



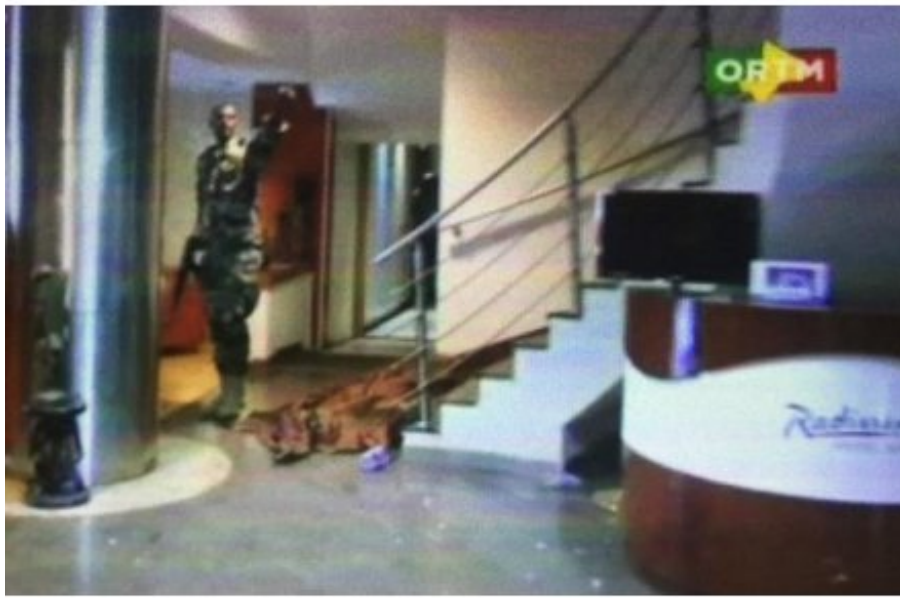
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At Least 27 Dead After Islamists Seize Luxury Hotel In Mali's Capital

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[This article comes from Reuters.](#)

By Tiemoko Diallo

At least 27 people were reported dead on Friday after Malian commandos stormed a hotel seized by Islamist gunmen to rescue 170 people, many of them foreigners, trapped in the building.

The jihadist group Al Mourabitoun, allied to al Qaeda and based in the desert north of the former French colony, claimed responsibility for the attack. The former French colony has been battling Islamist rebels for years.

More than seven hours after the initial assault, a security source declared the drama over, along with the deaths of two militants. But the security ministry said gunmen continued to hold out against special forces on the top floors of the seven-floor building.

“The attackers no longer have hostages. They are dug in in the upper floors. They are alone with the Malian special forces who are trying to dislodge them,” spokesman Amadou Sangho said.

A U.N. official said U.N. peacekeepers searching the hotel had made a preliminary count of 27 bodies.

State television showed troops brandishing AK47s in the lobby of the Radisson Blu, one of the capital Bamako's smartest hotels and beloved of foreigners. A body lay under a brown blanket at the bottom of a flight of stairs.

Peacekeepers saw 12 dead bodies in the basement of the hotel and another 15 on the second floor, the U.N. official told Reuters on condition of anonymity. He added that the U.N. troops were still helping Malian authorities search the hotel.

A man who worked for a Belgian regional parliament was among the dead, the assembly said.

Minister of Internal Security Colonel Salif Traoré said the gunmen had burst through a security barrier at 7 a.m. (0200 ET), spraying the area with gunfire and shouting “Allahu Akbar”, or “God is great” in Arabic.

The attacks are a slap in the face for France, which has stationed 3,500 troops in northern Mali to try to restore stability after a 2012 Tuareg rebellion which was later hijacked by al Qaeda-linked jihadists.

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