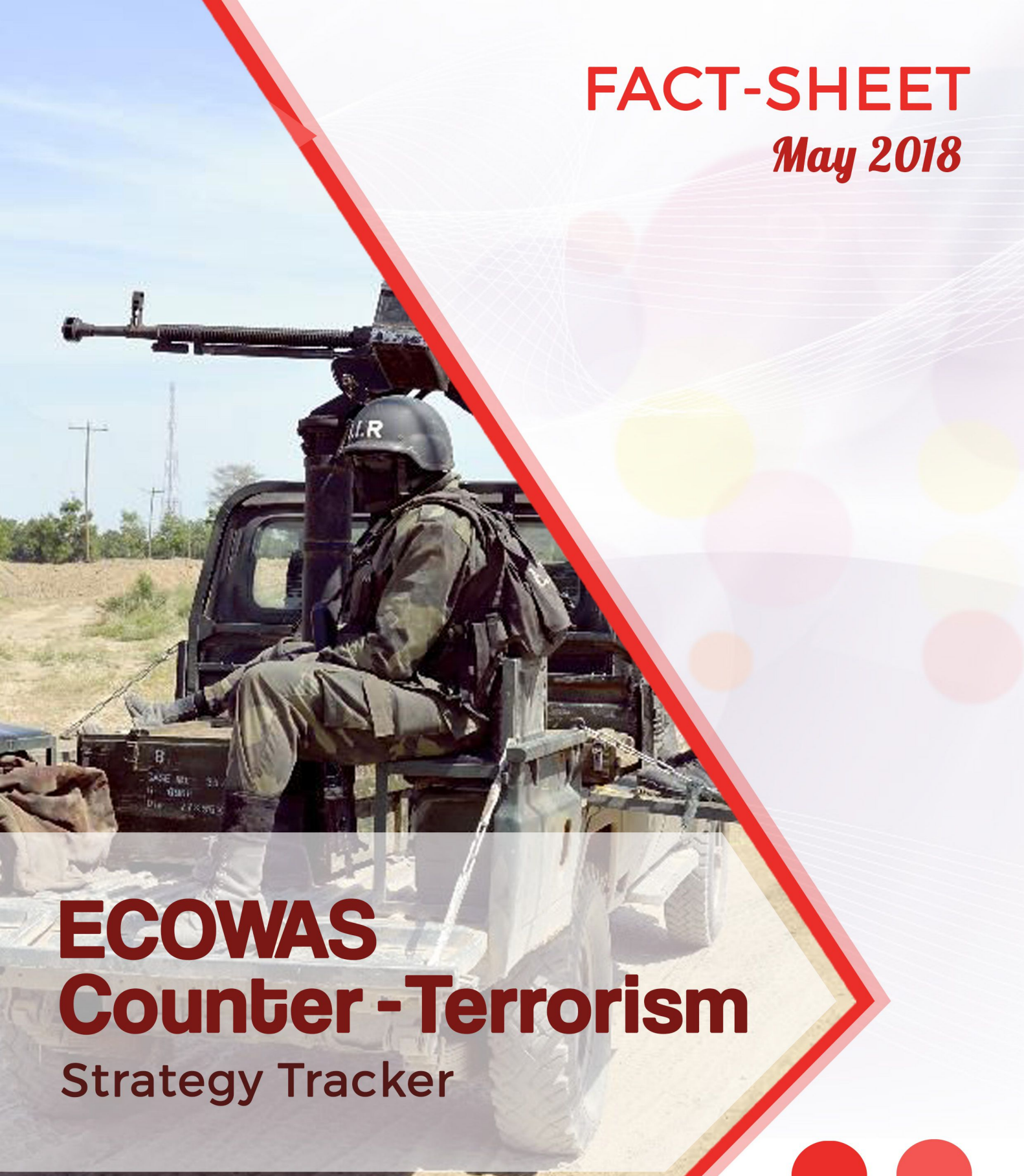
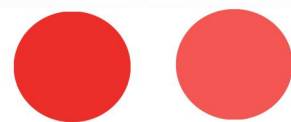


FACT-SHEET
May 2018



ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy Tracker



Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la Démocratie et le Développement

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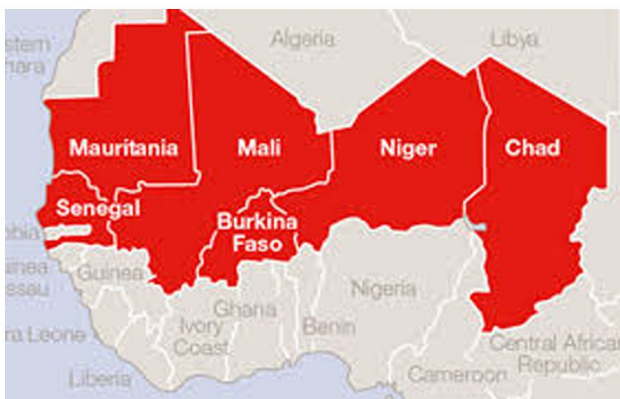
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INTRODUCTION

In response to the challenges of terrorism West Africa is facing, ECOWAS developed the Counter-Terrorism Strategy and Implementation Plan as a means of countering terrorist activities in the region as well as putting in place large-scale measures against terrorism.

To keep track of acts of the insurgency as they relate to ECOWAS countries, Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD) created the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy Tracker (ECTS-Tracker). The tracker is an open data platform that provides a practical analysis of operational policy framework for ECOWAS counter-terrorism, actions, supports, and serves as a knowledge base that promotes a common regional approach for counterterrorism by both state and non-state actors. This is done through the documentation and analysis of cases, activities, and incidences of extremist violence across the West African sub-region.

The tracker examines locations, trends, and patterns of incidences of violent extremism within the West African and Sahel regions. The ECTS-tracker also serves as a tool for monitoring the efforts of states in implementing the ECOWAS Counter-Terrorism Strategy (ECTS).



OVERVIEW OF THE MONTH



200 suspected insurgents were arrested in four West African Countries

52 in Burkina Faso



95 in Togo



42 in Benin



13 in Ghana



The Operation Led to the Recovery of

38 Guns

40 Sticks of Explosives

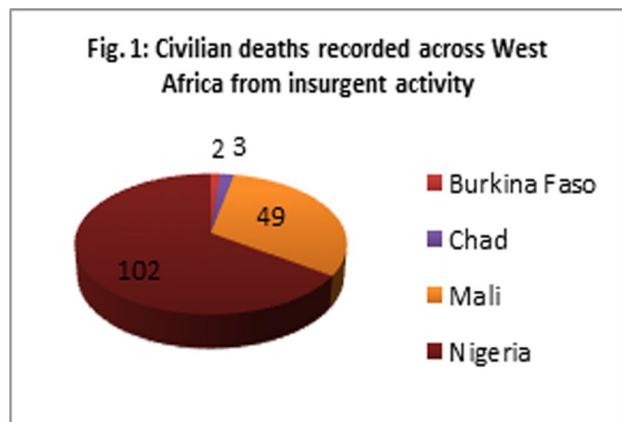
623 Illegally registered motorbikes



The Liberian security operatives beefed up security across the country, after receiving security warnings from the British Government's Intelligence Services of a possible terrorist attack in the country. The alert, which did not state when or where the attack will be perpetrated, warned British nationals in Liberia and others keen to travel to Liberia to avoid beach resorts, hotels, cafes, crowded areas and restaurants frequented mainly by foreigners.ⁱ

Over 200 suspected insurgents were arrested in a joint anti-terror and security operation in four West African countries; these include 52 in Burkina Faso, 42 in Benin, 95 in Togo and 13 in Ghana. The operation led to the recovery of 40 sticks of explosives, 38 guns and 623 illegally registered motorbikes.ⁱⁱ

The Nigerian Military officially launched 'Operation Last Hold' a final deep push operation, aimed to liberate and uproot the remnant of Boko Haram insurgents from the Lake Chad Basin region.ⁱⁱⁱ Nigeria also recorded the highest number of civilian casualties in West Africa this month.



The month also witnessed another attack on a top Burkinabe government official, Patrick Kabore. Suspected insurgents assassinated him around his residence in Oursi, a town brothering Burkina Faso and Mali, in far North Burkina Faso.^{iv}

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Burkina Faso

Since the November 2017 attacks in Burkina Faso, the northern region of the country has been unstable and humanitarian access has significantly reduced. Two high profile deaths were recorded this month.

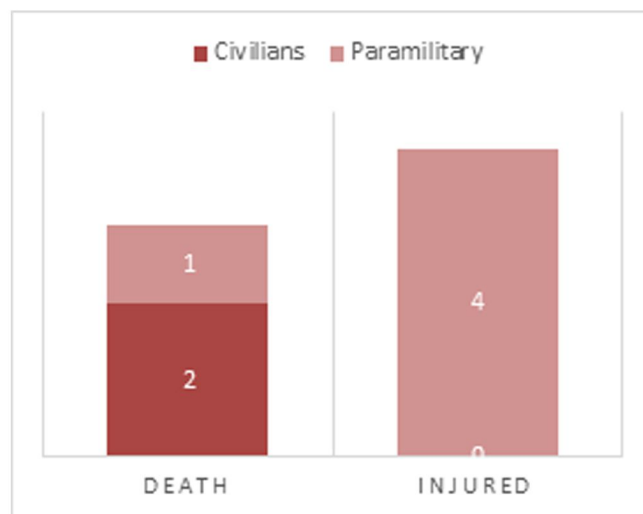


Fig. 2: Deaths recorded in Burkina Faso

Last month witnessed the killing of Hamidou Koundaba, the mayor of Koutougou Commune, in the country Northern Province of Soum.¹ In a similar vein, insurgents have further targeted government officials in the unstable Northern region, as was the case in with the death of Patrick Kabore in his residence by suspected jihadists. On Monday 11th May, Patrick Kabore, a top official and the government's highest representative in Oursi - a town in Burkina Faso bordering Mali, was murdered in his home. The police suspect jihadists.²

Military raids in various parts of Burkina Faso, by CDD estimates, led to the arrest of 52 suspected insurgent.³

Cameroon

While the country prepares to hold nationwide elections this year, the military to mitigate insurgent activities ahead of the general elections has tracked down a large cache of illegal weapons in a warehouse in Awae - a town near Yaounde the capital. During the raid, five gun-runners were arrested, while items recovered in-

³ Army: 200 arrested for terrorism in West Africa. 19th may 2018, <https://www.today.ng/news/africa/army-200-arrested-terrorism-west-africa-115403>

¹ Koutougou commune mayor gunned down. 9 April 2018, <https://www.newsghana.com.gh/burkina-faso-koutougou-commune-mayor-gunned-down/>

² Burkina Faso prefect killed 'by jihadists': sources. 11 May 2018, <https://www.news24.com/Africa/News/burkina-faso-prefect-killed-by-jihadists-sources-20180515>

recovered include: 10,500 rounds of ammunition, as well as an undisclosed number of explosives, guns, cutlasses and knives.⁴

The south-west and north-west regions of Cameroon recorded at least eight armed attacks and military counter-offensive attacks. Separatist groups have escalated their attacks and are now targeting civilians, most particularly schools and teachers.

Chad

Chad is a country that has suffered numerous assaults from the Boko Haram insurgent extremists, based in Northern Nigeria. On the 15th of April last month the sect attacked the town of Arge, bothering Nigeria and killed three Chadian security forces.⁵ In this period, the insurgents once again attack Chadian army checkpoints on an island in Lake Chad in Gabalami on the countries far west overnight. This attack claimed the life of one civilian, two customs officials, two forestry agents and a soldier.⁶

Liberia

Liberia is a country that has been unstable following the civil war 14 years ago.⁷ And is just recovering from the Ebola epidemic. In the past month, the country's has beef up security along the country's porous borders with Guinea, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire. This was in response to the British Government's issuance of a possible terrorist attack in the country. Various security apparatuses in Liberia along with the United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), are reviewing the alert with a view of countering the threat or adopting measures to mitigate the elements of the danger. Meanwhile, the Liberia National Police (LNP)

have already stepped up night patrols and erected checkpoints at various intervals around Monrovia in other to deter any attacker from bringing in arms, ammunition and other warlike materials into the country's largest urban settlement with a population of over one million people.⁸

Mali

International forces have been able to capture Talha Al Libi, a senior AQIM officer. Details are yet to be released of the operations that led to his arrest; however, interviews from a source in Timbuktu revealed information about the operations of Al Furqan and the fall-out of its leaders. His descriptions led to the location of the AQIM executives: Abderrhamane, Talha Al Libi himself and Emir Yahia Abu Al Houman.

The Gao region of Mali has recently been subject to violent attacks as 20 people died in a militia attack on Tuareg people. According to reports by Agence France-Presse, gunmen in vehicles and on motorbikes attacked a checkpoint close to the Niger border that was manned by militants from the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad, a Tuareg group.

In recent weeks the northern Gao and Menaka regions of Mali have seen a rise in intercommunal violence between Tuareg and Fulani communities. These clashes occurred as French military operations targeting the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara were underway. The al-Qaeda affiliated organisation Group of Support for Muslims and Islam, known as JNIM, is also active in the region. There have been at least 94 extrajudicial killings in the Menaka region since the beginning of the year; the United Nations said last month.

⁴ Cameroon, Battling Insurgencies, Cracks Down on Illegal Weapons, 07 May 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/cameroon-battling-insurgencies-cracks-down-on-illegal-weapons/4382858.html>

⁵ Boko Haram kills three Chadian soldiers. 18 April 2018, Read more at <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2018/04/boko-haram-kills-three-chadian-soldiers/>

On the 2nd of May in the town of Dia in the central Mopti region, four children were killed when playing an explosive device they thought was a toy. In similar circumstances on the 27th of May, two children were seriously injured by an IED explosion in Tanema area in central Mali. This has been the sixth explosion of this nature this year alone in central Mali.

Niger

Niger has also seen the rise of intercommunal clashes. On the 22 May, approximately 142 displaced people arrived at the Abala refugee camp in the western Tillabery region of Niger as a result of these clashes. These attacks appear to be cyclical as a few days prior armed attackers raided a village in the Tillabery region killing around 17 people.

Nigeria

This period, Nigeria Army launched Operation 'Last Hold', a final push operation aimed to uproot the Boko Haram insurgent sect from their known enclaves across the Lake Chad Basin. The theatre command of Operation Lafiya Dole in the troubled Northeast, Major General Abba Dikko, stated that the operation which aimed to last four months, entails the deployment of six additional manoeuvre brigades and other critical assets to insurgent affected states in north-east Nigeria. This will help to enable the return of displaced persons, allow for farming, fishing and security of lives and property as well as restoration of normal life to the North-east.

In Borno and Yobe states, residents told DW that militants of the so-called Islamic State in West Africa (ISWA) - led by Musab al-Barnawi - held sway over a territory spanning an estimated 100 miles (160 kilometers) (Boko Haram rebranded itself as ISWA when it aligned with Islamic State in 2015 - the year President Muhammadu Buhari pledged to defeat the group). "Definitely Boko Haram is very much present in our area. They even mount roadblocks, conducting stop and search operations the way the military does. Luckily they don't kill people in this area," said Ahmad Muhammad, who lives in Damboa, Borno State. Residents also told DW the militants were collecting taxes from citizens in return for what they said was "protection". The Nigerian military has refuted the claims, insisting that no territory was under ISWA control.

This period saw numerous offensive operations from the Nigerian military, alongside the multinational joint task force (MJTF), with the Civilian joint task force (CJTF) in uprooting Boko Haram insurgents from various hideouts within the Lake Chad Basin region. According to CDD estimate, 29 insurgents killed, while 12 were arrested and 1062 civilians recruited.⁹

⁶ Boko Haram strikes, kills six on Lake Chad island. 4th May 2018, <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/amplite/-just-in-Boko-haram-strikes-kills-6-on-lake-chad-island.html>

⁷ Adebajo, Adekeye (2002) Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. Boulder, CO: Lynne-Reiner

⁸ Liberia: UK Issues Terrorist Alert On Liberia. 18 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805210641.html>

⁹ Military Launches Operation Last Hold in Final Push Against Boko Haram. 16 May 2018, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201805160108.html>

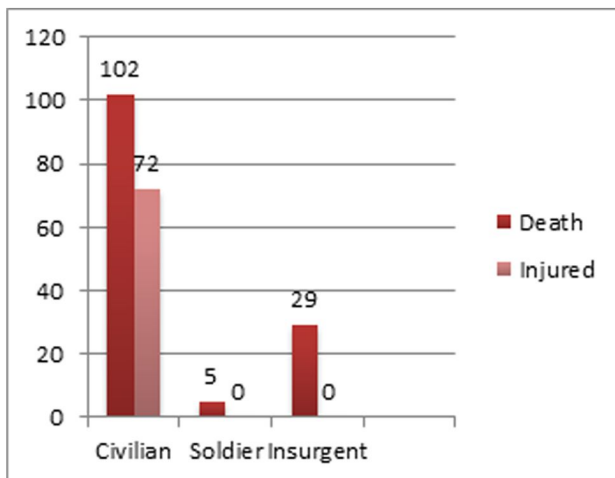


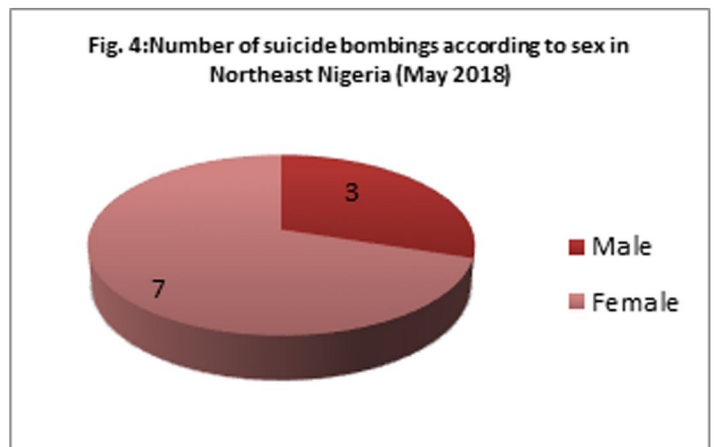
Fig. 3: Death and injury recorded from Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria (May 2018)

PATTERNS OF ATTACKS

Radical insurgent groups operating across the Lake Chad and the Sahel West Africa region have unleashed various attacks at different locations within the area.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgents have once again changed suicide attacks tactics by using an older man who appeared as a weak and feeble traveller.¹⁰ Security forces have repelled and intercept various assaults. Total attacks have by CDD estimates: killed 102 civilians, injured 72, and killed 5 military officers.

In Mali, there was another assault on the Tuareg ethnic community in the village of Tindibawen, 160km east of the town of Menaka near the border with Niger, and in a nearby village, Nanout Kotia, mayor of Menaka. The assault claimed the life of 17 civilians, recently Tuareg ethnic groups have come under attack from suspected rebel group linked to al-Qaeda- fighters in north-eastern Mali. Last month 40 of their members were killed.^v In total CDD recorded 49 civilians killed by insurgents.



In Mali 160km east of the town of Menaka near the border with Niger.

The assault claimed the life of **17 Civilians**, recently Tuareg ethnic groups have come under attack from suspected rebel groups linked to al-Qaeda fighters in north eastern Mali. Last month **40 of their members were killed.**

While insurgent attacks in Burkina Faso claimed the life's of 2 civilians, one para-military official and four para-military sustained various degrees of injuries.

¹⁰ Suicide Bombings: Boko Haram adopts new tactics. 17 May 2018, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/268745-sucide-bombings-boko-haram-adopts-new-tactics.html>

EDUCATION

The Nigerian Minister for Education Mr Adamu Adamu, during his keynote address at a Workshop, organised to review the Legal Framework on the Safe School Declaration, an initiative for the Protection of schools in North-eastern Nigeria from insurgent attacks. He disclosed that so far Boko Haram has murdered over 2,295 teachers and displaced 19000, and devastated the school system by destroying 1,500 schools since 2014, with over 1,280 casualties among teachers and students.^{vi}

'LAW GROUP' a US-based US/Nigeria law firm, released a fact-finding report on 7th May 2018, 77 days after the abduction of Dapchi schoolgirls at which point the released girls were back in school. At the time of writing, all the girls had been released except for Leah Sharibu, who remains in captivity. The report admonished the Nigerian government for not shutting down the Government Girls Science Technical College and relocating the students to safer locations. This was based on the climate of uncertainty, as well as the trauma of the situation. They also urged the Nigerian government to secure the freedom of Leah Sharibu and adequately utilise the \$22 million Safe School Initiative, which is meant to provide support to families of unrecovered girls and orphans whose parents had previously been killed by Boko Haram.^{vii}

In defiance of Boko Haram, the University of Maiduguri in Borno State, Nigeria, has stayed open despite an attack on the university earlier in the month. Armed attackers invaded the city but were stopped by security forces.

MODUS OPERANDI

Khalid Abubakar, the Secretary-General of Jama'atu Nasril Islam (JNI), an Islamic group, advised Nigeria security operative to review and reappraise their mode of operations. This is to meet up with dynamic challenges insurgents post to the country, as the criminals continue to change tactics. The group also pointed out that the security operatives in the conflict zones, including the citizens, had lowered their guards and relaxed. Which makes the insurgents take advantage of the situation, therefore, they called for continued vigilance most especially from the masses.^{viii}

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

According to data from IOM (International Organisation for Migration), over 5,300 people were displaced between the 9 - 14 May as a result of on-going military operations in the northeast of Nigeria. Around 160,000 people have been displaced in the Anglo-phone regions of Cameroon that have been suffering from violence and instability since 2016. Aid organisations are planning to provide emergency food, health, protection and shelter assistance.

The month of May saw about 10,250 new IDPs registered in Ménaka and Gao regions of Mali. In Niger, 142 displaced people arrived at the Abala refugee camp in the western Tillabery region following intercommunity clashes.

Seasonal changes this month brought strong winds that swept through northeast Nigeria destroying homes and shelter in at least 11 IDP sites. 444 recorded shelters were destroyed in the Jere locality leaving around 3000 people homeless.

The last week of May saw approximately 4,457 people in the northeast of Nigeria flee from their homes as a result of deteriorating living conditions alongside continued military operations according to IOM data. These displaced people have sought refuge in camps in Bama, Gwoza and Ngala local areas of Borno state.

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

The Victims Support Fund (VSF), a committee set up by the Nigerian government to restore and assure the dignity and well-being of victims of insurgency in Nigeria. It commenced N1.6 billion reconstruction projects within Gwoza, Mobba and Ngala communities in Borno State; these communities had been devastated by Boko Haram attacks. The reconstruction project hopes to restore governance institutions and bring life back to normalcy in the region.^{ix}

Hajiya Aisha Wakil popularly as 'Mama Boko Haram' a human rights lawyer and a mediator, disclosed at a fundraising event for her NGO 'Complete Care and Aid' on 4th May 2018 in Maiduguri the Borno State capital that Boko Haram insurgents are willing to lay down their arms and surrender for peace, with the motive to return to their various communities.^x

On 3 May a Red Cross driver was reported missing in the northern Soum province of Mali. He was reportedly travelling between the towns of Djibo and Arbinda.

¹¹ <https://www.unicef.org/wca/press-releases/un-urges-world-act-now-save-lives-west-africas-sahel>

¹² <https://www.unicef.org/wca/press-releases/un-urges-world-act-now-save-lives-west-africas-sahel>

UNICEF has warned that hundreds of thousands of malnourished children in Mali are at the risk of death.¹¹ Severe food shortage as a result of violence, insecurity and a long, lean season means that 5 million people will require food and livelihoods assistance.¹²

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its recent report titled "Perspectives from local communities on stabilisation and building peace in the Lake Chad Basin" revealed a lack of professionalism in security operatives and alleged misconduct of security personnel deployed to fight the insurgency in the Lake Chad Basin region. These allegations include sexual and gender-based violence perpetrated by members of the security agencies; soldiers were accused of fleeing with girls and young women from the communities.^{xi}

In another detailed report released by Amnesty International titled "They Betrayed Us" - the Nigerian military have been found guilty of repeating the cycle of abuse and torture of the thousands of women and girls who survived the rule of Boko Haram in the northeast of Nigeria. The reports reveal how the Nigerian military and Civilian Joint Task Force (JTF) separated women from their husbands and placed them in satellite camps located in Borno state where they were starved and raped.

The Malian army has been accused of extrajudicial killings of unarmed civilians in the city of Boulikessy after the G5 Sahel joint force convoy came under attack in an ambush by insurgents. The army was accused of responding by killing 15 unarmed civilians.^{xii}

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/8415/2018/en/>

MILITARY SUPPORT

The United States of America have donated two military aircraft to support the Cameroonian military in the ongoing fight against Boko Haram. The Cameroonian defence minister Joseph Beti Assomo and the U.S. Ambassador to Cameroon Peter Henry Barlerin were both aboard during the test flight. According to Joseph Beti Assomo, the planes specialise in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. Also, with inbuilt cameras that could capture images from the ground from up to 10 kilometres away from earth surface, and will be maintained by the United States for two years.^{xiii}

Burkinabe forces killed three suspected terrorists in an early morning raid: one gendarme was also killed in the fighting in the Rayongo neighbourhood, while five people, including one civilian, were injured. A statement released by the security forces revealed "The Special Intervention Unit of the National Gendarmerie" (USIGN) conducted an operation during the night of May 21 to 22 to dislodge suspected terrorists in the Ragnongo district".

INFRASTRUCTURE

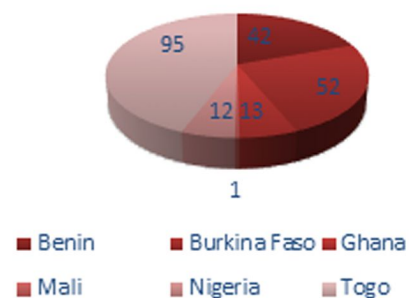
In a visit to Mali, the UN Chief requested for donors to provide more support to the G5 Sahel force. Back in February, during a conference with 50 countries including the United States, Japan and Norway pledged 414 million euros (\$509 million) for the G5 Sahel force, made up of troops from Mali, Niger, Chad, Burkina Faso and Mauritania. The Sahel Force has only recently gotten off the ground due to difficulties in accessing those funds despite years of planning.

The Nigerian Minister of Power, Works and Housing, Babatunde Fashola revealed in his opening remarks at the 27th power sector meeting held in Yola, Adamawa State that 80% of the electricity transmission and distribution installations damaged by Boko Haram insurgents in the North-east had been restored.^{xiv}

MILITARY RESPONSE

The Malian Ministry of Defence responded 48 hours after civilians accused the army under the G5 Sahel joint force of killing unarmed civilians. The army was ambushed by insurgents who murdered one Malian soldier in the town of Boulikessi located on the northern border with Burkina Faso, in retaliation the military were accused of shooting sporadically and killing 15 civilians, who were not terrorists. The minister in an official statement disclosed that "A Malian soldier was killed, and in retaliation 12 terrorists neutralized."^{xv}

Fig. 5: Number of arrested insurgents across West Africa



If we look at the number of arrests made, there is a negative correlation between civilian deaths recorded and the number of arrests made in that state as is indicated in the graph in figure 6.

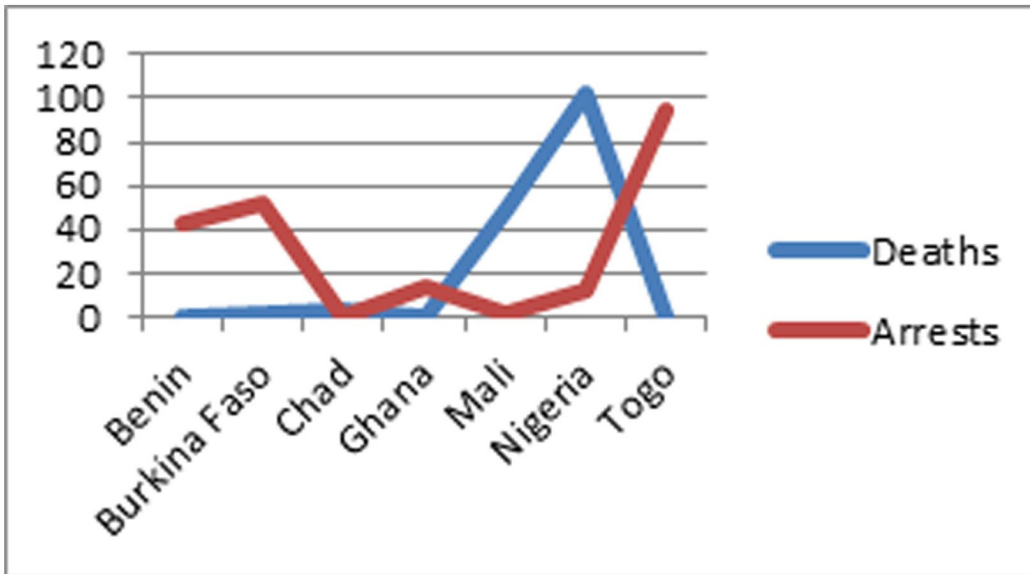


Fig. 6: Comparison of civilian deaths and insurgent arrests

HEALTH CHALLENGES

DR Congo has on May 26th, confirmed 26 deaths, and 49 confirmed or suspected cases of the Ebola virus in the Mbandaka area, in the northwestern Equateur province according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). The Ebola vaccination campaign in the affected regions has to date, provided 7,540 doses of the vaccine.

Chad has been experiencing an increase in the number of measles cases. As of the 20th of May, 218 meningitis have been recorded, with 34 deaths. Infections in the Zour district of the northern Tibesti region have reached almost epidemic levels.

Cholera outbreaks in northeast Nigeria have continued to spread with confirmed cases in four local government areas (LGS) in Borno State and one LGA in Yobe state. The UN is responding to the outbreak through various methods: surveillance, case management, water and sanitation services and raising awareness.

MEANS OF ATTACKS

In May 2018, insurgents operating across the Lake Chad, West Africa and the Sahel region made use of mostly foot soldiers, which perpetrated attacks using Pickups Vehicles, Motorcycles, at various locations across the region. Boko Haram insurgent at the Lake Chad region, also leverage on soft assaults by using improvised explosive devices strapped to the body of suicide bombers, that target public places and security operatives checkpoint before detonation.

In Gashua, Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe, Nigeria, courageous civilians foiled a suicide bomb attack by a suspected female Boko Haram member on a mosque. The suicide bomber had infiltrated the mosque, while members were about to commence a prayer session but were detected when struggling to detonate a suicide vest strapped to her body. She was quickly restrained by the locals, arrested and handed over to troops at Azare. Members of the Explosive Ordinance Disposal Component of Operation Lafiya Dole

at the location safely defused the suicide vest, and the suicide bomber is currently receiving medical attention due to injuries sustained during her arrest.^{xvi}

This period, by CDD estimate - Nigeria accounted for ten suicide attacks, in which three were male, while seven were female. This shows a decline in April, suicide attacks where 16 suicide attacks were recorded; Nine (9) were female and seven (7) male.

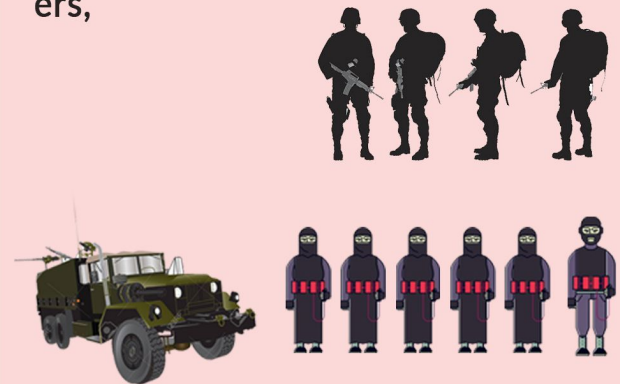
CONCLUSION

This past month has seen a sharp rise in intercommunal clashes between ethnic groups in the Sahel, most especially between Fulani and Tuareg groups in Niger and Mali. There have been increasing civilian casualties across West African countries most especially in Nigeria and Mali from intercommunal ethnic clashes, and the state security forces seem ill-equipped to respond.

A troubling report by Amnesty International detailing violence perpetrated by Armed Forces in Nigeria on the victims of Boko Haram has been published. However, the content of the report has been denied by the Nigerian government. This indicates a worrying trend in the increasingly blurred lines concerning human rights abuses between insurgents and security forces.

MEANS OF ATTACKS

Insurgents made use of **Foot Soldiers** and leveraged on **“Soft Attacks”** by using improvised explosive devices strapped to the body of suicide bombers,



Suicide attacks have reduced this month, with individual cases of the individual carriers possibly indicating a change in tactics. Alongside increasing violence and instability in the Lake Chad region, there have also been cases reported in DR Congo of the spread of infectious diseases - a problem that is rapidly becoming more urgent where there is currently an outbreak of Ebola.

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