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### X-RAID TEAM NEWS

**DAKAR RALLY 2009 (January 3<sup>rd</sup>-January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2009)**

### X-RAID TEAM SET TO FIELD SIX BMW X3 CCs IN DAKAR RALLY 2009

- **Al-Attiyah joined by Chicherit and Van Merksteijn**
- **Novitskiy, Terranova and Kuipers complete driver line-up**
- **BMW team eyes outright victory in South American classic**

TREBUR (Germany): X-raid's Power Racing Team will field six BMW X3 CCs in the Dakar Rally 2009, which takes place in South America for the first time. The event starts in Buenos Aires on Saturday, January 3<sup>rd</sup> and finishes back in the Argentine capital on Sunday, January 18<sup>th</sup>.

Newly-crowned FIA World Cup and FIA International Baja Cup champion Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah will be joined in the Trebur-based team's line-up by Frenchman Guerlain Chicherit and Dutchman Peter van Merksteijn, with X-raid Russia's Leonid Novitskiy, Argentina's Orlando Terranova and Dutchman René Kuipers completing the driver line-up.

Al-Attiyah, from Qatar, will be partnered by Sweden's Tina Thörner, while Frenchman Matthieu Baumel and Belgian Eddy Chevallier partner Chicherit and Van Merksteijn. Russian Oleg Tyupenkin, Frenchman Alain Guehennec and Portugal's Filipe Palmeiro complete the six-car team's co-driving line-up.

All six drivers will wheel out the latest version of X-raid's potent BMW X3 CC, updates of which have already taken outright wins in the punishing UAE Desert Challenge, Ha'il Saudi Baja, Baja Italy, Baja Spain and Baja Hungary this season in the hands of Al-Attiyah.

"We have a large team with strength and experience in depth," enthused team director Sven Quandt. "Our drivers have a wide range of experience in all forms of rallying and I am confident that our preparations will be rewarded with success in January."

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“We have been developing the BMW X3 CC for many months and I have been delighted with the increased competitiveness of the car and the professional attitude of the entire team.”

Al-Attiyah recently confirmed a third FIA title of the season, when he clinched the FIA Middle East Rally Championship for the fifth time in six seasons, but he would dearly love to add a Dakar win to his impressive list of recent victories. The Qatari finished sixth overall with Alain Guehennec in 2007, while co-driver Thörner has tackled the Dakar several times and finished runner-up with South African Giniel de Villiers in 2005.

“This is it, the big one,” enthused Al-Attiyah. “This is the event that we have all been preparing for all year and I am so looking forward to the start. I have competed in Argentina before in the WRC and enjoyed the stages there very much. But this will be a totally different challenge. We have shown over the last few months that this new BMW is more than capable of winning the Dakar.

“I know we have the pace and the reliability to win stages and, maybe, take victory. It will not be easy. Volkswagen are very strong and Mitsubishi have a new car, but there are less difficult sand dunes than we would find on a traditional Dakar Rally in Africa and this could be more of a sprint event, which could suit me and the other WRC drivers better. Altitude will also play an important factor and it is important that we have the car set-up spot on for each day.”

Chicherit, 30, has won a stage on the Dakar Rally in the past and his co-driver Matthieu Baumel is in winning form this season. The Frenchman partnered Al-Attiyah to success in Saudi Arabia earlier this year and won a recent special stage event in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia before switching his attention to final preparations for January’s Dakar.

Chicherit has the pace to match the Dakar Rally front-runners and is relishing his new South American challenge. The Tignes resident first competed in the African classic in 2005 and finished 49<sup>th</sup> overall and has set several useful times on off-road events in 2008.

Fifty-two-year-old Van Merksteijn is the oldest driver in the X-raid line-up, but the Dutchman is also one of the most experienced. The Enschede pilot has vast

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experience in Dutch special stage rallying and circuit racing, including success in numerous long-distance GT races.

He returned to rallying two years ago and tackled several WRC rallies, in addition to working on the 2006 Dakar Rally. He and Belgian co-driver Eddy Chevallier will need to call upon all his experience for his maiden Dakar outing.

Chevallier also has extensive WRC experience and finished ninth overall in the truck category of the Dakar Rally in 2004 and was leading the section with Hans Stacey in 2005 until engine failure robbed the pair of a potentially stunning result. In 2008, Chevallier finished fourth overall in the Monte Carlo Rally with François Duval and won the truck category in the Central Europe Rally.

Terranova tackled the Por Las Pampas Rally last season and will be doubly determined to achieve a top finish in his native Argentina. Orlando is the main local hope for success, is sure to attract massive local support and will be heavily reliant on the vast experience of co-driver Alain Guehenec.

The Frenchman has partnered Al-Attiyah, former Dakar winner Pierre Lartigue, former Group N world champion Grégoire de Mevius and X-raid's former FIA World Cup champion Khalifa Al-Mutawei in the past. This will be Guehenec's 17<sup>th</sup> Dakar Rally campaign.

Russian Leonid Novitskiy is one of the fastest improving drivers in off-road racing and had been second overall in the early stages of the recent UAE Desert Challenge. He and Oleg Tyupenkin will be hoping for a top five finish in the X-raid Russia-run BMW X3 CC.

Dutchman René Kuipers completes the driver line-up. He has tackled several rallies in Europe, including winning the Conrad Rally, finishing third in the Hellendoorn Rally and fourth at the Lautzits event this year. His co-driver Filipe Palmeiro has considerable cross-country rally experience and the Portuguese navigated for Brazilian Paulo Nobre on previous X-raid team campaigns.

The X-raid Racing Team faces its toughest ever challenge if it is to emerge victorious from the world's most famous off-road rally. A provisional 230 bikes, 30 quads, 188 cars and 82 trucks from 49 countries will take part in the event, but X-raid will need to

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beat the might of the factory Volkswagen and Mitsubishi teams to stand a chance of taking an outright win in the car category for the first time.

The ever-improving BMW X3 CC has been a match for its factory rivals on several events this season, with Al-Attiyah beating the factory Mitsubishi's fair and square in the Baja Spain and the X-raid car swapping fastest stage times with the Volkswagens and Mitsubishi's on the two rounds of the 2008 Dakar Series.

Dakar 2009 gets underway from the Argentina capital on January 3<sup>rd</sup>, with a short liaison into a 371km special stage in the direction of Santa Rosa de la Pampa. This is followed by specials across remote Argentinean agricultural land and barren wasteland, taking in overnight stops at Puerto Madryn, Jacobacci, Neuquen and San Rafael.

On January 8<sup>th</sup> the event reaches the Argentine city of Mendoza, before crossing the border into Chile on the second longest day of the entire event on January 9<sup>th</sup>. This section consists of 397km of liaison roads and a 419km special stage in the Andes foothills en route to the Chilean Pacific coastal port of Valparaiso, which will also host the traditional rest day on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>.

Competitive action resumes in Chile on Sunday, January 11<sup>th</sup> with a 294km special stage between Valparaiso and La Serena, using terrain similar to that used in the former Patagonia-Atacama Rally. The route continues to head north through Chile and into the Atacama Desert – the highest and driest desert in the world – where teams will benefit from much needed rest at two successive overnight halts in Copiapo.

The competitive action continues at high altitude as the route heads east towards the Argentinean border and a rest at Fiambala, after a tricky section in excess of 4,700 metres above sea level. Once the rally has returned to Argentina, the competition resumes with trails through sand dunes en route to La Rioja and on to more traditional FIA World Cup tracks en route to Cordoba, Argentina's second largest city, on January 16<sup>th</sup>.

The final stage takes teams back to Buenos Aires on Saturday, January 17<sup>th</sup> for the traditional fanfare welcome and ceremonial finish after 5,652 competitive kilometres in a total route of 9,574km.

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### Dakar Rally 2009 – X-raid teams

302. Nasser Saleh Al-Attiyah (QA)/Tina Thorner (S)	BMW X3 CC
306. Guerlain Chicherit (F)/Matthieu Baumel (F)	BMW X3 CC
315. Orlando Terranova (RA)/Alain Guehennec (F)	BMW X3 CC
316. Leonid Novitskiy (RUS)/Oleg Tyupenkin (RUS)	BMW X3 CC
318. Peter van Merksteijn (NL)/Eddy Chevallier (B)	BMW X3 CC
330. Rene Kuipers (NL)/Filipe Palmeiro (P)	BMW X3 CC

Ends

Further information and photos are available at [www.x-raid.de](http://www.x-raid.de) or contact Yvette Theisen at X-raid GmbH, Tel: + 49 (0) 6147 204670, E-mail: [y.theisen@x-raid.de](mailto:y.theisen@x-raid.de).

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