Beat: Local

Foreign and national hostages among killed in Algeria hostage crisis

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USPA News - Both foreign and national hostages have been reported killed after Algerian authorities intervened in a hostage crisis in the African country, local media reported Thursday. The hostage crisis took place in the Ain Amenas natural gas plant, located in Tiguentourine in the Sahara, within the southeastern region of the country and near the Libyan border, where militant groups that have been linked to al-Qaeda claimed to have taken at least 41 foreign nationals hostage.

As Algerian armed forces began surrounding the gas plant`s facilities, media reports said militant leader Abu al-Baraa demanded them to retreat from the area in order to negotiate the hostage crisis. However, the Algerian army carried out its rescue operation - not agreeing to negotiate with `terrorists` - and a number of hostages, both foreign and national, as well as militants were reported dead. Exact details remain uncertain, but different media outlets have reported at least 30 and up to 35 killed hostages following the raid. Among the hostages` nationalities are Americans, Japanese, French, British, Norweigan, and other Europeans, although details may defer. In addition, reports said fifteen attackers were also killed. Algerian Minister of Communication Mohamed Said spoke to the media, stating that the operation had ended. However, he said authorities were still working on freeing some of the hostages. Some media reports continued suggesting that a number of militants were still holding hostages. British Prime Minister David Cameron confirmed the death of at least one British national, describing the situation as `very dangerous` and `uncertain.` "I think we have to prepare ourselves or the possibility of bad news ahead," he said. Meanwhile, British Foreign Office Minister Alistair Burt said that "although details have yet to become final, I am afraid we should be under no illusion that there will be some bad and distressing news to follow from this terrorist attack." Earlier reports from the state-run Algerian Press Service said that hundreds of national workers were freed, in addition to two Scots, a Kenyan and a French national. The Ain Amenas gas plant is operated by BP, Statoil from Norway, and Algeria`s state energy company. The attack was apparently triggered following France`s decision to deploy its military into Mali, also in northern Africa.

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