



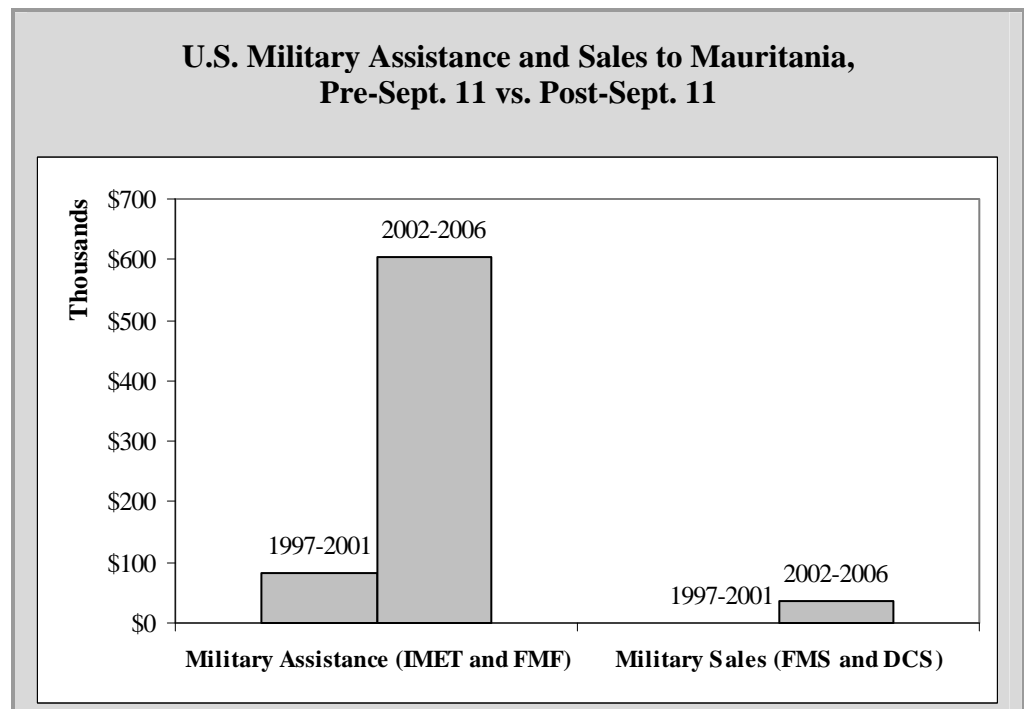
MAURITANIA

Background

Colonized by the French at the beginning of the twentieth century, Mauritania gained significant autonomy in 1946 – when the French Constitution opened the door for more decentralized control of its African colonies – and by 1960, Mauritania had achieved full independence. Throughout the French colonial period, many black Africans, whose ancestors had been enslaved or pushed south into Mali or

Senegal by centuries of advancing Arab-Berber settlers, crossed back over the river to resettle inside of Mauritania. After 1960, and following the withdrawal of French forces, conflict between ethnic Arabs and indigenous blacks flared. The conflicts were exacerbated by an asymmetric concentration of wealth in the hands of the ruling Moorish Arabs and a severe drought that lasted nearly two decades and killed almost 80 percent of the country's livestock. Racial tensions within Mauritania continued to fester as a result of a closed political system and a series of military governments that did not allow for the resolution of these issues at the national level.

In 1976, Spain left the territory now known as the Western Sahara and it was divided between Mauritania and Morocco. For the next three years, Mauritania was drawn into armed struggle with the Polisario Front – separatists living in the Western Sahara that wanted to create an independent state – until Mauritania relinquished its claims to the territory in 1979. During the conflict, Moktar Daddah, who became president of Mauritania after independence, was overthrown in a coup led by military officers dissatisfied with the management of the conflict in Western Sahara. Another bloodless coup in



1984 brought Col. Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya to power, where he remained for the next twenty years.

In 1989, about 40,000 black Senegalese migrant workers were driven out of the country by the Mauritanian security forces, reigniting the racial tensions between black and Arabs in Mauritania. Tens of thousands of black Mauritians were forced off their land by the violence, which expanded into a border skirmish with Senegal. A 1991 treaty ended the violence but the underlying tensions within the Mauritanian population have never been successfully resolved. After the end of the violence, a new constitution was drafted that legalized political parties and led to the country's first multi-party elections in April 1992. However, the leader of the 1984 coup and current president of Mauritania, Maaouiya Ould Sid Ahmed Taya, won the election and went on to win reelection in 1997 and 2003, surviving a violent attempted military coup on June 8, 2003, just five months before the elections. The 2003 presidential elections were not observed by international organizations and were marred by widespread allegations of fraud by Taya due to the arrest of the main opposition candidate immediately prior to elections.

In 2005, however, another military coup succeeded in ousting Taya and replacing him with a 17-member transitional government assembled by the military junta. The junta credited itself with ending 20 years of authoritarian rule and promised a return to civilian rule as soon as a timeline for the democratic transition could be established. Colonel Ely Ould Mohammed Vall, Taya's longtime national security advisor and former chief of the national police, was named the interim leader of Mauritania. After extensive meetings with all national political parties, the junta released their timeline for the return to full civilian rule in Mauritania. According to the plan, full presidential elections would be held in March 2007, with the junta scheduled to fully relinquish power in May 2007. No members of the military junta will stand for public office in the 2007 elections.

According to the 2006 State Department human rights report, the human rights record of Mauritania's military government, which overthrew the civilian government in 2005, remains poor. Officials act with impunity, arrest arbitrarily, detain for prolonged periods of time, excessively influence the judiciary and restrict basic human freedoms like speech, press, assembly and religion (Mauritania is officially designated as an Islamic republic). Because the government is controlled by the military, there is little room for the government to be changed by citizens and corruption is perceived as pervasive. Female genital mutilation and other forms of abuse and discrimination against women continue as does human trafficking and slave and child labor. There have been some democratic reforms, including successful municipal and legislative elections in late 2006.

The transitional government is continuing the former government's restrictions on freedom of speech and the press, censoring newspapers prior to publication and controlling most of the broadcast media. In an improvement of the situation, the transitional government allows for nearly unrestricted freedom of assembly, unlike the Taya government. However, certain demonstrations held during the year, including some in support of the deposed government, were forcibly broken up by the police. The transitional government also does not officially recognize some NGOs and political parties operating in the country. Although it is widely believed that all levels of the government are corrupt, the transitional government began investigations into these allegations. Racial and ethnic discrimination between the black and Arab populations of Mauritania remains a problem for national unity.

The 2006 State Department Terrorism Report noted that the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC), an Algerian terrorist group, "continued to operate in the Sahel region, crossing difficult-to-patrol borders between Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Algeria, and Chad to recruit extremists within the

region for training and terrorist operations in the Trans-Sahara and, possibly, for operations outside the region.” Designated a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department, the GSPC is a splinter group of the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), one of the principal Islamist militant groups that fought against the government during the Algerian civil war. The GSPC allied itself with al-Qaida in September 2006, adopted the name al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, and has begun adapting its tactics to those favored by insurgents in Iraq, including roadside bomb attacks. The U.S. military is currently embarking on a long-term initiative to counter what it sees as a growing terrorist presence in the predominantly Muslim regions of Africa, facilitated by ungoverned stretches of border and desert terrain. The Pentagon hopes to train thousands of African troops in counterinsurgency tactics and cross-border cooperation and communication as part of the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI), which includes Mauritania as well as Algeria, Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia.

U.S. Military Assistance Prior to Sept. 11, 2001

Mauritania has not participated in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms since 1994 and did not report any imports of major conventional weapons systems from the United States between 1990 and 2001.

International Military Education and Training (IMET) assistance was suspended after fiscal year 1991 (FY 91) in response to the government’s oppression of its black citizens and support of Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War. Mauritania received no Foreign Military Financing (FMF) between FY 90 and FY 01.

Mauritania concluded only small amounts of Direct Commercial Sales (DCS) and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) with the United States between FY 90 and FY 01. DCS during this period totaled \$103,000 and FMS totaled \$345,000. Mauritania received no U.S. weaponry through the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program during this period.

U.S. Military Assistance Since Sept. 11, 2001

Before resigning as U.S. Secretary of Defense in late 2006, Donald Rumsfeld laid out his vision for an Africa Command that would be added to the existing U.S. military commands in order to maintain order and stability in the often overlooked continent. As such, the U.S. government has worked on increasing engagement with the governments of Africa. Prior to the coup, Mauritania was considered a steadfast U.S. ally – despite supporting Iraq during the 1991 Gulf War – having been the first Arab country (and one of only three) to recognize Israel, the first African country to sign an agreement with the United States exempting U.S. soldiers from the International Criminal Court, and an ally in the “war on terrorism.” According to the FY 07 congressional budget justification for foreign operations, the transitional government “declared its desire for close relations with the United States.” However, it is too soon to tell whether or not the amount of U.S. military assistance to Mauritania will eventually reflect this political change.

After the 2005 coup, the United States restricted military assistance to Mauritania. However, the United States did not invoke section 508 of the Foreign Operations budget, which bans all military assistance to a country in the event of a military coup until a democratically-elected government takes control. Since deposed President Taya claimed victory in the 2003 elections despite widespread

allegations of fraud, the State Department ruled that, technically, the coup had not deposed a democratically elected leader.

Mauritania has received six times more military assistance during the five years after Sept. 11 than it received in the five years prior. Mauritania has not received any FMF since Sept. 11, but IMET appropriations remained steady until the coup. Although no IMET training activities were begun after August 2005, when the military coup took place, the U.S. government is ready to resume IMET appropriations since the installation of the transitional government, and \$130,000 has been requested for both FY 07 and FY 08.

Without FMF available to finance weapons purchases from the United States, no FMS has been concluded with Mauritania since Sept. 11. Although DCS has, for the most part, been minimal – totaling only \$36,000 between FY 02 and FY 06 – this total is up from no arms sales between FY 97 and FY 01. Most of these transfers have consisted of small, non-lethal defense articles. The State Department reported that, in 2006, a \$4.8 million transfer of laser components and spare parts had been authorized. Mauritania has received no U.S. weaponry through the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program since Sept. 11.

Although funding through the five main military assistance programs has been less than robust, the United States has provided Mauritania with counterterrorism training and funding through other programs. Mauritania is a beneficiary of the Regional Defense Counterterrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) and received \$100,000 in FY 06, with an additional \$100,000 slated for FY 07. Since FY 05, Mauritania has also been eligible to receive funding to expand its counterterrorism capabilities through the Foreign Operations budget's Anti-Terrorism Assistance program (NADR-ATA), which is part of the Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Activities account. Mauritania received \$1.5 million from this account in FY 05 but has not received further NADR-ATA funding.

In 2003, the State Department launched the Pan-Sahel Initiative (PSI), designed to foster counterterrorism cooperation among the United States and the Saharan countries of Mali, Niger, Chad, and Mauritania. Under the PSI, the U.S. military trained local forces to work together to counter known terrorist incursions, as well as trafficking of people and illicit materials. In 2005, the PSI was expanded, funded with \$125 million, and renamed the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCTI). The TSCTI added five more countries to the list of participants (Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Nigeria, and Tunisia) and intends to greatly augment the region's indigenous capacity to effectively fight terrorism. TSCTI commenced in June 2005 with Operation Flintlock, which trained 3,000 African soldiers from nine different countries alongside U.S. forces in skills ranging from basic marksmanship to human rights law. In FY 07, the TSCTI was added to the Foreign Operations budget for regular funding and received \$7.2 million from the NADR-ATA account, and \$16.8 million from the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account. The Section 1206 authority from the Operations and Maintenance title of the defense budget may also contribute funding to the TSCTI in FY 07.

U.S. Military Assistance and Sales to Mauritania, FY 90 - FY 08					
	IMET	FMF	DCS	FMS	EDA
1990	\$107,000	\$0	\$0	\$60,000	n/a
1991	\$84,000	\$0	\$16,000	\$285,000	n/a
1992	\$0	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	n/a
1993	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1994	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1995	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1996	\$0	\$0	\$85,000	\$0	\$0
1997	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1998	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1999	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2001	\$83,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
1990-2001	\$274,000	\$0	\$103,000	\$345,000	\$0
1997-2001	\$83,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2002	\$130,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2003	\$131,000	\$0	\$23,000	\$0	\$0
2004	\$231,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2005	\$112,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	\$0
2006	\$0	\$0	\$11,000	\$0	\$0
2002-2006	\$604,000	\$0	\$36,000	\$0	\$0
2007	\$130,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
2008	\$130,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$0	n/a

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