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A PERILOUS LANDSCAPE

Security Forces Adapt as
Sahel Extremism Spreads

PLUS

G5 Sahel Defense Chief Calls for Global Approach

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ON THE COVER:

As this photo collage illustrates, Sahel insecurity has many facets, but the region's people remain determined to defeat extremist forces.

PHOTOS CLOCKWISE FROM BOTTOM LEFT:
REUTERS, ISTOCK AND U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

There are no easy solutions to the decadelong security crisis in the Sahel. Extremist groups that first planted their flags in Mali during the political upheaval of 2012 have spread to destabilize parts of Burkina Faso and Niger. Terrorist attacks and armed conflict killed more than 6,200 people in these three countries in 2020, making it the most violent year on record for the region.

The leaders of the Sahel-based extremist groups, most notably the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, now are intent on moving south toward the coast and infiltrating countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo. The region's security forces must unite to stop them.

The factors that led to this insecurity are varied and interconnected. Sahelian countries have some of the youngest populations in the world, and a lack of job opportunities leaves people vulnerable to extremist recruitment. Commodities such as water and pasture are limited in the Sahel. Disputes over these scarce natural resources often turn bloody, allowing terrorists to capitalize on the chaos. The region also has seen coups, uprisings and electoral violence in recent years. This political instability, combined with a lack of state presence in remote areas, leaves a security vacuum that extremist groups can fill.

National militaries and international security missions have sought to return stability to the region. The G5 Sahel Joint Force and France's Operation Barkhane have recorded important gains, particularly in the tri-border region known as Liptako-Gourma, where terrorists have been driven out or neutralized. MINUSMA, the United Nations mission in Mali, has worked to protect civilians and lay groundwork for peace in a particularly challenging environment. Numerous bilateral and multilateral missions in the region have dismantled terrorist infrastructure.

But restoring peace to a 4-million-square-kilometer region is a tall order that requires more than just military force. Regional leaders have called for a "holistic approach" that includes economic development, deradicalization, alternative conflict resolution and political reform. Now, it's up to the region's political, military and civil-society leaders to unite behind the cause. After enduring so much violence, the people of the Sahel deserve a chance to experience peace. Extremism does not have historically deep roots in the Sahel. Its proud and peaceful people are ready to embrace a future without it.

U.S. Africa Command Staff

Nigerien Soldiers patrol outside the town of Ouallam.

REUTERS



Sahel Insecurity

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‘Significant Challenges Remain’



Brig. Gen. Oumarou Namata of Niger, the departing commander of the G5 Sahel Joint Force, spoke during a ceremony in Bamako, Mali, on July 30, 2021, as he handed over command to Division Gen. Oumar Bikimo of Chad. His remarks, originally made in French, have been edited to fit this format.



Malian and French forces conduct a joint patrol in the tri-border region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. REUTERS

The mandate of the Joint Force has just been renewed this month by the African Union's Peace and Security Committee. It enters its fifth year having already made advances in its development process, notably in the operational domain and in forming partnerships. This comes despite the often difficult security situation and the significant challenges that remain.

One major advance was harmonizing the actions and coordination between different actors. This coordination that we sought to codify in our campaign plans now has political backing. Today, the level of coordination, harmony and joint actions among the Joint Force, the Barkhane force and the national armies of the G5 Sahel countries has reached a point we never hoped for and is effective down to the lowest tactical level.

During the third and fourth mandates, there were 11 major operations lasting between two weeks and six months and involving anywhere from 300 to 1,500 Soldiers. This is in addition to the many routine or opportunistic missions. The results were impressive in terms of cleaning up our shared space.

From the fourth quarter of 2019 to today, there have been hundreds of terrorists neutralized and a large amount of materiel seized or destroyed. This has

disrupted a good part of the terrorists' logistical capacity. We can also point to the period between November 2020 and June 2021 when dozens of people were detained or captured who are now facing charges in the judicial process. All of this gives an idea of the road followed in terms of operational activities.

At the same time as the advances in the operational domain, the advances in respecting human rights and protecting civilians are also notable. The implementation of the Permanent Operational Procedure of the G5 Sahel Joint Force for internal investigations and the Mechanism for Identifying, Tracking and Analyzing Damages Caused to Civilians are two such advances. In the area of respecting human rights and international human rights law, the Joint Force is largely at the stage of ownership.

Even while capitalizing on these advances, the Joint Force continues to face challenges. The force does not have its own aerial capacity, and there are gaps in the intelligence system. These two capacity challenges have required the continued collaboration with operational partners.

Finally, but not the least, on the question of general support for the Joint

Force, it is worth recalling that despite various announcements of support from international sources, which often take too long to be effectively put in place, the countries of the G5 Sahel continue to make significant sacrifices. One proof of this is the exceptional contribution to finance operations made by the three countries of the center (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger). Without these contributions, the series of operations known as Sama that yielded great gains may not have been possible. Once again, it is worth restating the need of finding a sustainable way to finance the Joint Force.

We must also commend all the personnel at the heart of the battalions who have, through self-sacrifice, made gains in confidence and efficiency, making possible all the concrete operational results that have been achieved. I remain convinced that this valuable human capital will immediately follow the orders of Maj. Gen. Oumar Bikimo with the same enthusiasm, the same professionalism and the same determination in pursuit of our common goals.

CONGOLESE CHILDREN TRADE LIFE AS MINERS FOR CHANCE AT SCHOOL

Some DRC children work in mines because they don't have a birth certificate required to register for school.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Hundreds of children in Kipushi, a mining city in the southeastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), finally received birth certificates that allow them to attend school for free.

Many of the children had worked alongside their parents in cobalt and copper mines.

UNICEF provided school kits and financially supported administrative work by a local nongovernmental organization to obtain the birth certificates for about 500 children in August 2021. Children must provide certificates when registering for school.

Parents should register children within 90 days of birth, says Kipushi's chief prosecutor, Patrick N'Djongo Rwamo. But out of neglect, ignorance or because of bureaucratic hassles, many parents do not do so. Obtaining a birth certificate retroactively is long, complex and expensive.

"It's tough — more than 98% of our students do not have" a birth certificate, said Mugimba Cosmas, head of the city's public education. "It's a real shame."

The precious certificates were handed over to parents at a schoolyard ceremony in Kipushi, a city of about 170,000 in Haut-Katanga province near the Zambian border. The children are among 1,003 youngsters ages 8 to 15 whose certificates were made available on Rwamo's instructions.

Kabwit Yav, a mother of six, looked delighted next to her son, a fifth-year primary student. "Three of my children study, thanks to UNICEF; the others are already aged over 18, and they are unemployed at home, for lack of financial means," she said.

"In my area, we have nine quarries with copper and cobalt ore where several families — dads and mums looking to survive — do informal mining all day long," said Louis Tshota, administrator of Kipushi territory. "Children go to work in the mines to help their parents, which deprives them of school," he said, adding that at least 2,017 children work at the various pits across his territory.

Nearly 7 million children ages 5 to 17 are out of school in the DRC, according to United Nations figures.

A child breaks rocks extracted from a cobalt mine in Lubumbashi, DRC.



SENEGAL'S OLD CAPITAL MAKES STAND AGAINST RISING SEA

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

In the northern Senegalese city of Saint-Louis, excavators are ripping up the beach to lay giant basalt blocks in an 11th-hour effort to keep the sea at bay. When finished, a black sea wall will stretch 3.6 kilometers along the coast of the country's former capital.

Dire warnings about the risk of rising sea levels already are a grim reality in Saint-Louis, where seafront residents are abandoning their homes to the encroaching Atlantic Ocean.

The sea wall is a stopgap. Some are skeptical that the historic city of 237,000 people can be saved at all.

Saint-Louis stands only a few meters above sea level. Coastal erosion also is eating away at the shoreline.

Many locals have had little choice but to move to a displacement camp inland because their homes have been swallowed up by the raging sea, the erosion and the crumbling ground beneath them.

Erosion is causing the coastline to recede by 1.8 meters a year across the region, according to a 2019 World Meteorological Organization report.

The encroaching sea already has caused severe damage.

Flooding in 2017 and 2018 left more than 3,200 people homeless. About 1,500 of them now live in a displacement camp in Djougop, farther inland.

The disaster prompted Senegal to begin building the sea wall in 2019, partly financed by France. The project is worth \$117 million and also includes a rehousing program. Building was due to finish by the end of 2021.

The project also requires home demolitions in a 20-meter-wide strip behind the barrier. Between 10,000 to 15,000 people are to be uprooted, said Mandaw Gueye, an official working on the project.

Some will end up in Djougop and nearby neighborhoods, where the World Bank is helping to fund construction of 600 homes, he said. Other project officials stressed that the displaced would be compensated.

The sea barrier is a short-term emergency measure and not designed to be impermeable. The government says it is studying more durable solutions.

A young girl carries water past a section of sea wall built in Saint-Louis, Senegal, to stave off rising seas. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Surgeon Brings Health Care to Rural Cameroon

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

During the week, Dr. Georges Bwelle, 49, specializes in intestinal surgery at the main hospital in Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital. On weekends, though, he takes to the road.

He leads a team of volunteers that crams into a minibus and heads out into remote areas.

The tiny mobile clinic provides basic health care to those in need.

Recently, his nongovernmental organization (NGO), called ASCOVIME, visited the prison at Nkongsamba, about 350 kilometers northwest of Yaoundé. Team members examined nearly 500 prisoners and their family members.

Volunteers brought in equipment, transforming a room near the cells into a small field hospital, with departments for general medicine, ophthalmology, dentistry and minor surgery.

An inmate, 35, soon emerged from the operating room after surgery to repair a hernia.

"Thank God I have been freed from this ailment — the doctors looked after me," he said.

Bwelle's drive to help others can be traced to his childhood.

Born into a family of modest means, the young Bwelle saw his father's health deteriorate because he had no access to a specialist doctor after a road accident.

After his studies, Bwelle began to travel throughout his country.

"With the little money I had, I bought medicines and treated three or four people, then 10, then 100," he said.

Little by little, a team of doctors with a panoply of skills gathered around him.

In 2008, he set up ASCOVIME, an acronym in French meaning Association of Skills for a Better Life.

The NGO carries out about 40 missions a year, provides medical consultations to 40,000 people, carries out about 1,400 operations and gives school equipment to 20,000 children.

Most of the time, ASCOVIME visits rural areas where health care is scarce and difficult to access.

The most frequent medical complaints are malaria, joint pain and hernias — problems linked to working the land, Bwelle said.



Dr. Georges Bwelle, left, and one of his colleagues operate on a patient at the prison in Nkongsamba, Cameroon, in July 2021. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

SAHEL SECURITY FORCES

Look for Answers After Decade of Violence

ADF STAFF | PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Mass atrocities, forced displacement, public executions: Terror. It has been a fact of life in parts of Africa's Sahel region since extremists gained a foothold in Mali in 2012 and then spread their reach beyond its borders.

Despite efforts by regional security forces and global partners, the violence shows no sign of stopping. By the end of 2021, there was an 18% increase in violent events and a 14% decrease in fatalities compared to the record-setting violence of 2020 in the Sahel, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which documents violence across the globe.

Much of the violence was attributed to the al-Qaida-affiliated Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) coalition of militant Islamist groups, including the Macina Liberation Front (FLM), which originated in central Mali. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) also is active.

Fatalities linked to JNIM in 2021 were expected to increase over 2020. By the end of June 2021, reported fatalities attributed to FLM through battles with security forces and other militant

groups already had passed their 2020 level and were on track to double.

In Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, military pressure had forced ISGS and JNIM from some areas, but the groups continued committing atrocities in more remote locations, sometimes spilling into neighboring countries and occasionally battling each other.

Other terrorist groups operating in the Sahel include Ansar al-Dine, established in 2011 by Iyad Ag Ghali, the central leader of the 1990 rebellion in Mali, and Ansaroul Islam, considered Burkina Faso's first Islamist terror group.

Continued on page 11

People flee extremist attacks in northern Burkina Faso.



Malian Soldiers patrol the capital, Bamako, amid a surge in violence by rebel forces in 2020.



By the Numbers

The following figures represent the number of violent events reported in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Events include violence against civilians, militia versus military fighting and explosions. The numbers include incidents involving state forces, rebel forces and political militias.

JANUARY 1-DECEMBER 9, 2021

NUMBER OF EVENTS

- Burkina Faso..... **1,208**
- Mali..... **1,265**
- Niger..... **392**

NUMBER OF FATALITIES

- Burkina Faso..... **2,087**
- Mali..... **1,774**
- Niger..... **1,338**

VIOLENT EVENTS AGAINST CIVILIANS

- Burkina Faso..... **577**
- Mali..... **469**
- Niger..... **181**

SAME PERIOD IN 2020

NUMBER OF EVENTS

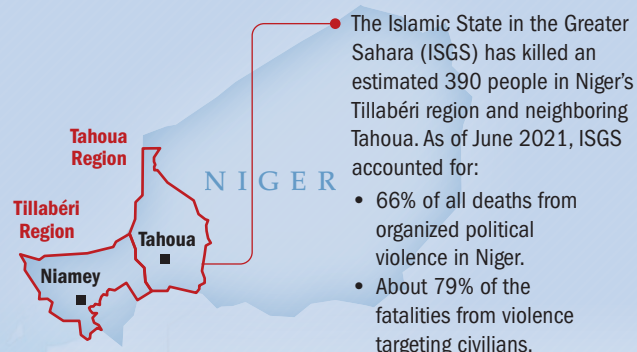
- Burkina Faso..... **845**
- Mali..... **1,216**
- Niger..... **502**

NUMBER OF FATALITIES

- Burkina Faso..... **2,278**
- Mali..... **2,748**
- Niger..... **1,030**

VIOLENT EVENTS AGAINST CIVILIANS

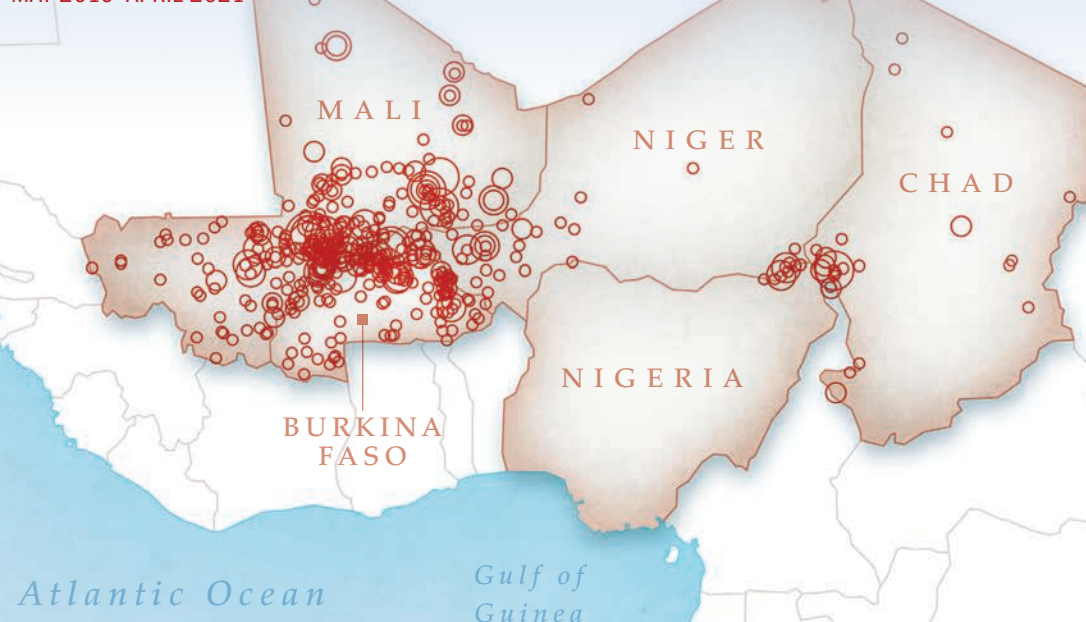
- Burkina Faso..... **319**
- Mali..... **422**
- Niger..... **253**



Source: Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

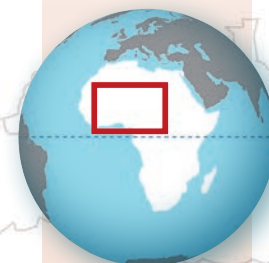
Distribution of Attacks

MAY 2019-APRIL 2021



ATTACKS

- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-16
- 17-24



Source: Janes.com

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE (IDPs)

BURKINA FASO

- Armed group attacks caused 450,000 people to flee in 2020 alone, bringing the total number of IDPs since the conflict started in 2016 to more than 1 million.

MALI

- Estimated number of IDPs in Mali: 346,864.
- Estimated number of Malian refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Niger: 146,930.
- Estimated number of Malians in need of emergency food assistance: 1.3 million.
- Estimated number of Malians in need of humanitarian assistance: 5.9 million.

NIGER

- Nearly 139,000 IDPs.
- The numbers increased by 47% in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions over the 12 months ending in April 2021.

Sources: ReliefWeb, U.S. Agency for International Development, April 2021

Number of Fatalities



Source: Le Monde diplomatique



Islamic State Franchises Multiply

Years After Losing Territory in the Middle East, ISIS Proliferates on the African Continent

ADF STAFF

The Islamic State group, which once held about a third of Syrian territory and even more ground in Iraq, now oversees a network of affiliates of varying sizes across Africa.

Each affiliate arose in disparate regions with unique histories and grievances. Groups exploiting those grievances through extortion and violence eventually took on the brand known globally as ISIS. Now the international community is joining African nations in looking for ways to combat the spread.

Islamic State group influence in Africa has grown yearly since 2014, according to a 2021 Sky News report. By 2019, at least 22 African countries had seen suspected Islamic State group-linked activity, even if no affiliate was based there. By 2020, eight countries had seen an increase in such violence. Those eight represent West Africa's Sahel, the current epicenter of Islamic State group violence on the continent, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Mozambique.

Observers say the Islamic State group affiliations offer advantages to Africa-based militant groups and the umbrella organization. Local jihadist

A Malian Soldier walks near a sign reading, "Welcome to the Islamic state of Gao." The Islamic State group has been expanding its reach in many African countries, including Mali.

groups gain the cachet "of the Islamic State brand as well as the resources that come along it, such as financing, training, and a worldwide social media-based propaganda platform," wrote Jacob Zenn, of the Jamestown Foundation, and Colin P. Clarke, of the Soufan Group, for Foreign Policy magazine. In turn, the Islamic State group can point to successes in Africa as it struggles to recover from defeats in the Middle East.

In fact, African affiliates now are featured on the front page of the Islamic State group's weekly publication, *al-Naba*, more than core groups in Iraq and Syria (ISIS core), Zenn and Clarke reported.

There are six African affiliates, or provinces, of the Islamic State group in Africa. The first three began in 2014 in war-torn Libya, Algeria and Egypt's troubled Sinai region. A year later, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) formed and has branches in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel. One branch emerged from Nigeria's Boko Haram insurgency and the other out of militant groups active in northern Mali.

A small group in Somalia pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group in 2018, and a year later Islamic State Central Africa Province formed. It has branches in Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province insurgency and in a faction of the eastern DRC's Allied Democratic Forces militant group.

"Underscoring how important an area of operations Africa has become for the Islamic State, an estimated 41 percent of all global deaths inflicted by Islamic State militants in 2019 occurred in Africa," researchers Tricia Bacon and Jason Warner for the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point wrote.

The African groups vary by history, size and motivation. Experts have found that discerning the true relationships between them and the Islamic State group can be elusive. Ultimately, the Islamic State group has to designate a group as a province for it to be considered an affiliate.

Researchers Haroro J. Ingram and Lorenzo Vidino in a May 2021 essay for Lawfare, a blog of the Lawfare Institute, wrote that the Islamic State group supplies affiliates with its *aqeeda* (creed) and *manhaj* (method) for establishing an Islamic state and a brand for furthering its propaganda.

“In short, its affiliates are expected to adopt and apply the Islamic State’s ideology and politico-military strategy in their corner of the world,” they wrote.

For example, in the DRC, Seka Musa Baluku’s faction of the Allied Democratic Forces militant group has adopted ISIS core propaganda techniques and talking points. In turn, Ingram and Vidino wrote, the Islamic State group has acknowledged the DRC militants’ operations and claimed its successes. ISIS core doesn’t seem to be doing much toward command and control, but there is evidence of funding coming to the DRC group.

One theme that unites the affiliates is their “mutual commitment to the ideals, at least ostensibly, of a global caliphate,” according to Bacon and Warner.

In the way of aid to the Libyan group, ISIS core sent emissaries from Iraq, returned foreign fighters to bolster local forces, offered money, and supplied governance, tactical and strategic advice.

ISIS core also has sent money to ISWAP’s Lake Chad faction and to groups in Somalia. Money and weapons went to the Sinai group, Bacon and Warner wrote. Even so, aid to affiliates was “ad hoc and infrequent.”

Zenn and Clarke argued that Libyan provinces, which are more or less defunct now, represented a first-degree connection because they pledged loyalty, took in fighters from Syria to establish themselves, and “maintained frequent and direct communications to the group’s core.” They also got funding, training and advice until international and Libyan forces dislodged them.

ISWAP would represent a second-tier connection. It has pledged loyalty but has had little engagement with fighters and trainers from the ISIS core group. ISIS does, however, promote attacks and consult with ISWAP leaders.

The world is taking note of the Islamic State group’s growth in Africa. In late June 2021, leaders with the 83-nation Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS met in Rome and approved a task force to address the militant group’s spread into Africa.

Luigi Di Maio, Italian minister of Foreign Affairs, did not share details about how the task force would work, but he said a “holistic approach” is needed to address poverty and other drivers of extremism.

The coalition announced that the Central African Republic, the DRC and Mauritania are among the group’s newest members. Burkina Faso, Ghana and Mozambique attended as observers.

“While it is good that the coalition is talking about Africa and bringing relevant countries into the discussion, any coordination seems to be still in the early stages, while the conditions on the ground are deteriorating very fast,” Emily Estelle, a research fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, told Voice of America.

“The proposed task force should focus its energy on backing up military success with governance success,” she said. “This is the gap that lets IS and other groups keep coming back after military losses.”



Nigerien Soldiers build a wall around the graves of Soldiers killed in a 2019 jihadist attack.

Continued from page 8

The number of militants killed in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger during offensive military operations from early 2020 through mid-June 2021 was estimated at more than 1,400, according to ACLED.

Mali Remains Fragile

Insurgencies often thrive in areas of political upheaval. This has been the case in Mali where, in June 2021, the country experienced its second military coup in nine months. Repeated JNIM and ISGS attacks on Malian forces through the first half of the year only made the country’s security situation worse.

The first half of 2021 was deadly for Malian forces. JNIM killed 10 Soldiers in February during an ambush in the southern-central town of Boni, and ISGS attacked a convoy in the eastern town of Tessit in March, killing at least 33 troops.

In December 2020, a European effort called Task Force Takuba arrived in northern Mali with the first troops coming from France and Estonia; Czech and Swedish forces arrived soon thereafter, according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

French President Emmanuel Macron in July 2021 announced that he would end Operation Barkhane, which began after France initiated a military intervention in 2013. Macron also closed three military bases in Mali and reduced by half the number of French troops in the Sahel.

Other international security operations in Mali since 2013 include the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, which has supported political processes and performed security-related duties, and the European Union Training Mission Mali (EUTM), which works to strengthen the Malian Armed Forces.

International Military Efforts

UNITED NATIONS MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTEGRATED STABILIZATION MISSION IN MALI (MINUSMA)

MINUSMA, established in 2013, is authorized to include 13,289 military personnel and 1,920 police officers. Its forces are spread across five sectors. Its mandate includes supporting the implementation of a peace agreement in Mali and helping Malian stakeholders devise a strategy to protect civilians and reduce violence. During much of its existence it has been the most dangerous peacekeeping mission in the world with 260 peacekeepers killed as of November 2021.

G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

Authorities formed the G5 Sahel Joint Force in 2017 as a military alliance among Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. At its creation it was authorized by the African Union and the U.N. Headquartered in Bamako, Mali, it includes up to 5,000 personnel, including Soldiers, police and gendarmes. It addresses terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking in the Sahel with a particular emphasis on border regions between member countries.

MULTINATIONAL JOINT TASK FORCE (MNJTF)

Officials established the MNJTF in 1994 in Nigeria in response to armed banditry in the Lake Chad basin. In 1998, it became truly multinational with the inclusion of Chad and Niger, which were experiencing similar security challenges. In 2015, as the extremist group Boko Haram spread throughout the region, the African Union authorized the deployment of about 10,000 troops to address the security crisis. It now includes five member states — Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria — with four sectors headquartered in Mora, Cameroon; Baga-Sola, Chad; Baga, Nigeria; and Diffa, Niger.

EUROPEAN UNION TRAINING MISSION (EUTM) MALI

The mission, which began in 2013, is made up of more than 800 Soldiers from 22 EU members and five nonmember states. EUTM Mali trains and advises the Malian military, improves the military education system, and advises G5 Sahel Joint Force headquarters personnel. It began its fifth mandate in 2020 and, as of mid-2021, had trained more than 15,000 Malian Armed Forces students in a variety of skills including first aid, countering improvised explosive devices and human rights law.

OPERATION BARKHANE

This French-led military intervention came after Operation Serval in August 2014. Unlike Serval, which was limited to Mali, Barkhane was designed to respond to militants across the Sahel with a particular emphasis on the tri-border region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. Up to 4,500 Soldiers were deployed in Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger with headquarters in N'Djamena, Chad. In July 2021, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that he would end the operation while continuing French support for countries in the region fighting extremism.

TASK FORCE TAKUBA

In December 2020, a European effort called Task Force Takuba arrived in northern Mali with the first troops coming from France and Estonia; Czech and Swedish forces arrived soon thereafter, according to the Council on Foreign Relations. In 2021, the task force brought together the special forces from seven European countries to fight terrorism in the Sahel. The force includes 600 troops, half of whom are from the French Army.



Burkinabe citizens protest worsening jihadist attacks in 2021.

By October 2021, Mali reportedly was close to reaching a deal that would deploy 1,000 members of Russia's Wagner Group to the country to counter terrorism and insecurity. The notoriously brutal mercenaries operate in several countries on the continent and have a track record of human rights abuses and self-enrichment.

ISGS in Niger

In Niger, the Tillabéri region continued to be a hot spot for attacks by ISGS, JNIM and armed bandits.

In January 2021, jihadist gunmen killed 100 people in Tchoma Bangou and Zaroumadareye. The villages are about 120 kilometers north of Niger's capital, Niamey, in the Tillabéri region that borders Mali and Burkina Faso.

In a public meeting of federal, regional and local leaders in the town of Ouallam, Gen. Mahamadou Abou Tarka said Tillabéri's border with Mali allows extremists virtually unfettered access to the region.

"The difficulties of guaranteeing peace in an area like that of northern Tillabéri comes from the fact that it is a border area open to Mali, where the government has unfortunately disappeared," said Tarka, who serves as president of Niger's High Authority for the Consolidation of Peace. "We must seek them out, pursue them relentlessly in their base in Mali, annihilate them, deny them the ground."

To win this battle against extremism, he said, the military, local leadership and the public must work hand in hand.

"The Armed Forces need the knowledge that the administration has of communities," he said. "Consultation between the military and the governor, between the military and the prefects, must be permanent."

ISGS is by far the most active terrorist group in Niger. In the first half of 2021, the number of people ISGS killed accounted for 66% of all deaths from organized political violence and about 79% of the fatalities from violence targeting civilians, according to ACLED.

Armed Groups

JAMA'AT NUSRAT AL-ISLAM WAL-MUSLIMIN (JNIM)

JNIM formed in March 2017 through the merger of four jihadist groups in the Sahel: Ansar al-Dine, the Macina Liberation Front, al-Mourabitoun and the Sahara branch of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Since then, it has expanded its operating territory across West Africa while committing violence against civilians, local security forces, international militaries and U.N. peacekeepers.

ANSAR AL-DINE

Ansar al-Dine, which means "Defenders of the Faith," is an Islamic Tuareg group founded in December 2011. The group has tried to establish Shariah across Mali and often targets western civilians and peacekeepers. The group was heavily involved in Mali's 2012 coup. In 2017, the group officially merged with the Macina Liberation Front, al-Mourabitoun, and the Sahara branch of AQIM to form JNIM.

MACINA LIBERATION FRONT (FLM)

An affiliate of Ansar al-Dine, the FLM formed in January 2015 with the goal of taking over a large territory in central Mali and substituting itself for the Malian state. It was founded by Amadou Koufa, a radical Fulani preacher from the Mopti region. The group initially attacked Malian troops but soon began targeting civilians, conducting small-scale raids on police stations and assassinating local officials. The group reportedly used improvised explosive devices, car bombs and suicide attacks during an attack against the G5 Sahel's Joint Force headquarters in 2018.

ISLAMIC STATE IN THE GREATER SAHARA (ISGS)

Operating in the Sahel's Liptako-Gourma region along the borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, the ISGS aims to establish Salafi-jihadist rule. The group is known for competing with other terrorist groups, committing violence against civilians, and attacking local and international security forces. In September 2021, French troops killed ISGS head Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi, who was wanted for deadly attacks on U.S. Soldiers and foreign aid workers.

ANSAROUL ISLAM

Founded in 2016 by Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a Fulani imam and preacher, Ansaroul Islam is considered to be Burkina Faso's first homegrown militant Islamist group. The group splintered after Dicko was killed in a French-led raid of his camp in 2017. From 2016 to 2018, just more than half of militant Islamist violent events in Burkina Faso were attributed to Ansaroul Islam, but the group's activities declined sharply in the following years.

Nigerien Army officials inspect a torched vehicle where gunmen on motorcycles killed eight people, including six French aid workers.

Brutality in Burkina Faso

ISGS also has left a trail of devastation in Burkina Faso, where the terrorists are known to cut off the hands of suspected thieves, perform public executions and recruit children. Since 2018, the country has experienced a sharp increase in attacks against security forces and civilians.

On June 4, 2021, gunmen, mostly children ages 12 to 14, raided the village of Solhan in northeast Burkina Faso, killing more than 160 people and burning homes.

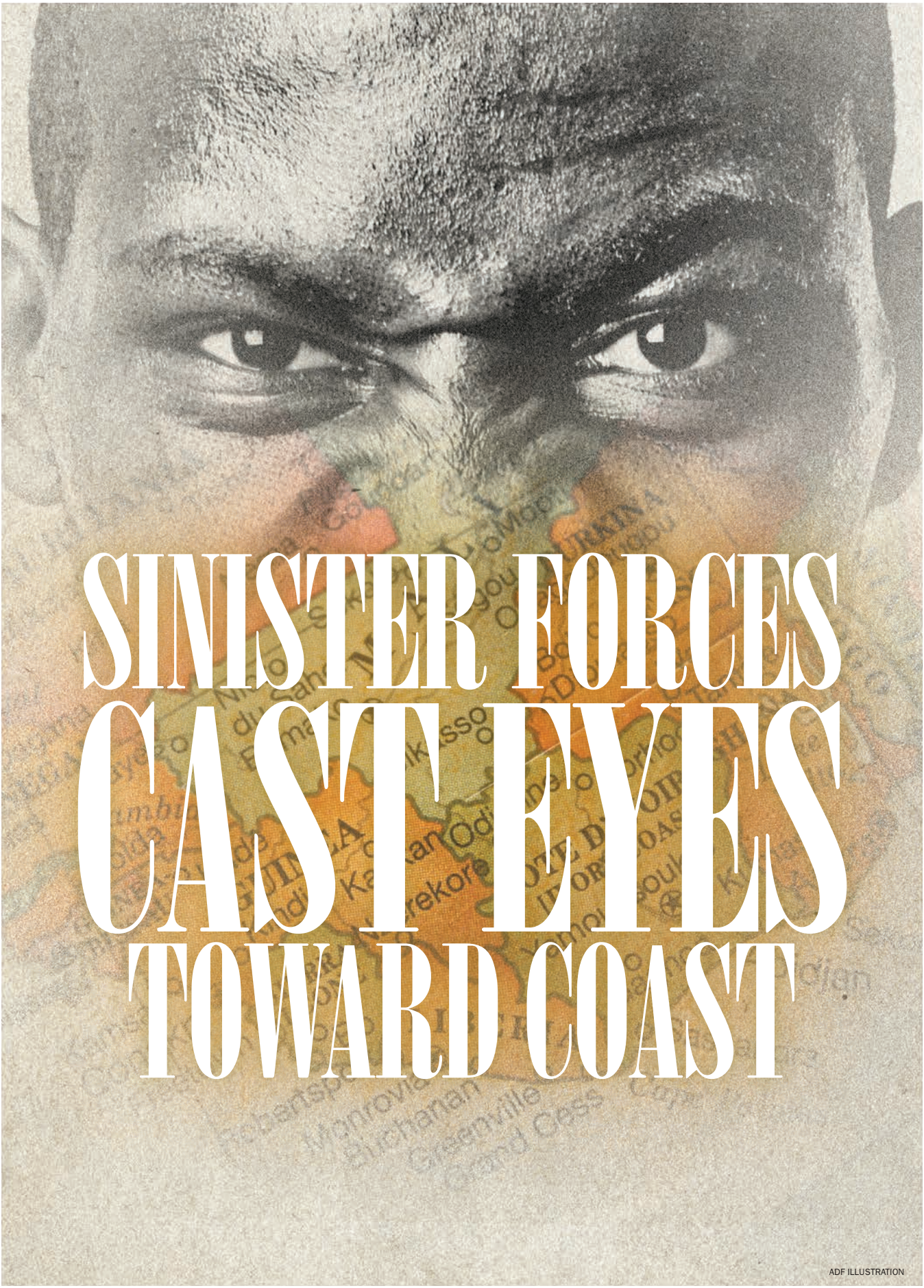
Fighting between ISGS and JNIM, along with the efforts of French and G5 Sahel Joint Force security forces, has weakened ISGS in the country's Sahel, Centre-Nord and Est regions. The group has switched operations to the Seno province in southern Burkina Faso and the eastern Oudalan province.

JNIM attempts to maintain compliance and regulate social conduct through less deadly means, including intimidation through threats, beatings and kidnappings in areas the group controls, according to ACLED.

In November 2020, however, JNIM responded to the deployment of troops in the northeastern town of Mansila by imposing an embargo on the town and placing improvised explosive devices along surrounding roads.

Through the first half of 2021, extremist groups killed 66 volunteer militiamen, and, in November, an attack near a gold mine in Inata killed 49 military police.

As of May 2021, more than 1.1 million Burkinabe civilians were internally displaced, compared with 560,000 at the beginning of 2020, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development. □



SINISTER FORCES CAST EYES TOWARD COAST

ADF ILLUSTRATION

WEST AFRICAN NATIONS PREPARE AS SAHEL-BASED EXTREMISTS SEEK TO EXPLOIT NEW TERRITORY

ADF STAFF

AS EXTREMISTS launched murderous assaults on Burkinabe churches in 2019, neighboring Ghana took note. In preceding years, Islamist-backed terrorism and violence, born in Mali and spreading south, had infiltrated Burkina Faso and crept ever closer to Ghana's northern border.

Although hundreds of kilometers north of the border, the church attacks still were a source of unease. Their brutality toward people of faith and houses of worship was striking.

In Silgadji, Burkina Faso, gunmen rushed in on motorcycles and killed a pastor, two of his sons and three other congregants in April 2019, the BBC reported. Less than a month later, more than two dozen extremists killed six people, including a priest, during Mass at a church in Dablo. They then burned the church to the ground.

Ghanaians' fears were further stoked soon after on Sunday, June 2, 2019, when a 51-year-old Burkinabe national wandered into a Catholic church in the northern border town of Hamile, Ghana. The builder, dressed in a T-shirt and trousers, carried a loaded semi-automatic pistol and raised congregants' suspicions.

Police arrived and arrested the man before anything else could happen. The gunman told authorities he had arrived in the area a week earlier to work on a building project, according to Graphic Online, a Ghanaian news outlet. He also told police he carried the gun for protection because he had been robbed previously in Burkina Faso.

The Upper West Regional Security Council met with Christian and Muslim leaders to encourage vigilance and for locals to keep watch for suspicious people, according to Graphic Online. "This is a wake-up call on public safety issues," said the Most Rev.

Richard Kuuia Baawobr, bishop of the Wa Diocese.

As militant Islamist violence continues to grow in Burkina Faso, Mali and elsewhere, two things are clear: Extremists groups have made public their desire to expand their reach into West African coastal nations. And those nations are working together to stop them.

"For some time now the understanding for all of us who work in this space is that violent extremism is descending toward coastal states from the Sahel — from Mali, from Niger, and into Burkina Faso — and subsequently looking to take over coastal states, including Ghana," Mutaru Mumuni Muqthar, executive director of the West Africa Centre for Counter-Extremism (WACCE), told ADF. "And so we've been following this closely in terms of dealing with local communities along the borders, our northern borders."



Participants chat during a community engagement meeting in Bawku, Ghana, in November 2020. ABDUL RASHID IDDRISU/WACCE



THE ALLURE OF COASTAL STATES

The spread of violence out of Mali into Burkina Faso and beyond can be explained through several dynamics. First, regional and international security responses have pushed militants outward as they seek safe havens in new territory, such as along the porous borders of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger's Liptako-Gourma region.

Second, militants seek to "expand the battlefield" to dilute the effectiveness of security forces by making authorities cover ever-widening territories, according to Dr. Daniel Eizenga, a research fellow with the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Finally, area populations, including those in coastal states, tend to be interconnected ethnically and culturally in ways that defy borders, especially with regard to the movement of pastoralists back and forth across the region. This can further complicate security and is not directly tied to the 10-year-old violence that originated in Mali.

High-ranking militant leaders made clear their designs during a February 2020 meeting in central Mali during which they discussed expanding toward the Gulf of Guinea, primarily through Benin and Côte d'Ivoire, and attacking military bases there.

Among those attending, according to French security officials, were Abdelmalek Droukdel, then-head of al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb; Iyad Ag Ghali, founder of Ansar al-Dine and leader of Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin, known as JNIM; and

A Ghana Immigration Service officer patrols during a security cooperation event with U.S. Marines in Asutsuare, Ghana. Informal border crossings in northern Ghana are a security concern.

1ST LT. TAYLOR COX/U.S. MARINE CORPS

Amadou Kouffa, head of the Macina Liberation Front. French forces killed Droukdel in Mali in June 2020.

Financial motives also are among the likely drivers of expansion into coastal states. The Sahel and neighboring regions are predominantly pastoral, which means a robust cattle industry. Cattle markets will have people moving toward the coast. If extremists can control and exploit trade routes and movement along them, they can help fund their efforts, Eizenga has said.

Those cross-border movements are common and hard to police in countries such as Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.

Muqthar said infiltration by extremists in Ghana's north is "incontrovertible." His group, WACCE, holds up to a dozen civilian engagements a year, mostly in Ghana, but the group also has worked in Cameroon and has "operational networks" in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali and Senegal. Most engagements are workshops to help civilians build resilience against violent extremism. The group also conducts research and advocacy work and cooperates closely with Ghana's ministries of interior and national security.

“

THE NORTH OF CÔTE D'IVOIRE IS BEGINNING
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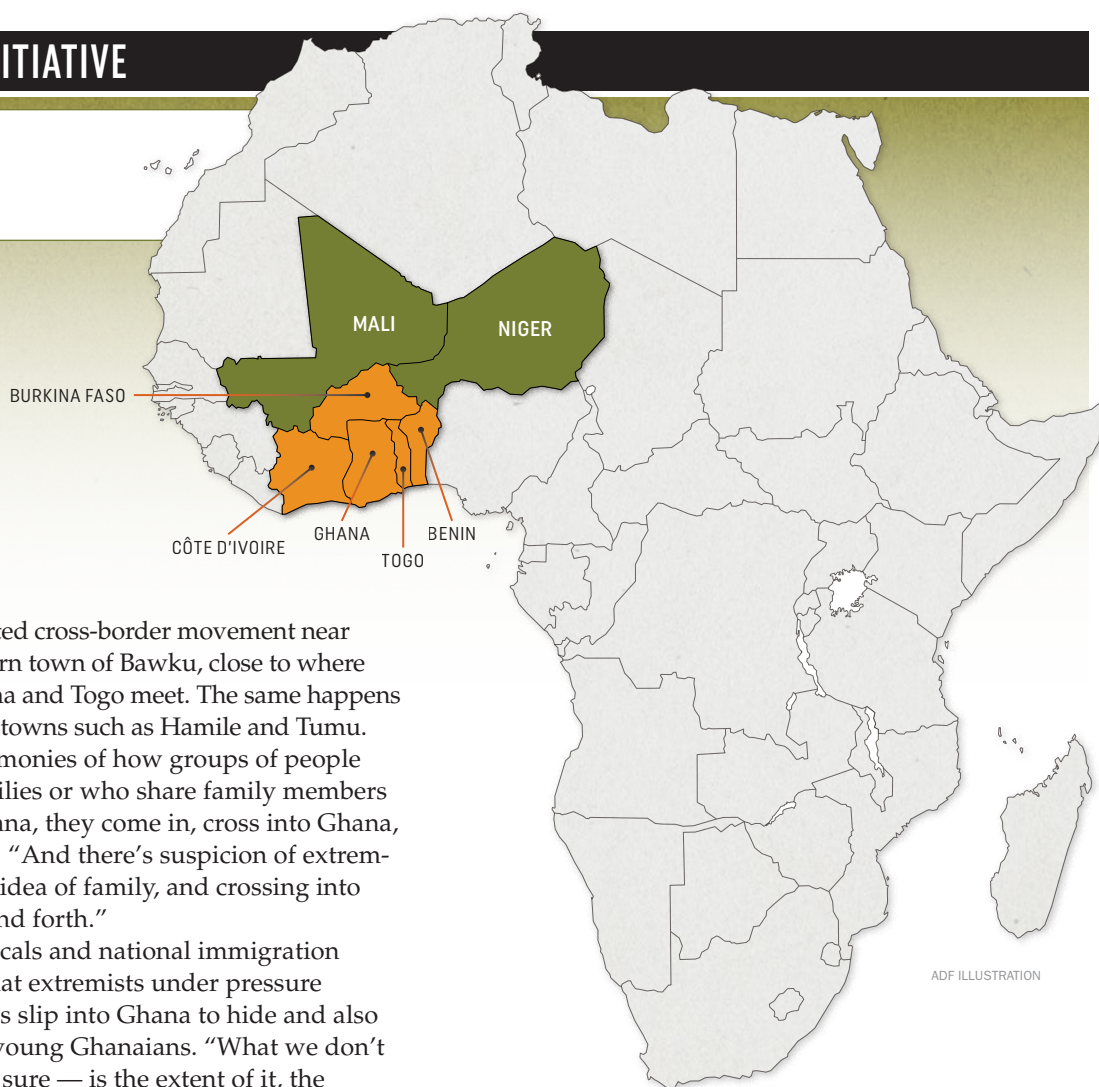
— Lassina Diarra, Ivoirian counterterror expert



Ivoirian Soldiers provide security during the inauguration of the International Academy for Combating Terrorism in Jacquelineville, Côte d'Ivoire, in June 2021. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

THE ACCRA INITIATIVE

- Member Nations
- Observer Nations



ADF ILLUSTRATION

WACCE has noted cross-border movement near Ghana's northeastern town of Bawku, close to where Burkina Faso, Ghana and Togo meet. The same happens in the northwest in towns such as Hamile and Tumu.

"There are testimonies of how groups of people claiming to be families or who share family members with people in Ghana, they come in, cross into Ghana, and back," he said. "And there's suspicion of extremists using that, the idea of family, and crossing into the country back and forth."

Reports from locals and national immigration officials indicate that extremists under pressure from security forces slip into Ghana to hide and also attempt to recruit young Ghanaians. "What we don't know — we're not sure — is the extent of it, the numbers involved, and their resolve in doing so," Muqthar said.

Sampson Kwarkye, senior researcher with the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) Regional Office for West Africa, the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin, wrote that Sahel extremists "are increasingly tapping into a terrorist economy, using Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo as sources or transit zones of funding and logistics."

ISS research, he wrote in June 2020, shows that extremists steal livestock from Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger and sell it at cut rates in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana. Money then is funneled back to accomplices, including terrorists, who use it to buy weapons, motorcycles, fuel and food.

Kwarkye wrote that smugglers sneak millions of dollars' worth of fertilizer from Ghanaian border towns such as Hamile into Burkina Faso, where it becomes plentiful and cheap for extremists who use it to make improvised explosive devices and car bombs.

WEST AFRICAN STATES RESPOND

Kwarkye wrote that coastal nations will have to improve border control, enhance their ability to track trade between countries, and gather better

intelligence, including through the support of civilians living in border towns.

Ghana already is taking steps in that direction. President Nana Akufo-Addo in June 2021 announced the launch of the nation's first National Security Strategy. The effort is intended to provide "rapid, coordinated and comprehensive responses" to threats, he said.

The minister of national security is to hold workshops for government officials, religious and traditional leaders, youth and women's groups, educators, and civil society organizations to make clear their roles in security collaboration.

Ghana's neighbors also have spent the past couple of years girding for the growing extremist threat emanating from the Sahel.

Côte d'Ivoire in June 2021 inaugurated its International Academy to Combat Terrorism outside Abidjan. It includes a research institute, a school for government officials and a training center for special forces. The academy will train Soldiers, police officers, customs officials and prison administrators from multiple countries.



“The north of Côte d’Ivoire is beginning to be under the influence of jihadist groups,” Ivorian counterterror expert Lassina Diarra told Agence France-Presse. “This region is key to the security of the Ivorian state.”

Extremists targeting Côte d’Ivoire exploit cultural ties to Burkina Faso to cross borders for recruitment and other unlawful acts. In June 2020, extremists attacked a security post in Kafolo, killing 10 Soldiers. In 2021, several other attacks along the border had been logged by midyear.

In Togo, to Ghana’s east, the government formed the Inter-ministerial Committee for the Prevention and Fight against Violent Extremism in May 2019. The 18-member committee includes members from government ministries, the Army, and civil and religious groups. The group works with local panels to raise awareness, provide early warning of extremist activity, and improve relations between civilians and security forces, according to an October 2019 ISS report titled, “Togo ups its ante against terror threats.”

West African coastal nations also are working together. Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Togo established the Accra Initiative in 2017 in response to the growing regional extremist threat. Two years later, Mali and Niger joined as observers. The initiative focuses on three areas: training; cross-border military operations, such as Operation Koudalgou I, II and III between May 2018 and

A Burkinabe investigator inspects burned cars in January 2016 outside the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou after an attack by al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb killed dozens. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

November 2019; and information and intelligence sharing through periodic meetings among government ministers and security officials.

Regional nations appear to agree that military interventions, which tend to be short-term and sporadic, will not be sufficient to address the growing threat. Interacting with civilians, building trust and conducting operations in ways that disrupt extremists’ financial flows without harming local economies will be crucial.

Ghana stands out as a model in West Africa. So far, it has avoided major terrorist attacks, despite being nestled among countries that have. It has a well-trained Army, a stable government and a history of engaging with civil society. Still, it must stay alert.

Foreign policy and security analyst Adib Saani told German news service Deutsche Welle in July 2021 that Ghana benefits from an absence of active insurgencies and other internal security problems.

“Largely, in Ghana we have been able to maintain a level of human security and national cohesion in all parts of the country, so the terrorists don’t have a place to fit in.” □



‘The Crisis
IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL,
and the
Solution
MUST BE GLOBAL’



A woman carries water in a camp for displaced people in Ouallam, Niger. Violence has forced more than 2 million people in the Sahel to flee their homes. REUTERS

The Chief of the G5 Sahel Department of Defense Calls for a New Marshall Plan to Save the Sahel

ADF STAFF

Mohamed Znagui Sid’Ahmed Ely knows the security challenges of the Sahel well. A former brigadier general in the Mauritanian Army, he has spent time in command positions, as an instructor and at the country’s general staff headquarters. He humbly says, “My career is a normal career of an officer,” but his resume shows he has been at the forefront of the region’s fight against extremism.

He commanded the region’s Joint Military Staff Committee (CEMOC) in Tamanrasset, Algeria, and later was appointed inspector general of the Mauritanian Armed Forces. He also spent time overseas as a defense attaché.



Mohamed Znagui Sid’Ahmed Ely, chief of the Department of Defense of the G5 Sahel

In 2015, he left active duty and became the chief of the Department of Defense for the newly created G5 Sahel. At the time, the security situation was particularly perilous. Extremist groups had been driven out of northern Mali by Chadian and French forces but had regrouped and formed a base of operations in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger known as Liptako-Gourma.

“They took refuge in the cross-border zones that are remote — difficult to access and abandoned by states,” Sid’Ahmed Ely told ADF. “They turned them into lawless areas where they won the loyalty or terrorized the populations, practiced illicit trafficking, and launched attacks against rural and urban populations, and against the

national and international forces present.”

In 2017, the G5 Sahel Joint Force was created and hailed as a homegrown solution to the Sahel’s security challenges. Made up of 5,000 Soldiers in seven battalions spread across three zones, it was meant to clear terrorists from border regions and address cross-border crime such as drug trafficking. But as it enters its fifth year, the region’s security landscape remains bleak. More than 5,000 people were killed in attacks or armed combat in 2021, and more than 2 million people are displaced. In 2021, nearly 29 million people in the Sahel needed assistance and protection, an increase of 5 million people over 2020, according to the United Nations.



“Terrorism has never been Sahelian. **IT WAS IMPORTED TO US AND GRAFTED ONTO OUR LOCAL PROBLEMS** to produce the complex situation we are living in today.”

Sid’Ahmed Ely is quick to say there is much work to be done.

“The situation today is still troubling, and the joint force still lacks the means required for its mission,” he said.

He also believes the crisis is being fueled by factors beyond the borders of the five G5 Sahel nations: Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger. Libya’s civil war has led to a spillover of fighters and weapons into Sahelian countries. The loss of ground by the Islamic State in the Middle East also has caused fears that the Sahel will attract battle-hardened foreign fighters.

“Terrorism (instead of using the word jihadism, which is a misnomer) has never been Sahelian,” Sid’Ahmed Ely said. “It was imported to us and grafted onto our local problems to produce the complex situation we are living in today. The vast desert areas, the lure of profits through criminal trafficking, the deleterious situation in our area, the precariousness of our means and the reluctance of the international community make me fear a new wave of terrorism could come to our region.”

But he insists that the joint force has made gains. Success can be measured in regional cooperation. It wasn’t long ago that cooperation between the five countries was disjointed and, sometimes, outright hostile. Now the countries have created a Platform for Security Cooperation; founded a Center for Analysis and Early

Warning in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; and founded a Fusion Center in Niamey, Niger. The multinational forces train jointly at the G5 Sahel Defense College in Nouakchott, Mauritania, and at a Sahelian Security College in Bamako, Mali. Soon a regional police academy will open in N’Djamena, Chad.

“In such a short time and coming from five countries, it has succeeded in integrating and working together under one force command,” Sid’Ahmed Ely said. “It ensures common pre-deployment training for the men, and it set up a police component for judiciary oversight and compliance with the law.”

At the operational level, the joint force created rapid action groups of gendarmes in each country that are trained and equipped for anti-terror missions. Sid’Ahmed Ely particularly lauds the seamless coordination of the forces by the Tactical Allied Command Post in Bamako, which has authority over the three zone headquarters. A separate joint command was created in Niamey for coordination with allied foreign forces, such as France in the tri-border region.

“The joint force strategy is to act in zones in partnership with the allied forces and the national forces from the region by prioritizing the areas most targeted by the enemy,” he said. “Currently, it concentrates its efforts on the central zone, which is where the tri-border region is located.”

One particular success was Operation Sama, which



FROM LEFT: Soldiers meet with civilians as part of the G5 Sahel Joint Force's Operation Sama. G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

The G5 Sahel Defense College in Nouakchott was formed in 2018 to offer common training for G5 Sahel Joint Force Soldiers from five countries. It graduated its third class in 2021. G5 SAHEL

A Nigerien military physician treats a patient at a free medical clinic during Operation Sama in the Liptako-Gourma region between Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger. G5 SAHEL JOINT FORCE

was conducted in three phases in Liptako-Gourma over more than two years. The operation helped regain territory and dismantle terrorist infrastructure by capturing bomb-making equipment, motorbikes, fuel, weapons and mobile phones. The operation emphasized civil-military actions such as distributing school kits to children and radios and food items to adults. It offered health services to some of the most vulnerable.

"The operations have helped to keep up the pressure on armed and terrorist groups and to reinforce trust between the Force and civilian populations," the U.N. said in its May 2021 report of the secretary-general. "The Joint Force also reports increased collaboration between its units and the population."

Still, the joint force faces major challenges. It lacks its own air capacity for transporting troops and equipment, conducting reconnaissance or providing air support to ground troops. Sid'Ahmed Ely said the joint force also lacks the ability to collect satellite imagery and gather intelligence electronically.

"This really harms the force's effectiveness," he said. "This lack of air capacity can be resolved by making it available through other structures, if not direct, or by strengthening the national capacities of the contributing countries, which provide air support to the joint force."

Sid'Ahmed Ely said that even though the joint force needs resources, resolving the crisis must go beyond military solutions.



"The degree of violence is getting higher and higher despite the best efforts of the forces which, it should be pointed out, are very significant," he said. "This challenges us and reminds us that the force alone will not solve the security problems in the Sahel."

He points out that the Sahel is facing a changing climate, an exploding youth population, widespread unemployment and political instability.

"The crisis is multidimensional, and the solution must be global and multisectoral with an urgent, massive and comprehensive commitment from the international community."

As the G5 Sahel alliance enters 2022, it's in a particularly tenuous position. France is repositioning its forces in the region and ending its Operation Barkhane counterterrorism mission. In August 2021, Chad withdrew 600 Soldiers from the joint force. The U.N. estimates that the joint force needs \$391 million annually to perform its duties, but it lacks a consistent funding source. Sid'Ahmed Ely said the time is right for the international community to make a commitment to the joint force and to the Sahel in the form of a "Marshall Plan," an international investment that would buoy the region. The original Marshall Plan in 1948 offered foreign aid to Western Europe to rebuild war-torn areas.

"I hope for a greater and more substantial engagement of the international community in the Sahel, particularly at the level of the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union to help, not only at the security level, which is a priority, but also to decide on a Marshall Plan for the benefit of the Sahel and the cancellation of the Sahelian debt," Sid'Ahmed Ely said. "It is at this price, and only at this price, that the security trends will be reversed and the Sahel will become a zone of security and peace between Africa and Europe and between the Middle East and America." □

GOLD

FINANCES

CRIME



THE SAHEL HAS BECOME A BREEDING GROUND FOR TERRORISTS. SMALL GOLD MINES ARE THE UNWILLING PARTNERS.

ADF STAFF

There's a fantastic amount of gold to be found in the Sahel.

In addition to the region's large-scale industrial mines, there are small artisanal mines — hundreds of them in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger — with people, including children, mining gold with simple hand tools. A 2019 International Crisis Group report said that more than 2 million people in the three countries work in small-scale artisanal mines.

With so many mines and miners, the three countries can't protect them from attacks and raids by terrorists and robbers.

The region has become the center of a surge in terrorism, with thousands of people killed and millions more forced to flee their homes. Huge areas of the three countries are left ungoverned and unpoliced.

As the violence spreads, it threatens other countries, including the coastal states of Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana and Togo.

Ayisha Osori, head of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa, told the Financial Times that if terrorists destroy security in the Sahel, there will be “a domino effect of insecurity, wholesale violence ... breakdown of borders as internally displaced persons spread across the Sahel” and beyond.

The terrorists' tactics range from providing paid protection to small mines to all-out invasions of mines and mining towns.

For extremists to expand and hold their territory, they need money, and the artisanal mines in Burkina Faso alone are believed to produce as much as 30 metric tons of gold per year. The artisanal mines are generally in remote areas, away from government taxation — and protection.

The gold from the artisanal mines, according to the

Financial Times, usually is smuggled to neighboring Togo, where it is taxed at a lower rate than in Burkina Faso. From there it is flown to the United Arab Emirates for processing. The gold typically is transported in hand luggage and flown on commercial flights. A 2018 study indicated that about 20 metric tons of gold makes its way from Burkina Faso to Togo each year.



Workers labor in a gold mine in Bouda, Burkina Faso. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The region's artisanal gold mines serve the extremists in more ways than just money. The miners themselves are poor and working under terrible, and dangerous, conditions. Extremists often recruit them. Many of them are just children, mostly boys, open to manipulation.

“NO MATTER WHICH REGION, THEIR FIRST TARGET IS TO CONTROL THE MINING AREA. IT’S THEIR TOP REVENUE SOURCE, AND ALSO A GOOD PLACE FOR THEM TO RECRUIT.”

— Mahamadou Sawadogo, Burkinabe security analyst

Artisanal gold mining often involves the use of explosives such as dynamite, and extremists have used some of the mines to train recruits in the use of dynamite as a weapon.

The region’s terrorists have not limited their attacks to just small, artisanal mines. They also have attacked trucks and convoys used by large mining companies. In Burkina Faso on October 29, 2021, terrorists attacked a convoy of buses and supply trucks carrying 33 employees and contractors of the Canadian mining company Iamgold. It was the second such attack on an Iamgold convoy in three months, *The Globe and Mail* newspaper reported.

TWO MAIN GROUPS

There are two main groups of extremists operating in the Sahel. One is Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, or JNIM), a coalition of insurgent groups that formed in 2017. Since then, it has expanded its operating territory across West Africa while waging war against civilians, local security forces, international militaries and United Nations peacekeepers.

Researcher Jared Thompson, writing for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said JNIM has successfully tapped into local grievances in expanding its territory, “while responses to the insurgency have not addressed the political drivers of conflict and have facilitated human rights abuses.”

“Attacks on security forces and violence against civilians by JNIM are both likely to continue as insurgent violence inflames community tensions and political dynamics between Sahelian states and international partners impede a comprehensive pathway to peace,” Thompson noted.

The other group is the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), an Islamic State group affiliate. It has been particularly violent against civilians, local authorities and international security forces. “The group will likely continue to pose a threat to local communities and Sahelian states as counterterrorism efforts alienate civilians and fail to roll back ISGS’s territorial gains,” Thompson noted in a July 2021 report.

The two groups have similar goals, including imposing strict Shariah. Miners have reported that extremists have shown up at their mines and directed them to grow their beards, shorten their pants and conduct daily prayers. Both groups exploit community tensions and the failure of governments to intervene and provide security. Both take hostages for ransom, steal cattle and provide “protection” services, including controlling smuggling routes.

Thompson said the two groups have worked together on at least five occasions but have had a falling out since as early as the summer of 2019. The Islamic State group has encouraged ISGS to be more aggressive in dealing with JNIM, which also has had defections to its rival. Security analyst Christian Nellemann said the two groups are battling to control mining sites.

“Islamic State propaganda has featured this conflict prominently, detailing attacks against JNIM cells and actively encouraging defections from JNIM to ISGS,” Thompson wrote. “The depth of the conflict suggests that, while some local cells may be able to reduce the level of intra-jihadist violence, the two groups are unlikely to restart collaboration in the manner observed in 2019.”

COVID-19 has made matters worse. The pandemic shut down ports and borders throughout Africa, which reduced money and supplies to both groups. That, in turn, pushed the extremists further into the gold market.

“The tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Côte d’Ivoire is characterized by illicit smuggling and small arms trafficking that accompany goods being transported through Côte d’Ivoire to commercial hubs in Mali and Burkina Faso,” noted Daniel Eizenga and Wendy Williams in a December 2020 brief published by the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. “This area is also developing into a new hub of





Gold miners take a break in a town northeast of Burkina Faso's capital. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



Miners empty containers of ore from a shaft in an artisanal mine in Mali. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



A young miner emerges from a gold mine in the Ganzourgou region of Burkina Faso. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

artisanal gold mining.” They reported that a string of attacks starting in 2020, “combined with prospects for gold exploitation, have heightened the risk of insecurity in this region.”

Mahamadou Sawadogo, a Burkinabe security analyst, said in June 2021 that extremists had spent the past year expanding their territory around Burkina Faso. “No matter which region, their first target is to control the mining area,” he told the Financial Times. “It’s their top revenue source, and also a good place for them to recruit young men.”

In a study, the International Crisis Group noted that artisanal gold mining is fueling violence and criminal networks. The group concluded that the only way to stop the extremists is to step up subregional and international security throughout the mining areas.

UNTENABLE SITUATION

Researchers noted that the current situation, in which artisanal sites are mining gold with either insufficient or nonexistent security protection, is untenable. The study recommended:

- Artisanal gold mining must be preserved because of its “positive consequences,” which include providing jobs to citizens who might otherwise be forced to work with extremists. In some cases, gold miners are reformed extremists.
- In gold-bearing areas marked by violence, governments should either deploy their security forces near the sites or formalize the role of local independent security groups. Such security need not necessarily

be deployed at the actual gold mines.

- In using independent security groups, governments will need to install supervisory mechanisms to prevent such groups from becoming “predatory elements.”
- Governing groups need to strengthen subregional and international regulations and improve due diligence to better control gold production by limiting its capture by violent extremists.
- Governments need to formalize the mining process by issuing gold mining permits and setting up authorized trading posts.
- Officials should grant tax advantages or provide basic services to show artisanal miners that the government can help them.
- Governments must find a balance between industrializing sites, generating taxable income and preserving artisanal mines so that workers continue to have jobs.

“Sahelian states should encourage the formalization of gold mining activities, while taking care not to alienate the gold miners,” the study noted. “They should redouble their efforts to secure gold mining sites and prevent security forces or allied militias from becoming predatory elements. The governments of these countries and those who buy their gold should strengthen their regulation of the sector.” □

The background of the entire page is a dramatic, swirling pattern of red and white, resembling a cyclone or storm clouds. In the center of this pattern is a solid red silhouette of the African continent. The text is overlaid on this background.

IN THE EYE

***OF THE
CYCLONE***

ADF ILLUSTRATION



Amid Terror and Political Upheaval, Burkina Faso Yearns for Stability

ADF STAFF

As the sun set on the final day of Ramadan, a muezzin called faithful Muslims to prayer. They solemnly prostrated themselves on prayer mats in a courtyard before enjoying the iftar, a dinner laid out on a communal table and eaten after sundown during Ramadan.

It is a tradition that dates back centuries, but the setting was unusual: the home of the Catholic archbishop of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. He had invited local Muslims to celebrate the holy day at his home.

"Together we must demolish walls and build bridges," Cardinal Philippe Nakellentuba Ouédraogo said after the meal. "Demolish the walls of hate, misunderstanding, intolerance to build bridges. They came here tonight to build a bridge of brotherhood and tolerance for a reconciled world."

In many countries, a scene like this would be unthinkable, but Burkinabe are proud of what they call their "multicultural brew." It is not uncommon for Christians and Muslims to live side by side, attend the same schools and even intermarry. On holy days, members of one faith will walk next door to offer a

lamb dish to neighbors of another faith.

A common saying is: "One is human and Burkinabe before being Christian or Muslim."

But that harmony has been shattered in recent years. Beginning in 2015, extremist groups crossing over from Mali took over swaths of the country's north and north-east border regions, deploying bombs and rushing in on motorbikes to attack civilians. About 1.3 million people have been forced to flee their homes, a figure equal to 6% of the population.

A lull in the violence from mid-2020 to mid-2021 brought hope, but the reprieve proved to be short-lived. From May to August 2021, 335 civilians died due to armed conflict in the country, a 300% increase from the previous four months.

The low point of the crisis came in June 2021 when assailants on motorbikes stormed the villages of Solhan and Tadayat, killing 174 people in two days. The brutality of the attacks in which terrorists burned down huts with people inside and fired at men trapped in mine shafts shocked an already shaken nation.

Children who fled armed militant attacks play football at a camp for internally displaced people in Kaya, Burkina Faso.

REUTERS

“Burkina Faso as a country is in the eye of the jihadist cyclone,” said Mohamed Maiga, director-general of the Mali-based security consulting firm Aliber Conseil.

In August 2021, the country’s ministers in charge of defense and security announced a new “holistic vision” for the national counterterrorism strategy. A purely military approach, they said, would not be enough to end the crisis. It was time to dig deep and get to the root of the problem.

“The military response is important and necessary, but it is not sufficient,” said Minister of Security Maxime Koné. “We are going to jump-start our diplomacy. We will track those who support the terrorists. Those who threaten us are within our borders.”

These plans were upended in January 2022 when a group of military officers arrested the president and seized power in a coup. The security implications of this coup were still unknown as of early 2022.

Building National Resilience

The vast majority of terror attack victims in Burkina Faso are civilians. Since the

beginning of the security crisis in Burkina Faso through mid-2021, there were 580 attacks by extremist groups, and 359 have been directed at civilians.

The violence has caused what is being called a “silent refugee crisis,” with hundreds of thousands of people living in makeshift shelters and fleeing across borders into Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana and Mali. More than half of those forced to flee have been children.

In the war-torn regions, life is permanently disrupted. During the most recent school year, 2,244 schools in Burkina Faso were closed due to terrorist attacks. The lack of structure leaves children vulnerable to extremist recruitment. Many young recruits report being drawn by rewards such as money, mobile phones or motorbikes.

“They are waiting to go back to school,” Abdouraouf Gnon-Konde, country director for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, told Deutsche Welle. “School is the key to creating a future for these children.”

Before the coup, the nation was embarking on a five-year plan to address the terror

A Burkinabe Soldier patrols a camp in Dori that hosts internally displaced people from the country’s north.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES





threats and protect the most vulnerable. It included protecting schools, offering additional services to displaced people, deradicalization programs for extremists willing to lay down arms, and outreach to people in prisons at risk of becoming radicalized.

The country also has pledged to improve an often-overwhelmed court system to bring justice to terrorist suspects.

“In the five years to come we must construct a strong national resilience against the terrorist threat by building a foundation to support the capacity for governance and national security in order to protect people and property,” Koné said.

Short-Lived Success

In recent years, the Burkina Faso Armed Forces (FABF) has launched major efforts against terrorists. In 2019, thousands of Soldiers participating in Operation Doofu swept through the Nord, Centre-Nord and Sahel regions of the country to clear out terrorist enclaves. In 2020, a joint operation with Côte d’Ivoire took aim at the border region. Most recently, Operation Taanli in 2021 brought together Burkinabe and Nigerien forces resulting in huge arms seizures and the killing or capture of 100 terrorists.

But, too often, say observers, the success has been short-lived.

“All these operations allowed the locals to return to a relative state of calm,” wrote Moussa Banhoré, chief of the Burkina Faso early warning and intercommunal conflict resolution service. “However, the army has not been able to consolidate its gains. Because, following them, these zones have

been the targets of attacks far more deadly than before the operations.”

The FABF has said it wants to change this with a strategy that will keep its forces closer to the most vulnerable people and train them in new counterinsurgency tactics designed to give them the upper hand.

“We need to refine and accelerate the transformation of national Armed Forces by reorganizing them structurally and territorially to make them more responsive and operational,” then-Brig. Gen. Gilbert Ouédraogo said as he took command of the Armed Forces in October 2021. “We are convinced that this reorganization is one of the imperative conditions for success in the fight against terrorism.”

The plan would include building gendarmerie bases in rural places that previously had been unprotected. There would be a renewed emphasis on training in skills such as international humanitarian law, countering improvised explosive devices, and nonconventional and special operations warfare.

The military also planned to invest in communications equipment and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance technology to support its troops.

“We had been in a peacetime posture for too long that used military regions as reservoirs of forces,” said Gen. Aimé Barthélemy Simporé, Burkinabe minister delegate for defense in October 2021. “Soon we will begin a reorganization to be as close as possible to our operational mission. We are going to build a training system that is as comprehensive as possible. We are going to train a lot more.”

Demonstrators hold a banner that reads “Solhan Yesterday, Who’s Turn is it Tomorrow?” during a march to protest a lack of action against extremist violence in Burkina Faso.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A man reads a newspaper in Burkina Faso after a terrorist attack in Solhan that claimed the lives of more than 160 people.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Volunteer Defense Groups Can Help or Hurt

Government-Sanctioned Vigilantes Fight as Violence Grows

ADF STAFF

As the militant Islamist threat continued to spread out of Mali and into Burkina Faso, government authorities there turned to armed civilian vigilante forces to help restore security.

In January 2020, Burkina Faso's parliament approved funding and training for the Volunteers for the Defence of the Fatherland (VDP).

"This law was voted unanimously by the parliament," then-Defense Minister Moumina Chériff Sy said, according to a Reuters report. "It shows that beyond our differences of opinion ... we can be one when it comes to defending the homeland."

The approach places the civilians under military control as auxiliaries in the hopes that they will free up national forces to conduct other operations, according to a report in *The Defense Post*. Volunteers for the VDP must be 18 and are recruited in consultation with local populations. They are trained for 14 days in weapons, discipline and human rights and then are given small arms and communications equipment.

They also must undergo a "moral investigation."

Among their functions are to provide surveillance, information and protection for local populations during an attack while waiting for security forces to arrive, Sy told Burkina Faso news service *Le Faso*.

"It is not a question of making cannon fodder," Sy told *Al-Jazeera*. "We want to prevent these volunteers from becoming militias."

Some VDP members already have been killed by militants, including during an April 2021 attack in the town of Tanwalbougou, Gourma province, in the nation's east. Heavily armed gunmen ambushed a patrol and killed three gendarmes and four volunteers, *Anadolu Agency* reported.

Dr. Daniel Eizenga, research fellow for the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, said Burkina Faso is trying to be creative and thoughtful about providing security in far-flung areas.

"What they're really trying to do is integrate local militias that have provided some protection for their

communities and have at times been in conflict with violent extremist organizations," Eizenga told ADF. "They're basically trying to formalize that militia force and do so in a way that will integrate them into the larger security forces structure for Burkina Faso."

There are, however, legitimate criticisms. Some worry that arming civilians runs the risk of inflaming violent tendencies in the region or empowering civilians to pursue vengeance and retribution over protection and peace.

There is some evidence that these concerns are valid in Burkina Faso. A March 2021 review by Clingendael, the Netherlands Institute of International Relations, indicates that VDP recruitment discriminates against pastoralists and nomads, which tends to exclude many among ethnic Fulani communities. The report notes incidents of attacks and other abuses on Fulani civilians.

Whether Burkina Faso is successful with the VDP will depend on the strength of oversight and accountability measures, Eizenga said. Insurgent groups such as those plaguing remote areas of Burkina Faso — what Eizenga calls "spoiler insurgencies" — can persist for long periods. They tend to have little local support, but as long as they persist and can tap local resources, "they are perceived as winning," he said.

Eizenga said that integrating local forces in remote areas that are hard to access by government forces offers "a potential long-term solution if done well and provided with the correct amount of oversight."



Children write on the board in their classroom in Dori, eastern Burkina Faso, in a school set up for students who have fled extremist violence. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Demonstrators burn tires in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, after a coup that removed the president from office in January 2022. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Uncertainty Reigns

The FABF has faced accusations of abuse against civilians and extrajudicial killings. After the Solhan massacre, members of a volunteer defense group in the town complained that they called a military unit stationed nearby before and during the attack but received no help.

Abdoulaye Diallo, an assistant bus driver who survived the attack, spoke for many in the region. “I don’t trust the defense and security forces; they don’t do their job,” he told Al-Jazeera. “The country is being invaded by jihadists ... [and] the crisis continues because the government is not able to fight.”

Soldiers complained they were woefully under-equipped for the counterterrorism fight. After an attack in Inata, where 20 Soldiers were killed in November 2021, the unit reported it had not received rations for two weeks and resorted to hunting for food. Coup leaders used such reports as a pretext to take power.

Koné said the “trinity” of the government, defense forces and the population must be in harmony.

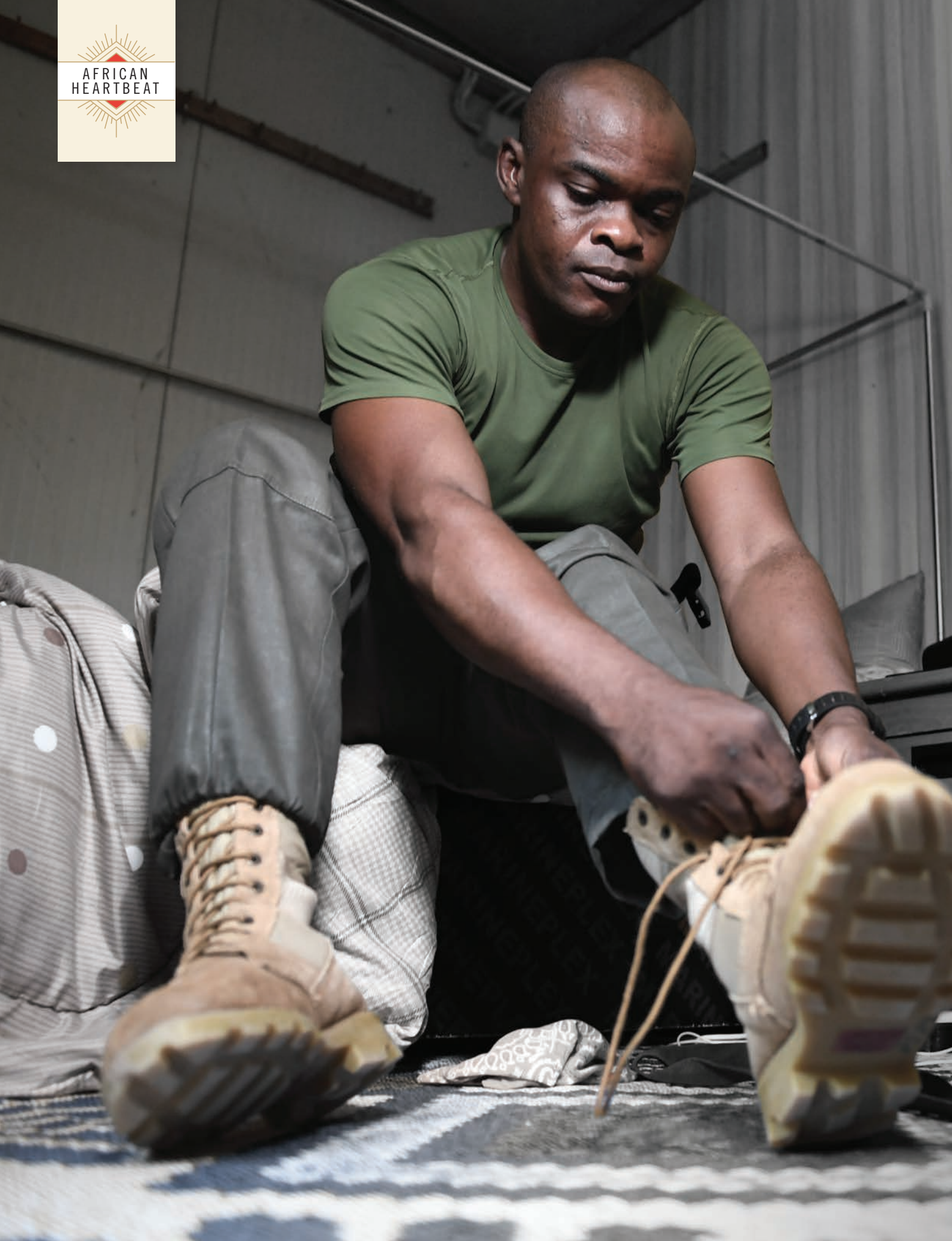
“It will be a question of mobilizing the whole nation,” Koné said. “Because this struggle is beyond our political positioning, beyond our political and religious divisions. This is not just a question of the government, but it is a question of the whole nation.”



Burkinabe Soldiers patrols the Soum region in northern Burkina Faso. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Many Burkinabe citizens are taking a wait-and-see approach in response to the political upheaval.

The mayor of the town of Dablo, where farmers have been unable to plant crops for three years due to unrelenting terror attacks, said people are yearning for security. “As long as security is not found, people cannot carry out an activity or go about their business freely,” said Dr. Ousmane Zango. “So we think that they must quickly organize themselves so that the population can regain peace of mind.” □





GEARING UP — for — DUTY

ADF STAFF

A member of Nigeria's Formed Police Unit prepares to patrol Mogadishu as part of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). As the mission enters its 15th year, it salutes the tens of thousands of Soldiers, police officers and civilians from eight countries who have served since it began in 2007. These men and women have helped restore some degree of peace to Somalia after decades of civil war. Many challenges remain, but the AMISOM forces who lace up their shoes each morning and suit up for work have shown that they are prepared to meet them.

MOKHTAR MOHAMED/AMISOM



BOKO HARAM

Bears Lethal Offspring





An Islamic State Group Franchise Emerges as the Most Dangerous Threat in the Lake Chad Basin

ADF STAFF
PHOTOS BY AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Abubakar Shekau had cheated death before. Several times since the brutal Boko Haram leader took control of the Nigeria-based violent extremist group in 2009, announcements of his demise had gone out. Each time they were premature — until May 2021.

Reports again alleged that Shekau had been killed, this time during a battle with a rival faction of Boko Haram known as the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). The news, which turned out to be true, came in an audio recording made by the rival faction. A voice thought to be that of ISWAP leader Abu Musab al-Barnawi said Shekau “killed himself instantly by detonating an explosive.”

“Shekau preferred to be humiliated in the afterlife [rather] than getting humiliated on earth,” he said, according to the BBC.

Shekau’s death has significant ramifications for those remaining in his faction of Boko Haram, for ISWAP, and for the Nigerian and regional security forces fighting all the extremists. Boko Haram’s original iteration likely will continue to founder, ISWAP probably will gain strength, and security forces will have to change their approach to meet the growing new threat.

ISWAP, which has strong ties to the Islamic State’s core group, likely will become the focus of a new growth enterprise in Africa after international military interventions reversed and degraded earlier Middle East gains. One expert expects the fight against jihadist terrorism in



A truck belonging to the Islamic State West Africa Province flies the terrorist organization’s flag in Baga, Nigeria.

Northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad basin to intensify and lengthen.

“What it also means is that there is now a need for more concerted efforts aimed at countering ISWAP’s influence operations, to improve civilian governance and provision of public services as ISWAP begins to gain more traction,” Folahanmi Aina, a Nigerian researcher and doctoral student at King’s College London, told ADF.

Boko Haram no longer is the monolithic threat that emerged in 2002 in Borno State and grew to a full-fledged

insurgency in 2009. Now a handful of factions remain, with ISWAP the clear leader in organization, tactical ability and threat potential.

The Many Faces of Boko Haram

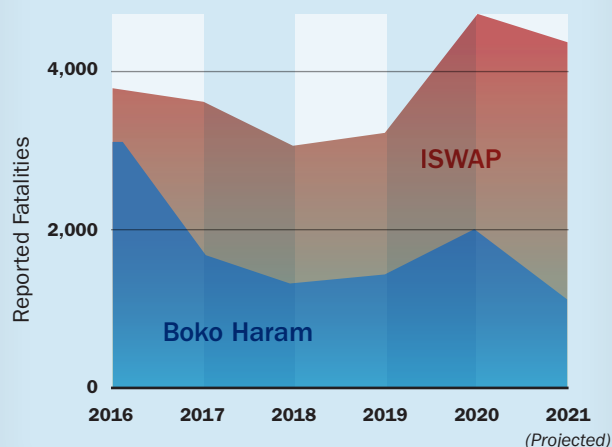
ISWAP is the name Boko Haram took in March 2015 when Shekau pledged his group's allegiance to the Islamic State group and its leader at the time, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Boko Haram had in the preceding months suffered setbacks from Nigerian and regional forces, which weakened it and inflamed growing internal strife, according to "Facing the Challenge of the Islamic State in West Africa Province," a May 2019 report by the International Crisis Group.

A year later Boko Haram split, with al-Barnawi — son of Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf — and others leaving Shekau, keeping the ISWAP name and accepting official recognition from the Islamic State group core.

Shekau remained in control of the smaller remnant and took up the group's original name: Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad, or JAS.

Leadership changes and controversies have persisted in ISWAP since the split, and al-Barnawi himself was reported to have been deposed as leader and later killed in August 2021, although details about his death were scant. But the group has been able to successfully parlay Islamic State group connections into continued growth and influence in the region. International Crisis Group estimates put ISWAP's forces at between 3,500 to 5,000 fighters in 2019, with only 1,500 to 2,000 for JAS. And the smaller group has seen steady defections since then.

Fatalities Linked to Militant Islamist Groups in the Lake Chad Basin



Sources: Africa Center for Strategic Studies and Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project

Another faction operating in the Lake Chad region is the Bakura faction, which takes its name from Ibrahim Bakura, also known as Bakura Doron. Shekau's faction was rooted in the Sambisa Forest in Nigeria's Borno State. The Bakura faction, which is a subfaction of Shekau's and was loyal to him, has been responsible for attacks in Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, according to a March 2020 Jamestown Foundation report.

Finally, Boko Haram's earliest breakaway faction from 2012, known as Ansaru, is aligned with the international

Nigerian Soldiers patrol in October 2019 after Islamic State West Africa Province militants raided the village of Tungushe, killing a Soldier and three residents.





Islamic State West Africa Province extremists burned this truck during a February 2020 attack in Nigeria's Borno State.

terrorist group al-Qaida. It had been dormant for some time but reportedly resurfaced recently in northwestern Nigeria, according to the Soufan Center.

The Current Extremist Threat

Since Shekau died in May 2021, the JAS faction has been in decline. Even while he still was alive, rival ISWAP had opposed Shekau's support for indiscriminate violence against civilians, particularly fellow Muslims who lived outside his group's territory, according to the International Crisis Group report. "ISWAP made clear that it, by contrast, had adopted a posture less hostile to Muslim civilians."

That posture, though still violent and brutal, has allowed ISWAP to embed itself effectively in civilian populations in the Lake Chad basin, and at times even gain a measure of support from them, Aina said.

"Now ISWAP mostly focuses on attacks against military formations and acquiring weaponry as demonstrated during its very first attack, which was on the third of June 2016," Aina said.

In that attack, ISWAP fighters hit a Nigerien base in the rural village of Bosso on Lake Chad near the border with Nigeria. "It illustrated what would become ISWAP's modus operandi: a raid targeting the military, capturing weapons and supplies, without civilian casualties," according to the International Crisis Group.

"Also, ISWAP administers civilian governance and the provision of public services in areas where it operates, such as digging wells, providing dividends for recruits and even collecting taxes," Aina said. "Boko Haram, on the other hand, mostly focuses on attacks against both the military and civilian populations, and is known to be mostly involved in the kidnapping of civilians, so for instance the Chibok girls." Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from their school in Chibok, Borno State, in 2014, sparking international condemnation.

ISWAP also has resolved not to use women and children as suicide bombers. "Basically, this is some form of tactic adopted by ISWAP aimed at winning the hearts and minds of the locals," Aina told ADF. This posture has allowed the group to depend on some locals for intelligence gathering, which further deepens the challenge for security forces.

Even so, ISWAP remains a brutal terrorist group with no compunction about mistreating and killing innocent civilians to serve its purposes. For example, in July 2020, the group is believed to have kidnapped and

Mourners attend the funeral of 43 farmworkers in Zabarmari, about 20 kilometers from Maiduguri, Nigeria, on November 29, 2020. Boko Haram had killed the farmworkers in rice fields near the village of Koshobe a day earlier. The laborers had traveled 1,000 kilometers from Sokoto State to find work.





Supporters of the Coalition of Northern Groups rally to urge authorities to rescue hundreds of schoolboys abducted in Katsina State, Nigeria, in December 2020.

A man points out bullet holes at the Government Science Secondary school in Kankara, Katsina State, Nigeria, in December 2020. Boko Haram abducted hundreds of students from the school.

executed five Nigerian men, of whom three were aid workers, in Borno State.

A month earlier, ISWAP killed 81 civilians in Borno State's Gubio village and killed 20 Soldiers in Monguno who were protecting international nongovernmental organizations, according to a Council on Foreign Relations blog post. Most of those killed in Gubio were Muslims.

"While [ISWAP] labelled its victims as vigilantes working with government forces, they were mostly unarmed cattle herders and residents, some of whom hold light weapons for self-defense in an utterly restive area," according to the post.

Meanwhile, Shekau's JAS faction has been shrinking. According to an August 18, 2021, report by the Institute for Security Studies (ISS), more than 2,100 people associated with JAS have left since Shekau's May 2021 death.

Those who left either were civilians who couldn't leave previously for fear of retribution, or fighters, including commanders and their family members. Most of these desertions have happened in Nigeria's Borno State.

The defections are due to two things, the institute reports. First, ISWAP is letting people leave, especially those held forcefully by JAS as laborers or human shields. Second, JAS fighters who don't want to join ISWAP are fleeing to save their lives. "As ISWAP tightens its monopoly on violent extremist operations in the Lake Chad Basin, it has demoted some JAS commanders, replacing them with its own younger leaders from the Lake Chad islands," according to ISS.

The Threat Going Forward

As ISWAP emerges as the dominant Boko Haram faction, perhaps even more concerning is that it seems poised to form the basis of an Islamic State group resurgence in Africa after the group was degraded in the Middle East, Aina said.

With its connections to the Islamic State group's core leadership, Aina fears that ISWAP eventually could subsume the JAS faction, which has suffered leadership

gaps and lack of direction since Shekau's death.

Another possibility is even more disturbing. What if ISWAP found common cause with armed criminal gangs in Nigeria?

In northwestern Nigeria, organized criminal gangs have been wreaking havoc for about the past five years through kidnappings for ransom, primarily by targeting boarding schools, research associate Dr. Mark Duerksen wrote in a March 2021 report for the Africa Center for Strategic Studies.

The criminal gangs, described by Nigerians as bandits, originated in Zamfara State where artisanal gold mines are common. State officials have estimated that there are 10,000 armed bandits scattered across 40 camps in Zamfara alone, Duerksen wrote.

At least 30,000 bandits were operating in Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto and Zamfara states, Zamfara Gov. Bello Matawalle's press secretary told Nigerian online news site The Cable in April 2021. Nearly 3,000 people were killed during bandit attacks between 2011 and 2019, and more than 1,000 were kidnapped in that span.

"The activities of these organized gangs in the North West is attracting the attention of militant Islamist groups," Duerksen wrote. "Ansaru has deployed clerics to the region to preach against democracy and government peace efforts. There is also some evidence that [ISWAP] is developing ties to North West criminal groups in an attempt to radicalize them."

This potential development is Aina's biggest fear. He said the Islamic State core might seek to broker a unification between ISWAP and the Ansaru faction now that Shekau is out of the picture. The bandits, who operate largely without political ideology, also may be ripe for co-opting.

The bandits would offer ISWAP numbers and weaponry. Militants would offer the bandits order and a mission. Nigerian security forces have waged campaigns to tamp down the criminal threat in the northwest. In early September 2021, authorities shut down mobile telephone networks in Zamfara State as they worked to bring armed bandits under control, Reuters reported. Days later authorities took similar action in parts of Katsina State.

As the bandits scramble and look for ways to withstand government security forces, the Ansaru faction and ISWAP may offer a useful solution, Aina said.

"They might be just the kind of groups that ISWAP might be looking to," Aina told ADF. "And they will probably need Ansaru to help recruit these local bandits, because of the fact that Ansaru knows the terrain more than ISWAP does."

The Way Forward

One thing is clear: An emboldened and stronger ISWAP will mean continuing instability in the Lake Chad basin, Nigeria and surrounding countries. Solving this intractable problem will not be easy. Regional security forces, from the G5 Sahel Joint Force to the Multinational Joint



A wanted poster shows a reward offered for Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau. He killed himself in May 2021 by detonating a suicide bomb during a battle with rival Islamic State West Africa Province militants.

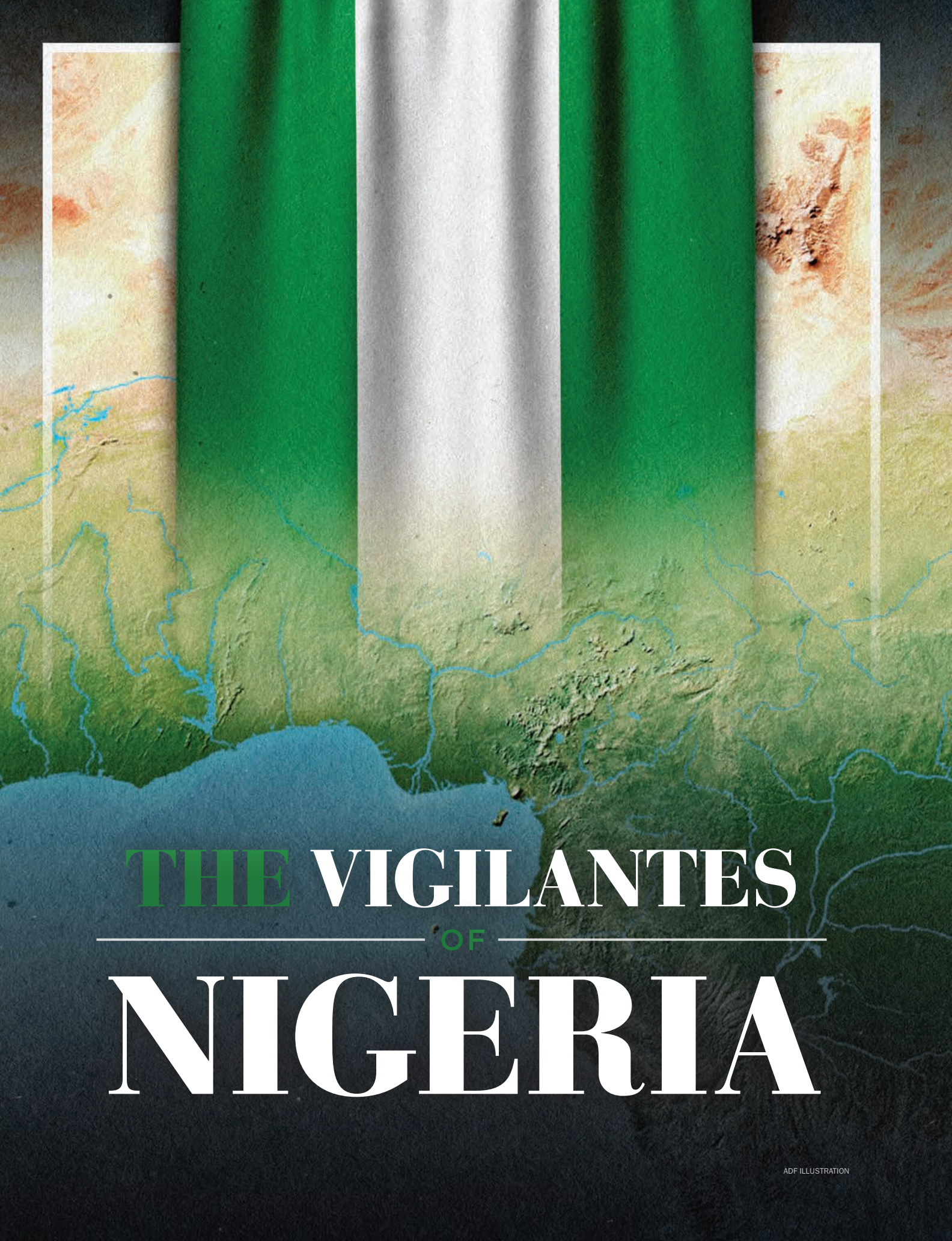
Task Force and others, have struggled to keep pace with varied jihadist threats, which are diverse and spread across the greater Sahel region.

One approach, however, seems to form the basis of a consensus among those who study and observe the Boko Haram threat. Governments will have to improve their ability to fill service and leadership gaps now being exploited by militants, especially those affiliated with ISWAP.

Aina said regional governments will need to provide "citizen-centric governance and resilience building" to address drivers of extremism such as illiteracy and unemployment. Such work, in tandem with continued military action, could show civilians that state-based government has their interests and needs at heart.

The International Crisis Group's report makes similar recommendations.

"ISWAP's deepening roots in the civilian population underscore that the Nigerian government (and, to a lesser extent, those of Cameroon, Chad and Niger) cannot look purely to military means to ensure its enduring defeat," according to the group's report. "Instead, they should seek to weaken ISWAP's ties to locals by proving that they can fill service and governance gaps at least in the areas they control, even as they take care to conduct the counter-insurgency as humanely as possible and in a manner that protects civilians." □



THE VIGILANTES OF NIGERIA

Under attack by extremists and bandits, Nigeria turns to civilian guards for help.

ADF STAFF

Students at the Government Science College in Nigeria's Niger State were sleeping one night in February 2021 when more than 50 gunmen from a nearby forest raided the campus, with only a single guard to offer resistance.

Even though a police station was less than 3 kilometers away, the invaders roamed the campus for three hours without interference. They fled back to the forest, taking 42 hostages, most of them boys about 15 years old, according to *The Africa Report* magazine.

The invasion sparked a national uproar. It was similar to the kidnappings of 276 Chibok girls by the extremist group Boko Haram in 2014, the kidnappings of 317 girls from a secondary school in Zamfara State in February 2021 and other hostage situations in Nigeria.

But unlike those kidnappings, the Niger State incident ended relatively quickly. Gov. Abubakar Sani Bello sent a local vigilante group into the forests on a search-and-rescue mission. The kidnappers released most of the captives in 10 days.

In parts of Nigeria, attacks by armed bandits and extremists have become so common that civilians have established vigilante groups to augment overmatched police and Soldiers.

These vigilantes face no less danger than do their official counterparts. In March 2021, criminal gangs killed two dozen vigilante guards and a Soldier in central Nigeria. Dozens of bandits riding motorcycles opened fire on the vigilantes in an ambush in Mariga Local Government Area in Niger State. The vigilantes were tracking bandits who had attacked an area military post.

The original goal of Boko Haram, formed in 2002, was to inflict a fanatical form of "pure" Islam on northern Nigeria with an ultimate vision of overthrowing the Nigerian government. The group's current insurgency began in 2009, and since then it has killed more

than 36,000 people and forced an estimated 2.3 million people from their homes.

Violence linked to Boko Haram and its offshoot, Islamic State West Africa Province, has doubled since 2015, when the government launched a major offensive dislodging the groups, according to the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Since then, the center notes, the two groups have focused on lightly populated areas of Borno State, including the rugged Sambisa Forest that borders Cameroon's northwest mountains and the firki ("black cotton") swamps south and southwest of Lake Chad.

But the extremist groups are not the only problem. Criminal gangs roam northwest and central Nigeria, stealing cattle and kidnapping people for ransom. They kill, loot and maim. They torch houses. They have no ideology, and their motives are purely financial. There is a growing concern that they have been infiltrated by extremists from the north.



More than 3,000 displaced people live in tents in the town of Anka in northwestern Nigeria. Bandits have terrorized the region.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A PROBLEM OF SCALE

Police and Soldiers have been unable to halt extremism, banditry and intercommunal violence. But observers say this is not entirely their fault. Nigeria has a problem of scale. Although it is only Africa's 14th-largest country by area, it is the continent's most-populous country and has the biggest economy. Its 36 states include Christian majorities in the south and Muslim majorities in the

“While many observers have concerns about the accountability and discipline of these vigilantes, and there is limited oversight over their activities, Nigerians who participated in this research express strong support for vigilante groups.” ~ U.S. Institute of Peace report

north. It is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world, with more than 500 languages and 300 ethnic groups. And the terrain can be challenging, particularly during the rainy season.

There’s also the problem of numbers. The ratio of police to civilians is well below United Nations recommendations. The New Humanitarian news service also notes “the lack of equipment, poor training, and low morale of the average officer” in Nigerian police agencies.

The federal government has turned to its Armed Forces for help, but they also are understaffed and overwhelmed by the conflict in the northeast. And the Soldiers are not trained for a policing role. “That means they are all too frequently shooting to kill, and with almost complete impunity,” The New Humanitarian reported.

In a report posted on its website titled, “Six Alternative Ways to Measure Peace in Nigeria,” the institute concluded that the increasing level of insecurity in the country could be attributed to poor performance by its security agencies. That, in turn, has led Nigerians to resort to taking the law into their own hands by establishing vigilante groups.

“When measured by the death toll, Nigeria seems beset by violence,” the report said. “By some accounts, the COVID-19 pandemic has made experiences of violence even more common.”

The institute’s report used research from four Nigerian states. The report noted that citizens asking for help from police reported disappointing results, with 64% of respondents saying that the experience was “difficult” or “very difficult.”

“There is strong support for vigilante groups,” the report said. “While many observers have concerns about the accountability and discipline of these vigilantes, and there is limited oversight over their activities, Nigerians who participated in this research express strong support for vigilante groups. More than eight in 10 respondents in all the surveyed states agreed that ‘vigilantes make a positive contribution to security in Nigeria.’”

The institute said that less than 10% of its respondents felt that vigilantes have a negative impact on Nigerian security. Although the institute’s surveys involved only four of the country’s 36 states, the results generally can be construed as consistent with the rest of the nation. The Lagos-based SBM Intelligence security company reported that in April 2021, 590 Nigerians were killed in violent attacks across the country, with just five states spared.



A vigilante commander supervises volunteers on a street in Yola, Nigeria. Thousands of volunteers have banded together to form the Vigilante Group of Nigeria. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

These conditions have led to vigilantes — citizens who take the law into their own hands. In most parts of the world, vigilantes are a threat to security. In parts of Nigeria, they are becoming a state-sanctioned necessity.

GROWING PROBLEM

The problem is getting worse. The rate of kidnappings across Nigeria increased by 169% from the beginning of 2019 to the end of 2020, the United States Institute of Peace reported.

NATIONAL POLICY

The position of the Nigerian government continues to be that, given sufficient resources, its police and Soldiers can protect its citizens without auxiliary forces. But that is not the view of many of the country’s 36 governors, who have learned to look the other way at the formation of vigilante groups, and in many cases, actually endorsed them.

One such group is the Civilian Joint Task Force, formed in Borno State in 2013. It began as a group of local hunters who wanted to protect their communities, but as the news organization The Conversation noted, the task force soon became integrated into the government’s official counterinsurgency effort. In 2016, experts



A security guard with his rifle was on duty when more than 300 girls were abducted by gunmen in northern Nigeria on March 1, 2021. The gunmen overwhelmed police and vigilantes. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

told *The Economist* magazine that the task force had more than 26,000 members in Borno and Yoko states, with 1,800 getting a salary of \$50 per month.

Over the years, the task force has used its deep knowledge of local communities and terrain to identify members of Boko Haram and limit their attacks. In recent years, the task force has provided security at camps for displaced persons. But like many Nigerian vigilante groups, members of the force also have been accused of abuses, including murders. In 2017, the United Nations had to pressure the task force into ending its practice of recruiting children.

Some vigilante groups have origins as self-appointed police who gain legitimacy through government endorsements. The Bakassi Boys got their start patrolling a market in the city of Aba in Abia State and now operate in the nation's southeast. The state government renamed them the Abia State Vigilante Service in 2000, giving them money and equipment. That same year, the Anambra State governor invited the Bakassi Boys to deal with increased crime there. The State House of Assembly passed a law to legitimize the group as the Anambra Vigilante Services. Imo State followed suit.

The Bakassi Boys have not been universally well

received. In 2018, the Nigerian Supreme Court upheld the death penalty imposed on three members of the Bakassi Boys for two murders committed in 2006. Nigeria's *Punch* Newspapers reported that Justice Amina Augie, who delivered the judgment of the Supreme Court said, "The Bakassi Boys are nothing but outlaws." She said they were "lawless persons operating outside the law, who desecrate the laws of the land in their unlawful and misguided quest to dispense justice by killing alleged criminals."

NO 'TYPICAL' GROUPS

There is no "typical" vigilante group in Nigeria. Some are funded and equipped by local governments. Some groups number in the hundreds, even thousands, of volunteers. And some are spur-of-the-moment revenge seekers, called to action by local leaders to avenge an attack.

Nigeria's security problems are West Africa's and the Sahel's problems. With more than 200 million people, Nigeria has tremendous influence over the entire region. As *Foreign Affairs* magazine has noted, "When Nigeria slips into recession, the rest of the region's economies typically stop growing."

In pointing out the failings of regional security groups, *Foreign Affairs* noted that "they also have

NIGERIA IS A ‘SOUP’ OF SECURITY RESPONSES

Dr. Mark Duerksen is a research associate at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies. His research focuses on Nigeria's security landscapes and Africa's unparalleled urbanization, along with the security challenges and opportunities that cities present. His projects at the center include tracking security-related news and creating analytic infographics. Africa Defense Forum (ADF) interviewed Duerksen via email. His remarks have been edited to fit this format.

ADF: Are Nigeria's mercenary groups actually working? It seems that many of them become as bad as the organizations they are set up to combat. For instance, a federal judge in Nigeria said the Bakassi Boys are “nothing more than outlaws.”

Duerksen: It's a complicated question, and it's not always clear whether Nigeria's regional and local nonstate security outfits are working, and it may be too early to tell in some cases. I think it's important to distinguish between:

- Private security organizations that are usually contracted by private interests.
- Local militias and vigilante groups that are set up to defend local property and communities, and sometimes are condoned, equipped and trained by local governments.
- Regional security outfits that are set up or officially sanctioned by state governments, even if their constitutionality is disputed.

All of these forces sometimes overlap geographically and operate in Nigeria in addition to the country's myriad military forces, numerous divisions of federal police, as well as other security forces such as the State Security Service. So, there's really a “soup” of security responses in Nigeria of all these different groups ostensibly trying to make the country safer from the diversity of armed groups operating in the country.

In the case of turning to vigilante groups or new regional forces to fill the security vacuum, these groups often follow a similar pattern of eventually engaging in the kinds of criminal behavior and abuses that they were tasked with preventing. This is the case with the self-defense militias in North West — they were initially established by local farmers to protect their interests against well-armed herder-aligned militias, but over time they have engaged in torture, atrocities and have even become feeders for the notorious criminal gangs that operate in the region.

Outcomes like this, which are also seen in the case



Dr. Mark Duerksen

of the Bakassi Boys, are the result of these forces having less oversight and receiving even less training than official security forces.

ADF: Are there some exceptions to this?

Duerksen: Yes, there are absolutely communities that have benefited from establishing local

outfits that patrol and keep a lookout, but this is often dependent on the dedication and oversight of individual local leaders rather than institutional checks and accountability. So it can be difficult to replicate any of these successes to make a significant dent in Nigeria's systemic insecurity.

Ultimately, these “alternative” security solutions are unlikely to deliver sustainable results unless they can be integrated into official institutions that will monitor, train and hold them accountable. In the meantime, documented violent events by armed groups in Nigeria have increased significantly over the past five years, from under 700 events per year to over 2,000 per year. Every year a significant number of events involving violence against civilians are attributed to Nigeria's security forces and to militias that were originally set up to increase security locally.

ADF: Despite all the publicity at their startups, the mercenary groups Amotekun and Shege-Ka-Fasa do not appear to be accomplishing much of anything.

Duerksen: It is unclear what either of these groups is accomplishing beyond generating controversies over their legality. Meanwhile, the rash of kidnappings for ransom in the north and the security sector violence against civilians in the South West continues. Additionally, regionalizing security may create

unintended problems if these forces operate with ethnic bias or under a banner of ethnic nationalism. Eventually, if these regional forces are not professionalized, they may aggravate regional divisions, which have long plagued Nigeria. The last thing Nigeria needs is a buildup of regionally loyal and ethnically organized security forces, especially when they're connected to separatist groups like the Eastern Security Network, which was recently established by the leaders of the Indigenous People of Biafra's militant movement.

ADF: *It seems likely that the only long-term solution to the country's security problems will be a commitment to hiring and training more police and, possibly, more Soldiers, and abolishing the practice of mercenaries. Is that a flawed theory?*

Duerksen: The problem is that more often than not, setting up new forces or taking matters into one's own hands via vigilante groups or newly sanctioned security outfits is the path taken in Nigeria instead of politicians and civil servants engaging in the challenging and long-term work of security sector reform, professionalization and trust building. Sensible reforms have been proposed by expert panels, but these haven't ever been fully implemented, and, over the years, the police units in need of reform have essentially been rebranded under new names and reconstituted without addressing their underlying issues. There are some proposals and optimism that more effective units could be established through community policing initiatives. So, there is room for innovation and new ideas so long as they are created to tackle the problems identified by review processes and their results are assessed over time. This could also be done through the creation of public safety forces, which would help Nigeria look toward more comprehensive and integrated security solutions.

In short, Nigeria's security architecture can be overly complicated and nebulous and often lacks the transparency and accountability needed for effective reform — something that needs to be addressed in the process of developing a multidimensional national security strategy. A serious reform and training effort of the country's military and police with a focus on integrated security responses (involving government services, social development and justice initiatives) is Nigeria's best bet for tackling the diversity of security threats the country faces.

the potential to generate more flexible and nuanced responses to local security challenges, especially if the federal government can start to address some of the economic drivers of instability."

Others also have defended the groups, saying they are a logical reaction to a problem.

"We run a federation; we have three tiers of government: federal, state and local governments," said Edo State Gov. Godwin Obaseki. "Why should security be exclusive to the federal level? What happened to the other two? Until we address that structural imbalance, we are not going to be able to deal with security at its core."



Armed vigilantes search vehicles at a traffic stop in Yola, Nigeria.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Some regions have established regulations to monitor the vigilante groups. As The Conversation website has reported, official regulation has not completely eradicated abuses, but it appears to be more useful than banning the groups.

"Moreover, the effectiveness of vigilantism in combating crime cannot be contested," The Conversation noted. "With enhanced training and accountability mechanisms, these groups could provide an important component of community policing."

Critics of the vigilante groups say the nationwide lack of security can be addressed only with truly strong police and military systems. Anything else represents a national failure, they say.

Shehu Sani, a senator for the opposition People's Democratic Party in Kaduna, said in May 2021 that Nigeria needed to restructure and better fund its police.

"The government has just failed to live up to its responsibilities and expectations," he said, as reported by The Guardian. "Corrupt security officers feeding on the defence budget must be dealt with and the welfare of troops must be upgraded. The military and the police must be better armed to match the bandits and terrorists." □

CHILDREN FORCED INTO COMBAT



ADF ILLUSTRATION

SAHEL EXTREMIST GROUPS TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DESPERATE CONDITIONS TO RECRUIT CHILD FIGHTERS

ADF STAFF

It was 2 a.m. on a Saturday when the calm of night in a Burkinabe village was interrupted by the sound of motorcycles, then gunshots.

Terrorists opened fire on residents of the gold-mining village of Solhan on June 5, 2021. They burned homes and markets and executed people until dawn. Local authorities reported at least 160 killed — the deadliest attack since violence spilled into the country in 2015.

Government spokesman Ousseni Tamboura revealed the most disturbing attack details weeks later: “The attackers were mostly children between the ages of 12 and 14,” he told reporters.

Terror groups such as Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara and al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb have unleashed a rising wave of targeted attacks on civilians in the Sahel.

Recent reports show they are resorting to using children to kill.

“They join because they don’t want to die of hunger,” Yacouba Maiga, head of Catholic Relief Services’ Mopti office, told Al-Jazeera. “They join because if they don’t, another group might kill them.”

“There are young people who know nothing other than this crisis.”

Thousands have been killed and millions forced to flee the regionwide violence. Those numbers,

along with mounting losses on the battlefield, have reduced the terror groups’ ability to recruit adults.

Africa has a history of armed groups recruiting and using children in conflict zones.

“Political instability, school closures and COVID-19 have created an environment where children become a useful resource for militants looking to staff their rank and file,” said Christopher M. Faulkner, a postdoctoral fellow in the National Security Affairs Department at the U.S. Naval War College. Faulkner spoke with ADF about his research but did not speak on behalf of his institution or the U.S. government.

“JNIM is using kids in all kinds of ways, including as spies and lookouts. This likely explains why some of these groups pursue children — more resources can improve tactical and operational effectiveness.”

Islamist extremist groups in the Sahel also have exploited food shortages, limited job prospects and an absence of local authorities in the recruitment of children.

Members of these groups preach a radical form of Islam to children in villages and promise food, clothes and money for joining.

Some children were promised about \$18 if they kill someone, according to Idrissa Sako, assistant to Burkina Faso’s public prosecutor at the high court in the town of Dori.



Children who fled attacks by Islamist militants in the Sahel play at a camp for internally displaced people in Kaya, Burkina Faso. REUTERS



A child carries water in a camp that welcomed more than 11,000 Malian refugees in northern Burkina Faso in June 2021. AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Children sit in a camp for displaced people in northern Burkina Faso. Children in the region have been targeted for recruitment by extremist groups. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

“There is a real threat that as communities lack work and are more and more isolated because of the socio-economic impact of COVID-19, we’re going to see an increase in the recruitment of children for a lack of options,” she told Reuters in February 2021. “As children are not in schools, the target of attacking a school for abduction or recruitment of children ... is shifting to where the children are.”

Children out of school have mined and trafficked gold in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.

Jean-Hervé Jezequel, director of the Sahel

project for the conflict research nonprofit International Crisis Group, said gold has helped Sahelian extremists procure transportation, weapons and ammunition.

Gold mines neglected by local governments often fall to fighters who hold swaths of largely lawless lands around the countries’ tri-border area, known as Liptako-Gourma.

“Control of the mining sites allows them to extend their influence and gain more funding,” he told Al-Jazeera. “The mines are full of young men



who can be easily recruited into jihadi groups.”

Boys and girls still are forced to join armed groups — as fighters, cooks or for sexual exploitation — in at least 14 countries, including Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan, according to the U.N.

Engaging directly with armed groups sometimes can be productive, as the U.N. showed when its dialogue with Central African Republic militants in 2015 led to the demobilization of more than 350 child combatants.

But it doesn’t happen often because many governments are hesitant to legitimize violent extremist organizations.

One of every three children seriously victimized in the world was in West and Central Africa, according to the 2020 report of the U.N. secretary-general on children and armed conflict.

Children in the Sahel are among the most vulnerable in the world. They are both in supply for and in demand by militant groups.

Maimouna Ba saw nearly 1,200 people who fled the attack on Solhan village seek refuge in the nearby town of Dori, where she directs a civil society organization called Women for the Dignity of the Sahel.

Some survivors said they saw children take part in the attack.

“Those children have no access to a good education, minimum health care, minimum dignity,” Ba told The Associated Press. “They are therefore vulnerable targets and easy to be recruited by extremist groups.”

Reopening schools with improved security measures is one way governments can better protect children. Experts also point to educating children about their vulnerability, about armed groups, and about the existence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs.

U.N. Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed said DDR programs are critically important, as are the acceptance and support of communities when children formerly associated with armed groups return.

“Thousands of children recruited and used by armed groups, and other affected children in their communities, do not receive the minimal care or services to reweave the fabric of a torn society,” Mohammed wrote in a 2020 report titled “Improving Support to Child Reintegration.”

“Those that do get help, often do so for just a few months, rather than the essential 3-5 years needed for reintegration.”

The report argues for investment in local education systems and mental health services, noting that significant funding gaps by international groups often disrupt the continuity of DDR programs.

“There is increased attention given by the U.N. to consider deficiencies in reintegration programs,” Faulkner said. “They specifically stress the need for such programs to have a gendered lens so that appropriate resources for girls and boys are available, given that they may have quite distinct experiences in conflict.

“That’s an additional reason for hope.” □

Senegal Will Host **AFRICA'S FIRST YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES**

VOICE OF AMERICA

Senegal will host the Youth Olympic Games in 2026 in what supporters hope will be the first step in proving to the world that Africa can host the Summer Olympics in the future.

Senegal will be the first African nation to host the Youth Olympic Games in 2026. The games were added to the Olympics in 2010 to give athletes ages 14 to 18 the chance to compete.

The youth games in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2018 had an Olympic Village with about 4,000 athletes from 260 countries. That contrasts with the estimated 12,000 athletes for the larger Olympics. Generally, experts say, the youth games will require

about one-third of the investment needed for the Olympic Games.

Senegal initially agreed to host the games in 2022, but COVID-19 forced postponement until 2026.

Although Senegalese officials say they are excited and honored to make history as the first African country to host the youth games, they also understand the responsibility that comes with it.

"There are expectations from the whole African continent, and Senegal has to organize games that would live up to the standards of previous Youth Olympics," said Babacar Makhtar Wade, president of the Senegal Judo Federation. "And because of that, Senegal is going to make sure it's a success and serves as a catalyst for mobilizing and engaging Senegalese youth in particular, and African youth in general."

Wade, who also is treasurer of the Senegal National Olympic and Sports Committee, said renovation plans are well under way.

"We are planning to first renovate three main venues — the Iba Mar Diop Stadium, which will host track, rugby and other sports," he said. "There's also our Olympic pool, which needs to be renovated. It has an adjacent park, which will host a few events such as the BMX freestyle, basketball 3-on-3 and hockey games. And there is also the Caserne Samba Diery Diallo, where the equestrian-related activities will take place."

There also will be venues in hubs outside Dakar, including a popular seaside resort that will host beach volleyball, boating and other events, and Diamniadio, site of a new 50,000-seat multipurpose stadium and other facilities.

Opening ceremonies of the
2018 Youth Olympic Games
in Buenos Aires, Argentina

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NIGERIA HOLDS FIRST SAHEL MILITARY GAMES

ADF STAFF

Nigeria hosted the inaugural Sahel Military Games with about 350 athletes from military forces participating in a weeklong competition in October 2021.

The Organisation of Military Sports in Africa (OSMA) organized the competition at the Federal Capital Territory in Abuja. Nigerian Brig. Gen. Maikano Abdullahi said that 12 countries participated in games that consisted of football, golf and marathons. Of the 12, eight were from the Sahel — Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Libya, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.

Eight countries participated in the golf competition, and all 12 competed in football and the marathon.

Nigeria's Leadership newspaper reported that Abdullahi said the championship's goal was to promote peace and unity among the military in Sahel countries and reinforce the collective resolve of the armed forces to end the region's terrorist threat.

"Fighting is won by many means, and sports is one of them," Abdullahi said. "We want to send a message to the world that the countries of the Sahel are together."

Visitors were required to adhere to COVID-19 protocols.

Marathons concluded the games, with Tanzanian runners Michael Sangia and Jackline Sakilu winning the men's and women's competitions, respectively. The closing ceremony included an invitational relay race with athletes from the Nigeria Police Force challenging other organizations.

Winners stand at the podium at the Sahel Military Games in Nigeria. The second Sahel Military Games is set to take place in Chad in December 2022. OSMA



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ethiopian Shatters WORLD RECORD

ADF STAFF

Ethiopian runner Letesenbet Gidey smashed the women's half-marathon world record in October 2021 by running 62 minutes and 52 seconds in Valencia, Spain — 70 seconds faster than the old record.

The 23-year-old beat the previous 21-kilometer record held by Kenyan Ruth Chepngetich since April 2021. Gidey also holds the world record for 5,000 meters and 10,000 meters. She won a bronze medal in the 10,000 meters in the Summer Olympics in Tokyo in 2021.

It's quite a turnaround for someone who was expelled from school when she was 13 for refusing to run in physical education classes.

"I really did not like racing," she told World Athletics in 2015. "I brought my parents to school to talk to the headmaster with the hope of getting reinstated. He agreed to reinstate me only if I ran (in competition) for the school. I reluctantly agreed."

She was born in Endameskel in the Tigray region of northern Ethiopia and raised on the family farm. When she began competing as a runner, she had only limited success. She finished 44th in her first cross-country race in 2012.

Later, an older brother worked with her, biking alongside to help with her pace when she trained.

Track records have been tumbling all over the world in the current "super spikes" era, which began in 2019 when the Nike company introduced running shoes that use a combination of a stiff plate and pliable foam to give runners more energy with each step. Other companies since have been forced to introduce similar shoes to keep their sponsored runners competitive.

Artisanal fishermen in Senegal use phones to record how industrial vessels fish.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
FOUNDATION

Senegal

Uses Transparency to Combat Illegal Fishing

ADF STAFF

Senegal is launching a program to promote transparency in the nation's fisheries sector to clamp down on illegal fishing.

Funded by Oceans 5, a philanthropic organization dedicated to protecting the world's oceans, the nearly \$1.2 million, three-year project with the Environmental Justice Foundation and Trygg Mat Tracking aims to publish up-to-date fishing license lists and vessel registries online. It also will empower artisanal fishermen to play a role in surveillance and monitoring efforts at the port of Dakar and in the government's fishing-related decision-making processes.

More than 30 industrial vessels were charged with illegally fishing in Senegal in 2020, the foundation reported. One of the project's components is meant to allow stakeholders in the country's fishing communities to document suspicious fishing activities.

"Unlike some other coastal countries in the region, Senegal has experience in participatory surveillance, and its authorities acknowledge its importance," Steve Trent, the foundation's chief executive officer and founder, told ADF in an email. "Small-scale fishers and local surveillance units work hand in hand to prevent, deter and eliminate IUU [illegal, unreported and

unregulated] fishing. This work faces operational, technical and funding limitations, which the project will help overcome."

The fishing industry provides more than 600,000 jobs domestically, and nearly 75% of the animal protein consumed in Senegal comes from fish. But 90% of the nation's fisheries are fully fished or facing collapse, according to data compiled by the foundation and United Nations.

As in other parts of West Africa, Senegal's fish mostly are exported to Asia and Europe, routinely as fishmeal or fish oil produced at Chinese-owned factories that pollute the environment. China is the world's worst IUU fishing offender, according to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime.

Senegal's government understands the importance of eliminating IUU fishing through enhanced transparency and enforcement measures and embraces the new project, Mactar Diallo, secretary-general of the Ministry of Fisheries and Maritime Economy, said in a report by Senegal Black Rainbow.

Diallo said foreign vessel owners may be fined up to nearly \$1.8 million for illegal fishing.

"In case of recurrence, we can go as far as the confiscation of the ship," Diallo said.



AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Algeria Joins World in **Outlawing Leaded Gasoline**

BBC NEWS AT [BBC.CO.UK/NEWS](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news)

Algeria became the last country on earth to halt the use of leaded gasoline, marking a step forward for global health and safety.

The toxic fuel has contaminated air, soil and water for almost a century. It can cause heart disease, cancer and strokes, and it has been linked to problems with brain development in children.

Many countries banned the fuel by the 1980s, but it was only in July 2021 that Algeria became the last country to ban it.

On the day of the switch-over, Nadil Rachid, president of Algeria's Authority Regulating Hydrocarbons, said refineries for the national oil company had been working to produce additional unleaded gas to ensure that consumers "will not endure any tension" caused by supply shortfalls.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres called the eradication of leaded petrol "an international success story."

"Ending the use of leaded petrol will prevent more than 1 million premature deaths each year from heart disease, strokes and cancer, and it will protect children whose IQs are damaged by exposure to lead," he said.

Kenyan Mathematician Forecasts COVID-19 Waves

ADF STAFF

Kenyan mathematician Dr. Shem Otoi Sam has become his country's oracle of COVID-19. Using a predictive model he developed, Sam found a way to forecast the rise and fall of infection waves, making him a kind of weatherman for the pandemic in western Kenya.

Sam, 39, goes on local radio to advise residents when they need to be more careful “by telling people — police, public education — ‘We’re going to have a peak. We don’t want to lose you,’” he told ADF.

As a survivor of COVID-19 himself, Sam knows personally how intense an infection can become and how important it is to prevent others from contracting the disease.

Sam’s modeling helped lay the groundwork for western Kenya’s Integrated Online Data System. The system helps Kenyan health officials monitor the availability of resources such as intensive care unit beds and high-flow oxygen so doctors and hospitals can know where to send patients. That has helped the region reduce the wave peaks, Sam said.

Early in the pandemic, skeptics claimed COVID-19 would not affect Africa. Sam’s first attempt at modeling pandemic outcomes confronted that false claim directly.

“When the first Covid-19 case came out in the country, I started scratching my head, comparing the Covid-19 infection rate, death rates and recoveries to other regions of the world,” he told Kenya’s *The Nation*.

His work showed that the continent was headed down the same path as the rest of the world when it came to COVID-19.



SHEM OTOI SAM

To expand his forecasting ability for COVID-19 waves, Sam adapted a mathematic model known as ARIMA, which stands for autoregressive integrated moving average. The adaptation let him extend ARIMA’s forecast capability from about one month up to eight, making it possible to predict infection waves farther into the future. The goal was to help public health officials prepare hospitals and their staffs for coming waves.

Forecasting has helped reduce the overall impact of COVID-19 in western Kenya, Sam said.

“We’ve been experiencing low peak intensity because people are forewarned. They [hospitals] prepare in advance, so they’re not over-run,” Sam said. “At the same time, my model has helped save not only lives but livelihoods.”

Rwanda Plans to Launch Satellite Constellations

THE NEW TIMES

Rwanda announced plans to launch two satellite constellations in the next three years. The move further highlighted the country’s goal to become a leader in Africa’s space industry.

The Rwanda Space Agency said that it filed a request to acquire two satellite constellations from the International Telecommunication Union. The two-craft fleet has a total of 327,320 satellites.

A satellite constellation is a group of satellites working together as a system. Unlike a single satellite, a constellation can provide permanent global or near global coverage.

The two constellations will join RwaSat-1, a satellite built by three Rwandan engineers and a team

of Japanese scientists at Tokyo University. It was launched in 2019 from Japan’s Tanegashima Space Center and deployed to low Earth orbit from the International Space Station. That same year, Rwanda launched the satellite Icyerekezo in partnership with OneWeb, a United

Kingdom company. The satellite was used to provide internet access to rural schools.

The move for expansion comes at a time when the development of the Rwandan space sector still is in its early stages, with a total of five to 10 partnerships, according to the agency.

“It shows that Rwanda is ready to use space services for the sociodevelopment of the country,” said Francis Ngabo, the space agency’s chief executive. “And, secondly, it’s a signal that we are sending to the business sector or the space sector that we are ready for investment in the space sector, space communication and space services in general.”



Nigerien Military Lends Hand to Those in Need



ADF STAFF | PHOTOS BY U.S. AFRICA COMMAND

Niger's military has launched a program to improve the lives of citizens living in the Agadez region surrounding Nigerien Air Base 201, a United States drone air base.

The newly created Action Civil-Militaire (ACM) division of the Forces Armées Nigériennes (FAN) is conducting humanitarian aid missions. The division has conducted its missions in conjunction with U.S. Civil Affairs teams stationed at the base.

Under the program, ACM members select villages to receive aid and execute each mission supported by U.S. Civil Affairs. A separate ACM unit is performing similar missions out of Nigerien Air Base 101 in Niamey, the nation's capital.

In May 2021, an Air Base 201 ACM mission to Beital, 30 kilometers north of the base, provided residents with 3,000 kilograms of rice, 120 mats and 120 buckets. A September mission to Teghazert, 8 kilometers east of the base, coincided with the celebration of the community choosing a new chief. The ACM gave the community footballs, rice, prayer mats, buckets, soap and mosquito netting.

The commanders of Defense Zone 2 and Air Base 201 praised the careful planning and execution of the ACM operations.

"We are incredibly pleased with how smoothly the logistics and communications went as the mission progressed, allowing us to aid our fellow countrymen in need," said Nigerien Capt. Badage Oumarou, the base commander.

An estimated 4,200 residents of the Agadez region have benefited from the ACM humanitarian missions.

"The Nigerien ACM team is an impressive group of people who genuinely want to help their fellow countrymen, and it is an honor working with them to improve people's lives in Niger," said U.S. Army Capt. Verzoni, the U.S. Civil Affairs team commander.

The missions are building ties between members of the FAN and villagers in a region with porous international borders that are prone to extremism. Groups linked to the Islamic State group, al-Qaida and other organizations have launched regular attacks in Niger, particularly in the area bordering Mali.

"FAN Soldiers who used to have little or no connection with these villages are now out interacting with the children, playing soccer, speaking with village elders of tribes different from their own," U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Jarrod Mattison of the Civil Affairs team told ADF.



OPERATION EAGLE CLAWS TESTS GHANA'S READINESS FOR TERRORIST ATTACK

ADF STAFF

Ghana Armed Forces Soldiers stepped from a helicopter and sprinted toward a simulated enemy with their weapons drawn as a commanding officer barked instructions.

It was the opening day of Operation Eagle Claws, an exercise meant to prepare military and emergency response personnel for terrorist threats.

The five-day annual exercise included members of the Ghana Police Service, Ghana National Fire Service, National Disaster Management Organization, National Ambulance Service, and other security and intelligence agencies. It concluded in late May 2021.

The 2021 Operation Eagle Claws exercise focused on responding to terrorist attacks such as those carried out during the year in Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire.



GHANA PEACE JOURNAL

"Ghanaians, and particularly those in this sector, know that terrorism is real — it is on our doorsteps," Col. William Nii Nortey, director of Army operations, told Ghanaian TV channel My Joy. "We should all be ready and know what is happening around us. We must be ready to protect and defend the integrity of Ghana."

Nortey encouraged area residents to report suspected terrorist activity to authorities.

"That is our basic mantra: If you see something, say something," he said.

Days before the exercise began, President Nana Akufo-Addo told France 24 that he views increasing terrorist attacks in the neighboring Sahel region as "the most important security challenge" for Ghana and the 14 other countries in the Economic Community of West African States.

"We are very concerned by the situation," Akufo-Addo said. "We know that in Ghana, this is not something that will just stop at our borders. There are coastal countries, countries in Western Africa, and these countries are also targets of terrorism. They are just as much targets as the Sahel countries."

This year, some of Operation Eagle Claws' first drills were conducted with customs and police officers at Hamile Border Post, where Soldiers practiced tactical skills while responding to a simulated small-arms attack near the Burkina Faso border.

In another drill, troops responded to a mock attack on foreigners staying at a hotel in Wa in northeast Ghana. It included combat techniques, extinguishing fires, mine detection, medical evacuation and profiling arrested terrorists.



REUTERS

EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY TO CREATE *Counterterrorism Center*

ADF STAFF

The East African Community (EAC) is preparing to create a counterterrorism center to help coordinate the region's response in the event of an attack.

The center still is in the early planning stage, but the six-nation regional bloc believes concrete action is needed.

"Each of us has been dealing with immigration and counter terrorism on their own and now we have come together," Peter Odoyo, Kenya's chief administrative secretary for national security, told The East African. "The EA Counter Terrorism Centre is under discussion. It is still under infancy stages."

The center could play an important role in training personnel, collecting and sharing intelligence, and sharing best practices across the region. It also could help build the capacity of the Eastern Africa Standby Force, the 5,800-person multinational force designed for rapid interventions in the region.

The EAC consists of six nations: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. During the 12 months ending in October 2021, there were 1,364 violent attacks involving rebels, terror groups or militias in the region, causing 2,631 fatalities, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

"Our region is prone to terrorism. As a community, it is important that we have an institution that is specifically designated to handle the issues of threats of any nature. This is to ensure that we keep our region safe," said Dr. Peter Mathuki, EAC secretary-general. "For us to handle peace and security effectively, we need an institution that looks into these issues."

Among the persistent threats are the Somali-based extremist group al-Shabaab, which has launched attacks in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and the Allied Democratic Forces, which has bases in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also has launched attacks in Uganda.



A worker shreds water hyacinth to be converted into biogas near the town of Kisumu, Kenya.

REUTERS

KENYAN ENTREPRENEUR Turns Weeds Into Fuel

REUTERS



Entrepreneur Dominic Kahumbu and his team return to shore from Lake Victoria after harvesting water hyacinth. REUTERS

A project in Kenya is using biogas technology to tackle two major pollution problems with one device: a machine that converts waste such as invasive water hyacinth into cleaner cooking fuel.

Biogas International, a Kenyan energy technology company, is partnering on the project with drugmaker AstraZeneca and the Institute for Sustainability Leadership at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

The project so far has provided 50 “digesters” to homes in the city of Kisumu in western Kenya, enabling families to switch from wood or charcoal, both of which are hazardous, time-consuming cooking methods.

Some of the families were given a gas stove as part of the project to replace their jiko, a portable stove that uses charcoal. Many of the digesters also were given out for free, with the rest subsidized by the company.

The machines run on waste such as ground up water

hyacinth, which has carpeted large parts of Lake Victoria, a freshwater lake between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. The plant harms aquatic life, including fish, and helps bacteria and mosquitoes flourish, posing health risks to local communities.

The digesters designed by Biogas International use 2 to 3 kilograms of water hyacinth scraped from the lake to power a cooker that can make a meal of maize and beans in about four hours.

“Water hyacinth is a blessing in disguise,” said Biogas International CEO Dominic Kahumbu.

But at a cost of \$650, the digesters are not affordable for most families in the city, he acknowledged. Although the technology is scalable, he said, the high cost of producing each digester makes turning a profit unlikely for at least another five years. He said the company needs new capital investment to produce more digesters.

CIRCULAR GARDENS FIGHT DEFORESTATION

REUTERS

Every night Moussa Kamara works at his bakery in Senegal, preparing hundreds of loaves. But at sunrise, instead of going home to sleep, he starts a second back-breaking job — hoeing the earth and tending newly sown seeds in a specially designed circular garden.

Kamara, 47, believes the garden will prove even more important than the bakery in the future for feeding his extended family, including 25 children, and other residents of Boki Dawe, a town near the border with Mauritania.

He is part of a project that aims to create hundreds of such gardens, known as “Tolou Keur” in Senegal’s Wolof language, that organizers hope will boost food security, reduce regional desertification and engage thousands of community workers.

“This project is incredibly important,” Kamara said, finally at home after a night spent at the bakery followed by 10 hours of cultivating edible and medicinal plants in the garden. “When you grow one tree, over 20 years people and animals will benefit from it,” said Kamara, whose commitment and hard work have earned him the role of garden caretaker.

The project marks a new, more local approach to what is known as the Great Green Wall initiative, launched in 2007, that aims to slow desertification across Africa’s Sahel region, the arid belt south of the Sahara, by planting an 8,000-kilometer line of trees from Senegal to Djibouti.



A Senegalese circular garden REUTERS

The wider initiative has managed to plant only 4% of the pledged 100 million hectares of trees. Completing it by 2030, as planned, could cost up to \$43 billion, according to United Nations estimates.

By contrast, the Tolou Keur gardens have flourished in the months since the project began and now number about two dozen, said Senegal’s reforestation agency.

The gardens hold plants and trees resistant to hot, dry climates, including papaya, mango, moringa and sage. Circular beds allow roots to grow inward, trapping liquids and bacteria and improving water retention and composting.

“A thousand Tolou Keur is already 1.5 million trees,” said Aly Ndiaye, a Senegalese agricultural engineer who is credited as the mastermind behind the circular bed design. “So if we start, we can do a lot.”



AFP/GETTY IMAGES

New Malaria Treatment Offers Hope for Africa

ADF STAFF

A vaccine process tested in Burkina Faso and Mali could reduce malaria illnesses and deaths by 70%, scientists say.

The drug trial focused on giving young children a modified version of a vaccine that has been used for 20 years, along with administering anti-malarial drugs at the time of year when children are most vulnerable. In West Africa, malaria spreads as the rainy season begins, about June, when mosquitoes breed and bite.

Researchers said they were surprised at how effective the combination of vaccine and drugs turned out to be. The tests spanned three years. Scientists said that three doses of the vaccine and drugs before the rainy season, followed by a booster dose before the next rainy season, prevented and controlled the disease much more effectively than vaccines or drugs alone.

No part of the world suffers more from the disease than does Africa. In 2019, more than 90% of the 230 million cases of malaria worldwide were Africans, mostly children. The disease kills 400,000 people globally each year, most of them under age 5.

The New England Journal of Medicine published the test results. The trial followed 6,000 children under age 17 months in the two countries and found that the vaccine caused significant drops in cases of malaria, hospitalizations and deaths.

FWAfrica reported that GlaxoSmithKline created the vaccine, called RTS,S, more than 20 years ago. The vaccine kills parasites that multiply quickly in the liver. The anti-malarial drugs target parasites in the body’s red blood cells.

The science site Nature reported that the original version of the vaccine already has been administered to more than 740,000 children in Ghana, Kenya and Malawi as part of routine childhood vaccine programs.

Tanzania Steps Up Fishing Enforcement

ADF STAFF

Tanzania has plans to boost its “blue economy,” the sustainable use of ocean resources to support tourism, jobs and environmental protection. But before that can happen, the country has to come to grips with illegal fishing.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is stripping Africa of its natural resources.

Tanzanian Livestock and Fisheries Minister Mashimba Ndaki said officials are determined to tighten current fishing industry regulations.

“Unfortunately, there are still dishonest and greedy fishermen in the country who are helping aliens to smuggle fish and other products outside the country, as well as engaging in fishing using prohibited fishing gear,” Ndaki told Tanzanian newspaper Daily News.

Driftnets, which hang vertically from flotation devices on fishing boats, can scoop up vast amounts of fish, including sea life that has no commercial value. The nets are largely responsible for depleting fish stocks and destroying ecosystems. The United Nations banned the nets 30 years ago, but illegal fishing operations still use them off the coasts of Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania.

Increased fishing patrol and surveillance efforts could be crucial to unlocking Tanzania’s blue economy potential. Its 850-kilometer coastline, which includes Zanzibar and several small islands, makes the area particularly difficult to patrol.

Since 2018, Tanzania has partnered with Sea Shepherd

Global, a nongovernmental organization, to increase maritime security. Shortly after the partnership formed, Sea Shepherd helped Tanzanian authorities arrest the captain and owner of a Malaysian-flagged shark-finning vessel. The men were sentenced to 20-year prison terms, the organization reported.

Sea Shepherd’s mission is to find and board trespassing vessels or other boats engaged in prohibited behaviors, such as shark finning or netting juvenile fish, the BBC reported. Recently, the group has worked with African governments in Benin, Gabon, Liberia, Namibia and Tanzania.

Shortly after the Sea Shepherd patrols began in Tanzania, authorities made 10 arrests. Afterward, 24 vessels immediately departed Tanzanian waters, and 19 of those left without receiving mandatory inspections.

Tanzania also is supported by FISH-i Africa, a partnership with Comoros, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, Seychelles and Somalia that promotes sharing information and regional cooperation to combat large-scale illegal fishing in the Western Indian Ocean.

Tanzania takes in an estimated 390,000 metric tons of fish from deep sea and inland fishing. The government hopes to increase fish production to at least 714,000 metric tons to achieve its per-capita fish consumption target of 10.5 kilograms, SeafoodSource reported.



People buy and sell fish at a market in Zanzibar, Tanzania.

AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Apps Help African Farmers Diversify Crops

ADF STAFF

A cellphone app is helping Kenyan farmers diversify their crops and improve yields, despite the economic hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

DigiFarm helps farmers source supplies such as seeds and fertilizer. It also helps with insurance, loans to diversify crops and market access. It even helps plan for extreme weather such as droughts and floods.

DigiFarm, a free service from telecommunications giant Safaricom, was launched in 2017, but most of its 1.4 million users signed up after the pandemic hit, Elizabeth Mudogo of DigiFarm told The Star of Kenya. The app recently expanded into Nigeria and Tanzania.

Kenya has 4.5 million small-scale farmers, according to government figures. Their output accounts for more than 60% of the country's food.

During the pandemic, farmers have had no choice but to improve their methods. DigiFarm is one of many innovations sweeping through Africa's farming industry and helping to blunt the effects of the pandemic on food security and poverty.

The continent's young, tech-centric population is embracing agricultural technology using mobile apps, artificial intelligence and drones to help build a more diverse, resilient agricultural industry. Besides DigiFarm, there are companies such as HelloTractor of Nigeria, which uses a mobile app to streamline sharing farm equipment.

In addition, Twiga, a Kenyan mobile e-commerce platform, harvests, buys, packages and delivers produce from member farms directly to vendors by digitizing the supply chain. It claims to cut out middlemen, eliminate food waste and reduce prices. Twiga Foods expanded from Nairobi to five other major towns during the pandemic and recently announced expansion into Uganda.

A DigiFarm worker prepares to receive farmers at a Kenyan collection center. REUTERS

South Sudan, Uganda Agree to Abolish Visas

ADF STAFF

Ugandans traveling to neighboring South Sudan no longer require visas to enter the country.

The move reciprocates one taken by Uganda in September 2021 to scrap visa entry requirements for South Sudanese. South Sudanese Deputy Foreign Minister Deng Dau Deng confirmed the development and said that his country's decision was in line with requirements of the East African Community (EAC).

The EAC is a regional intergovernmental organization with headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda are the other member states.

In July 2021, South Sudan and Kenya also scrapped visas for their nationals traveling between the two countries.

South Sudan is the EAC's newest member. Its founding treaty provides for the free movement of people and labor within the member states. The EAC's common market also provides for unrestricted movement of goods and capital. It also allows right of residence, which is the right of a citizen in one country to live in another member country.

South Sudan joined the EAC in 2016 but has been slow in adopting some protocols, including the one establishing the common market.

EAC member states have launched an annual exhibition to boost tourism in the region after the COVID-19 pandemic, eTN Tanzania reported.



Travelers from South Sudan cross a wooden bridge into Uganda. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NANA YAA ASANTEWAA

and the War of the Golden Stool

ADF STAFF

An Ashanti woman who shamed her tribe's warriors into standing up for themselves more than 100 years ago has become a symbol of freedom for Ghana. Nana Yaa Asantewaa's actions provoked the final Anglo-Ashanti war, known as the War of the Golden Stool.

In 1752, the British established a trading colony they called the Gold Coast on the Gulf of Guinea. It would become their hub for African trade which included gold, diamonds, wood, ivory, cocoa and grain. By the late 1800s, the British continued to expand their territory into local kingdoms and forced tribal leaders to submit to their authority.

The Ashanti fought back, beating the British Empire in the first two of what would eventually be five wars.

The final rebellion, known as the War of the Golden Stool, lasted about six months in 1900.

The Golden Stool was a symbol of Ashanti national unity. It was not a throne. When not in use, it was placed against a wall so that souls of dead Ashanti might rest upon it. It never touched the ground but always rested on a blanket. It was carried on a pillow, as only the Asantehene, the Ashanti king, was allowed to touch it. In some ceremonies, it sat on a throne of its own.

The final war began when the British governor, Sir Frederick Mitchell Hodgson, demanded the surrender of the Golden Stool as an admission by the Ashanti of their submission to British rule.

That is when Yaa Asantewaa made history.

THE QUEEN MOTHER

She was born in 1840, one of two children. Her brother, Afrane

Panin, became a tribal ruler while she grew up to be a skilled and successful farmer. When her brother died in 1894, Yaa Asantewaa used her position as Queen Mother to appoint her grandson as the new chief.

In 1896, the British exiled the Ashanti king to the Seychelles, along with Yaa Asantewaa's grandson and other ruling members of the tribe. Yaa Asantewaa became regent of one of the districts.

When Hodgson demanded the Golden Stool, the remaining ruling members of the Ashanti met in secret to discuss a proper response. Yaa Asantewaa was there, since her position as Queen Mother meant she was the official guardian of the Golden Stool. She addressed the

members of the council in a brief speech that has become a part of Ghanaian folklore. There are many versions of the speech, including this one:

Now I see that you are afraid to go forward and fight for our king. If you, the chiefs of Ashanti, are going to behave like cowards and not fight, you should exchange your loincloths for my undergarments.

She is said to have punctuated her speech by grabbing a gun and firing it in front of the assembled men.

The remaining leaders chose Yaa Asantewaa to be the leader of their fighting force. The Queen Mother took charge of an army of 5,000 Soldiers.

The rebellion was initially successful, with the Ashanti fighters storming a fort in Kumasi, where the British had sought refuge. Months later, the British governor sent sufficient troops to put down the revolt.

The British captured Yaa Asantewaa and 15 of her advisors and banished them all to the Seychelles. Yaa Asantewaa died in exile in October 1921. Three years later, the king and the remaining members of the exiled Ashanti court returned home. The king gave Asantewaa a proper royal funeral.

In 1957, what had been the Ashanti kingdom became part of Ghana, the first nation in Sub-Saharan Africa to gain independence.

Today, the War of the Golden Stool also is known as the Yaa Asantewaa War. She is remembered in an Ashanti song:

Yaa Asantewaa

*The woman who fights before cannons
You have accomplished great things
You have done well*



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CLUES

- 1** The name of this valley translates to “fountain of doubt.”
- 2** The site is best known for having one of the largest collections of petroglyphs (rock engravings) in Africa.
- 3** Figures on rocks include elephants, ostriches, giraffes, people and footprints. Some are from the late Stone Age.
- 4** The rock art provides an extensive record of hunter-gatherer community rituals covering at least 2,000 years.



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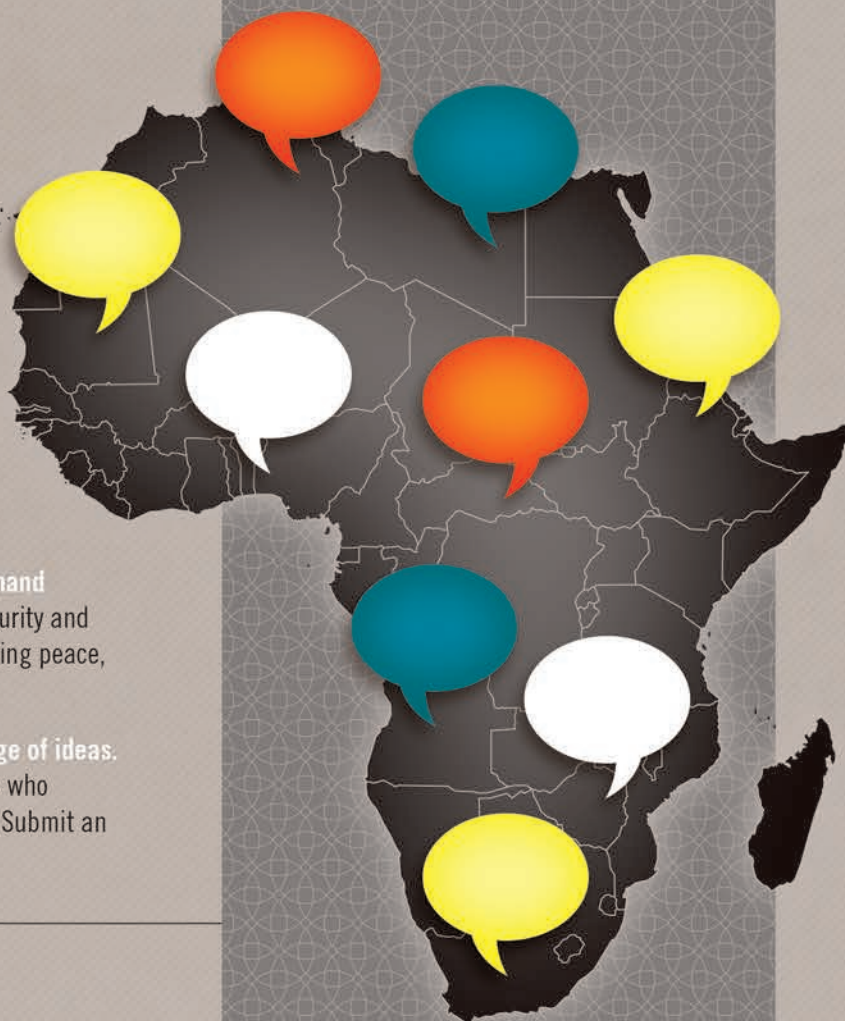
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