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Morocco Remains Safe despite Rise in Terrorist Activity in North Africa/Sahel in 2016

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Study Lauds Morocco's Counterterrorism Initiatives, Urges Resolution to Sahara Conflict

Washington, DC, April 14, 2017, Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) — The number of terrorist incidents in the Maghreb and Sahel regions of Africa rose 14% in 2016, according to a study released Thursday by The Inter-University Center on Terrorism Studies (IUCTS) and the Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, reaching the second highest level since 9/11. The eighth annual report, "Terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel in 2016," revealed that, despite this alarming trend, Morocco and Mauritania registered zero terrorist incidents in 2016, and that Morocco has been the country least-affected by terrorism in the region over the past fifteen years.

"During 2016, Morocco continued to improve its counterterrorism capabilities, as demonstrated by multiple arrests of suspected terrorists, seizing weapons, and aborting violent plots," said the report. "Particular mention should be made of the leadership of King Mohammed VI denouncing terror and proposing the excommunication of Muslims who use their faith as justification for political violence. And in early 2017, Morocco banned the production and sale of the burqa out of concern that the shroud-like garment, which covers the entire face and body of Muslim women, would be exploited to mount terrorist attacks.

"In sum, Rabat's holistic security strategies, ranging from expanded international cooperation (e.g., joining the African Union) to developing tolerant Islamic approaches, seem to serve as a practical model to bring potential terrorist threats to manageable levels."

According to the report, the most affected countries in 2016 were Libya (with 125 incidents), Mali (with 64 incidents), Tunisia (with 16 incidents), and Algeria (with 13 incidents); while to date, Algeria, Libya, and Mali have experienced the most terrorist incidents (1,329; 578; and 218, respectively).

"Of growing concern for African security interests are the increasing links and flow of recruits between... regional extremists and the so-called 'Islamic State' in Syria and Iraq, as well as al-Qa'ida affiliates and allies across the region," the report stated, noting that "countries in the Maghreb and Sahel are not immune to the broader threat of violence emanating from Iraq and Syria."

Among the report's ten tactical recommendations to address these regional threats were to:

- "Strengthen U.S. and NATO intelligence assets by broadening cooperation through AFRICOM, NATO's Partnership for Peace, and other modalities that supply and support training, equipment, and monitoring of resources throughout the region";
- "Continue to expand U.S. counterterrorism technical assistance and training to internal security personnel";
- "Work to settle intra-regional conflicts that provide openings for extremists to exploit and impede security and economic cooperation — including the Western Sahara dispute and the problem of refugees in the Polisario-run camps in Algeria. Also, collaborate with the global donor community to conduct a census of the camps to ensure that humanitarian aid is not diverted, from this location or elsewhere, for military purposes or personal enrichment";
- "Recognize the importance of and provide quiet encouragement to Muslim leaders in promoting the practice of a moderate Islam, as well as counter-radicalization programs that limit the appeal of extremist recruiters"; and
- "Promote regional trade and investment by expanding the US-Morocco Free Trade Agreement to include goods and products from North, West, and Central Africa."

"As the IUCTS study shows, the situation in North Africa and the Sahel is dangerous and we cannot be complacent," said Jordan Paul, Executive Director of the Moroccan American Center for Policy. "Morocco has emerged largely unscathed thanks to the leadership of King Mohammed VI and the vigilance of the country's security forces. However more can and should be done, including resolving the Western Sahara issue based on the Moroccan autonomy plan."

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Contact: Jordana Merran, 202.470.2049

The Moroccan American Center for Policy (MACP) is a non-profit organization whose principal mission is to inform opinion makers, government officials, and interested publics in the United States about political and social developments in Morocco and the role being played by the Kingdom of Morocco in broader strategic developments in North Africa, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East.

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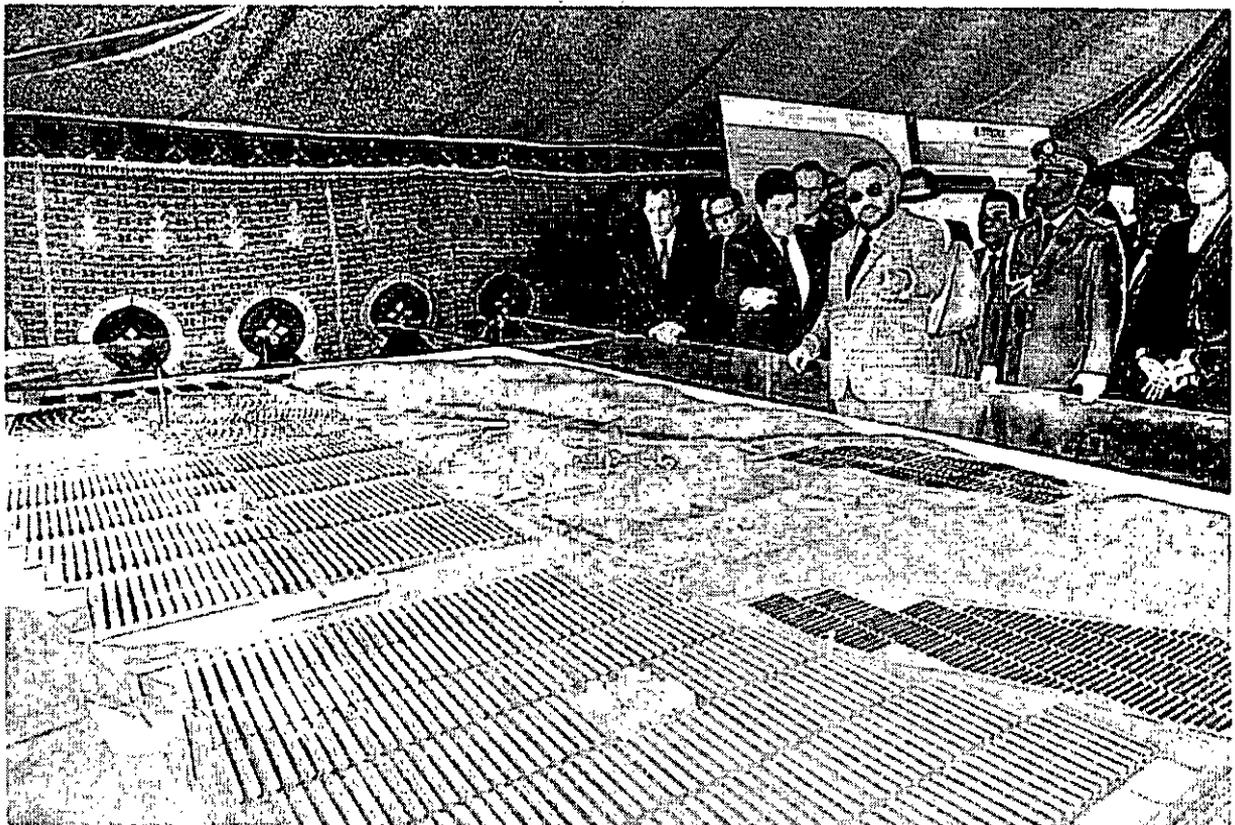
Jordana Merran

From: Moroccan American Center for Policy [jmerran@moroccanamericancenter.com]
Sent: Monday, April 17, 2017 12:53 PM
To: Jordana Merran
Subject: Morocco Safe despite Rising Threats in North Africa/Sahel; and More

Morocco on the Move

Morocco Remains Safe despite Rise in Terrorist Activity in North Africa/Sahel in 2016; and More

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King Mohammed VI reviews models of Noor IV.

IANS: Morocco Moving Ahead to become "Solar Superpower"

Excerpts:

"...Morocco's King Mohammed VI earlier this month launched the fourth and final phase of the world's largest solar energy plant - Noor Solar in Ouarzazate, on the edge of the Sahara desert. Noor is the Arabic word for light.

"The first phase of the \$9 billion project was launched in 2013, while the second and third phases were launched in 2016.

"When completed in 2018, the desert solar power complex will have a 582 MW capacity, enough to power 1.1 million homes - and would measure the size of capital Rabat."

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Hilton Views Morocco as Gateway to the Region

From a Hilton press release:

"Hilton has established a dedicated development office here in an effort to ramp up its expansion in North Africa.

"Building on an active pipeline in the region, which has grown to 15 hotels across Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia, Hilton has identified North Africa as a focus area for further

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growth. Hilton debuted the Hilton Garden Inn Casablanca Sidi Maarouf here earlier this year.

"Carlos Khneisser, VP of development in MENA at Hilton, said: 'We have almost 5,000 rooms under development in North Africa at this stage but with the majority of those being in Egypt there is a great opportunity for us to expand our presence more widely across the region.'"

[See the full release...](#)

international cooperation (e.g., joining the African Union) to developing tolerant Islamic approaches, seem to serve as a practical model to bring potential terrorist threats to manageable levels."

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