddafi promising to go door to door, house to house, killing people in Benghazi and elsewhere – when one thinks through the aftermath of a security approach, there has to be an indigenous political process that is wholly owned and wholly appreciated by the host population. Because without that, you simply will not achieve the strategic objectives for which one had a security mission or military objective in the first place.

It is for that reason that we were engaging politically with various actors in Libya from the very beginning of the multinational intervention there. It is for that reason that we had established diplomatic presence in Libya very, very early. And frankly it's for that cause that my friend and colleague Ambassador Chris Stephens lost his life in Benghazi, because he knew far better than anybody else in our government that it was important to actually engage locally in order to achieve our broader objectives.

I suspect that the same will be true in Mali. That – notwithstanding the nature of whatever mission ultimately is launched there by ECOWAS or whomever – it is vitally important that there be deep, sustained, real political engagement with local actors on the ground so that one could address the underlying causes that have led to the unrest in the first place.

I personally am heartened that it is part of our strategy and that it appears to be part of the strategy of the African Union and ECOWAS as well. And one hopes that once there is a permanent and legitimate government in Bamako that they will be similarly convinced about the need to engage.

Finally, with regard to the framework for other lessons and what lessons will be applied, I think that the easiest way and perhaps the most significant way to answer that question is that it's really not for us – the Americans as it were – to answer that question. One of the most important developments in my view in the last month addressing this was the decision of the African Union to hold a major international summit in Bamako on the developments in northern Mali. Because it demonstrated a couple of things.

One, it demonstrated the importance of, as I mentioned before, the local political process. Secondly, it demonstrated the importance of the African Union as an institution, as a key player to help address this issue. The third was that it demonstrated a willingness of multiple actors to actually go – notwithstanding what one has heard about the unrest in Bamako recently, because that meeting could just as easily have been held in Abidjan or in Freetown or Addis [Ababa] or Paris or London for that matter – but the fact that they decided that the centre of gravity holding it was there. And I say all that to say that at the end of the day, notwithstanding the history of past agreements and notwithstanding the history of past developments in the Sahel, it is going to have to be the African Union and the government of Mali that will decide what framework is going to be appropriate. And we will do our best as friends of the continent to be supportive in that process.

**David Styan:**

Before I take [further] questions, can I just push you – because someone is going to ask this point anyway so I'll do so now because it fits in quite well – off the back of your answer to that last question, we know that, specifically on the Malian–Tuareg agreement issue, each of the previous framework agreements has involved neighbouring countries, several of which have larger Tuareg populations, but above all Algeria.

So my question is what is the US government's current attitude, in this specific diplomatic conjunction which we are now, towards the Algerian government's role in northern Mali?

**Reuben Brigety:**

Well, from where we sit, it's hard to imagine a comprehensive solution that does not involve active and positive engagement from Algeria. The Algerians clearly have their own interests with regard to the situation in northern Mali, both because of their own Tuareg population but also frankly because of the security of their own borders and the unrest they've seen elsewhere.

I think it's probably fair to say that there is still some serious diplomatic work that will be needed to ensure that ECOWAS, the African Union, Algeria as a state – not as a member of ECOWAS but as a member of the African Union – and partners from the international donor community are all on the same page with regard to what their engagement looks like. But I think it is self-evidently obvious that the Algerians must play a very constructive role in order to address the developments in the region.

**David Styan:**

Okay. I know this meeting is on the record and perhaps you're constrained with what you can say, but we know that the head of AFRICOM has been to Algiers. We know that the Algerian minister of defence has actually toured all of the neighbouring countries in the last week or so. Can you say more about those two initiatives?

**Reuben Brigety:**

Sure. I think that they demonstrate a very active effort to achieve the sort of consensus that I just talked about before, a very active effort to understand the concerns of the Algerians, a very active effort to share not only our

concerns with them, but also encourage them to talk with other partners in the region to come to a collective consensus about what positive engagement in Algeria actually looks like.

### **Question 6:**

My question is: could you please explain what looks like contradictions in US foreign policy, especially towards the Sudan? I will give two examples. The first example is President Obama's special envoy to the Sudan, who has visited the country 20 times, said there was no reason to keep the country on the terrorist sponsors list. There was no evidence for that. But then the actress Mia Farrow said the general was naive and some NGOs started a campaign against him and soon he was transferred to Kenya. And the old policy continued.

Another example, United States does not recognize the ICC (International Criminal Court). It has not signed the ICC's statutes. But the United States has used the ICC against President [Omar] Bashir. And this looked like a contradiction. Thank you very much.

### **Reuben Brigety:**

Unless there are other questions on Sudan, perhaps I can take that one first. First of all, I thank you for the question. With regard to Mia Farrow, last I checked she did not work for the US government. But notwithstanding that, I think that the previous special envoy for Sudan – I presume you're referring to General [Scott] Gration who was then subsequently transferred to be our ambassador to Kenya – General Gration clearly at the time had his opinions, as do many officials in the US government, as is true in any other government, but ultimately decisions of large policies such as that go through an interagency process and ultimately we all report to the president of the United States. So while we are very, very pleased that Sudan and South Sudan have come to an agreement on almost all of the outstanding issues in Addis Ababa last month – obviously there's still some concerns about Abyei – we have been deeply engaged in helping to continue to further the peace between both of those countries so that both South Sudan and Sudan can continue to develop economically for the purpose of their own people.

I think that with regard to our overall policy on Sudan, we would like nothing more than for our relationship with Sudan to look more like our relationship with many other countries, but as you well know, there are a number of

challenges and this is a conversation that I think our two governments will continue to have.

I think specifically with regard to the ICC question and President Bashir, I would respectfully disagree with the characterization that we have used the ICC against President Bashir. First of all, as you correctly noted, we are not signatories to the Rome Statute, so we clearly are not in a position to 'use the ICC'. Even if we were members of the ICC, even if we were signatory to the Rome Statute, the prosecutor at the ICC as you well know is independent. And no country, so far as I can tell, is in a position to use that court one way or the other. But I think that with regard to the decisions of the prosecutor, we will leave it to our colleagues in The Hague to characterize that.

But let me just conclude by saying, as I've said before, that we would be hopeful that the nature of our engagement with the government of Sudan as a part of our respective actions will continue to improve. And we, as I say, commend the government of Sudan for coming to an agreement with the government of South Sudan on most of its outstanding issues.

#### **Question 7:**

You talked about the African-owned notion of this engagement and the military aspect of it. You said 'to find and remove these people who are harming our allies'. What are we talking about in terms of what America will actually bring to that part of it? Are we going to see a regular deployment of things like drones in the Sahel?

#### **Question 8:**

Fortunately, he just asked the first part of my question, so well done. The second part was more to the point of what's going to happen in the post-conflict stage? As you know, ECOWAS has a good war-fighting capability, but in terms of stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction, it's not really their forte. So how will the US contribute to that? How much commitment is the US going to put in? And how long will they be there for? Thank you.

#### **Reuben Brigety:**

To your first point, you all hopefully understand that I can't comment on the nature of ongoing military or potential military operations. What I can say is that the track record of our government for finding, fixing and finishing terrorist



networks that pose lethal harm to us and to our allies – and by allies, I mean broadly allies, not only us and our treaty allies in NATO but also those who have done harm and killed countless of innocent civilians in Sudan, in Yemen, in Mali, elsewhere – that our track record for fighting, fixing and finishing those networks is a good one. And that we will be persistent in addressing these elements, so long as they continue to exist for the purpose of harming innocent civilians around the world.

To your question on the nature of a post-conflict stabilization effort in northern Mali, it is an excellent question. We aren't anywhere close to answering that question yet, just by nature of where we are in that. It is true that our ECOWAS colleagues have many fine fighting forces. It is equally true that if you just sort of take a look at the geography and you have a sense of what it takes in the classic stabilization fashion to wage an effective military campaign to uproot an enemy and then to try to find a way to stabilize, that is a massive, massive undertaking. It will be for sure hugely expensive. It will also be incredibly challenging from just a plain military operations perspective.

That said, let me say two things. The first is that we actually have a model for how to do this in the African context. I think AMISOM (African Union Mission in Somalia) has been wildly successful in terms of routing al Shabaab. So now we are at a place, after several long years of fighting in Somalia, where we are now beginning to think through what the stabilization phase in Somalia looks like since AMISOM has taken so much territory away from al Shabaab. I think that in the context of working with the African Union under a UN mandate and obviously an AU mandate, with substantial support from the international community for training, for logistical support, etc., it is easy to imagine that if the African Union and ECOWAS decided that they wanted to have a similar approach, that we'd at least have a model elsewhere on the continent for how that could look.

Given that though, it will clearly require a great deal of effort and support, financial and otherwise, from a variety of governments to include the United States. We will certainly be engaged in supporting it one way or another. I obviously at this point can't tell you to what level or what that's going to look like, principally because we've not yet seen a plan from ECOWAS or the African Union.

But when they develop that plan, we will be in close consultation with them to see how we can support it, how we can work with other allies to support it, and then we will work methodically one step at a time. Both to obviously address the military – the phase three as it were, the active combat phase –

and then when we get to it, to think through the issues of post-conflict stabilization.

**David Styan:**

Can I push you again a little bit, just specifically on that before we take more questions? So we don't actually have a plan, but we do have a timetable, 45 days, etc. We also know that there are 3,300 ECOWAS troops in their plan, and then somewhat more vaguely over the last week, 3,000 Malian troops which the French appear to have said, 'Okay, we'll specifically help [them].'

Given that both yourselves – the US military – and France have had troops, not just in Mali but in the other Sahelian countries on military training programmes, how do you see the specificity of this ECOWAS and Malian French-trained, perhaps with bits of other militaries, the Algerians or others... how do you see it evolving? And how specific will the plan have to be by the time of the 45 days?

**Reuben Brigety:**

Let me answer it this way. I think that what appears to be a general consensus, even at this fairly early stage of the planning, is that the Malian armed forces will have to take a lead role in the securing of their own country. They have taken a very severe blow with regard to their loss of the north, loss of much of their equipment, etc., and it will be a challenge to help rebuild them.

How many Malian forces it's going to take, what level of training they will have to have before they can be seen as effective partners on the side of ECOWAS forces, what level of additional support they may need –obviously one can obviously see the mobility would be a key issue, both air and land – the amount of sustainment that they will need, whether or not you do that military sustainment in stages or all at once... these are all questions that, as entirely legitimate as your question is, I think we simply have to wait and see the actual planning for it. As a former military officer, I can say that I know that one cannot even begin to answer those things hypothetically. You really have to take a great deal of analysis to understand the nature of the battlefield and what will be required.

What I can say though is that it is clear that the nature of the military campaign, when it develops, will have to be African-owned and led. ECOWAS has been very good in articulating the need for planning at this point, but as I

said before, it will have to require a very strong Malian armed forces component. And developing that capability in and of itself will be challenging, and then developing it in such a way that they could actually deploy and hold territory in the north will be another level of challenge on top of that again.

**Question 9:**

You actually partly answered [my question], because I was going to ask about the recent media reports about how the US was looking to Somalia for lessons and comparisons with Mali and how it might inform the approach, and then the concerned analysts responding that firstly, that it's still waiting to see whether or not Somalia will reach a medium-to-long-term stability. And when you described the success of AMISOM, it's taken several years. It took several years to even come close to the authorized troop strength. And there's also been a lot of involvement of other regional actors and proxy local militias being supported by regional actors. Actually who controls the area, who does the fighting, is a little bit vague in some areas. I was wondering maybe if you could expand on what sort of lessons, and also potentially, cautionary tales from Somalia you guys will be taking forward into looking to Mali.

**Question 10:**

Two days ago or four days ago, Sudan arrested two Islamist jihadists in Khartoum. And also there are many news agencies talking about hunted Sudanese jihadists. They are travelling to Mali to fight with Al-Qaeda. And also during the revolution in Libya, there were many articles and reporters talking about Sudan crossing untraditional weapons from Libya to Sudan, then to jihadists in the Sinai, also to Hezbollah. Do you think Sudan is still [jeopardizing] peace and security in the Sahel and [throughout] Africa also? Thank you.

**Question 11:**

Somebody referred a little while back to ECOWAS troops not used to fighting in the dunes. This whole question of desert warfare is something that is very specific and I think you mentioned this several times, and in view of the fact that neither Algeria nor apparently Mauritania, both of whom would have a lot of experience there, are willing to take part in any military operation, one understands that approaches have been made to Chad, which is quite battle-

hardened. Do you have any information on approaches made to Chad and what the reaction has been?

**Reuben Brigety:**

With regard to the question on Somalia and comparisons, I think the most important lesson is to know that the lesson of Somalia is not yet over. Let me explain what I mean by that. As I say, AMISOM has had some really quite dramatic successes in terms of countering al Shabaab. You are correct to note that those successes took many years, and that in 2006, 2007, 2008, those were incredibly dark years in Somalia with some incredibly heavy fighting. And our colleagues from Uganda and Burundi who were there through the worst of it and stayed deserve a great deal of credit for what's happening, as do other regional forces that have since come in and have done amazing work on the ground.

However, we are at a situation now where if those gains are not consolidated by effective, indigenous Somali security forces – both Somali national army and police, whether those police be from Somalia or be invited by the Somali government from other countries – that there is a very real risk that those gains could be reversed. That is something that we, the United States, are keenly aware of, that we are keenly aware of in terms of engaging with our Somali colleagues and talking with our other African and other donor governments.

That's relevant obviously for the context in Mali in the following ways. One, as I say, it will take some time to effectively plan a military operation to retake the north, which is why as much as I would like to, I don't think anybody can reasonably answer those sorts of questions of what that looks like, particularly not before the ECOWAS initial plan is completed.

Two, regardless of what that plan is going to look like, that campaign will not be finished in two days or two months. That is incredibly difficult terrain; it's a vast expanse. It will take a long time to take and hold and that cannot happen unless there is a political process on the ground to accompany it – which is actually by the way another lesson that comes out of Somalia, that there has to be a political process to help undergird the nature of the military campaign.

And then the final thing that I would say is that even when we do achieve collectively – we meaning ECOWAS and the African Union, supported probably by outside partners – even when there is some military success on the ground, it is easy for various actors to want to declare victory and walk

away. But that, much like we're seeing in Somalia, is actually probably the most crucial phase of the entire enterprise.

When you actually have some degree of military tactical success on the battlefield, you then have to come behind with service delivery for citizens, with the ability to provide local security at the local level for individuals, the basic ambient security like by police and whatnot, and with that accompanying political process so that you actually achieve the strategic objectives for which the nature of the military campaign was launched in the first place.

I think those are some of the initial obvious lessons that not only we but I know many of our other colleagues are thinking about when we begin to look at the problem set in the Sahel.

With regard to Sudan becoming a threat or remaining a threat to peace and security as a result of movements of people, what I can say is that there clearly have been all sorts of public reports of foreign fighters coming from various locations and winding up in northern Mali. They didn't get there by magic. They had to get there somehow, crossing some number of borders. All I would say on that point is that we would encourage all countries in the region to closely monitor their borders and ensure that forces or people that have malicious intent are not allowed to cross their borders to Mali or anywhere else for that matter to do harm.

Finally, with regard to the question of Chad, what I would say is that there are ongoing discussions with all countries in the region to figure out how collectively everybody can become engaged with addressing this challenge which affects everybody.

### **Question 12:**

Thank you very much. I would just like to ask you to comment on two related points, please. One is you may or may not be aware of the court case that's running in New York on Mali which is relating to Al-Qaeda and drugs trafficking in the area. And that is that the evidence of the Department of Justice or the government on the links between Al-Qaeda and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb were rejected by the judge on the grounds that they just were not verifiable. Off the record, they were referred to as a load of rubbish.

The second related point is, are you aware and could you comment on the whistle blowing of John Schindler who was the senior intelligence officer for North Africa – US officer I should say – on the National Security Council and

currently professor of security studies specializing in counterterrorism at the US [Naval] War College in Newport. His publication in July, where he specifically warned Washington – that's the politicians – and whistle-blew on the fact that most of the terrorists in the Sahara were DRS (Algerian state intelligence) agents, as has been the case since the early 1990s, and specifically of course, he was referring to five of the main leaders of the Islamist groups in northern Mali at the moment.

If you could comment on those two points in the context of what you've said, I'd be most grateful. Thank you.

### **Question 13:**

You mentioned the need to engage the people from the north, disaffected people from the north. That would include both the refugees which are composed of Tuareg and other groups, and internally displaced people, and also the MNLA and others. What steps is the US government taking to prevent two things – one is the, to my knowledge, there are people in the refugee camp of M'Berra actually returning home to face the fear and dangers rather than stay in the camps because conditions, mortality, morbidity, are so high. They don't have enough nutrition. That's one. And that will turn people against whatever military or whatever intervention might take place.

The second question is about two parts: the internal dynamics within the MNLA and Ansar Dine, who have a Tuareg class element to their groups, but the other is that we know in Ireland and in Britain that military intervention can cause a recruitment bonanza for the hardliners. What steps is the US taking to anticipate that possibility by engaging with the Tuareg? And those steps are already afoot for the Tuareg who feel their history and culture will be eliminated by the military intervention. They are already talking about joining back with Ansar Dine again. And what is being done to prevent that? Because that could scupper the whole thing.

### **Reuben Brigety:**

To the gentleman in the back, I simply cannot comment on the nature of an ongoing court case. I refer you to the Justice Department for that. We can certainly help you contact them through our embassy here. With regard to Mr John Schindler at the Naval War College, I'm simply not familiar with the case or else I'd be happy to comment on it. So I can't comment intelligently.

To your question on camp conditions, I've spent – as I mentioned, prior to this position I was the deputy assistant secretary in our refugees bureau and spent a lot of time, a lot of time, in refugee camps on the continent. I am absolutely confident – first of all, I don't know the specific information about the nature of the camps or how many people have said they want to go back because of the nature of the camps. I simply don't have any information on it.

What I can be certain of, though, and absolutely assure you and the rest of the audience, is that the United States is engaging closely and continually with our colleagues at the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR, on the nature of their humanitarian response to ensure that there is indeed – that the nature of the response meets international humanitarian standards for health, for access to clean water and sanitation, for emergency shelter, etc. In fact, the assistant secretary for our refugees bureau, Anne Richards, is in Africa now. She either just was or is about to go to Mali and the region to discuss these issues. So I am absolutely certain that those conversations are ongoing.

Finally, with regard to engaging the Tuareg, we in the government of the United States are not directly, politically, diplomatically engaging the Tuareg. What we are doing is encouraging the government of Mali that they have to engage their Tuareg citizens because, as I said before, at the end of the day, this will be a Malian solution to the crisis, supported by their colleagues in ECOWAS, the African Union and then obviously we in the United States, along with other colleagues, will do all that we can to be supportive of the process.

But any political solution will have to be between the Bamako government and their colleagues, the Tuaregs in the north. And we will continue to encourage our colleagues in Bamako to engage their fellow citizens of the north to address those concerns.

**David Styan:**

Can I push you again slightly on that in that sense that the question is specifically asked in terms of relations between MNL and Ansar Dine. I'm not expecting you to comment on that per se, but you were quite clear in your opening statements in terms of the pillars of US policy to identify AQIM as the enemy in terms of the war on terror, etc. And you are saying you encourage domestic dialogue. Does the US administration distinguish between, not AQIM, but Ansar Dine, MOJWA (Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa) and the MNL in its analyses? Or do you see these as being

essentially fluid boundaries? Perhaps particularly bearing in mind what the gentleman asked previously in terms of the Algerian involvement with links to sponsorship of certain elements.

**Reuben Brigety:**

Right. The answer is yes, in the sense that we do not see them as all the same. We know that they are distinguishable with different agendas, to a degree, different memberships. And yet we also know without being too specific, if I may, that the relationships among certain members are fluid and that accordingly there are links. Which was why I said to the earlier question, with regard to engaging the MNLA, we know that MNLA, Ansar Dine, none of them are – how can one put it? – organic members of AQIM as it were. Which is why, and yet, for various reasons and to varying degrees, they have engaged in actions which I think it's fair to say have not contributed to the stability and territorial integrity of Mali.

And as such, in any process going forward, the groups, both corporately and individually, will have choices to make about how they wish to engage, how to one extent or another they wish to be part of any ultimate political solution. And there will be individuals or portions who for one reason or another, from one perspective or another, are not likely to be easily reconciled. I think that this is something that we'll have to continue to watch very closely as the political and military situation on the ground progresses.