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The German Foreign Office warns: “Al Qaeda in Maghreb” (AQM) specifically seeking Germans in the Sahara to kidnap

Threat from Al Qaeda attacks and kidnapping forces Africa-bound pilots to change route

The two Africa-bound pilots, Uwe Thomas Carstensen and Martin Grohganz, have had to abandon their original route. The current security situation left the pilots no choice. The decision to change the route was taken shortly before departing from Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and then on towards the Sahara.

According to the German Foreign Office, in North African countries and those bordering the Sahara in the south, there is a very real risk of Islamic terrorist and other criminal attacks. At the moment, “Al Qaeda in Maghreb” (AQM) is clearly specifically looking for Germans to kidnap, above all in the Saharan regions around the desert towns of Timbuktu (Mali), Tamanrasset and Ghardaia (Algeria). Strong warnings have been issued about trips to the border regions of Mali, Niger and Mauretania. There is also an increased risk of attacks on tourist destinations, such as hotels in the Sahel Saharan region. The explosive political developments in Algeria were also a reason to change the original itinerary.

The route was to take the Africa-bound pilots to Timbuktu and then on to Tamanrasset, Ghardaia and Oran in Algeria. Because of the terrorist warnings, they have now had to change their flight route. “We were really looking forward to the fascinating flight over the Sahara and visiting places in Algeria, but we’re taking the warnings very seriously and didn’t want to run any unnecessary risks”, explains Carstensen.

Instead of going north, the little rose-pained plane flew westwards first. Carstensen and Groh-ganz landed safely in Bamako in the south of Mali and then in Dakar (Senegal). From there they will fly to Gran Canaria. After stopovers in Lisbon (Portugal) and Agen (France) they are expected back in



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Hanover Airport on 24 February.

Since the beginning of February 2011, pilots Carstensen and Grohganz have been flying round Africa in a single-engine Cessna on the second leg of their trip. To date, they have stopped in Namibia, the Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Togo, Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal.

The first leg started on 1 November 2010 in Hanover. It took them via Croatia, Greece, Egypt, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, South Africa to Windhoek in Namibia.

Captions

Photo 1: The new flight route

Photo 2: Pilot Uwe Thomas Carsten relaxed and on the approach to Dakar

Photo 3: Dakar is the last stop on the African continent

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