

Monthly intelligence briefing on remote warfare against Boko Haram

May 2017

International organisations

1. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released a report on 12 April highlighting the dramatic increase in Boko Haram using children in suicide attacks so far this year.¹ UNICEF noted that the number of Boko Haram suicide bombings involving children in the first half of 2017 is on par with the total for the whole of 2016. Boko Haram has so far used approximately 117 children in suicide bombings in the Lake Chad region this year. Boko Haram's increasing use of children in suicide bombings may suggest that it is struggling to recruit and retain fighters. UNICEF released further figures on 4 May showing that at least 3,900 children have died due to the actions of Boko Haram and Nigerian security forces in northeast Nigeria between January 2013 and December 2016.²
2. The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) indicated that between 16 April to 15 May, 9,739 new internally displaced people (IDPs) were reported in Nigeria seeking food, water, shelter and protection.³ This is in addition to the 11,000 IDPs from Nigeria that had settled in Cameroon but returned to Nigeria during May. Many of these have arrived in large groups with a Nigerian military escort. Camps are already facing shortages in food and water, and up to an additional 3,000 people are reported to be planning to travel from Cameroon to Nigeria in the short term.⁴
3. The London-based NGO Transparency International Defence and Security (TI-DS) published a report on 18 May advocating that Nigeria's international partners build anti-corruption measures into all defence deals with Abuja in order to effectively combat Boko Haram. The report, *Weaponising Transparency*, also argues that the Nigerian government should adopt reform of defence procurement as a key counter-terrorism strategy.⁵ Nigerian officials and military representatives strongly contested TI-DS's accusation that defence sector corruption in Nigeria is emboldening Boko Haram, arguing that recent reforms and operational changes have rooted out corrupt behaviour.⁶ TI-DS produced the report in partnership with the Nigeria-based Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC).
4. In its most recent situation report, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) reported that as of 15 May there were 4.7 million food-insecure people in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states in Nigeria. The organisation predicted that this would rise to 5.2 million people by August. More than 50,000 people

¹ <http://weshare.unicef.org/Package/2AMZIFLJWE2A> and https://www.unicef.org/media/media_95571.html

² <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=56683#.WS4XUROGORs>

³ See DTM Nigeria – Emergency Tracking Tool numbers 12-14 at <http://www.globaldtm.info/nigeria/>

⁴ <http://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/ocha-flash-update-influx-refugees-returning-north-east-nigeria-cameroon-update-no-2>

⁵ http://ti-defence.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Weaponising_Transparency_Web.pdf

⁶ <http://dailypost.ng/2017/05/20/army-denies-transparency-international-report-alleging-corruption-military/> and <http://www.newsweek.com/nigeria-defense-spending-corruption-boko-haram-611685>

could face famine-like conditions across the three states.⁷ Active conflict, ongoing insecurity and lack of funding for international NGOs is preventing basic humanitarian assistance and intervention. The severe food insecurity is encouraging looting and the targeting of road routes used to deliver food supplies.⁸

US and European partners

5. Ministers from the United Kingdom's foreign office and Department for International Development gave a joint speech on 14 April in which they outlined previous British support for Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram.⁹ Tobias Ellwood and James Wharton highlighted financial support for the MNJTF totalling £5 million, humanitarian support totalling £74 million in 2016, medical care for 500,000 people and education to 25,000 children, and the provision of training for an estimated 22,500 Nigerian military personnel. The ministers also used their speech to call on Boko Haram to release all the hostages it is holding. On 20 April, the international development secretary, Priti Patel, promised a total of £100 million this year to help the United Nations, the International Committee of the Red Cross and international NGOs reach the most vulnerable people displaced by Boko Haram.¹⁰
6. The Nigerian chief of defence policy, Air Vice-Marshal Bashir Saidu, has acknowledged and expressed gratitude to the United Kingdom for the training provided to some Nigerian officers at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.¹¹ He made his comments during a visit by staff and members of the UK Royal College of Defence Studies to the Nigerian Defence Headquarters in Abuja on 15 May.
7. The UK foreign office in London and the US embassy in Abuja both reported on 5 May that they have credible intelligence to suggest that Boko Haram is planning to increase its kidnapping of foreign workers in the Bama local government area of Borno State in Nigeria.¹² The increase underlines speculation that Boko Haram has insufficient resources and is refocusing its efforts on generating income from kidnap for ransom. The evidence suggest that Boko Haram is struggling to feed its fighters, and there have been reports of militants are handing themselves into security forces suffering from starvation.¹³ As northeast Nigeria and the wider region suffers a food crisis and is at risk of famine, it may be Boko Harams plan to raise funds from ransom payments in order to purchase food for current fighters and incentivise new recruits.

⁷ <http://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/Public/documents/ep/WFP292051.pdf>

⁸ <https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/57123> and <https://guardian.ng/news/boko-haram-raid-borno-town-loot-food-supplies/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-calls-for-the-release-of-all-abducted-by-boko-haram>

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/a-global-development-system-for-the-21st-century>

¹¹ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/05/16/despite-threats-dhq-insists-boko-haram-will-soon-be-history/> and <http://www.nta.ng/news/20170516-royal-45848/>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/nigeria> and <https://ng.usembassy.gov/security-message-u-s-citizens-boko-haram-threat-kidnap-foreigners-bama-local-government-area-borno-state/>

¹³ <https://www.apnews.com/b4858fe3a0354fd881a039569a2e2d18> and http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/97

8. Representatives of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) attended the African Chiefs of Defence Conference at the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) headquarters in Stuttgart, Germany, on 19-20 April.¹⁴ After the event, the commanders of AFRICOM and the MNJTF, General Thomas Waldhauser and Major General Lamidi Adeosun respectively, held a press briefing at which they noted that the split between the Boko Haram factions led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi and Abubakar Shekau is aiding MNJTF operations against the militants. Waldhauser indicated that the Trump administration's support for counter-terrorism operations in the Lake Chad region would remain unchanged, and will continue to emphasise 'African solutions to African problems'. This suggests that the White House is disinclined to support the fight against Boko Haram by deploying additional US personnel to the Lake Chad region.
9. United States Army Africa (USARAF) joined Chad Basin MNJTF forces at Douala Naval Base in Cameroon on 24 April for the United Focus 17 desktop exercise. The exercise involved joint planning and coordination activities that included civilian and military participants who workshopped counter-terrorism and human insecurity scenarios.¹⁵ The inclusion of civilian planners may have been prompted by the worsening humanitarian situation in northeastern Nigeria.
10. The White House appears to be moving forward with the proposed \$600 million sale of 12 A-29 Super Tucano light attack aircraft to the Nigerian government.¹⁶ The US Air Force has previously described the use of the A-29 by Afghanistan as a game-changer. The robust, turboprop aircraft would allow the Nigerian Air Force (NAF) to provide close air support to counter-insurgency operations, and potentially enable it to carry out more sophisticated night-time raids.¹⁷ The US Congress will need to approve any sale. The Obama administration had previously put the deal on hold after the NAF repeatedly bombed civilians and humanitarian aid workers.

Regional coalitions and local governments

11. Nigerian security, immigration and law enforcement officials are reportedly returning to liberated local government areas (LGAs) in Borno State.¹⁸ Staff are returning to 24 of the 27 LGAs in the state, but are unable to return to Abadam, Guza Mala and Marte because of continuing military operations in those areas. Boko Haram may respond to the return of government officials to liberated areas by carrying out small-scale attacks to disrupt rebuilding and discourage IDPs from returning. This would undermine government claims of victory over Boko Haram and corrode public confidence in government services.

¹⁴ <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/04/21/mnjtf-a-divided-boko-haram-boost-to-our-counter-insurgency-operations/> and <https://www.stripes.com/news/us-command-seeks-african-liason-officers-at-stuttgart-headquarters-1.464333#.WTZzLxOGORs>

¹⁵ <http://www.usaraf.army.mil/media-room/article/28147/unified-focus-2017-tabletop-exercise-brings-multinational-collaboration-to-cameroon>

¹⁶ <http://www.businessinsider.com/trump-to-sell-attack-planes-to-nigeria-to-help-fight-boko-haram-2017-4?IR=T> and http://www.defenseworld.net/news/18963/US_To_Sell_12_Embraer_A_29_Super_Tucano_Aircraft_To_Nigeria#.WTZk4xOGORs

¹⁷ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-39564855> and <http://www.militarytimes.com/articles/trump-to-sell-attack-planes-to-nigeria-for-boko-haram-fight>

¹⁸ <https://www.thecable.ng/security-agencies-take-control-borno-communities-liberated-boko-haram> and <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/more-news/231352-boko-haram-security-agencies-send-personnel-to-liberated-borno-communities.html>

12. On 31 April, the Nigerian Air Force led an interdiction mission 40 km outside of Damboa near Balla. Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the main Boko Haram faction, was reportedly injured in the strike, and a key deputy, Abba Mustapha, was killed. Shekau reportedly sought medical attention in a border town near Kolofata after the attack.¹⁹ The NAF mission against such high-value Boko Haram targets was likely intended to be a decapitation strike.
13. Nigerian soldiers and local Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) fighters conducted a joint campaign in Ngala to dislodge Boko Haram militants from the territory on 19 May. The operation reportedly freed almost 1,000 hostages being held by Boko Haram and included the destruction of IED-making equipment.²⁰
14. On 20 and 21 May, the Nigerian Army conducted a 72-hour clearing operation in the Chikun Gudu, Tumbuma Karami and Tumbuma Baba areas surrounding Lake Chad.²¹ Soldiers reportedly killed 13 suspected Boko Haram militants and arrested 10 others and recovered a cache of small arms. The Nigerian Air Force component of Operation Lafiya Dole reportedly conducted intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions in the Sambisa Forest area during the clearing operation.
15. The Nigerian Police Force has deployed police officers and operatives from the Explosive Ordinance Device Department to churches, mosques and other public places across Abuja in response to Boko Haram threats to attack the capital.²² While Nigerian government officials played down the threat, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Security Committee decided to intensify intelligence activities around Abuja.

Boko Haram

16. Throughout mid-April and May, Boko Haram militants concentrated their attacks geographically around IDP camps near Maiduguri and Konduga and intensified IED and mobile small arms attacks. This is possibly in response to the Nigerian government seeking to reassert control and return key government services to areas it has pushed Boko Haram out of.
17. Boko Haram carried out IED attacks on military checkpoints in Borno State on 12 and 17 April. The 12 April incident reportedly involved a suicide bombing and small arms attack on a military checkpoint in Dalori, Maiduguri, near an IDP camp, and resulted in the death of a Nigerian soldier.²³ Militants also allegedly stole weapons during the attack. The 17 April attack occurred near Sabon Garin Kimba

¹⁹ <http://punchng.com/bharam-leader-shekau-injured-others-killed-in-air-strike/> and <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/230215-many-boko-haram-leaders-killed-air-raid-official.html>

²⁰ <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2017/05/boko-haramtroops-kill-9-terrorists-rescue-998-persons/> and <http://dailypost.ng/2017/05/20/boko-haram-troops-rescue-998-people-destroy-bomb-factory-photos/>

²¹ <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/nigerian-troops-battle-boko-haram-lake-chad-area-47540095> and <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/rest-of-world/nigerian-troops-battle-boko-haram-in-lake-chad-area/articleshow/58774750.cms>

²² <http://punchng.com/bharam-police-deploy-detectives-in-abuja-mosques-churches/> and <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2015/11/boko-haram-plans-attacks-on-churches-mosques-markets-dss-warns/>

²³ <https://www.naij.com/1099369-boko-haram-attacks-military-checkpoint-soldier-killed.html> and <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/news/general/boko-haram-attacks-military-checkpoint-kills-soldier-carts-away-weapons/193405.html>

village, and ended with Boko Haram killing five military personnel and stealing military vehicles and weapons. Four other soldiers are missing in action.²⁴

18. Three Nigerian soldiers were killed and two injured by an IED while they were patrolling the Ngoshe-Pulka Road in Borno State on 18 April.²⁵ Reports suggest that Nigerian soldiers later killed six militants and recovered small arms during related clearance missions in nearby villages on 20 April.²⁶
19. Nigerian soldiers repelled Boko Haram fighters who attacked an army base near Sambisa Forest on 27 April. Fifteen suspected militants were killed in the clash according to a Nigerian military spokesperson.²⁷
20. On 7 May, Boko Haram released 82 of the remaining schoolgirls it kidnapped in Chibok in April 2014. The militant group exchanged the hostages for five of its leaders that the Nigerian government released. The Swiss government and the International Committee of the Red Cross brokered the exchange together with Mustapha Zanna, a barrister from Maiduguri who once represented the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf. Five days after the exchange, on 12 May, Boko Haram released two propaganda videos. In the first, one of the five released militants, Shuaibu Moni, threatens attacks on the Nigerian capital, Abuja. In the second, four of the released Chibok schoolgirls are allegedly shown pledging allegiance to Boko Haram.²⁸
21. Boko Haram has launched several attacks near IDP camps in Borno State over the last month. Two separate suicide bombings were carried out near an IDP camp in Konduga town on 15 and 17 May.²⁹ On 20 May, militants attacked and killed four members of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in two separate attacks near an IDP camp on the outskirts of Maiduguri (Dalori camp-1). The second attack involved personal IED attacks in the town of Konduga.³⁰
22. On 13 May, CJTF fighters fought off Boko Haram militants who attacked and reportedly killed six farmers near Amrawa village.³¹
23. Three Boko Haram suicide bombers launched an attack on the University of Maiduguri female hostel on 18 May.³² Three security staff were injured in the attack.

²⁴ <https://www.newsbreak.ng/2017/04/boko-haram-kills-five-soldiers-military-check-point/> and <http://punchng.com/bharam-terrorists-kill-five-soldiers-in-borno/>

²⁵ <http://www.cfrmagazine.com/2017/04/boko-haram-ied-kills-three-soldiers-in.html?m=0> and <http://punchng.com/boko-haram-ied-kills-three-soldiers-in-borno/>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ <http://www.news24.com/Africa/News/nigeria-says-15-suspected-boko-haram-fighters-shot-dead-20170428> and <http://dailypost.ng/2017/04/27/boko-haram-troops-kill-15-terrorists-several-others-injured-borno/>

²⁸ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/boko-haram-releases-video-purported-chibok-girl-170513025720253.html> and https://article.wn.com/view/2017/05/13/Kidnapped_Chibok_schoolgirls_pledge_allegiance_to_Boko_Haram/

²⁹ <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/regional/north-east/231549-soldiers-injured-as-female-suicide-bomber-attacks-military-checkpoint.html> and <http://www.pulse.ng/local/in-borno-female-suicide-bomber-attacks-military-checkpoint-2-soldiers-injured-id6695706.html>

³⁰ <http://punchng.com/suspected-boko-haram-members-kill-six-vigilantes/> and <http://www.france24.com/en/20170521-suspected-boko-haram-jihadists-kill-vigilantes-nigeria>

³¹ <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/boko-haram-kills-nigerian-farmers-170515134702648.html> and <http://www.tori.ng/news/62106/serious-panic-as-boko-haram-terrorists-murder-six.html>

24. On 18 May, the governor of Taraba State, Darius Ishaku, suggested that Boko Haram militants dislodged from Sambisa Forest are regrouping in Suntai Daaji forest in his state.³³
25. Boko Haram has also carried out attacks in Cameroon and Chad during this reporting period. Three civilians were killed and three wounded in a suicide attack in Kolofata in northern Cameroon on 19 April.³⁴ On 5 May, Chadian troops clashed with militants at an army post in Kaiga in the Lake Chad region. Nine Chadian troops and 28 Boko Haram fighters were reportedly killed in the clash.³⁵

³² <http://saharareporters.com/2017/05/19/three-male-suicide-bombers-killed-three-injured-foiled-attack-university-maiduguri-female> and <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/231602-suicide-bombers-killed-in-attempt-to-attack-female-hostel-of-university-of-maiduguri.html>

³³ <https://www.thecable.ng/boko-haram-members-relocating-sambisa-taraba-forest> and <http://dailypost.ng/2017/05/19/boko-haram-insurgents-relocating-sambisa-taraba-forest%E2%80%8E-governor-ishaku/>

³⁴ <http://www.topnigerianews.com/three-dead-in-boko-haram-suicide-attack-in-cameroon/> and <http://punchng.com/three-dead-in-boko-haram-suicide-attack-in-cameroon/>

³⁵ <https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/35337026/boko-haram-attack-in-chad-kills-nine-troops-40-jihadists-sources/#page1> and <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-nigeria-security-chad-idUSKBN1820EV>



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