

Two Car Bombs Rock Algiers

Date: 11 December 2007

Location: Algiers, Algeria

A Brief Summary of the Bombings

Locations of Bombing Incidents: Constitutional Council building in the Ben Aknoun neighbourhood, Émile Payen Street near the offices of the United Nations

The first car bomb exploded around 9:30 am outside the Constitutional Council building where the council administers the country's elections.¹ Students on a bus travelling towards the nearby Ben Aknoun University were also killed in the explosion.² The second car bomb detonated 10 minutes later outside the UN building that housed the offices of the World Food Program, the International Labor Organization, the UN Development Program, the Industrial Development Organization, the Population Fund, the Safety and Security Office, and the Public Information Offices.³

Many witnesses reported seeing a white truck or van drive into the United Nations compound moments before the blast occurred.⁴ In its statement al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb confirmed that each suicide bomber drove a truck loaded with over 800kg of explosive materials.⁵

Casualties

A number of news sources indicate the death toll from both bomb attacks ranges from 31 to 62.⁶ Algeria's Interior Ministry stated the official count of those killed is 31, but it could be higher.⁷ After surveying reports from medical and rescue workers, two

¹ The New York Times. "Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers," 12 Dec. 2007.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/africa/12algiers.html?em&ex=1197608400&en=02067d3c22631f6c&ei=5087%0A>

² The New York Times. "Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers," 12 Dec. 2007.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/africa/12algiers.html?em&ex=1197608400&en=02067d3c22631f6c&ei=5087%0A>

³ The New York Times. "Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers," 12 Dec. 2007.
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⁴ The New York Times. "Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers," 12 Dec. 2007.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/africa/12algiers.html?em&ex=1197608400&en=02067d3c22631f6c&ei=5087%0A>

⁵ SITE Institute. "Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb Claims Two Suicide Bombings in Algiers, Other Attacks in Jant and Ain Defla in Algeria," 11 Dec. 2007.
<http://www.siteinstitute.org/bin/articles.cgi?ID=publications331507&Category=publications&Subcategory=0>

⁶ Bloomberg. "Algeria Bomb Kills 62; Al-Qaeda Claims Responsibility (Update 4)," 11 Dec. 2007.
http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aM_3l.5ssm8Y&refer=home

⁷ The New York Times. "Tally in Algiers Attacks Uncertain," 13 Dec. 2007.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/13/world/africa/13algeria.html>

European diplomats in Algiers believe the number of dead is well over 60.⁸ In a statement posted on a Jihadist website by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the group that has claimed responsibility for carrying out the attacks, the group alleges that 60 people died in the first car bomb attack and 50 people in the second attack.⁹ Officials from the United Nations stated that 10 of its employees were among those killed and that others are missing.¹⁰ The Interior Ministry confirmed that five of the pronounced dead are foreign nationals: two Chinese, one Dane, one Senegalese, and one Filipino.

Injuries: More than 170 people were injured from the attacks.¹¹

The Suspects

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, a group which has evolved from the GSPC (a French acronym meaning the Salafist Group for Call and Combat) has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The two suicide bombers identified, who were responsible for executing the attacks were: Ibrahim Abu Uthman and Abdul Rahman Abu Abdul Nasser Al-Aassemi. Ibrahim Abu Uthman was reported to have sported a gray moustache and appeared to be in his 50s while Abdul Rahman Abu Abdul Nasser Al-Aassemi is believed to be younger.¹²

Forewarnings to the attack

In the past, Al-Qaeda has been urging attacks on French and Spanish interests in North Africa. There have been several forewarnings issued by al Qaeda prior to the attacks. In a video released in September, Ayman al-Zawahiri, called for jihad in North Africa to “cleanse (it) of the children of France and Spain.”¹³ Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb was also responsible for attacks on the Algerian prime minister's office and a police station, killing 33 people on 11 April 2007.¹⁴ The 11th holds special meaning to al Qaeda and its affiliates as significant attacks such as the attacks on the World Trade Center in

⁸ The New York Times. “Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers,” 12 Dec. 2007.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/africa/12algiers.html?em&ex=1197608400&en=02067d3c22631f6c&ei=5087%0A>

⁹ Al Jazeera. “Al-Qaeda Claims Algeria Bombings” 11 Dec. 2007.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/4371B609-73CB-4AA2-8CC5-308B7C4092C7.htm>

¹⁰ Bloomberg. “Algeria Bomb Kills 62; Al-Qaeda Claims Responsibility (Update 4),” 11 Dec. 2007.

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601087&sid=aM_3l.5ssm8Y&refer=home

¹¹ Al Jazeera. “Al-Qaeda Claims Algeria Bombings” 11 Dec. 2007.

<http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/4371B609-73CB-4AA2-8CC5-308B7C4092C7.htm>

¹² New York Times. “Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers.” 12 December 2007. Accessed at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/africa/12algiers.html>

¹³ “Al-Qaida claims bloody Algiers bombings,” by B Hassane Meftahi and John Leicester. 12 December 2007. Accessed at:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20071212/ap_on_re_af/algeria_explosion;_ylt=AqhiAzegKFBrbP3VfACnaris0NUE

¹⁴ “Al-Qaida claims bloody Algiers bombings,” by B Hassane Meftahi and John Leicester. 12 December 2007. Accessed at:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20071212/ap_on_re_af/algeria_explosion;_ylt=AqhiAzegKFBrbP3VfACnaris0NUE

the U.S on 11 September 2001, followed by one in Djerba, Tunisia, on 11 April 2002, one in Madrid on 11 March 2004.¹⁵

11th December specifically holds significant meaning for the Algerians as on that date in 1960, pro-independence demonstrations were held against the French colonial rulers. In addition, the Constitutional Council of Algeria is also located on December 11, 1960 Boulevard.¹⁶ Another key indicator uncovered was the fact raids have been carried out in Algeria over the past year and the most recent of which was carried out in November 2007 found three bombs, 1,760 pounds of explosives and a rocket launcher in the group's hide-out.¹⁷ The most recent raid of the militant hideout was a clear indicator that the group possessed the material capabilities to carry out an attack of this magnitude.

Government and International Response

The Algerian Interior Minister Yazid Zerhouni initially blamed al-Qaeda's local branch (GSPC) for the suicide attacks until further investigation. At this time there have been no arrests specific to this incident as investigations are still underway to ascertain the masterminds behind this and emergency services are still providing aid to the victims of the blasts.

The Algerian Prime Minister Abdelaziz Belkhadem canceled a cabinet meeting to visit the injured victims at the hospital. He condemned the attack that killed innocent people saying that nothing can justify such a crime.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed his shock, outrage and anger towards the attack on the UN office.¹⁸ The US president George W Bush condemned the attack labeling the terrorists "these enemies of humanity" and the French President Nicolas Sarkozy also condemned the attack calling the incident "barbaric and cowardly"¹⁹

Prepared by Jesmeen Khan, Shiran Ali, and Nidaa Abu-Ali

¹⁵ New York Times. "Twin Bombs Kill Dozens in Algiers." 12 December 2007. Accessed at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/12/world/africa/12algiers.html>

¹⁶ "Al-Qaida claims bloody Algiers bombings," by B Hassane Meftahi and John Leicester. 12 December 2007. Accessed at:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20071212/ap_on_re_af/algeria_explosion;_ylt=AqhiAzegKFBBrbP3VfACnaris0NUE

¹⁷ "Al-Qaida claims bloody Algiers bombings," by B Hassane Meftahi and John Leicester. 12 December 2007. Accessed at:

http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20071212/ap_on_re_af/algeria_explosion;_ylt=AqhiAzegKFBBrbP3VfACnaris0NUE

¹⁸ "BBC: 'Dozens killed' in Algeria blasts" BBC, 11 December 2007

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7137997.stm>

¹⁹ Ibid