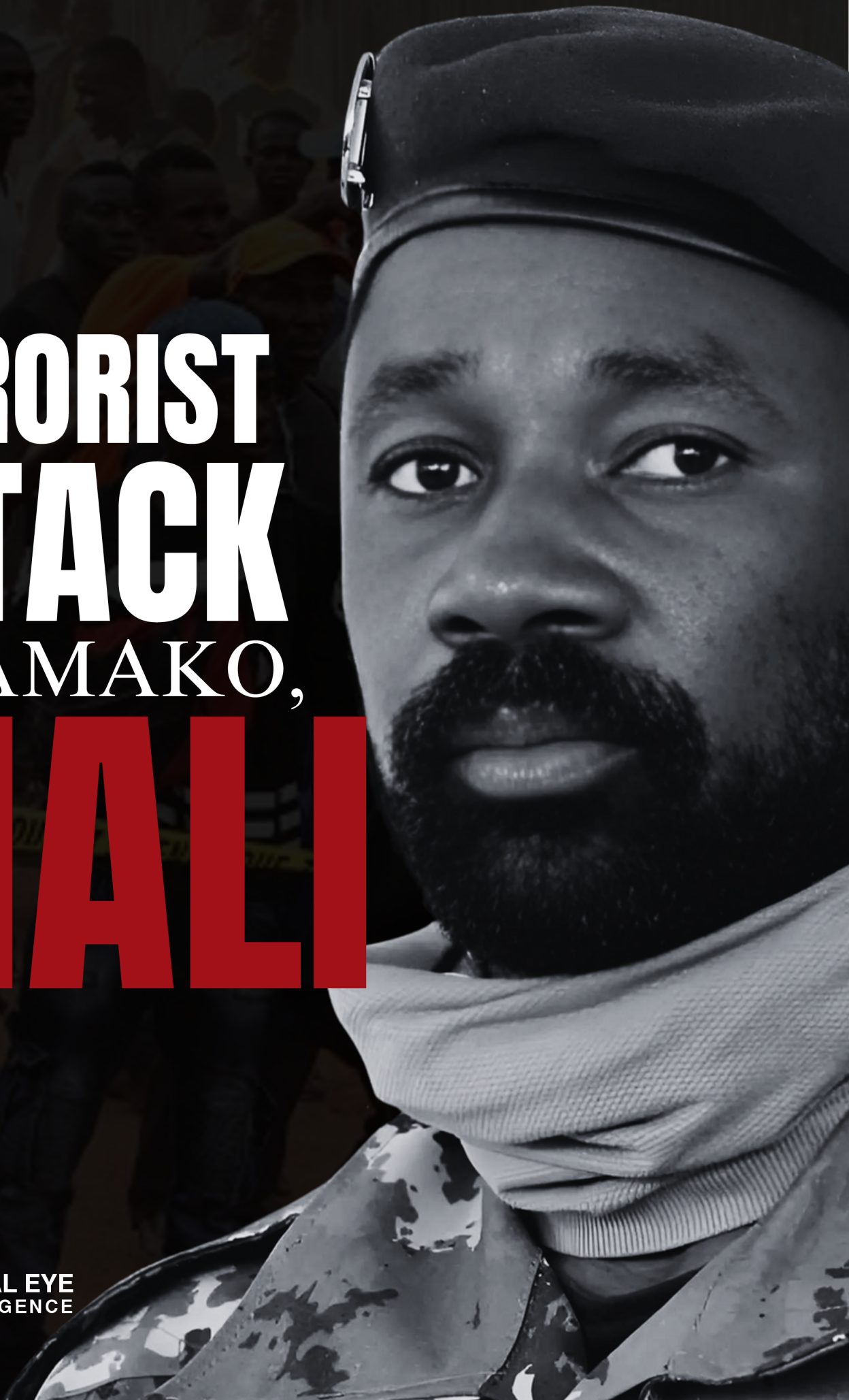


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**TERRORIST
ATTACK
IN BAMAKO,
MALI**



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Overview

On the morning of September 17, 2024, the Malian capital, Bamako, experienced a coordinated terrorist attack targeting a gendarmerie school and the Modibo Keita International Airport. The attack was claimed by the Support Group for Islam and Muslims (JNIM), a terrorist organization linked to al-Qaeda. The attack marked a significant escalation in the Islamist insurgency, as Bamako had largely been spared from such operations in recent years.



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AEROPORT INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT MODIBO KEITA - SENOU

Key Developments

1. The Attack

- Gunfire and explosions were heard near the Faladie gendarmerie school and Modibo Keita International Airport. Eyewitnesses reported plumes of smoke rising from the area, and social media footage showed armed men firing near key military installations.

- The Malian army swiftly intervened, repelling the attackers. However, significant damage was reported. At least 50 people were injured, with a dozen ambulances seen transporting wounded military personnel.

- A temporary closure of Bamako's airport followed, while security forces conducted mopping-up operations. Residents were advised to avoid the affected areas and remain vigilant.



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2. Claims and Casualties

- JNIM (Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin) claimed responsibility for the attack, stating they had inflicted heavy casualties and destroyed several military assets, including aircraft. While the Malian military has not confirmed the extent of these losses, reports indicate serious damage to the military facility.

- Unconfirmed videos circulated online, showing burnt bunk beds and charred bodies in the military camp. Mali's government has not released official casualty figures, but security sources reported multiple injuries among security personnel.

3. Government and Military Response

- Major General Oumar Diarra, Chief of the General Staff of the Malian army, addressed the troops, reaffirming the army's commitment to continuing the fight against insurgents. He highlighted the nation's capacity to confront the jihadist threat and urged soldiers to be ever-prepared.

- Mali's Ministry of Transport assured the public that steps were being taken to restore normalcy at the airport. By September 18, flights had resumed, although the situation remained tense.

4. Regional and International Reactions

- ECOWAS strongly condemned the attack, expressing solidarity with the Malian government and people. The organization reiterated its firm stance against terrorism in West Africa, particularly in the Sahel region.

- The United Nations and other international organizations advised their personnel to restrict movement. The attack has raised alarm within the diplomatic and international community, given the proximity to critical infrastructure.





Context and Implications

Security Situation in Mali

Mali has been grappling with an insurgency led by various jihadist groups, including JNIM and factions of ISIS. These groups typically operate in the north and central regions of the country, where they target both military installations and civilian populations. The attack on Bamako signals a worrying shift, as the capital had been relatively shielded from such violence.

Political Instability and Wagner's Role

The country has undergone two military coups since 2020, with Colonel Assimi Goita currently leading the military junta. The government has severed ties with France and other European allies, opting to collaborate with Russia and its Wagner mercenaries in combating insurgency. However, the efficiency of this partnership is increasingly questioned, particularly following the recent battlefield losses in the northern regions and this high-profile attack in the capital.

JNIM's Objectives and Operations

JNIM (Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin) has emerged as a dominant force in the Sahel region. Formed in 2017 through the merger of various jihadist factions, JNIM's primary objectives are to establish Sharia law and expel foreign forces from the region. The group has orchestrated numerous high-profile attacks in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger.



Analysis

The attack on September 17 demonstrates JNIM's increasing capability and ambition, as it directly targeted military and civilian infrastructure in Bamako, which had largely been spared from the insurgency. The timing of the attack – coinciding with the 64th anniversary of Mali's gendarmerie – appears symbolic and suggests a calculated operation aimed at undermining the military government's credibility.

Moreover, the fact that Wagner's base is located at the airport raises concerns over the group's effectiveness in protecting strategic assets. This attack follows a series of battlefield defeats for the Malian army and its Wagner allies, including a significant loss in the north against Tuareg rebels.





Recommendations

1. **Strengthened Coordination:** Mali should enhance security coordination with neighboring countries, particularly within the G5 Sahel Joint Force, to prevent further escalation.
2. **Focus on Counterinsurgency Adjustments:** The attack highlights the need for serious adjustments in Mali's counterinsurgency approach. Emphasizing both military and civilian protection will be essential to counter JNIM's growing influence.
3. **International Engagement:** ECOWAS and the United Nations must remain engaged and provide support, particularly in addressing the humanitarian fallout from continued jihadist operations.



Conclusion and Outlook

The attack on Bamako is a stark reminder of the escalating security crisis in Mali and the broader Sahel region. With JNIM proving capable of striking at the heart of the capital, the Malian junta faces mounting pressure to reassess its counterinsurgency strategy. The international community, particularly ECOWAS and the United Nations, will be closely monitoring the situation as it threatens to further destabilize West Africa.

For Mali's government, the attack challenges both its domestic legitimacy and its reliance on Russian mercenaries. The continued insurgency, coupled with rising political instability in neighboring Burkina Faso and Niger, could push the region into deeper turmoil.

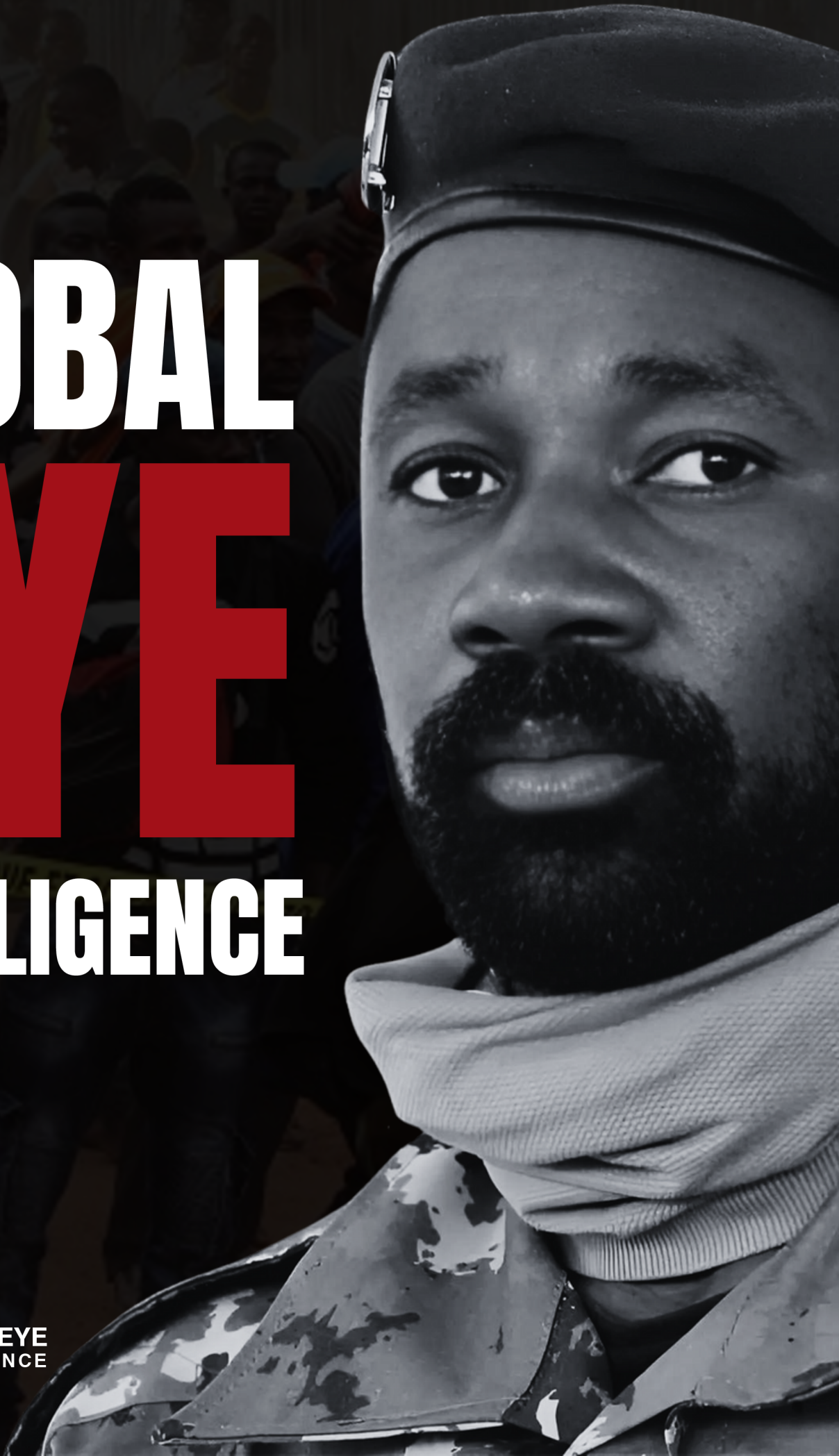


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