

The Boko Haram and Nigerian Jihadism

Yossef Bodansky

February 2015

Executive Summary

Despite its growing notoriety, Boko Haram (Western Education Is Sacrilege in the Hausa language) is but a small component of a wider and more convoluted Islamist-Jihadist challenge to the entire Heart of Africa - of which northern Nigeria is but an important part. The key to comprehending, confronting and ultimately defeating Boko Haram is thus in addressing the entire Islamist-Jihadist challenge at the Heart of Africa. The gradual adoption of the immensely violent and politically uncompromising Takfiri Jihadism by the Boko Haram in summer 2014 significantly increased the Jihadist threat to Nigeria and the entire Heart of Africa. The strategic importance of the Boko Haram markedly changed in late-2014 with the establishment of a new Sudan-origin system of state sponsorship in order to facilitate a regional escalation of the Boko Haram's Jihad. Starting late-January 2015, the Boko Haram delivered a major political-military challenge to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan. This is the most explicitly political challenge to the government - albeit delivered through military means. The impact on the presidential elections, now scheduled for mid-February, will be immense.





About ISPSW

The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is objective and task oriented and is above party politics.

In an ever more complex international environment of globalized economic processes and worldwide political, ecological, social and cultural change, bringing major opportunities but also risks, decision-makers in enterprises and politics depend more than ever before on the advice of highly qualified experts.

ISPSW offers a range of services, including strategic analyses, security consultancy, executive coaching and intercultural competency. ISPSW publications examine a wide range of topics connected with politics, economy, international relations, and security/ defense. ISPSW network experts have worked – in some cases for decades – in executive positions and possess a wide range of experience in their respective specialist areas.

About the Author of this Issue

Yossef Bodansky has been the Director of Research at the International Strategic Studies Association [ISSA], as well as a Senior Editor for the *Defense & Foreign Affairs* group of publications, since 1983. He was the Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare at the U.S. House of Representatives between 1988 and 2004, and stayed on as a special adviser to Congress till January 2009. In the mid-1980s, he acted as a senior consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of State.

He is the author of eleven books – including *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (*New York Times* No. 1 Bestseller & *Washington Post* No. 1 Bestseller), *The Secret History of the Iraq War* (*New York Times* Bestseller & *Foreign Affairs Magazine* Bestseller), and *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda's Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* – and hundreds of articles, book chapters and Congressional reports.

Mr Bodansky is a Director at the Prague Society for International Cooperation, and serves on the Board of the Global Panel Foundation and several other institutions worldwide.



Yossef Bodansky



ANALYSIS

Despite its growing notoriety, Boko Haram (Western Education Is Sacrilege in the Hausa language) is but a small component of a wider and more convoluted Islamist-Jihadist challenge to the entire Heart of Africa - of which northern Nigeria is but an important part. The key to comprehending, confronting and ultimately defeating Boko Haram is thus in addressing the entire Islamist-Jihadist challenge at the Heart of Africa. The gradual adoption of the immensely violent and politically uncompromising Takfiri Jihadism by the Boko Haram in summer 2014 significantly increased the Jihadist threat to Nigeria and the entire Heart of Africa. The strategic importance of the Boko Haram markedly changed in late-2014 with the establishment of a new Sudan-origin system of state sponsorship in order to facilitate a regional escalation of the Boko Haram's Jihad. Starting late-January 2015, the Boko Haram delivered a major political-military challenge to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan. This is the most explicitly political challenge to the government - albeit delivered through military means. The impact on the presidential elections, now scheduled for mid-February, will be immense.

Historical Background

The development of the region that includes contemporary northern Nigeria can be traced to the growth of caravan traffic. The westward expansion of the Muslim world boosted the revival of socio-political life. Already in the 10th Century, the cities of Kano and Katsina were key centers of trans-Saharan caravan traffic. These cities had a unique cosmopolitan character, bringing together both people and cultural influence from as far away as the Middle East and southern Africa. The aggregate impact of this foreign influence resulted in uniquely high levels of social development. By the 12th Century, Islamic civilization kept spreading into northern Nigeria along the caravan routes from the Sudan to Timbuktu, in the Mali Empire. Islam gained tangible foothold with distinct socio-political characteristics in the 14th Century - contributing to the ascent, by the 15th Century, of the Hausa city-states as the vibrant trading centers of the Heart of Africa. Throughout, scholars from the Mali Empire occupied important administrative posts in the Hausa city-states.

The Borno Empire to the north gradually replaced the Hausa as the regional center of power and influence during the 17th and 18th Centuries. The loss in 1759 of control over the oasis town of Bilma and access to the Trans-Saharan trade signaled the beginning of the end of the Borno Empire - which culminated in dismemberment to autonomous clusters by 1780. The forces that filled the ensuing vacuum in the early 19th Century created the socio-political dynamics and posture that still dominate northern Nigeria two centuries later.

At the turn of the 19th Century, Shehu Usman dan Fodio, an urbanized Fulani Islamic scholar in the Hausa-ruled city of Gobir, introduced the reliance on Islamic values in order to further socio-economic grievances. He unified nomadic Fulani, disgruntled Hausa peasantry, and Gobir urbanites who joined him in forced exile in Gudu - all of whom suffered under the despotism and corruption of the Hausa kings - into a military-religious force. Shehu Usman dan Fodio led the army of his followers on a Jihad aimed at purifying Islamic practices in the region by installing new righteous leadership in the Hausa city-states. In early 1804, dan Fodio was proclaimed Amir al-Muminin (The Defender of the Faithful) by his followers in Gudu. He immediately nominated a number of Flag Bearers amongst his followers - thus laying the foundations of the political structure of the Jihad. Between 1804 and 1808, dan Fodio's Jihad toppled fourteen Hausa kings and replaced them with Fulani emirs. These emirs swore allegiance to dan Fodio and jointly established a Caliphate in what is today northern Nigeria. In 1809, dan Fodio's son Muhammad Bello founded the city of Sokoto that became the



capital of what was now known as the Sokoto Caliphate. Until the British conquest in 1903, the Sokoto Caliphate was among the largest and most powerful empires in sub-Saharan Africa.

The British Government formally organized the territories of the region as a unified Nigeria in 1914.

After the end of the Second World War, Britain began moving Nigeria toward independence. Considering its size and diversity, the country-to-be was organized in the form of a federated state. The British established a comprehensive structure of self-governance at all levels with fairly well trained and prepared local officials and functionaries. It was intended that they would ultimately take over the running of the country on their own once independence came. Nigeria was granted independence in October 1960 in a peaceful and fairly well organized manner. The borders of independent Nigeria were determined in the map rooms in Berlin on the basis of the reach of European colonial officials and the skills of diplomats, and not on the basis of the natural habitats and economic spheres of the local population. Moreover, although the British authorities gave Nigeria a uniquely positive treatment, their socio-economic development programs were driven more by the self-interest of London, than by the desire to develop the local population. Now, to ensure the unity of the huge diverse country in the face of internal strife and economic crises, as well as external pressures, successive Nigerian governments - both civilian and military - succumbed to the lure of authoritarian centralization at the expense of local rule.

Ideological Waves

Meanwhile, Nigeria, and particularly the restive north, was not immune to the ideological tidal waves sweeping across the Third World and particularly Africa. Political militant Islam re-emerged as an integral part of the ideological revival in the post-Colonial era in the form of "a leftist Islamic ideology" with violent revolutionary taint. The French Marxist scholar Maxime Rodinson noted that the evolution of the revolutionary post-independence struggles transformed "the implicit ideology of the Third World revolt" into a widespread adoption of "militant aspects of Marxism. Some people do so by presenting such tendencies as parts of the 'essential' Islam." Thus, Islam emerged as the expression of the cause of the Third World and the champion of the down trodden masses.

Yet, the main outbursts of Jihadist violence in northern Nigeria were by indigenous groups led by charismatic preachers. Most important was Muhammadu Marwa - a Cameroonian who immigrated to northern Nigeria in 1945 and assumed a leading role in confronting the British. He continued to fight central authority after independence. Known as Maitatsine (He Who Curses in the Hausa language), Marwa organized in the early-1970's a large militant following called the Yan Tatsine (Followers of Maitatsine in the Hausa language). In 1980-85, they launched the first Jihadist uprising in northern Nigeria - renouncing the spread of the evils of westernization and state administration. Marwa himself was killed in the initial riots but his death only exacerbated the violence.

The large and rapidly growing Muslim population of Sub-Saharan Africa intrigued the Islamist and Jihadist leaders. Starting the mid-1970's, the Iranian Islamists sought to use the large Lebanese-Shiite population as a springboard for the radicalization of Africa's Muslims. The Iranians met with success in the 1980's when they expanded their reach to Marxist groups and convinced them to adopt Sunni Islamism-Jihadism as the key to lavish support. In April 1987, Tehran conducted an international conference on Islam and the Mustazafin (Oppressed in Persian) to address the revolutionary struggle in the Third World and Iranian financial and



military assistance. "The freedom movements ... especially Islamic movements, are very important to us. We have always supported them from the beginning, and we shall continue to do so," declared then chairman of the Iranian parliament Hojjat ol-Islam Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani. Concurrently, Libyan intelligence also sought to capitalize on Islamic radicalization - spending huge amounts of money, as well as providing extensive training and large quantities of weapons, throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. However, as the Jihadist movement in Libya escalated its war against Muammar Qadhafi - Libyan intelligence swiftly disengaged from supporting all other Islamist-Jihadist causes.

In the early-1990's, Sudan's Hassan al-Turabi launched the first dedicated Islamist drive to harness and control the radicalization of Sub-Saharan Africa's Muslims. Tehran and Khartoum closely coordinated their involvement throughout Africa. They jointly transferred financial assistance, placed operatives, and established stockpiles of weapons and explosives. Meanwhile, Turabi promises to expand the work of the International Muslim Brothers and various al-Jihad organizations in sub-Saharan Africa in order to spread Sunni militant Islam and establish entities loyal to the Islamic Revolution. Throughout the Heart of Africa the surge was led by the Senegalese Ahmad Khalifa Niasse, aka the Ayatollah of Kaolack, who advocated a Black African liberation struggle tailored after the FIS struggle in Algeria.

In spring 1993, Mohammed Sharif Mahdavi, the Director of the Africa Department in the Foreign Ministry, elucidated the Iranian doctrine in terms of continuing the legacy of the African struggles. "For West Africa ... the Islamic Revolution of Iran evoked a vivid memory of its past history when Islamic scholars like Shehu Umar Tall, Shehu Usman dan Fodio and others, transformed society and created Muslim empires. ... The merit of the Islamic Revolution in Iran is that it has rekindled the spirit of Islamic Revival and revitalized the confidence of the Muslim Ummah in its potentials and capabilities. ... Iran is the pioneer in the new phase of the struggle for a Muslim World Order."

Concurrently, the then fledgling global Jihadist movement dispatched emissaries and activists to establish a comprehensive network all over Africa. In early-2001, Osama bin Laden specifically urged the Muslims of Nigeria, as well as of other West African states, to rise up against what he called US "enslavement". That was to be the beginning of an African Jihad. Toward this end, bin Laden dispatched in June 2001 a most senior aide - Imad Abdelwahid Ahmed Alwan, a Yemeni - to conduct a major survey of the Islamist hot-spots of Africa. Alwan traveled from Afghanistan to Chad, Niger, Mauritania, Mali, Nigeria and Algeria. He was most impressed by the growing radicalization and militancy of the Muslim communities in northern Nigeria and strongly recommended massive help by the supreme global leadership of Jihad.

However, the violence Alwan witnessed in Nigeria had little to do with bin Laden's calls for a global Jihad and a confrontation between Islamdom and the West. Starting 2000, northern Nigeria was rocked by cycles of clashes between Christians and Muslims over the establishment of Sharia States in the predominantly Muslim parts of northern Nigeria. This confrontation was itself but a phase in a cyclical process prevalent throughout the entire Heart of Africa. There exists a sectarian fault line that runs from Uganda to Senegal/Gambia and is dominated by the traditional struggle over water and land rights between the predominantly Muslim nomads and the predominantly Christian homesteaders. At the turn of the 21st Century, these clashes evolved and escalated into anti-Christian Jihads. In the Nigerian section of this fault line, the conflict between nomadic Fulani and Hausa homesteaders was exacerbated and transformed into a vicious Jihad against the entire local Christian population as well as Muslim communities that refused to abandon modernization. In fall 2001, around the time Alwan was in northern Nigeria, intense Christian-Muslim violence flared anew - exacerbated



by the growing flow of funds from Arab Islamist-Jihadist charities. At least a thousand people were killed in this cycle of communal violence.

Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf and the Foundation of Boko Haram

The street violence of fall 2001 saw the first emergence of extremely violent groups of thugs that swore allegiance to a religious teacher from Yobe State called Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf. In the first half of 2002, Yusuf consolidated these groups into an organization he first called the Yusufiyya Dawah (The Disciples of Yusuf in Arabic) movement and subsequently adopted the populist name Boko Haram. The group was formally founded in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State, as the Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jama'a ala Minhaj as-Salaf (The People of the Way of the Prophet and the Community According to the Salafi Approach in Arabic) with Yusuf as its religious guide and de-facto leader.

In early-2004, the Boko Haram moved to Kanamma, Yobe State, close to the border with Niger. It set up a base called "Afghanistan" for the establishment of a real Muslim society that rejected all things Western and the conduct of military training. Soon afterwards, armed detachments of the Boko Haram started attacking police outposts and killing police officers. Among the locals, the members of the Boko Haram were known as "the Nigerian Taliban".

Boko Haram assumed center stage in early May 2004 when a new cycle of Christian-Muslim violence erupted in the central Nigerian town of Yelwa. On May 4, Christian Tarok farmer-fighters attacked Muslim Fulani tribesmen (part of the world's largest nomadic group) because their herds grazed on lands and used water claimed by the farmers. At least 630 people, two thirds of them Fulanis, were killed in the first cycle of clashes. News of the fighting spread throughout northern Nigeria and incited numerous violent clashes between local Muslim and Christian communities. On May 12, radicalized Muslim youth attacked Christians in the northern city of Kano ostensibly in retaliation for the "massacre" in Yelwa. Street battles quickly spread throughout Kano. Between 500 and 600 people, most of them Christians, were killed in the two days of violence. Wielding machetes and spears, as well as throwing petrol bombs, Boko Haram thugs distinguished themselves in the brutality of their attacks and the indiscriminate killing and mutilation of innocent civilians. Their zeal and refusal to cease street violence severely complicated and prolonged efforts by the local authorities and community leaders to bring the carnage to an end.

In November 2008, Boko Haram thugs played a similar role in exacerbating the clashes between Muslim and Christian gangs in the Jos area. These clashes were triggered by a disputed local government election where the feuding candidates were a Muslim and a Christian. At least 700 people were killed in Jos alone. By now, however, Boko Haram had consolidated a quality leadership and expanded its membership way beyond the street fighting thugs. Godwin Ijediogor of the Nigerian Guardian described the group's leadership in terms reminiscent of Al-Qaida. "Boko Haram membership is reported to include many members of the elite, including university lecturers and others, who abandoned their posts and sold their homes to join the sect. Ironically, Yusuf is Western-educated and went about with cell phones and other Western items while urging his followers to rid themselves of all material wealth and war against Western education. He went about chauffeur-driven in a Mercedes all-terrain vehicle, with vehicles in his compound." In early-2009, Yusuf declared an all-out total war on the Nigerian modern state. "Democracy and the current system of education must be changed otherwise this war that is yet to start would continue for long," Yusuf decreed.



In late-July, the Boko Haram sought to take over and dominate the next cycle of major Christian-Muslim violence with disastrous results. On July 26, clashes erupted in Bauchi between Christian and Muslim street gangs. Boko Haram claimed that the Christian gangs attacked its mosque and unleashed its own gangs on the Christian population. The security forces reacted in force in order to suppress the fighting. More than 50 people were killed and over 100, most of them Boko Haram thugs, were arrested. It did not take long for Boko Haram gangs in other cities to start attacking Christians - for the first time using a large number of firearms. Most intense were the street fighting in Maiduguri, where the Boko Haram was originally established.

Yusuf sought to use the Maiduguri fighting in order to consolidate control over the region's Islamist forces. Hence, Boko Haram gangs attacked rival Islamic mosques in addition to the usual list of police stations, the local prison, and Christian churches. Security forces counterattacked on July 27, killing over 90 Boko Haram members and arresting several hundred including Yusuf. Fighting continued to spread and escalate, mainly in Yobe State. On July 30, Yusuf was shot dead while in police custody in Maiduguri. Key financier Alhaji Buji Foi was also killed. Abuja would later claim that Yusuf was killed trying to escape - but nobody believed this excuse. The shock of Yusuf's death and the public display of his bullet-riddled body brought the five-day insurrection to a swift end. A total of some 800 people were killed, an estimated 500 of them Boko Haram members. Most known Boko Haram leaders were assumed to be dead.

The surviving leaders of the Boko Haram seemed to have put a brave face on the outcome of the Maiduguri fighting. On August 9, a communique surfaced insisting that despite his martyrdom, Yusuf "lives forever" as the guide of the Boko Haram. The communique was signed by Mallam Sanni Umaru in his capacity as the "acting leader" of the Boko Haram. The communique stressed that since "Boko Haram is just a version of Al-Qaida" - the organization was invincible. The essence of the communique amounted to a declaration of a Jihadist war on the rest of Nigeria. The Boko Haram announced that it had "started a Jihad in Nigeria" and was about to unleash a wave of terrorism in predominantly-Christian Southern Nigeria - starting with bombing attacks in major Nigerian cities such as Lagos, Ibadan and Enugu. However, in early September 2009 there were mounting indications from numerous Jihadist sources in the Middle East and South Asia that the Umaru communique was actually issued by the Jihadist global leadership in pursuit of its own objectives in Nigeria and west Africa as a whole, and not by the survivors of the Boko Haram.

Meanwhile, around the turn of the 21st Century northern Nigeria was increasingly riddled with radicalized groupings and thus increasingly susceptible to the spread of the Jihadist message. The technological and information revolution made it easier for the Jihadist message to reach even the most remote parts of Africa. Cheaper and easily available air transportation enabled would-be fighters, commanders and leaders of Jihadist movements to reach centers of both Islamist-Jihadist scholarship and military expertise in the Middle East and South Asia. They acquired knowledge, funds and weapons for their home constituencies.

By the middle of the decade, the global Jihadist system - the so-called al-Qaida - started emphasizing the emergence of regional trends and movements unique to local conditions. This evolution enabled the distinct Islamist-Jihadist movements of northern Nigeria to have better understanding and cooperation with "the center" - opening the door to greater amounts of support, training and supplies. This trend continues and keeps reinforcing and radicalizing the rapidly expanding Jihadist movement throughout northern Nigeria and the entire Heart of Africa. The main outcome has been the further integration of the inwardly looking Jihadist groups of the Heart of Africa into the global Jihadist movement.



Boko Haram and the Association with the Global Jihadist Movement

In mid-June 2010, Boko Haram became formally associated with the global Jihadist movement via the regional entity Al-Qaidat Jihad fi al-Maghreb al-Islami (The Foundation of Jihad in the Islamic West in Arabic, also known by the acronym AQIM, which is really more of a strategic-theological authority than an operational command). AQIM leader Abu Mousab Abdel Wadoud (aka Abdel Malek Drouqdal) announced that al-Qaida was “prepared to provide weapons training to [Boko Haram’s] sons and to provide them with whatever support we can - men, arms, ammunition, and supplies - in order to enable you to defend our people in Nigeria and to repel the wrongs of the Crusader minority.” Abdel Wadoud stressed that the entire global Jihadist movement was committed to markedly expanding presence and operations in sub-Saharan Africa because it provides for “strategic depth that would give [the Jihadists] a bigger scope for maneuvers.” It is impossible for al-Qaida to operate in West Africa without gaining a solid foothold in Nigeria, the region’s leading power - a foothold that the cooperation with Boko Haram is expected to provide.

In late-June, Boko Haram reciprocated in a dramatic fashion. Imam Abubakar Shekau (aka Imam Abu Muhammed Abubakar bin Muhammed Shekau), the former deputy leader long believed to have been killed in late-July 2009 in the Maiduguri riots, resurfaced in a Jihadist video clip as the leader of Boko Haram. The video was a classic Al-Qaida style propaganda with Shekau wearing a headdress, with an AK-47 gun at his side and a stack of religious books behind him. Shekau declared that he is well and firmly in command. He announced that the Boko Haram was now ready to launch attacks on “western culture” in Nigeria. He stressed that the Boko Haram would retaliate for the Muslim casualties suffered in 2009 and the killing of its leader Ustaz Mohammed Yusuf by the Nigerian security forces. Ultimately, Imam Abubakar Shekau reiterated, the Boko Haram was first and foremost committed to the imposition of strict Sharia Law throughout Nigeria. Significantly, Maiduguri was immediately filled with flags of the Boko Haram - an expression of widespread grassroots support.

On July 11, 2010, Abubakar Shekau issued a communique which stressed all-Jihadist themes. Significantly, the communique was posted on the Ansar al-Mujahedin Jihadist forum that is strongly affiliated with Al-Qaida. The communique was addressed to leaders of Al-Qaida and its regional-affiliated groups in Algeria, Iraq, Somalia and Yemen. Shekau sought to convey the message that the Boko Haram was now an integral part of that milieu. Shekau singled out the martyrdom of the key Jihadist commanders in Iraq back in April. “I send this message of condolence on behalf of my mujahedin brothers in some African territories called Nigeria to the mujahedin ... in general and to the soldiers of Allah in the Islamic State of Iraq in particular,” he wrote. “By Allah, they rose, did Jihad, and fought in order for the faith to be entirely for Allah. It was for this that they rose, it was for this that they fought, and it was for this that they died. For that, He really was a master of the martyrs.” Shekau defined the Jihad waged by the Boko Haram as an integral component of the global Jihad that does not recognize modern states - including “some African territories called Nigeria” - and their boundaries. Shekau then warned the United States and the West of the dire ramifications of the impending escalation of the Jihad. “Infidels, hypocrites and apostates: Do not think Jihad is over. Rather Jihad has just begun. O America, die with your fury!”

The joining with the global Jihadist movement came in the aftermath of a few years of cultivating contacts and building trust. Back in 2003, Yusuf fled to Saudi Arabia via Sudan ostensibly to study and do the Hajj. He made the first contacts with the Jihadist leadership. A Hausa-speaking AQIM senior commander known as Abu-Mihjan the Nigerian was instrumental in establishing the early theological and thrust building relations. Another manifestation of the growing importance of the Nigerian Jihad was the correspondence between



Sheikh Abu-Muhammad Al-Maqdisi (real name Isam Muhammad Tahir al-Barqawi), one of the foremost Jihadist theological authorities, and Abu-Zaytuna (no further identification), a Nigerian Salafist-Jihadist scholar who sought advice on “how best to strengthen the Jihadist movement” in Nigeria. Abu-Muhammad Al-Maqdisi and Abu-Zaytuna corresponded between April 2008, when Al-Maqdisi was released from Jordanian jail, and September 2010, when he was rearrested.

In the aftermath of the crackdown in summer 2009, many of the survivors of Boko Haram, including Shekau and most of the leaders of the militant groups not in prison, escaped to Chad and Niger. While several thousand followers of Boko Haram remained in Nigeria - they were essentially leaderless street gangs. Hence, it would be the outcome of the leaders’ experience across the border that would dramatically change the quintessence and capabilities of Boko Haram. In Chad, the Nigerian escapees linked up with local Jihadist activists who put them in contact with AQIM as well as Sudanese and Iranian intelligence (who are operating jointly in the Sahel). In Niger, the Nigerian escapees encountered forces of AQIM’s Southern or Saharan Front under the command of Yahia Djaouadi, (a.k.a. Yahia Abu Ammar) and his second-in-command Hammadou Abid (a.k.a. Abdelhamid Abu Zeid). Specifically, the Boko Haram refugees were assisted by Abu Zeid’s katiba of AQIM.

Shortly afterwards, Shekau and a few senior leaders made their way to a desert camp where they met with Abdel Wadoud and members of the AQIM Shura. Abdel Wadoud offered Shekau that AQIM would help in the rehabilitation and rebuilding of the Boko Haram - including the training and equipping of the fighters in Niger - in return for strategic and operational assistance inside Nigeria and Gulf of Guinea states. Additional aid, including funds, would be provided by Iran and Sudan via AQIM. The Boko Haram leaders quickly accepted the generous offer of AQIM. Under the new arrangement, the Boko Haram leadership committed to following the strategic advice and guidance from the AQIM Shura. However, the Boko Haram did not become part of AQIM and to a great extent kept its freedom of action regarding the Christian-Muslim fighting. Meanwhile, the training and equipping of the Boko Haram fighters started in earnest in the camps of Abu Zeid’s katiba. Additional Boko Haram fighters, gang-members and new recruits made their way to Niger during the winter of 2009-10.

The new relationship between AQIM and Boko Haram was first alluded to by Abdel Wadoud in late-January 2010 in a “Message to the Nigerian Muslims” emailed to Nigerian media outlets. “We are ready to train your people in weapons, and give you whatever support we can in men, arms and munitions to enable you to defend our [Muslim] people in Nigeria,” Abdel Wadoud wrote. “You are not alone in this test. The hearts of mujahedin are in pain over your troubles and desire to help you as much as possible.” When Abuja and the Nigerian media doubted the authenticity of the message, Abdel Wadoud repeated the message in a communique in Arabic which was posted in the most authoritative Jihadist websites. “We are ready to train your sons on how to handle weapons and will give them all the help they need - men, weapons, ammunition and equipment - to enable them to defend our people and push back the Crusaders,” Abdel Wadoud reiterated.

The mere existence of the message from Abdel Wadoud, particularly given the efforts undertaken by AQIM to prove its authenticity, clearly demonstrated that Nigeria had become a top priority of AQIM and the global Jihadist leadership. To succeed in “push[ing] back the Crusaders”, AQIM would need extensive penetration of, and assistance inside, Nigeria. This would only be possible through close partnership with indigenous Jihadist forces such as the Boko Haram. Thus, although there was no immediate reaction from the Boko Haram - the security authorities in Abuja considered them the intended audience of Abdel Wadoud’s message.



Meanwhile, the several Boko Haram would-be commanders who escaped Nigeria to neighboring countries in the aftermath of the crackdown in summer 2009 were now making their way to the Middle East. Shekau, who first fled to Niger and Chad as a guest of AQIM, continued on to Sudan. Shekau received in Khartoum comprehensive training for he returned to Nigeria a year later fluent in Arabic. Yusuf's third in command Mamman Nur - a Cameroon-born Shuwa Arab raised in Maiduguri who is also known as Muhammed Marwan - also escaped to Somalia where he received advanced training from the Shabaab. He also visited the Sahel where he trained with AQIM senior commanders. All other Boko Haram commanders were also received with open arms by local Jihadist leaders and provided with advance training, mainly in Niger, Algeria, Sudan and Somalia, and, upon their leaving for home, with weapons and other terrorist equipment such as fuses and communications gear. Boko Haram would-be commanders acquired at the time the most important skill of recruiting and indoctrinating would-be martyrdom bombers. There must be several expert teams in northern Nigeria given the large number of martyr bombers and their diverse areas of operations.

Most significant was the involvement in Somalia of Hassan (aka Jimale, Yusuf, and Abdi Madobe) because it proves that Ayman al-Zawahiri and the upper-most Jihadist leadership are acquainted with and support the Boko Haram. Hassan is a former Sudanese military officer in his 50's who is the senior military trainer for the Shabaab. Around 2006-7, Zawahiri personally tasked Hassan with the training in Somalia of African Jihadists of importance who could not travel to Afghanistan-Pakistan for advanced training. Hassan then developed specialized training strategies and programs for the al-Qaida affiliates in Africa. In mid-2009, several Boko Haram fighters and commanders were enrolled in the training programs run by Hassan.

In March 2011, Hassan left Somalia for northern Nigeria in the company of Mamman Nur and other Boko Haram commanders and fighters who had just completed their training. In mid-June 2011, Boko Haram issued a communique hailing the impact on the returning fighters. "Very soon, we will wage Jihad," the communique read. "Our Jihadists have arrived in Nigeria from Somalia where they received real training on warfare from our brethren who made that country ungovernable." In winter 2011/12, a Nigerian senior commander and several Yemeni, Kenyan and Ethiopian expert trainers from the Somalia camps joined Hassan in northern Nigeria in order to improve the professionalism and capabilities of local Jihadist forces. Simply put, Hassan would not have trained the Boko Haram in Somalia, let alone travel to Nigeria to help them, without the explicit authorization from Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Boko Haram between 2010 and 2013

Boko Haram returned to life and public awareness between 2010 and 2012. In early-2010, it did not take long for the renewed viability and improved performance of the Boko Haram to surface. To gain popularity and notoriety, the Boko Haram returned to playing a major role in the fratricidal grassroots Christian-Muslim violence.

In January 2010, Yoruba Christian farmers' gangs attacked Hausa-Fulani Muslim herders in villages around Jos. The Muslim nomads led their herds onto lands cultivated by the Christian farmers and destroyed crops. The Christian farmers were vicious and dozens of Muslims were slaughtered in and around Jos. Clashes spread into Jos itself as Muslim and Christian gangs clashed in the streets. Violence subsided only after the security forces sent to the area, clashed with the gangs and imposed a curfew. By then, a few hundred civilians were killed.



In early March, Muslim gangs attacked Christians in Jos in retaliation for the January carnage. This time, machete and spear wielding Hausa-Fulani Muslim herders attacked the Yoruba Christian farmers in advance of their driving their herds onto the farmlands. In retaliation, Christian gangs attacked and burned mosques and Muslim-owned shops in Jos - triggering widespread street fighting. Emboldened and incited by populist Imams, Muslim gangs intensified the fratricidal violence and carnage against all Christians in the area. Over seven hundred people were killed and several thousand were maimed by machete and spear strikes in the clashes of March 2010. Although the clashes started as classic confrontation between farmers and herders - because these were Yoruba Christian villagers confronting Hausa-Fulani Muslim herders, these clashes quickly spread into the city of Jos and transformed into a vicious Christian-Muslim carnage.

The Boko Haram played a unique and important role in the early March fighting in Jos. The Boko Haram fighters arrived on the scene brandishing automatic weapons and rocket launchers. They operated in cohesive small groups and demonstrated tactical skills. They markedly escalated the carnage, as well as put up stiff defense against the Nigerian security forces. It was clearly a different Boko Haram than the thugs of previous cycles of Christian-Muslim violence. Both the Nigerian security forces and the Western intelligence services monitoring Nigeria were taken by surprise by the quantities and quality of the weapons used by Boko Haram, as well as the abundance of ammunition and rockets they had. The main question was the origin of these weapons. Although some of the RPGs and AK-47s could have been stolen from army barracks - the majority of the Boko Haram weapons must have been brought into the country for they are not types used in Nigeria by either the security forces or criminals such as the Delta gangs.

The Boko Haram clearly enjoyed their new prominence. They sent text messages to members of the Nigerian security services on duty in the area. "You will all be killed," read the text, "signed Boko Haram".

In late March 2010, Musa Tanko, a spokesman for the Boko Haram, issued a communique explaining the role of the Boko Haram in the recent Jos riots in the context of global Jihad. "Islam does not recognize international boundaries. We will carry out our operations anywhere in the world if we have the chance," Tanko said. "The United States is the number one target for its oppression and aggression against Muslim nations, particularly in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its blind support to Israel in its killings of our Palestinian brethren." Tanko explained that Boko Haram was drawing "inspiration from the Afghan Taleban" and was considering "Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden as its champions." Tanko qualified this statement, adding that the Boko Haram was looking up to Al-Qaida and the jihadist leaders "although we don't have any contact with them yet." By the second half of June, both AQIM's Abdel Wadoud and Boko Haram's Shekau would clarify and confirm the relationship and cooperation between their organizations.

By now, the Boko Haram leadership was already capitalizing on the gradual return to Nigeria of trained fighters and commanders in order to rebuild the organization in accordance with the guidelines received from al-Qaida. Although Boko Haram communiqués issued in Shekau's name implied a unified organization - the objective conditions in northern Nigeria, particularly problems of transportation and communications, made it impossible. The Boko Haram organized around three cores with distinct commanders. Moreover, fear of assassination by the Nigerian security forces compelled Shekau to go underground and use a few doubles to deliver some of his video-messages and communiqués. The text of these communiqués and messages has remained Shekau's.

Abubakar Shekau focused on rebuilding the Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria with emphasis on populist grassroots and headline-grabbing activities. Khalid al-Barnawi, a native of Borno State who initially joined



Sahel-based Jihadists before 2005 and rose to prominence running joint operations with Mokhtar Belmokhtar between Algeria and Niger and all the way to Mauritania, used fighters returning from AQIM and the Shabaab training camps to establish a network of cells in northwestern Nigeria focusing on al-Qaida-style spectacular operations such as car-bombs and martyrdom operations. Other regional commanders and leaders were Adam Kamar in Kano, Kabiru Sokoto in Sokoto, and Abu Muhammed in Kaduna. Mamman Nur ran the third core that focused on building an al-Qaida-style professional core for the Boko Haram. He was assisted by foreign experts sent to Nigeria including attack planning expert Abu-Mahjin from Chad, logistics experts Abubakar Kilakam from Niger, and financing expert Muhiddin Abdullahi from Sudan who had Saudi connections facilitating fund-raising. Nur also maintained the communications with the Jihadist supreme leaders in Afghanistan-Pakistan, AQIM, the Shabaab, AQAP, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), and a host of other Jihadist entities.

Meanwhile, Boko Haram launched an unprecedented wave of terrorism throughout northern Nigeria. The wave was characterized by a spate of low-quality localized attrition of society punctuated by headline-grabbing spectacular operations. The first spectacular strike was launched on September 7, 2010. Boko Haram attacked a federal prison in Bauchi State and freed more than 850 prisoners - 100 of them Boko Haram fighters captured in the crackdown of summer 2009. Shekau utilized the public fixation with the prison break to reiterate the Jihadist credentials of Boko Haram. He announced that their ultimate objective is the return to brotherly community of pure Islam. Shekau's communique also introduced the formal name of Boko Haram - Jama'atu Ahlus Sunna Lidda'awati wal Jihad (Community of the People Committed to the Propagation of [the Prophet's] Teachings and Jihad in phonetic Arabic).

The next few months saw constant improvement in the tactics and quality of weapons - mainly IEDs and car-bombs - of the Boko Haram forces. Boko Haram also embarked on kidnapping-for-ransom and bank robberies in order to fund itself. Concurrently, small groups wielding machetes and using both hunting and assault rifles continued to maraud the centers of northern cities - killing real and imaginary enemies, and sowing terror. On June 16, 2011, Boko Haram launched Nigeria's first martyrdom operation - using a car-bomb to attack the police headquarters compound in Abuja. There quickly followed another martyrdom bombing of the UN building in Abuja in August. Escalation of terrorist strikes - both at the grassroots level and spectacular operations - continued into 2012.

The initial success of Boko Haram led to growing tension with the global Jihadist leadership. The leadership passed messages via the most senior leaders of AQIM that the lavish support and training were provided in order to further the global Jihad against the West and not the goals of a parochial pretentious Jihadist movement that Boko Haram was at the time. The primary venues for these messages were al-Barnawi and Kamar. Ayman al-Zawahiri communicated directly with Kamar in 2011-12 regarding the role of Nigeria's Jihadist entities in the global Jihad. Al-Barnawi concurred that the funding, training and weapons from AQIM must be used for attacking foreign targets in and around Nigeria instead of against Nigerian targets - particularly local Muslims. Although Shekau continued to insist that internal Nigerian operations be given ultimate priority, he would not cut ties with either AQIM or the Barnawi faction. Toward this end, Shekau nominated Habibu Yusuf (aka Babagana Assalafi), one of Barnawi's closest disciples, as his deputy and put him in charge of relations with AQIM. Assalafi was killed in March 2013 during a military raid in Sokoto.

Initially, al-Barnawi claimed a few spectacular operations under Al-Qaidat Jihad in the Lands Beyond the Sahel. The global Jihadist leadership did not approve of the gesture since Boko Haram remained the formal ally



of al-Qaida. Instead, in January 2012, al-Barnawi, initially using the nom de guerre Abu-Usamat al-Ansari, announced the formation of Jama'at Ansar al Muslimin fi Bilad al Sudan (Supporters/Partisans of Muslims in the Land of Black Africans in Arabic) as a distinct entity separate from Boko Haram. It soon became known by the shorthand Ansaru. The best AQIM-trained operatives - the Yan Sahara (The Sahara Men in the Hausa language) - joined the Ansaru, and brought with them a lot of the sophisticated systems received from AQIM and the Shabaab. AQIM-trained Adam Kamar (aka Abu Yasir) from Kano was the commander of the Sahara Men. Kamar was killed in a shoot-out in August 2012. Barnawi did not replace him. Another key commander that joined the Ansaru was Mummodo Abu Fatima - the foremost expert in organizing martyrdom operations starting with the Abuja attacks in summer 2011.

During 2012, Ansaru refined its message along the tenets of AQIM - focusing on the spread of anti-Western Jihad throughout the Heart of Africa - rather than the establishment of an Islamic State in northern Nigeria and fratricidal violence against Nigerian Muslims in revenge for the crackdown of 2009. Ansaru's forces increased their participation in regional operations in Niger, Cameroon and increasingly Mali. A few Boko Haram fighters led by Shekau also fought in northern Mali. Shekau was wounded in late 2012 while fighting in Gao. He was evacuated back to Borno in early 2013, but for fear for his safety he was moved to Amchide, Cameroon, until he recovered in August 2013. As well, 200-250 Nigerian Jihadists, mostly Ansaru fighters but also Boko Haram people, completed advanced training at an AQIM camp in Mali. They learned to use Technicals (weapons mounted on 4x4 vehicles) and a new generation of bomb fuses.

In late 2012, on the eve of the French military intervention in Mali, the Nigerian Jihadists were provided with several fully equipped Technicals and a few trucks filled with Libya-origin weapons and ammunition, and were sent to Nigeria via Niger. The newly arrived Technicals were first used with great effectiveness in the February 16, 2013, sophisticated night attack on a workers' camp on the Kano-Maiduguri highway and distraction strikes on a prison and a police station. Ansaru claimed responsibility and explained the attack was in revenge for "the transgressions and atrocities done to the religion of Allah ... by the European countries in many places such as Afghanistan and Mali." Meanwhile, in order to recognize AQIM's help, Shekau posted back on November 29, 2012, a lengthy video saluting global Jihadists and expressing Boko Haram's solidarity with al-Qaida's objectives and leaders. On December 24, Ansaru kidnapped a French engineer in Katsina, 50 kms from the border with Niger. Ansaru announced it would continue attacking French targets until France ended the ban on the veil and its "major role in the planned attack on the Islamic state in northern Mali."

The January 2013 French-led intervention in Mali excited the entire Jihadist movement throughout the Heart of Africa. Theological and personal disagreements were pushed aside in order to rally to the help of the Jihadists of Azawad as well as strike French and Western interests wherever possible. Mokhtar Belmokhtar established a rudimentary ad-hoc Shura to coordinate operations that included commanders from AQIM, Ansar Dine (Supporters of the Faith in Arabic), MUJAO (French acronyms of The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa), Ansaru, Boko Haram, and a host of smaller Jihadist entities. An Ansaru commander called Abu Ali al-Nigeria was a senior member of Belmokhtar's Shura. The Shura also oversaw the growing flow of weapons, munitions and funds from Libyan arsenals and their distribution among the region's Jihadist forces. Many weapons, including IEDs, recovered from Boko Haram since mid-2013, were traced to Libya.

Between March and May 2013, Ansaru and Boko Haram groups attacked along Nigeria's border with Niger and Cameroon in order to tie down local forces so they couldn't be sent to Mali. Ansaru fighters participated in several spectacular operations inside Niger including attacks on a French uranium mine in Arlit and the prison



in Niamey. Both Ansaru and Boko Haram established rear bases in southern Niger to be used as safe havens and recruitment and training facilities. Meanwhile, Boko Haram led the operations in Cameroon - particularly the kidnappings of French citizens between March and November 2013. Islamist sympathizers in Yaounde and other cities organized riots, robberies and extortions in support of the Boko Haram and against France and its allies.

The Command Structure

Starting the second half of 2013, the Nigerian Jihadist movement - mainly Boko Haram and Ansaru - sought to formulate a viable command structure. Given the size and diversity of northern Nigeria, the paucity of communications and transportation, and the personalities of the key Jihadist commanders - a firm system of command and control was out of the question. Still, there emerged a pragmatic organizational framework under the banner of Boko Haram that seems to be largely functioning by late 2014.

Boko Haram is led by an Amir ul-Aam (Commander in Chief) - Abubakar Shekau. He is answerable to a Shura (Council) of trusted Kwamandoji (Commanders in the Hausa language). Significantly, the Shura includes not only Boko Haram's senior regional commanders but also representatives of Ansaru, AQIM, MUJAO and others. The Shura is Boko Haram's highest decision-making body, and the Amir ul-Aam cannot launch major operations, formulate strategy or issue communiqués without the approval of the Shura. The Shura is functioning efficiently though, given the realities on the ground, not frequently.

Very little is known about the members of the Shura or even its size - estimated at 6-8 members. The only two known members are Mamman Nur, who is Shekau's second-in-command, and Ansaru's Khalid al-Barnawi. Other reported Shura members include Ibrahim Tada Ngalyike from Gwoza, member of the original "Nigerian Taliban" Aminu Tashen-Illmi, and a faction leader known only as Abu Sumayya. There are conflicting reports whether Abu Kaka or Abu Qaqa - the media face of Boko Haram - is a Shura member. The identity of past members should be indicative. The three known members are Habibu Yusuf (killed in early 2013), Momodu Bama (aka Abu Saad, heavy-weapons expert and the son of Mallam Abatcha Flatari who provided charms for the soldiers until both were killed in late 2013), and Mohammed Zangina (who was involved in coordinating suicide bombings before his arrest in early 2013).

The main problem of the Boko Haram command and control system seems to be at the localized level. As a populist movement immersed in fratricidal violence all over the land, Boko Haram must be represented in every region and city. To achieve this, the Boko Haram has a system of local Amirs who are in charge of specific areas. Large cities and densely populated areas are subdivided into Lajna (Sectors in the Hausa language) each of which is being run fairly autonomously by a sub-Amir. The Amirs and sub-Amirs are supported by Kwamandoji who run operations on a localized level. Each Commander is in turn assisted by a Nabin (Deputy in the Hausa language). Each Nabin controls at least one Mu'askar (Lieutenant) who is the real leader and commander of the violent armed gangs that carry out Boko Haram's murderous raids. Known commanders include Abdulmalik Bama, Umar Fulata, Alhaji Mustapha (aka Massa Ibrahim), Abubakar Suleiman Habu, Hassan Jazair, Ali Jalingo, Alhaji Musa Modu, Bashir Aketa, Abba Coroma, Ibrahim Bashir, Abubakar Zakariya and Tukur Ahmed Mohammed. There are also new zonal commanders for Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States who are unknown. Significantly, only a few of the more senior Amirs and Kwamandoji are members of the Boko Haram Shura.



Doctrine and Strategy of the Nigerian Jihadist Movement

The doctrine and strategy of the Nigerian Jihadist movement - including Boko Haram and Ansaru - have evolved since the winter of 2013/14. The hitherto distinct regional and internal-domestic strategies have been blurred. The key novelty is that the sought-after destruction of the Nigerian state through fratricidal carnage is no longer only in revenge for being rejected by the grassroots, but also in pursuit of the larger quest for the establishment of an Islamist Sahelian-Maghrebi Caliphate that will replace existing states. In practical terms, though, there still exists separation between internal and regional operations with most commanders engaged in domestic operations only.

The internal strategy of the Boko Haram is based on a combination of terrorizing the population through carnage and challenging the government (at all levels) with spectacular strikes. Boko Haram is focusing increasingly on martyr car-bombing against high-value targets in Abuja and other cities and major attacks on key facilities in rural areas. Since 2012, Boko Haram has also contemplated the conduct of spectacular operations against oil and transportation infrastructure in the south in order to demonstrate nation-wide outreach. In March 2013, Shekau warned that the Boko Haram would soon attack oil refineries in the Niger Delta. In early-2014, there were indications that the Boko Haram was indeed getting ready to strike in the south. In winter 2013/14, Boko Haram formed "special kidnapping squad" most likely run jointly by al-Barnawi and Nur from across the Cameroonian border. The main mission of the squad is generating funds through payments of ransom for foreigners.

Most gruesome, though, is the cruel and senseless killing and displacing of innocent Muslim civilians - particularly in Adamawa, Borno, and Yobe States. Locally-based factional commanders, most notably Ngalyike and Tashen-Ilmi, play prominent role in directing the internal operations. For these internal operations, Boko Haram fields about 500 to 1,000 fighters with a few thousand youth that can be recruited for short-term mob violence as need be. Since the winter of 2013/14 there has been a marked escalation in the carnage against civilians. The data Abuja has is incomplete at best. However, even the rough numbers paint a horrific picture. In 2013, at least 3,000 people were killed by Boko Haram and other Jihadist entities. Since January 2014, at least 5,000 people were killed - over 2,000 in Borno State alone. The pace and scope of fratricidal killing has markedly increased since mid-May 2014. The financial costs to Nigerian society and the nation are inestimable.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Jihadist ascent is the penetration and subversion of the highest levels of the Nigerian security and intelligence services. These achievements were made possible by the training of Nigerian Jihadists in Sudan - including by experts from Iranian Intelligence and expert assistance provided by Iranian agents and operatives in Nigeria itself. The endemic corruption within the Nigerian elites made things easier for the Jihadists. The extent of the penetration first came to light in early March 2012 when a British Special Boat Service (SBS) hostage rescue attempt in Sokoto failed. The rescue mission was betrayed by high authorities in Abuja even before it commenced. Consequently, the Ansaru-affiliated Jihadists had time to murder their hostages and ambush the SBS troops as they approached the compound.

Presently, official Abuja can no-longer ignore the threat. In late-May 2014, Lt. Col. (Ret.) Rudolph Atallah, the former Africa Counterterrorism Director for the US Department of Defense warned that "there was a Nigerian internal investigation of nine generals and senior military officers all suspected of aiding and abetting Boko Haram. The officers were suspected of giving them weapons, access to the armories, and information on government tactics and targeting. It is very difficult to counter an organization when internally, within the Nigerian structure, there are political, militarily, and logistical issues." Among the weapon systems betrayed to



the Boko Haram were several vehicles and at least one QJG-02 PRC-made 14.5mm anti-aircraft machine-gun recently acquired by the Nigerian Army.

On June 3, 2014, a Nigerian military court indicted 15 senior military officers for helping Boko Haram. "There are a lot of arrests that have been made over some officers who were sabotaging the ongoing counter-insurgency operations. The suspects include about 10 generals and other ranks, not to talk of soldiers who have been found culpable of sabotaging our operations," a Nigerian military source explained. "They were found guilty of leaking military strategies to the Boko Haram people. This was why many soldiers have been ambushed and killed by Boko Haram." Nigerian senior officials concede that these cases are but the tip of the iceberg and only the most blatant cases official Abuja could not ignore or brush aside.

Theologically, the main reason for the blurring of the separation between internal and regional operation is the Jihadists' rejection of the modern state and its boundaries in favor of the all-encompassing Ummah and Caliphate. For practical reasons, Boko Haram and Ansaru maintain safe-havens across the Nigerian border in Niger, Chad and Cameroon. These camps serve as safe-havens for fighters, training sites and storage sites for the Jihadists' arsenals. In early-2014, the Nigerian Jihadists were stockpiling Libya-origin weapons caches and other supplies in these bases. These weapons include several SA-7 and SA-24 MANPADS originally delivered by AQIM to Agadez, Niger, in 2011/12 but handed over to the Nigerians only in late 2013. These undertakings are conducted under Nur and al-Barnawi. Nur was responsible for the dispensation of the several millions obtained as ransom for kidnapped Europeans on weapons acquisition and construction of infrastructure along the Chadian-Cameroonian and Niger borders.

Meanwhile, the Nigerian Jihadist movement expanded and institutionalized its presence in, and cooperation with, regional Jihadist fronts and Shuras. In August 2013, a commander going by the name Abu Zamira noted that Boko Haram had "commanders as far afield as Niger, Chad, Sudan and Cameroon" who are involved in the Nigerian Jihad. In spring 2014, Boko Haram started joint kidnapping-for-ransom operations in Cameroon with local Jihadist gangs and Séléka fighters from the Central African Republic. The Boko Haram's reputation for ruthlessness was admired by the Séléka that invited Nigerian Jihadists to come to the Central African Republic to train the local forces and lead strike operations against the French forces. In May, several dozen Nigerian Jihadists were already fighting in the Central African Republic. In Bangui, Séléka fighters inscribed "Bocouharamé [Boko Haram]" on their uniforms in appreciation of their fellow fighters. The Nigerian Jihadists in the northern Central African Republic also participated in regional raiding parties stretching into Sudan and Chad.

Nur continues to handle the Shura's contacts and cooperation with AQIM, MUJAO, the Shabaab, and other sponsors in Sudan and the Persian Gulf region. Most significant was the emergence in spring 2014 of a Nigerian branch of Ansar al-Sharia (Partisans of the Sharia) that is an off-shoot of the global Jihadist movement and al-Qaida. The Ansar al-Sharia handles in a concentrated fashion the flow of foreign experts to Nigeria as well as of Nigerian mujahedin returning from foreign Jihadist fronts - mainly Afghanistan-Pakistan, Syria, Somalia and Yemen. The travel of Nigerian Jihadists throughout the Sahel and the Maghreb is conducted locally.

Key Developments in 2014

Boko Haram burst into world attention after the mid-April 2014 kidnapping of more than 300 mostly Christian school girls between the ages of 16 and 18 from Chibok village in Borno State, northeastern Nigeria.



The majority of the girls have already been forced to convert to Islam and remain in captivity. They are scattered in groups among a few camps in northeastern Nigeria (mainly in the Sambisa Forrest Reserve in eastern Borno State close to the border with Cameroon where, in spring 2014, Shekau maintained his main camp, headquarters, guards' base, and judgement-incarceration base), Cameroon's northern sliver (particularly in the Kolofata area, about 15 kms from the border with Nigeria), the southwestern corner of Chad across the Cameroon border, and the Birao region of the Central African Republic near the Sudan border. The videos posted by Boko Haram are believed to have been shot in the vicinity of Shekau's base-camp in the Sambisa Forrest Reserve.

Several girls were sold as bounty-wives to Boko Haram mujahedin for 2,000 Naira (~US\$12) each. "Some of them have been married off to insurgents. A medieval kind of slavery. You go and capture women and then sell them off," community elder Pogu Bitrus of Chibok town reported. Boko Haram's Amir Hassan Ali of Maiduguri boasted he already married two of the girls while in the Sambisa forest. In early-May, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau warned that other girls might be sold as slaves should Abuja refuse negotiations. "Allah instructed me to sell them, they are his properties and I will carry out his instructions. ... By Allah, I will sell them in the marketplace," he vowed. Abuja's insistence that the Army has long known where the girls' whereabouts is irrelevant for no rescue operation is possible without risking the lives of all or most of the girls.

As is his wont, Shekau used the address regarding the Chibok girls in order to deliver a major political message. Most important was his praising of Usman dan Fodio, the uprising he led, and his subsequent establishing of the Sokoto Caliphate in the 19th Century. Shekau noted that the Boko Haram was drawing inspiration from the legacy of dan Fodio. This was the first time that Shekau alluded to the intent of the Boko Haram to establish a Caliphate of their own.

The summer of 2014 has seen a marked escalation in Boko Haram attacks on the civilian Muslim-majority population throughout northern Nigeria. The attack methods range from car-bombs to martyr-bombers to indiscriminate shootings into crowded places. In Kano, Boko Haram used a large number of female martyr-bombers. The intensity and magnitude of the carnage inflicted upon the civilian population is unprecedented. The attacks have become increasingly vicious and indiscriminate. Some of these attacks inflicted more than a hundred fatalities and several hundred wounded each. The Boko Haram also launched a few quality operations aimed to punish the non-cooperative population. Most significant was July 23 bombing of the bridge across the Gnadda River in Gamoru Ngala, Borno State, on the Cameroon border. The bombing aimed to punish the local people after they had formed a defensive militia against the Boko Haram. All together, the Muslim-majority civilian population suffered in the first months of summer 2014 several thousand dead and close to ten thousand wounded. The declared objectives of this campaign of terror are to demonstrate through carnage the impunity of the Boko Haram, the ungovernability of the north, and to punish the civilian population for not embracing the Boko Haram and its Islamist ways.

Lethal and painful as the indiscriminate carnage has been, this is not the significant development in Nigerian Jihadism during summer 2014. The key development is the further integration of Boko Haram into the global Jihadist trend. The timing is singular given the brewing schism (as of spring 2014) between the traditional Jihadism represented by the al-Qaida supreme leadership in Afghanistan-Pakistan and the ascent of Takfiri Jihadism spearheaded by the Khorasan Pledge scholars and implemented by the DI'ISH (Al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi'l-Iraq wa'ash-Sham or The Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria in Arabic) and subsequently the KHI (Al-khilafa al-Islamiya or the Islamic Caliphate in Arabic) in al-Jazira (the Sunni Arab heartlands of Syria-Iraq). In



this dispute, Boko Haram leaders followed closely the decisions of senior partners such as AQIM that both demonstrated sympathies for Takfiri Jihadism but also sought to minimize the crisis with al-Qaida. Indeed, the Boko Haram initially blurred the separation between internal and regional operation and stressed the rejection of the modern state in favor of an all-encompassing Caliphate. On May 5, 2014, Shekau stated that “we don’t know Cameroon or Chad... I don’t have a country. Islamiyya is what I have.”

In the second half of June, AQIM leaders sought to reconcile between the al-Qaida leaders in Afghanistan-Pakistan and the DI’ISH leaders. In a June 22 communique, AQIM recognized Ayman al-Zawahiri’s preeminence as “our Sheikh and Emir” and urged DI’ISH to reconcile. However, when AQIM’s appeals were rejected by the al-Qaida supreme leaders, AQIM announced its support for the DI’ISH. On 1 July, Sheikh Abdullah Othman al-Assimi posted a video-message in the name of al-Qaidat Jihad in the Maghreb and Trans-Saharan Regions - an area that includes Nigeria in Jihadist terminology. Assimi, whose real name is unknown, is the organization’s leader and a prominent Islamist jurist. His home base is in the mountains and forests of Boumerdes and Tizi-Ouzou in Algeria. “My group wants to build friendly ties with DI’ISH. You are dearer to us than our tribe and family, and you will always have our support,” Assimi said. “We are still waiting for al-Qaida branches across the world to reveal their stance and declare their support for [DI’ISH].” Assimi alluded to his support for the Takfiri interpretations of the laws of Jihad. “After the silence of the people concerned, we wanted to show our stance for the sake of justice so that the DI’ISH Jihadists know that we will not fail them. We tell all Muslims that we have seen justice in the DI’ISH approach and they are among the most obedient of Allah’s people and the most dedicated to the Prophet.” This was a very important endorsement of the tenets articulated in the Khorasan Pledge. Assimi also criticized the support provided by AQIM and its leader Abdelmalek Droukdel with African Jihadist groups. Droukdel’s ties with Boko Haram, Assimi specified, “are limited to provision of [material] support”.

In late-July, regional Jihadist leaders met in southern Libya in order to better coordinate operations, examine the possible unification of Maghreb and Sahel groups, and agree on a common position regarding the theological dispute between Zawahiri and Baghdadi. The gathering included senior commanders from AQIM, Ansar al-Sharia (Tunisia and Libya), Ansar Bait al-Maqdis (Egypt), El Mourabitounes and Ansar al-Din (northern Mali). By mid-August, the presence of Takfiri Jihadists affiliated with the KHI throughout the Maghreb and the Sahel was palpable. The Takfiri Jihadists vastly expanded recruitment of volunteers for fighting in the ranks of the KHI in Syria-Iraq. They also oversaw the conversion of existing networks and groups to Takfiri Jihadism.

The process has accelerated by the return of combat veteran Jihadists to the Maghreb and the Sahel. Some of these veterans assumed command of Takfiri Jihadist entities and raised the banner of the Caliphate. Led by Algerian commander Luqman Abu Sakhr, the Tunisia-based Uqba Ibn Nafi Brigade formally joined the KHI. The Brigade also claimed responsibility for the July 2014 killing of 15 Tunisian Army soldiers on the border with Algeria. In mid-September, senior commander Khaled Abu Suleiman (real name Gouri Abdelmalek) noted that since “the Maghreb has deviated from the true path [of Jihad]” he was pulling his men from affiliation with AQIM. He announced the establishment of the Caliphate Soldiers in Algeria (Jound al-Khilafa fi Ard al-Jazayer in Arabic) and sworn allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and the Islamic Caliphate. The Caliphate Soldiers kidnapped and beheaded a French national to demonstrate their adherence to the Takfiri doctrine of Baghdadi’s Caliphate.

Throughout, the Boko Haram leadership was being drawn into the Jihadist debate over spread of Takfiri Jihadism. In mid-summer, senior leaders reportedly led by Mamman Nur were summoned to a secret summit



meeting with senior emissaries from the Shabab of Somalia, the KHI, and the Takfiri faction of AQIM. The meeting took place in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, with the participants arriving under the cover of the Umrah (lesser Hajj) processions. The Boko Haram leaders were advised by their senior partners and allies that they must adjust their doctrine in accordance with the ongoing transformation of the Jihadist trend and the adoption of Takfiri Jihadism. The key issue was the urgent imperative for the Boko Haram to go beyond raids and terrorism, and focus on territorial conquests and the declaration of Caliphate. The Jihadist emissaries promised to vastly expand the flow of military aid and expertise to the Boko Haram. The Boko Haram leaders committed to the new Jihadist strategy and priorities. They also agreed to join the Shabab, the KHI, and the Takfiri faction of AQIM and formulate all future policies and strategies as a united front. The meeting concluded with the Boko Haram leaders assuring their senior partners and allies that the Boko Haram would soon declare a Caliphate.

This doctrinal transformation and growing adherence to foreign trends were first noted in select Boko Haram operations in summer 2014. Most important was the profound change in doctrine regarding permissible entertainment. This change was adopted under pressure and explicit instructions from the Shabab leaders in Mogadishu. In mid-June, the Shabab admonished Boko Haram for their tolerance of watching football - the Mondial games and particularly of the Nigerian team. The Shabab message was based on Takfiri practices.

In order to prove their adherence, Boko Haram fighters blew up an entertainment establishment called "football viewing center" in Damaturu, Yobe State, on the night of 17 June. The attack took place when the place was packed with people watching the championship game. Dozens were killed and wounded. The Yobe attack was different from previous attacks on "centers" in the States of Adamawa and Plateau in that the Yobe center was Muslim and did not serve alcohol while all previous attacks were against places serving alcohol to Muslims. When the Shabab leaders hailed the Yobe operation, Boko Haram expanded attacks on other "centers of sin." Most significant was the June 29 bombing of the People's Hotel brothel in the Bayangari district of Bauchi, Bauchi State. Ten people were killed and fourteen were wounded.

Meanwhile, the Boko Haram resumed spectacular operations. On June 25, they blew-up a car-bomb in a shopping mall in Abuja's Wuse II district, killing 24 people. They also blew up a martyr-driven car-bomb at a fuel depot in Lagos, killing five people. This was the first known attack of Boko Haram in Lagos.

On July 13, Shekau capitalized on the late-June spectacular operations in order to attract attention to his new message - a reflection of the resolutions of the Jihadist summit in Saudi Arabia. He first claimed responsibility for the strikes in Abuja and Lagos. "We were the ones who detonated the bomb in filthy Abuja," Shekau declared. "A bomb went off in Lagos. I ordered [the female bomber] who went and detonated it."

The bulk of Shekau's mid-July address focused on defining the theological positioning of Boko Haram between al-Qaida and the rising Islamic Caliphate. Shekau explained that several Jihadist leaders were his "brethren" and asked Allah to protect them and their Jihad. The list included al-Qaida leader Ayman al-Zawahiri, Taliban leader Mullah Omar, and their arch nemesis Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the Emir of the Islamic Caliphate. Shekau then repeated Takfiri Jihadism's complete rejection of the modern state in order to stress that there can be no reconciliation with Abuja. "May God's wrath befall the name Nigeria; all we know is the land of God. We are doing the religion of God and no one will stop us from practicing the religion of Allah, even if it is going to be only for a few people of millions of people." Shekau explained that the source of this quintessential schism is the different canons guiding governance. "I am reading the Quran, and you are reading the constitution; I am reading the rules and regulations of the Quran, and you are doing that of the constitution," he explained.



Soon afterwards, the Boko Haram started their still unfolding consolidation in the northeast. On August 6, a large and well equipped mobile force of the Boko Haram attacked and seized the town of Gwoza, Borno State. The highly mobile storming of the city resembled the tactics used by the DI'ISH/KHI mobile forces in their onslaughts in central Syria-Iraq. The professionalism and tactical skills displayed strongly suggest that Nigerian and other veterans of the al-Jazira Jihad advised the Boko Haram and were in command of their forces. The growing use of sophisticated IEDs along routes used by the Nigerian Army can be attributed to the influx of expert Jihadists from the Middle East. As well, a growing number of Jihadists from regional groups - including Tuaregs from Mali, Libya and Algeria, al-Shabab Somalis, and other mujahedin from Libya, Chad, Niger and Cameroon - have joined the ranks of the Boko Haram elite forces since spring-summer 2014 and take part in the fighting in northeastern Nigeria. Consequently, the elite combat forces of the Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria grew from 4,000 fighters in mid-Summer 2014, to 6,000 in early-August and to 8,000 in mid-September. The capture of Gwoza was thus the first step toward the occupation and holding of territory and towns.

The Establishment of the Caliphate

Boko Haram launched their major offensive in the third week of August 2014. The objective is to bring about a profound change in the situation in northern Nigeria, as well as grab attention for the next major policy announcement by Shekau.

On August 20, a Boko Haram mobile force of a few hundred fighters riding various Technicals and armored vehicles attacked and seized the Mobile Police Training Academy in Limankara near Gwoza. On the next day, 21 August, Boko Haram mobile forces seized the town of Buni Yadi, Yobe State. According to witnesses, the Boko Haram attacked "in a convoy of numerous sports utility vehicles and armed with sophisticated weapons." On August 23, Boko Haram mobile forces overran the Madagali local government, Adamawa State. According to witnesses, the attack "was led by armored vehicles" seized earlier from the Nigerian military in Borno State. The Boko Haram fighters immediately hoisted their flag over the Madagali local government area. They continued to seize the military base in town and acquired large quantities of weapons and vehicles. The forces continued to capture Madagali town, Adamawa State, and began patrolling the streets. The Boko Haram thus consolidated a 20 kilometer corridor to Gwoza, Borno State. The Boko Haram hoisted their flags everywhere throughout the region.

On August 24, the Boko Haram posted a video in which Abubakar Shekau announced the establishment of an independent Islamic Caliphate throughout northeastern Nigeria. Shekau declared that Gwoza was the capital of the Islamic Caliphate. He reiterated the complete rejection of the modern state by the Boko Haram. "We don't believe in the name Nigeria. We are in [an] Islamic Caliphate. We have nothing to do with Nigeria," Shekau explained. "Thanks be to Allah, who gave victory to our brethren in Gwoza and made it part of the Islamic Caliphate. By the grace of Allah, we will not leave the town. We have come to stay."

Shekau devoted the main part of his address to explaining the logic behind the indiscriminate killing of civilians, including Muslims, who did not accept Islamism. He addressed the Boko Haram's would be victims. "We still have the magnanimity of asking you to repent; because you will never succeed in this way by the grace of Allah and I swear by Allah that we will never stop killing you because Allah commanded us to kill people like you. If we pity you and spare you, one day you will become infidels, so to us having pity on you is an act of disbelief. You can continue to run or hide your identities in women's attire, but we will get to you and



remove the women clothing off you. Then while you are shouting for mercy, we will strike, smash your heads and kill you all.”

Shekau emphasized that the carnage will continue irrespective of the actions and behavior of the targeted population. “Even if you don’t do anything to us we will kill you. We would do it even to avenge our brethren. You killed our brethren in large numbers. We don’t joke with religion. ... Woe on to you. It is Allah that torments you and even tomorrow Allah will torment you. By Allah you will never achieve your aim. I swear by Allah.” Shekau concluded by issuing a stern warning. “This is the speech I have to make which is a warning for worse things to come. Better submit to Allah before it becomes too late.”

Shekau’s threats and warnings were not empty rhetoric. As Boko Haram forces consolidated their control over the population centers within their Caliphate - they intensified the atrocities against civilians who would not cooperate with them. The Rev. Fr. Gideon Obasogie of the Maiduguri Diocese reported that “Christian men are caught and beheaded, while Christian women are forced to become Muslims and are taken as wives to the terrorists. The houses of Christians that have fled are now occupied by the terrorists; their cars are used by the terrorists. Some Muslims around identify Christian homes to be occupied and the Christians hiding were also exposed and they were killed. Strict Sharia Laws have been promulgated [and] citizens are being killed in their numbers.” In Gamboru Ngala, near the border with Cameroon, the Boko Haram publicly executed the town’s highest Muslim cleric, the head of traders’ union, and numerous Muslim notables because they refused to recognize and abide by Takfiri Islamism. In Gwoza, Boko Haram detachments are hunting down and executing young men who would not join their ranks. “They said ‘Shekau sent us. You are condemned to death be you Christian or Muslim,’” an eye witness recalled. “Within a short time, the whole park was filled with bodies just lying everywhere.”

Meanwhile, Boko Haram forces continue to advance, expand and consolidate their Caliphate. In early September, Boko Haram forces using stolen military armored personnel carriers, Technicals and motorcycles stormed several cities in Adamawa State, mainly near the border with Cameroon, and established bases in the area. The territorial key to the Caliphate remained safely in the hands of the Boko Haram despite counter-offensives by the Nigerian Army. The Jihadists also deployed forces directly on the border with Cameroon - enabling them to receive supplies and reinforcements from their own cross-border safe-havens and regional allies.

Since mid-September 2014, the situation in northeastern Nigeria somewhat stabilized. The Caliphate continues to expand - but mainly in secondary directions and against minor towns and villages in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States. Raids also expanded into Gombe State. The Boko Haram installed new Amirs in Gwoza and Dambua, Borno State - forcing the local emirs to flee and seek refuge in Abuja. By early October, Islamist local authorities were established in over 25 cities and townships throughout the Caliphate. They violently impose Islamist way of life on the population. The kidnapping of civilians continue. More than 50 young women were kidnapped in Gulak in mid-September. The Boko Haram also raided fishing villages in the Kukawa Local Government area, Borno State, and kidnapped several people. They were taken by boats across Lake Chad. The region is of importance to the Boko Haram because of the major smuggling routes for weapons and volunteers from Sudan. By late-September the Boko Haram raids were becoming more lethal in order to terrorize greater segments of the population into submission. For example, close to 100 civilians were killed and over 540 houses were completely destroyed in a single brief raid on the villages of Kubi and Watu, Michika local



government area, Adamawa State. Over six million people have been internally displaced since the beginning of the Boko Haram's offensive back in early August.

The main strategic objective of the Boko Haram is a major assault on Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State. Toward this end, Boko Haram columns raided Dikwa, central Borno State. They also established major operational bases 15 kms from the major Giwa barracks. The key to the Boko Haram offensive is the city of Bama on the main road to Maiduguri. Bama has become the focus of heavy battles aimed to block Boko Haram's advance on Maiduguri. In the process, Bama has changed hands repeatedly at a heavy toll for the Nigerian troops, civilians and Boko Haram fighters. A sizeable Boko Haram force continues to hold onto the densely populated areas of Bama. On 11-12 September, Boko Haram forces started moving weapons into the Jere area in Bama in anticipation for the assault on Maiduguri. The situation along the road between Bama and Maiduguri remains fluid. Meanwhile smaller columns of the Boko Haram intensified raids on villages and townships on the approaches to Maiduguri in preparation for protracted warfare.

Already on September 5, the Boko Haram dropped leaflets in Maiduguri announcing the imminent capture of the city. On September 11, the Borno Elders Forum warned that Maiduguri was "completely surrounded" by the Boko Haram forces. They warned that the city was "under imminent threat of annihilation." The Boko Haram forces "are nursing the ambition of attacking the city in all directions. There is credible local intelligence information to that effect," the Borno Elders Forum reported. The Nigerian military disputed the reports on the encirclement of Maiduguri. Still, the most forward Boko Haram columns remain deployed some 35 kms from Maiduguri. Ultimately, both the Boko Haram leadership and senior leaders of the several Jihadist organizations allied with and supporting the Boko Haram are anticipating a major victory in the coming few weeks.

On the main front, the Nigerian military succeeded in holding the line between Bama and Maiduguri - thus preventing the Boko Haram forces from reaching Maiduguri. The main fighting take place in the area of Konduga, 35 kms southeast of Maiduguri. In mid-September, Nigerian forces ambushed major Boko Haram mobile columns advancing from Bama to Konduga and inflicted heavy casualties. In one of these clashes, the Nigerian military killed a Boko Haram Amir - that is, a senior force commander playing major role in the assault on Maiduguri. Nevertheless, the Boko Haram regrouped within hours and resumed their assaults and surges towards Maiduguri undeterred by their heavy losses.

Starting 25 September, the Boko Haram used heavy and armored weapons in their renewed thrusts in the Bama-Konduga area. The weapons seized by the Nigerian army included a Panhard ERC-90 Sagaie wheeled tank and several armored personnel carriers. Some of the Boko Haram's heavy weapons were seized from the Nigerian military and others were seized from French and allied forces in northern Mali and provided to the Boko Haram by their regional allies. Hence, despite the military's major success, the threat posed by the Boko Haram's Caliphate is far from diminished. Mobile columns using motorbikes and Technicals keep raiding villages some 15-20 kms from Maiduguri. Consequently, local leaders continue to insist that the Boko Haram forces "have laid siege on the city of Maiduguri."

Back on 22 September, Nigerian forces killed near Konduga a senior commander called Bashir Mohammed. In addition to being the commander of the Uye camp, he was also one of Shekau's doubles who appeared in some of the latest videos. This led Abuja to announce the killing of Shekau himself. Authoritative Jihadist sources insisted from the very beginning that Shekau was alive.



On 2 October, Shekau released a new video demonstrating that he was alive. "Here I am, alive. I will only die the day Allah takes my breath," he said. He reiterated that "nothing will kill me until my days are over... Some people asked you if Shekau has two souls. No, I have one soul, by Allah." Shekau stressed that his own demise would have no lasting impact on the ascent of the Boko Haram. "Here I am alive, you talk so much about your killing of me but that is not the point. We are still in our Islamic Caliphate, reigning, we are doing the teachings of the Quran." He repeatedly stressed that Shekau the individual was not important. "Even if you kill me ... it will not stop us imposing Islamic rule."

Shekau noted that the continued fighting had no impact on the consolidation of the Caliphate. "We are running our Caliphate, our Islamic Caliphate. We follow the Quran... We now practice the injunctions of the Quran in the land of Allah." This included the administering of strict Sharia punishments as prescribed by Takfiri Jihadism by the Boko Haram authorities. To stress the point, the video showed people being stoned to death and being given lashes. The video concluded with the beheading of a man who identified himself as a wing commander and the pilot of the Alpha Jet missing since September 11. The pilot was then beheaded with an axe. Shekau thus demonstrated that the Boko Haram Caliphate has adopted the Islamic Caliphate's ways as promised in the summit in Saudi Arabia.

The Boko Haram continued to consolidate and expand their Caliphate throughout northeastern Nigeria during October irrespective of the negotiated cease-fire claimed by official Abuja. By the end of the month, the Caliphate controlled well over 20,000 square kilometers. Back in mid-October, immediately after the announcement of the cease-fire, the Boko Haram launched a series of attacks on several townships and villages in Borno and Adamawa States. The attackers inflicted dozens of civilian fatalities and kidnapped close to a hundred - over two thirds of them young women and girls. The number of kidnapped youth exceeded 350 by the end of the month. In late-October, the Boko Haram also extended the spread of terrorism in the northeast to areas adjacent to the Caliphate. These raids and bombings demonstrated the growing reach and impunity of the Boko Haram forces. Of significance was the series of bombs placed in bus stations in Gombe, Gombe State, that killed more than 30 and wounded over 100 civilians.

Most important was the concurrent offensive on Mubi, Adamawa State, and nearby towns. The Boko Haram launched extremely violent assaults that resulted in the collapse of local military units and in which civilians were the primary victims. The capture of Mubi was followed by mass public executions and the kidnapping of local women and girls. This offensive is also of political importance because Mubi is the hometown of Nigeria's Chief of Defense Staff Alex Badeh. Indeed, the Boko Haram rushed to burn Badeh's house the moment they entered the town. Jihadist leaders in Nigeria and the Middle East ridiculed Abuja's explanation that these attacks and raids were conducted by "other rogues and criminals" rather than mainstream Boko Haram.

On 31 October, Shekau capitalized on the seizure of Mubi and released a new video tape addressing the latest developments. He ridiculed Abuja's claim of negotiations and cease-fire. "[W]e are fighting for Islamic Caliphate," Shekau explained. "Because of this, there is no any cease-fire or dialogue with anyone. Instead it is a war with beating and killings, and guns that we are hungry for... We are on course; our focus and determination is to see that only Quran is being used in running the world. With Allah, this is what we put ahead of us." Shekau emphasized that there is no point in dealing with Nigeria, and that "we will not do it, Allah said no to it. We are working with Quran, and no infidel will threaten us." Addressing all Nigerians,



Sheaku reiterated that “our war is not ending, expect more, what you are seeing is just little. There is no retreat in this Jihad; Allah is with us, and we are succeeding.”

He then announced the capture of a German teacher as a hostage back in July. Shekau also ridiculed the anticipated release of the Chibok girls and other kidnapped women. “If parents of Chibok girls will know the condition of their children, they will not be worry [sic]; it is either to be with their conversion to Islam or you die with pains. You don’t know that the over 200 Chibok girls have convert to Islam. They have memorized several sections of Quran [and] they have realized that Christians have filled old testament with lies.” Consequently, “the small girls from Chibok” are now “insisting that Islam is the true religion,” Shekau explained. “We have married them off, and they are in the house of their husbands.”

Mid-September also saw the revival of the western-central front - particularly in the Kano-Kaduna area. On 17 September, four terrorists riding a tricycle taxi attacked the Federal College of Education in Kano. Two opened fire, killed the security guards and continued shooting and throwing improvised explosives at students who tried to escape. A third attacker entered a lecture hall packed with students and blew himself up. The fourth was blocked before he could enter a second lecture hall and detonated his bomb in a corridor. At least 30 people were killed and close to 50 were wounded in the attack. Two days later, a group of a few Boko Haram terrorists and several Fulani herdsmen attacked three rural communities in the Sanga local government area of Kaduna State and killed 43 people and wounded over a hundred. Smaller scale attacks continue throughout the central and western parts of northern Nigeria. On November 2, the Boko Haram struck the Koton Karfi prison in the central Kogi State, about 100 km south of Abuja. The attackers blew up the prison’s walls and covered the inmates’ escape by heavy gun fire. They freed 132 prisoners - most of them Boko Haram terrorists.

By early November, the slide of the Boko Haram into the fold of Takfiri Jihadism was clear. On 3 November - Ashura Day, the holiest day for Shiite Islam - a martyrdom bomber approached a crowd of Shiite worshipers and blew himself in their midst. Hundreds of worshipers gathered outside a seminary adjacent to the Emir’s palace in the Tsohuwar Kasuwa area of Potiskum, Yobe State. More than 20 people, including several children, were killed, and over 50 were wounded, many of them losing limbs. The Sunni-Shiite schism has been largely muted in northern Nigeria because of the overall diversity of Islam in Nigeria. The few anti-Shiite attacks conducted by the Boko Haram since 2012 were minor and no martyrdom bombers were used. In contrast, the pattern and tactics of the bombing in Potiskum are identical to these of Takfiri Jihadist martyrdom bombers in the Middle East and South Asia - particularly in Iraq and Pakistan respectively. Hence, the Potiskum bombing is yet another key facet of non-Nigerian Takfiri Jihadism adopted by the Boko Haram.

Ultimately, the further radicalization of the Boko Haram in fall 2014, including the growing viciousness of their attacks, is a reflection of the overall transformation of the Jihadist movement in the Maghreb and the Sahel. The growing flow of combat veteran Jihadists back from Syria and Iraq impacted the key organizations handling the transportation of Jihadists - Ansar al-Sharia of Tunisia and Ansar al-Sharia of Libya. In Libya, combat veterans of both DI’ISH/KHI and al-Qaida’s Jabhat al-Nusra established a new organization called al-Battar. The raiding battalions and companies of al-Battar are notorious for their brutality and ferocity - a reflection of the combat experience and indoctrination in Syria and Iraq. Moreover, both Abu Ayaz, the leader of Ansar al-Sharia of Tunisia, and Muhammad al-Zahawi, the leader of Ansar al-Sharia of Libya, have gravitated toward Takfiri Jihadism as a result of deep theological discussions with Luqman Abu Sakhr, the leader of the Uqba Ibn Nafi Brigade.



Consequently, the main regional commanders joined the preparations for the establishment of an Islamic State in the Islamic Maghreb (ISIM). Mokhtar Belmokhtar, currently the leader of the al-Murabitun in southern Libya, is the leading candidate for the post of Emir of the ISIM. Mokhtar Belmokhtar has long been a sponsor of Boko Haram's Khalid al-Barnawi. Moreover, Ansaru commander Abu Ali al-Nigeriai has long been a senior member of Belmokhtar's Shura. In September-October, Belmokhtar oversaw the organizing of the so-called "Salvador Triangle" in the no-man's land formed by the borders of Libya, Algeria and Niger. Cadres of al-Murabitun, al-Battar and foreign expert Jihadist established three secret training camps in southern Libya. These camps serve as the center of Takfiri Jihadism throughout the Maghreb and the Sahel - providing expert training, organizing and equipping for several hundred Jihadists at any given time.

Overall, the role and participation of the Boko Haram in these activities is based on the understandings reached in the Mecca meeting earlier in summer 2014. During the fall, senior commanders of the Boko Haram arrived in southern Libya from Nigeria, Mali and Syria-Iraq in order to participate in the regional Jihadist effort. Under their supervision, close to a hundred Nigerian fighters are receiving expert training in the three secret camps in southern Libya. The first Nigerian Jihadists are scheduled to graduate in early 2015. The Nigerian branch of Ansar al-Sharia is already preparing for their infiltration back to Nigeria. As these expert Jihadists arrive in the Caliphate, and the Nigerian North as a whole, they will further transform and escalate the Boko Haram's insurrection and terrorism Jihad.

Meanwhile, since spring 2014, high-level Jihadist sources in Europe and in Syria-Iraq have been warning that the Nigerian Jihad will soon reach Western Europe. The sources claim that the Boko Haram already has networks of supporters among the Nigerian ex-pats in the UK. These networks are being reinforced by the few UK-based Nigerian Jihadists that fought or are still fighting in Syria-Iraq. As well, the Boko Haram developed "solidarity networks" in cooperation with AQIM-controlled Maghrebi ex-pats in France and Belgium. These networks are also being radicalized and reinforced by veterans of the Syrian-Iraqi Jihad. To-date, the Nigerian Jihadists did not address strikes at the heart of the West or even outside the Heart of Africa. The designation in the West of the Boko Haram and several senior commanders as terrorists were shrugged. However, with the specter of Western support for the Nigerian Government against the Boko Haram growing - the leaders of Boko Haram and Ansaru might be contemplating retaliatory strikes against their foes.

Change of the Strategic-Regional Context

The strategic-regional context of the Boko Haram's Jihad changed profoundly in early November 2014. This was a direct result of the evolving geo-strategic grand designs of the key aspirant powers - Sudan, Iran and Qatar - that committed to sponsoring and sustaining an Islamist-Jihadist surge into the Heart of Africa. The envisioned surge will be a three-prong east-to-west surge - a northern arm along the shores of the Mediterranean originating from Libya, a central arm through the Sahel originating from both Libya and Nigeria, and a southern arm along the shores of the Gulf of Guinea originating from Nigeria. By the time the surge is completed, there will emerge an Islamist-Jihadist bloc from the Red Sea in the east to the Atlantic in the west, and from the Mediterranean in the north to the Gulf of Guinea in the south.

The decision to use Nigeria as a springboard would, in turn, determine the states' sponsorship of the Boko Haram and their facilitation of the still unfolding marked escalation of the Boko Haram's assault on the State of Nigeria. In fall 2014, the leaders of Iran and Sudan were convinced that Abubakar Shekau and the Boko Haram will be able to facilitate the revival of their grand design for west Africa. That design had collapsed a year earlier



because the change of heart of the anticipated facilitator - Michel Djotodia, the then President of the Central African Republic (CAR).

Back in early 2013, Iran and Sudan resolved to quickly and decisively intervene throughout the Heart of Africa in order to block and reverse a dreaded French-led Western intervention in west Africa. This intervention was risking the Islamist-Jihadist surge into the Heart of Africa that till then had been going virtually unopposed. Tehran and Khartoum feared that the intervention in Mali and the Sahel would become the start of a wider effort to restore Western hegemony in the entire region. Therefore, Iran and Sudan started preparing for a major strategic surge into west Africa - both the Sahel and the shores of the Gulf of Guinea. The ultimate objective of this surge was, and still is, to consolidate control and/or influence over the huge region and its vast oil, uranium and minerals (rare metals and rare earth) reserves while preempting and preventing the US/West/NATO presence.

In May 2013, there was a sudden sense of urgency in Tehran. The Nigerian security forces exposed a HizbAllah network in Nigeria and unearthed the arms cache it had buried. More than the arrest of a few HizbAllah operatives, Tehran was alarmed by the corrosion of the weapons in the cache that made them inoperable. Iranian intelligence experts now worried that the many other caches buried and concealed by HizbAllah Lebanese operatives along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea were in similarly unusable shape. Hence, there emerged an urgent imperative to vastly expand on-land logistical axes to push large quantities weapons to both feed the Jihadist up-surge throughout the region and restore the corroded caches throughout the region. (The capture of the Iranian weapons ship in Nigeria in late October 2010, whose key operatives were convicted and sentenced by coincidence also in May 2013, convinced Tehran that smuggling operations via seaports was a too risky a route even though they permitted larger weapon shipments.) Iran and Sudan concluded that the military infrastructure in Sudan must be vastly expanded and reinforced in order to sustain the push into west Africa as well as withstand possible retaliatory strikes.

Meanwhile, hectic preparations took place in Khartoum for the escalation of the surge into west Africa. Both Iran and Sudan consider the CAR a crucial venue because its territory permits traffic westward around the chaos in Darfur and the French presence in N'Djamena. Moreover, Bangui provides quick access to the Gulf of Guinea via Cameroon, as well as to the sub-Saharan east-west roadway that passes through the region's main capitals - those that Khartoum was then courting - all the way to Dakar. Therefore, Khartoum launched a charm offensive in order to recruit President Djotodia that had come to power in a March 2013 coup and was being shun by the West.

In May, Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir invited Djotodia for a series of bilateral and multi-national discussions in Khartoum that should facilitate a dramatic breakout westward for Sudan, Iran and their allies. The June 17-18 visit to Khartoum by Djotodia and his delegation constituted a major up-grade of the CAR's role in, and contribution to, the Iran-Sudan alliance. In their first private meeting, Bashir assured Djotodia of Sudan's commitment to supporting and economically sustaining the CAR in return for the CAR's playing a greater role in the continental designs of Iran and Sudan. Djotodia agreed - setting the tone for the subsequent discussions involving additional senior officials.

Most important is the groundbreaking regional security agreement discussed and committed to on June 17 by a large group of senior officials co-chaired by Bashir and Djotodia. The Sudanese delegation was led by Defense Minister Abd al-Rahim Muhammad Hussein, Presidential assistant and veteran intelligence senior official Nafie Ali Nafie, and National Intelligence and Security Services chief Muhammad Atta al-Mawla Abbas.



Also around the table were delegations of senior intelligence and security forces from the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt (then under the Ikhwan's Muhammad Morsi), Mali and Mauritania. The delegations discussed and agreed on close strategic cooperation in restoring Arab-Muslim preeminence to the entire west Africa. The representatives committed to the consolidation of mutually loyal and supportive regimes, as well as to assisting other regional countries establish Muslim-dominated regimes and join their alliance. The senior officials discussed practical modalities for jointly breaking-away from stifling Western influence and demands for reforms. They agreed on cooperation in resolving security and economic crises and suppressing democratic opposition forces. Significantly, all countries present also committed to helping Egypt and Sudan in their "sacred struggle" to sustain the Arab rights to, and dominance over, the Nile waters. Thus, the June 17, 2013, agreement constituted a major and strategically profound shift in the regional posture and assertiveness. If implemented - west Africa would not be the same.

It did take long for Djotodia to have second thoughts about his deal with Khartoum. Bangui realized that the industrialized powers ready to consider investing in the CAR despite US-French antagonism would not do so because of the deal with Sudan. Djotodia decided in the late summer to abandon the Khartoum agreement and instead appeal to the West (that ultimately betrayed him in early 2014) for help and cooperation. In November, Djotodia reneged on his agreement with al-Bashir to let Sudanese intelligence operatives into Bangui. Alas, the January 2014 French-led military intervention in the CAR led to the initial return of Iran and Sudan on the coattails of the wave of atrocities against Muslims. The French forces and their Francophone African protégés aggravated the grassroots crises by dividing the entire diverse population into two camps - "with us" and "against us" (essentially, anti-Seleka and pro-Seleka respectively) - even though the CAR had long been rife with close to ten distinct conflicts. Consequently, the most vicious and violent Christian vigilante groups - the Anti-Balaka - became the core of the ostensibly pro-French grassroots forces. The CAR's Muslim minority was driven to the northeast and quest for support and protection from Sudan.

However, the CAR was descending into the still escalating chaos and fratricidal violence. Hence, Khartoum and Tehran started in late spring 2014 to restore their surge into west Africa and build alternatives to the CAR. It was not a simple decision for Khartoum because Sudan was by then deeply involved in sponsoring and assisting a myriad of Sunni Jihadist movements throughout the Middle East. Some of these groups were vehemently anti-Shiite and anti-Iran Takfiri Jihadist groups. Moreover, Sudanese intelligence was closely cooperating with Turkish intelligence and the key conservative Sunni Gulf States.

In summer 2014, President al-Bashir instructed the entire national security and intelligence elite of Sudan to reexamine the country's overall defense posture in view of the prevailing and emerging threats and opportunities. On August 31, the entire leadership met in Khartoum for a top secret strategy formulation deliberation. General Abd al-Rahim Muhammad Hussein, the Minister of Defense, asserted that the special relations with Iran were to remain the crux of Sudan's national security.

"I shall start with our relationship with Iran and say it is a strategic and everlasting relationship. We cannot compromise or lose it. All the advancement in our military industry is from Iran. They opened the doors of their stores of weapons for us, at a time the Arabs stood against us. The Iranian support came when we were fighting a rebellion that spread in all directions including the National Democratic Alliance. The Iranians provided us with experts and they trained our M.I. [Military Intelligence] and security cadres. They also trained us in weapons production and transferred to us modern technology in the military production industry. There is one full battalion of the Republican Guards still with us



here and other experts who are constructing interception and spying bases in order to protect us, plus an advanced Air Defense system. They built for us Kenana and Jebel Awliya Air Force bases.”

General Siddiq Amer, the Director General of Intelligence and Security, concurred and stated that “Iran is our biggest ally in the region, in terms of cooperation in the areas of intelligence and military industrial production. We have relations with all the Islamic Movements World Wide and we represent a door for Iran to all these Islamic groups.” Amer reinforced an earlier comment by Hussein about the extent of Sudan’s reach in the Jihadist circles. Hussein noted that “the ISIS and the other Jihadist movements are newly formed and can move freely outside the traditional surveillance networks. Currently, there are twenty thousand (20,000) Jihadists and fifteen (15) newly formed Jihadist Movements who are scattered all over, from Morocco to Egypt, Sinai, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, all the Gulf States, a wide presence in Africa and Europe and nobody owns a data-base on that as the one we have.”

General Yahya Muhammad Kheir, the Minister of State for Defense, raised the possibility of cooperating with the Gulf States on issues that include Africa. The intelligence services of several Gulf States were seeking Sudan’s help with intelligence and contacts because the Gulf States did not know anything about the Islamist groups in Libya, Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, and the North African Arab Countries. Kheir recommended that Khartoum cooperated with the Gulf States to the extent that Sudanese interests were furthered and that Sudan’s vital interests were not affected. “We will not sacrifice our relations with the Islamists and Iran for a relationship with the Saudis and the Gulf States,” Kheir stated. Amer also saw no problem balancing between the Gulf States and Iran. “We are capable of misleading the Gulf States by taking open, declared steps and procedures towards improving diplomatic relations with them,” he assured.

The meeting also delved on the relations with the Jihadist forces in Libya and their impact on Sudan’s growing cooperation with Qatar and Turkey in sponsoring Jihadist forces throughout Africa. Libya is the northern springboard for the surge westward, and the Jihadists’ success in Libya is a prerequisite for their need of Nigeria. Hussein explained that practical cooperation had already begun in Libya. He illustrated Sudan’s unique role as a mediator between Iran and the Sunni powers. In late July, Hussein noted, “they [the Iranians] transported to us BM [anti-aircraft] missile launchers and their rockets using civil aviation planes. We stored them in Kenana and sold part of them to Qatar to support Libya fighters after they were subjected to attacks by the Egyptian and Emirates air forces. That helped them to achieve victory.”

General Imad al-Din Adawy, the Chief of Joint Operations, elaborated on the latest developments in the cooperation with and in Libya. “Our joint forces with Tchad [Chad] are in their best state. The Libyan border is totally secured, especially after the victory of our allies (Libya Dawn Forces) in Tripoli. We managed to deliver to them the weapons and military equipment donated by Qatar and Turkey and we formed a joint operations room with them under one of the colonels in order to coordinate and administer the military operations. Turkey and Qatar provided us with information in favor of the revolutionaries on top of the information collected by our own agents so they can control the whole country.” Amer pointed out to the prospects for long-term relations with Libya through the professional assistance by Sudanese Intelligence. “We have intensified the work to train and graduate Libyan M.I. cadres. Currently, they are doing an advanced course on Internet operation, deciphering of codes, interception of telephones and wireless radios. Their leadership requested us to train and establish for them a strong M.I. system.” It is through the Libyan Military Intelligence that Sudan would not only dominate Islamist-Jihadist Tripoli - but also open the back door for Iran.



Meanwhile, summer 2014 saw the building of relations and cooperation between the intelligence services of Iran, Sudan, Qatar and Turkey in Libya and the acceptance of the central and unique role of Sudan. In early summer, Nouri Abusahmain, then still the Islamist president of the Libyan General National Congress (in office between 25 June 2013 and 4 August 2014), made a secret trip to Khartoum and requested funding and arms shipments in order to sustain the hold onto power by Jihadist militias affiliated with the Muslim Brothers. The Libyans nominated Ahmad al-Zuway, an Ikhwan official with tribal links in Sudan, as the front man for the military-intelligence cooperation with Sudan. Zuway's first task was to oversee the flow of arms and Jihadists in cars and trucks from northwest Sudan to Kufra. Consequently, the Ikhwan could expand the Jihadist Dawn militias with fighters, weapons and ammunition from Sudan.

During the summer, Sudan launched supplies by air to the Tripoli-Misruta area. The coastal highway from the Benghazi-area stockpiles in the east and the Tripoli-Misruta area in the west was blocked in several sectors so on-land traffic was impossible. Consequently, Libya's various Jihadist militias became increasingly dependent on supplies flown from Sudan over the Sahara. As the Jihadist forces advanced on Benghazi, Sudanese transport aircraft directly supplied these forces from Derna in the east and Misruta in the west. In early September, Sudan began to directly supply the Jihadist Dawn militias in the Tripoli area. Transport aircraft flew from Sudan, landed and refueled in Kufra, and continued to the Tripoli airport of Mitiga that is controlled by the Dawn militias. These supplies enabled the Dawn militias to sustain their hold over the vital Tripoli-Misruta area - forcing the Libyan politicians opposed to the Islamists to escape to Tobruk near the Egyptian border. Meanwhile, to expedite the flow of arms and ammunition, Sudan also began to supply Kufra by air in addition to the ongoing truck convoys.

By fall, Doha decided to institutionalize and formalize the cooperation with Khartoum in order to ensure that it was not banished from Libya and other up-and-coming Jihadist fronts - mainly in Africa. During October, Doha and Khartoum negotiated several secret and not-secret Sudanese-Qatari agreements. In early November 2014, the Qatari Minister of Defense Hamad bin Ali al-Attiyah and the Sudanese Minister of Defense General Abd al-Rahim Muhammad Hussein signed a comprehensive military cooperation agreement in Doha. The signing ceremony was attended by the Chief-of-Staff of the Qatari Armed Forces Maj. Gen. Ghanim bin Shaheen al-Ghanim who handles the day-to-day implementation. The agreement covers "training, formation, exchange of expertise, joint exercises, joint investments, exchange of visits, promotion of cooperation between the two armies, and the exchange of military studies on the level of military academic institutions." The agreement also provides for "the exchange of expertise in logistics and industrial fields including detached service of officers and experts along with the military medical cooperation" - that is, Qatari participation in the Sudanese out of country endeavors. As part of the military cooperation agreement, Qatar committed to "supply Sudan with the natural gas." In the secret agreement on intelligence cooperation, Qatar committed to sponsoring and funding a myriad of Sudanese (and Iranian) Jihadist initiatives mostly throughout Africa. It is understood in Doha that in the context of the new bilateral relations - Khartoum will intercede with Tehran not to undermine the al-Thani rule in Qatar and to continue to use Qatar as the lucrative main venue for illegal technology imports and sanctions-busting oil and gas exports.

In late-November, Maj. Gen. Ghanim bin Shaheen led a large delegation of military and intelligence officials on a follow-up visit to Khartoum. He was hosted by Sudan's Gen. Hussein. The delegations discussed the further expansion and consolidation of the special relations and cooperation between the armed forces of Qatar and Sudan. Concurrently, Sudan's Information Minister Dr Ahmed Bilal arrived in Doha in order to address the public political aspects of the new relations. Bilal delivered a speech praising "the relations



between Qatar and Sudan” and describing them as “strong, long-standing and well-developed ties.” Bilal was effusive in his praise of official Qatar. “The people of Sudan owe a debt of gratitude to the Emir H H Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Father Emir H H Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the government and people of Qatar for the support extended to Sudan in all conditions and in all fields.”

Concurrent changes in eastern Libya manifested the Sudanese-Qatari cooperation. Back in September, 15 Qatar-sponsored KHI/DI’ISH operatives led by an Egyptian and a Saudi Arabian senior commanders arrived in Derna from Syria via Turkey. Their mission was to establish a KHI branch in Libya. By late October, over 50 Derna Jihadists publicly pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi and declared their commitment to establishing a Derna Caliphate in Cyrenaica. Using the weapons and funds received from Sudan, they built an 800-strong force operating at least six camps outside Derna as well as a few large training facilities in the Green Mountains for Libya, Egyptian and foreign Jihadists. By mid-November, they seized control of the entire city of Derna with the KHI’s black banners flying over all government buildings.

On December 12, the Mujahedin Shura Council of Cyrenaica urged all Islamist forces to join a coalition led by the Derna Caliphate, and all the Islamist militias in eastern Libya, including the Sudan-sponsored Libyan Dawn forces, recognized the new coalition. The Jihadists celebrated the announcement with a military parade in Derna led by tanks and Technicals adorned with black flags. Combat proven commanders from Syria, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt arrived in Derna from the KHI to help expand the training and force building efforts. They established three major training camps in Nawfaliya (near Sirte), Sabratha and Derna for Libyan and African, including Nigerian, fighters. Sudanese military technicians also arrived in Derna to build communications facilities as well as maintain the combat aircraft, tanks, artillery and rockets in the Jihadists’ arsenal. In late December, these Sudanese technicians were instrumental in servicing and arming the few combat planes seized by the Libyan Dawn, and thus enabling the Libyan pilots to bomb and set aflame several oil tanks in the Sidra port.

The success in Libya in fall 2014 prompted Tehran and Khartoum to increase the direct involvement of Qatar in other endeavors in sub-Saharan Africa. The decision was also affected by the prominence of Qatar with other Sunni Jihadist movements, and especially the Caliphate, that were increasingly influencing Shekau and the Boko Haram Shura.

The anticipated role of the Boko Haram Caliphate as the Islamists-Jihadists springboard into the rest of west Africa requires Shekau to closely follow Baghdadi’s Takfiri Jihadism. Unlike earlier surges into the Heart of Africa, the Jihadism sponsoring states are now convinced that they have a sound territorial springboard in the Boko Haram Caliphate. In late-2014, the Caliphate was tightly controlling around 50,000 SqKm or 6% of the territory of Nigeria, and partially controlling additional 130,000 SqKm - for a total of around 180,000 SqKm or close to 20% of the territory of Nigeria. On November 3, Zanna Mustapha, the Deputy Governor of Borno State, warned that if the Boko Haram’s pace of territory occupation were to continue in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, they would not survive for long. “If the Federal Government does not add extra effort, in the next two to three months, the three North-Eastern states will no longer be in existence,” he said.

Unlike the Sahel areas under the dominance of AQIM - the Caliphate has densely populated area with solid transportation infrastructure, electricity and mobile phones, water and food. The Boko Haram Caliphate includes both cities with technically skilled urban population and food-producing rural area. Thus, the Boko Haram Caliphate can serve as a secure long-term springboard for further surge into the Heart of Africa. Therefore, it became imperative for the sponsoring states to quickly organize supplies of weapons, funds and



expert cadres to assist Shekau in consolidating his rule over northeastern Nigeria and be able to surge from there.

To make sure that Shekau and the Boko Haram Caliphate can indeed deliver on the growing expectations - senior intelligence officials of the key sponsoring states and the Jihadist Takfiri trend resolved to submit the Boko Haram to a very close inspection. In mid-October, they sent a small delegation of senior commanders and experts from KHI - Sudanese, Libyans, and Syrians - to personally inspect and assess the situation in the Boko Haram Caliphate. A couple of weeks later, the experts returned to Khartoum and then to Raqqa (the capital of Baghdadi's Caliphate) very impressed not just by the military and organizational capabilities of the Boko Haram, but also by the Islamist Jihadist knowledge and zeal of Shekau and his closest aides (not further identified). The visitors were particularly impressed by the commitment of their hosts to building the Boko Haram Caliphate on the basis of the Rashidun Caliphs (Islam's first four Righteously Guided Caliphs) and particularly Abu Baker and Omar - which is the cornerstone of Baghdadi's ideological doctrine. The experts recommended that the Takfiri Jihadist trend should tell would be volunteers from all over the Muslim World that if they could not reach Baghdadi's Islamic Caliphate because of travel difficulties they should go instead to the Derna Caliphate and the Boko Haram Caliphate.

With the Derna Caliphate secure, Sudan and its allies - Qatar, Turkey, and behind the scenes Iran - could capitalize on the huge stockpiles left there by the Qadhafi regime in order to support African Jihads. The support for the Boko Haram was put under a single manager - a coordinator for the communications, weapons supplies and financing delivered from Libya via Sudan. Known only by nom-de-guerre Abu Kudes - he is an Egyptian, an Ikhwan activist and originally a "professor" from Al-Azhar University, Cairo, who was involved in earlier Jihadist logistical efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Turkey-Syria. In late 2014, Abu Kudes was coordinating the delivery of weapons from stockpiles in Cyrenaica with the assistance of logistical experts from Sudanese and Turkish intelligence. Qatari intelligence was funding all the Jihadist logistical operations in Cyrenaica.

The Sudanese also oversaw the organization of forward bases and supply lines to the Boko Haram Caliphate. Weapons, ammunition and other equipment collected both in Cyrenaica and in the south - the Sabhah area - are bought to Kufra (aka al-Jawf) where the operation is under Ahmad al-Zuway. From Kufra, the supplies are transported by truck or air to northwestern Sudan. The main storage area for materiel arriving from Libya is in the airbase in Dongola. From there, the goods earmarked for the Boko Haram are flown or trucked to the Al-Fashir airbase. The storage bunkers are located west of the airport compound. Most of the supplies are trucked southwest by desert road to the A5 highway, then taking the A5 westward to Chad. Sudan's joint forces with Chad, as identified by General Adawy, expedite the crossing of the convoys into Chad. The convoys continue westward across Chad, pass around N'Djamena from the north, continue westward across the desert to Goufey, Cameroon, and across the Cameroonian tip to numerous crossing points into Nigeria between Gambaru and Lake Chad (the Baga area). This logistical push is the reason for the growing importance of the roads near Lake Chad for the Boko Haram. From there, the Boko Haram uses Nigeria's A3 highway and secondary roads already under the Caliphate's control in order to disperse the weapons and supplies into the Nigerian deep interior. In early November 2014, Boko Haram patrols moved around the northeast corner of Nigeria's Borno State and in the extreme north of Cameroon - some 50 km from Chad's capital N'Djamena.



Indeed, most of the sophisticated weapons used by the Boko Haram during 2014 were received from allies - mostly from Mali and Libya. Thus, the Sudan-origin logistical effort is building on existing foundations on the border of Nigeria in areas where the Boko Haram is already present. Nigeria's northeastern borders are completely porous. The Nigerian security authorities in the North know of over 10,000 cross-border routes from Niger, Chad and Cameroon where there is no government presence or supervision. These routes have long been used for the cross-border smuggling of migrant and goods - mainly for the local communities. They are now being taken over by the Jihadists. Local smugglers report that they are running into growing numbers of people and goods arriving into Nigeria from Sudan, the Central African Republic, Mali and Libya.

In the Monguno area alone, a local fisherman-smuggler told Ndahi Marama of the Lagos Vanguard, "there are over 300 routes that people can get into Nigeria or out of the country with any kind of truck or load, provided they know the terrain." In the Ashigashiya immediate area, noted another local, "there are over 50 border villages and hamlets directly linked with some settlements in Cameroon." Once inside Nigeria, arms shipments are distributed using all means of transportation - from trucks and cars to donkeys, camels and bull-driven carts. The diversity of means of transportation enables the Boko Haram to quickly conceal their arsenals and move them safely all over Nigeria. "Boko Haram has been able to smuggle arms into Nigeria using various methods such as the use of specially crafted skin or thatched bags attached to camels, donkeys and cows where arms are concealed and moved across the borders with the aid of nomadic pastoralists or herders. Its members are known to connive with merchants involved," a Nigerian security official told Ndahi Marama.

The New Era of the Caliphate

On November 9, Abubakar Shekau ushered in the new era of the Caliphate in a 44-minute video message, 20 of which were delivered in Arabic. The message was aimed at Middle Eastern audiences and particularly the Takfiri Jihadist leadership. Unlike his usual appearance in military fatigues in front a line of parked combat vehicles, this time Shekau was photographed delivering a sermon during Friday prayers. Shekau was dressed in clothes typically worn by Imams - a light blue Babbar Riga (gown) with an Alkyabba (garb) on top, and a Zanna Bukar cap which was half covered with a Turban. Shekau's video was choreographed to resemble the July declaration of the Islamic Caliphate by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi during a sermon in a Mosul mosque. Shekau delivered his sermon in the main mosque of Gwoza, Borno State. Gwoza, Shekau explained, is now called Darul Hikma (the Abode of Wisdom in phonetic Arabic) and serves as the capital of the Caliphate.

Shekau made special effort to convey his own personal and the Boko Haram's adherence of the tenets of Baghdadi's Takfiri teachings. He stressed the enduring stability of the territorial entity known as the Caliphate. He reassured the Jihadist supreme leaders and their sponsoring states they can trust him and be assured that the Boko Haram to deliver the long-term springboard into the Heart of Africa. "To all Muslims and all devout Mujahideen, my esteemed brethren, Allah has bestowed on us Islamic victory, and we pray to Allah to give us the opportunity to fight infidels on the face of the earth. We fight and kill whoever opposes what the prophet brought. My brethren in Islam, we are living in Islamic Caliphate. We send our greetings to our brethren living in the Islamic caliphates - the Caliphate in Iraq and Syria. My brethren in Islam, wherever you may be, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan, in Azerbaijan, in Shishan [Chechnya], in blessed Yemen, in Somalia - to everyone living in Islamic caliphates, we convey our greetings at this moment. Look at this Nigeria, liars. Look at these tyrants. They are sabotaging Islam. We have indeed established an Islamic Caliphate. This is an amazing thing. Victory from Allah!"



He reiterated to the Takfiri Jihadist leaders that the Caliphate in Nigeria is part of the Arab-dominated milieu and not a distinctly African undertaking. “We don’t call ourselves Boko Haram. We are Jama’tu Ahlus Sunna Lidda’awati wal Jihad” (Community of the People Committed to the Propagation of [the Prophet’s] Teachings and Jihad in phonetic Arabic), Shekau declared. He also emphasized anew his “firm authority” over the Caliphate. He repeated that there can be no cease-fire or any other agreement with the Nigerian government. Shekau concluded that the Caliphate was well consolidated as an entity and was no longer beholden to his own leadership. “If Allah decides I die today, by Allah I will die.”

Significantly, unlike previous sermons, Shekau did not mention al-Qaida, Ayman al-Zawahiri, or any other al-Qaida affiliates.

The evolution of the Boko Haram strategy since early November 2014 put a growing emphasis on preparing the infrastructure and territory required by the foreign partners and sponsors for the anticipated escalation. Concurrently, the Boko Haram has focused on politically spectacular operations in order to undermine the stability, and ultimately the very existence, of the Nigerian State in its current borders. The first priority is to delegitimize the Federal Government, not just one president or another. The next priority is to alienate the entire Muslim population of the North by inflicting heavy casualties, preventing daily life, and demonstrating the government’s inability to protect the people and ensure safe and secure everyday life. Taken together, these two priorities will inevitably have major impact on the presidential elections. Boko Haram leaders are convinced they are on the winning streak militarily. Since mid-November, they reported repeatedly to Khartoum and Raqqah (the capital of Baghdadi’s Caliphate) that they already have weapons and ammunition, food and other supplies, for 12-18 months of intense fighting.

Abubakr Shekau promised in mid-November that the Caliphate “will never be part of Nigeria again.” In the last months of 2014, there has been a continued consolidation of Islamic state institutions in order to transform the Caliphate into an enduring entity. The Boko Haram flew its black banners from all police stations and government buildings. The Boko Haram demonstrated its conviction that the Caliphate is irreversible by giving all key cities and town new Muslim names. The first two were the Caliphate’s capital Gwoza, Borno State, that was renamed Darul Hikma (the Abode of Wisdom in phonetic Arabic), and Mubi, Adamawa State’s second largest city and the site of a major Boko Haram victory, that was renamed Madinatul Islam (the City of Islam in phonetic Arabic). The Boko Haram also vastly expanded the nomination of new Amirs and sub-Amirs as the governors of all key cities, townships and other population centers throughout the Caliphate. Significantly, the Boko Haram also introduced new Senior Amirs for the 16 Local Government Areas captured in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States.

In early November, the Boko Haram declared all the captured towns and cities part of the Caliphate and instituted Sharia law as the sole guide for governance and justice. This decree was followed by public demonstrations just how determined the Boko Haram’s Amirs were. In Mubi, for example, after announcing the enforcement of Sharia law in the region - the Jihadists publicly amputated the hands of ten residents who were found guilty of offenses against property. The next Friday, two Imams were publicly beheaded for preaching against Boko Haram. The following Sunday, Boko Haram teams led by commanders broke into local churches, assured the parishioners they wouldn’t burn down their churches immediately, and then formally instructed the parishioners to relocate, convert to Islam, or be ready to be executed.

After the initial shock therapy, the Boko Haram rulers focused on restoring normal life and economic viability to the cities, towns and villages under their control. The Boko Haram established checkpoints in all



cities and town where armed fighters instructed the stopped civilians “not to panic or run away” from their homes and businesses. Owners, managers and key officers of large businesses were summoned to the local Amirs and sub-Amirs and were given “assurances of safety” for themselves and their businesses for as long as the don’t violate the Sharia. In rural roads, Boko Haram checkpoints stopped fleeing civilians with the instructions to return to their homes and resume normal life. The Boko Haram also sent patrols and operatives into centers of displaced people. The Boko Haram fighters assured the displaced people they would enjoy “better security in the Islamic Caliphate than in Nigerian territories.”

Consequently, by mid-November normal activities started to pick-up in the towns and cities under the Caliphate. Boko Haram patrols kept encouraging the local residents to resume their normal activities and reopen their shops for business. The Boko Haram even assured residents of free movement at any time in contrast with the curfews imposed by the Nigerian military in several cities threatened by the Boko Haram. In some of the cities and towns, the Boko Haram authorities even threatened business owners that if they failed to open their shops - the Boko Haram would have them broken into, seized and handed over to Islamists ready to resume business activities. However, many shops and businesses whose owners had fled were since broken into and looted by both Boko Haram fighters and local people. By late-December, though, the food supply system was yet to be restored throughout the entire northeastern Nigeria and some communities were still suffering shortages.

By early December, there emerged a growing schism between the local governing bodies that focus on resumption of normal live and economic productivity and Boko Haram zealot higher-ups interested in imposing Islamist Sharia at all cost. The Boko Haram local officials remain interested in establishing order in the cities and towns under the control of the Caliphate. They also remain dedicated to the establishment of functioning Islamist governance. Ultimately, the Boko Haram governing authorities ended-up using a mixture of horrific brutality and surprising pragmatism in dealing with the civilian population under their control. Simply put, the schism emerged because the Boko Haram didn’t know where to draw the line as governing authorities rather than mere rebels and mujahedin. In some localities, Boko Haram police rounded up men to explain the Sharia rules on the basis of the Quran and other Islamic scripture. People have been rounded up in order to be instructed in great detail about strict dress codes that includes regulating how long pants should be above the ankle as per the dress codes in the days of Prophet Muhammad or the forbidding of collared shirts as products of the West. However, Boko Haram checkpoints also confiscated “forbidden Western technology” such as computers, automated weights and other business-related systems, as well as removed automated-teller machines and other electronic systems from local banks. These actions had devastating effects on the reviving of economic and business activities.

In the strategic and oil-rich northeastern corner of Borno State, the Boko Haram immediately focused on imposing rigorous Sharia law in order to secure tight control over the population and the movement of people. When local Jihadist commanders were ready for some compromises in order to sustain economic stability and reduce simmering grassroots tension - the Boko Haram leadership brought in Chadian Imams, commanders and mujahedin to impose Sharia law and order. The Chadian Islamists-Jihadists took over the administration of most communities in the northern corner of Borno State. Chadian Imams now sit in court to adjudicate local disputes. The Boko Haram, explained a recent refugee, “now rule over those who could not escape from the seized communities with an iron fist, sword and bullets.”



Meanwhile, between early November and mid-December, Boko Haram raids and attacks continued to spread and escalate throughout the region - mainly in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa States, but also beyond and increasingly in Gombe and Bauchi States. The Boko Haram largely succeeded in blocking military counterattacks on the key contested cities - albeit at a high cost in fighters and weaponry. Essentially, this was a transition period in which the ongoing military activities of the Boko Haram continued along proven lines while the strategy and force structure evolved on the basis of newly acquired weaponry, arrival of expertise, and emerging missions as a result of the new regional role.

In early November, columns of the Boko Haram continued their long-range raids aimed to sow terror and divert the security forces from confronting the Caliphate. First attacked was the Nafada area, Gombe State. The Boko Haram also expanded their sabotage and martyrdom-bombing campaigns - starting with Azare, Bauchi State that was subjected to both a regular bombing and a lethal female suicide bomber. Of significance was the escalation of the bombing campaign against schools - a cornerstone of the Boko Haram's quintessential doctrine. On November 10, a suicide bomber dressed as a student in a school uniform and carrying a school rucksack killed 50 students at the Government Technical Science College in Potiskum, Yobe State. In late-November, two teenage girl martyrdom-bombers blew themselves up at a crowded market in Maiduguri, Borno State. The first girl blew herself up first in the middle of a dense crowd, and as people gathered to help the victims, the second girl detonated herself and caused even greater carnage. At least 78 people were killed and close to 300 were wounded in the bombings.

In mid-November, the Boko Haram launched a series of localized attacks to expand and consolidate their control in contested areas. The key thrusts included the occupation of Maiha, about 25 km from Mubi, Adamawa State. The Boko Haram raided Askira-Uba and Wamdiyo, as well as occupied villages in the Polo area of Maiduguri, Borno State. The townships of Hong and Gombi, Adamawa State, fell to a determined assault where Boko Haram fielded superior firepower. The Boko Haram seized anew Chibok, Borno State, expanded the offensive in the next few days, and made gains along Nigerian border with Cameroon. Concurrently, the Boko Haram stormed and occupied the village of Azaya Kura in the Mafa area, Borno State, some 30 km from Maiduguri. At least 45 villagers were killed in the attack.

Concurrently, the Boko Haram returned to terrorizing the rest of the North through indiscriminate bombing of crowded public places and schools. The main terrorist attacks took place in Kano and the central North. On November 12, a lone female suicide bomber blew herself up inside the Federal College of Education in Kontagora, Niger State. She was prevented from entering the crowded library so that casualties were very few. A couple of days later, in Kano, a suicide bomber detonated his car-bomb in a petrol station - killing six and causing extensive damage.

This cycle of bombing climaxed on 28 November in a complex operation aimed to cause massive carnage among Muslims who do not accept the Boko Haram's Takfiri Islamism. First, a bomb exploded outside the Central Mosque in Kano as hundreds of people were arriving for the Friday prayers. Soon afterwards, two suicide bombers blew themselves up among the people rushing to help the victims of the first explosion. Meanwhile, gunmen opened fire on the security and emergency services rushing to the mosque area. A total of over 200 people were killed and over 500 wounded. Three weeks later, on 17 December, Shekau issued his next message. Although he did not claim responsibility for the Kano Mosque attack - Shekau declared that the Boko Haram was ready to fight and kill anyone challenging its definition of true Islam. Sheaku identified as legitimate targets of his wrath both all non-Muslims and "fake Muslims" like the Emir of Kano.



New weapons and better tactics originating in the battlefields of Syria-Iraq became more prevalent in the Boko Haram operations between late November and early December. On 27 November, the Boko Haram used a Middle East-type IED (Improvised Explosive Device) during an ambush of military and hunter (vigilante) forces on the main road to Mubi at Maraba-Mubi, Adamawa State, about 18 km from Mubi. After the explosion, a Boko Haram ambush opened fire on the troops and nearby people at a bus station - causing panic. At least 10 soldiers and 35 hunters were killed in the ambush.

As part of the consolidation of forces, the Boko Haram started organizing localized units. One of the first units surfaced in late-November near the border with Chad and Cameroon on the shores of Lake Chad. The first encampment was at Dogon Fili, 15 km from Doron Baga, Borno State. This raiding force is dedicated to clearing up the areas around Lake Chad to ensure freedom of movement for the anticipated convoys. The first strike by this force took place on 20 November near the village of Doron Baga, some 180 km north of Maiduguri. The unit sought to prevent local fishermen on their way to the market across the border in Chad from using a road that the Boko Haram planned on using. Hence, the raiding force ambushed, and then slaughtered and drowned, 56 fish traders near the shores of Lake Chad. In a first, the unit also destroyed mobile phone masts in the area to prevent communications. On 14 December, over 600 Boko Haram fighters from this unit crossed Lake Chad and simultaneously attacked several villages in the northern tip of Cameroon.

The Boko Haram introduced night-time terror raids. On 30 November, Boko Haram militants conducted a night raid on several objectives in Shani, Borno State. More than 30 fighters arrived on motorcycles - throwing incendiary bombs and firing heavy machine-guns. On the night of 3 December, the Boko Haram raided and captured Lassa, Borno State. The raiding force quickly overwhelmed by fire the hunters who resisted them with locally made rifles, bows and arrows. They burnt almost half of the town, killed hundreds, and drove others to flee. They also abducted over twenty women, mostly young girls. By daytime, the Boko Haram was in charge of Lassa. The main raiding force left - leaving behind a local Amir they nominated and a small garrison.

Shortly afterwards, the Boko Haram established another new raiding unit and a base of operations in the Buni Yadi area in the southern part of Yobe State. The new unit is better trained and comprised of 20 heavily-armed Technicals and numerous motorcycles. The unit continues the Boko Haram's regular attacks - albeit with greater audacity. On the night of 1 December, this unit launched a pre-dawn attack on Damaturu, the Yobe State capital. A column of Technicals and motorcycles drove into the main street shooting and throwing bombs. They split into smaller subunits and went after select objectives. The marauding forces roamed through town most of the day and then left as suddenly as they arrived. At least 150 people were killed in the attack. On 4 December, the same unit stormed two towns in Gombe State - raiding banks as well as burning government buildings and political party offices. First, they attacked Bajoga, Gombe State, in the early morning. They rampaged in the town for several hours and then continued to Ashaka, 5 km away near the border with Yobe State. They raided Ashaka for a few hours and then vanished on the road to Buni Yadi.

Meanwhile, terror bombing throughout the North continued unabated. Most of the martyrdom-bombers were pairs of young women. On 1 December, two female suicide bombers blew up in the Maiduguri Main Market killing 10 and wounding 50. They carried the bombs in the back of their hijab dress. On 10 December, two female suicide bombers attacked a market in Kano town. They started a loud argument with local merchants and detonated themselves once a crowd gathered - killing five and wounding a dozen. The next day, another pair blew themselves up near a bus station in Jos, the Plateau State capital. The second waited for a



large number of people to rush to help the casualties of the first explosion before detonating herself. At least 40 people were killed.

In early December, a new Boko Haram unit surfaced near the border with Niger. This elite raiding unit is comprised of the Manga tribe from Chad. Their area of operations is northeastern Borno State and particularly the oil-rich Gajiganna region between Maiduguri and the border between Niger and Nigeria. Drilling and other oil-related work had long been abandoned for fear of the Boko Haram attacks on the area. In mid-December, the Boko Haram launched a new effort to control northern Borno State and the border area - again in anticipation for the arrival of cross-border supplies and reinforcements. The Manga raiding force first surfaced on the night of 12 December when it struck Gajigana town, 45 km north of Maiduguri. Once again, the raiding force drove all over town, shooting machine guns and throwing bombs in all directions. The raiders returned two nights later. They destroyed almost all the houses in the area and killed more than 30 people. Thousands were forced to flee the area - leaving it open for the Boko Haram.

Meanwhile, the Boko Haram continued to push forward, consolidating hold over more contested areas in the second half of December. These raids were conducted by small forces of some six Technicals each. These raiding forces used shock tactics - making efforts to destroy as many buildings as possible with incendiary bombs in as short a time possible. They also kidnapped hostages. Priority was given to women and girls, but boys and teenagers were also seized to be used as forced labor and boy-soldiers. During these raids, the Boko Haram fighters first shot down the men before herding the women and children they could capture.

Such raids took place simultaneously all over the area claimed by the Caliphate. For example on 20-22 December, in the east, one such raid was in the area of Gumsuri just north of Chibok, Borno State. There, over 30 men were killed and at least 185 women and children were kidnapped. In the west, the Boko Haram raided on Damagun, on the Damaturu-Kano road in Yobe State. The raiding force first stormed the local military base and the Divisional Police Headquarters. They then rampaged for two hours, inflicting serious damage, killing dozens and kidnapping an undetermined number of women and children. In the north, a raiding force yelling "Allahu Akbar" drove into Geidan, northeast Borno State, spraying gunfire and throwing bombs. Terror bombing also continued all over the areas claimed and contested by the Boko Haram. For example, on 22 December, an incendiary bomb exploded in the Central Market in Bauchi, Bauchi State, killing about ten women and maiming twenty others. Another bombing took place in a crowded motor park in Gombe, Gombe State. Two explosions occurred in quick succession with the second blast aimed at people rushing to the scene. The bombs killed over twenty and wounded over sixty.

The nearly simultaneous surge of Boko Haram operations on 20-22 December was not accidental. These strikes coincided with two unusual messages from the Boko Haram leadership. The first video surfaced on 21 December. This is a KHI-style terror video narrated by a senior commander rather than Shekau. The commander claimed it was shot in Bama, 60 kms north of Gwoza. The video shows mujahedin killing in cold blood several tens of civilian adult men lying face down on the floor in a dormitory. The short and thin senior commander then stepped toward the camera to deliver a short message. Although most of the background voices were Kanuri, the commander spoke in Hausa. He delivered a chilling message about how the Boko Haram intends to treat those who dare to confront them.

"We are indeed very happy that God, the most praised and most exalted, has brought us to the town of Bama. In the past, our brethren in this movement [Boko Haram] had mistakenly assembled and



locked up people in the prison, which is wrong because we have it on Islamic authoritative traditions that when prisoners of war are arrested, it is either they are kept or killed.

“Even though the Prophet had advised during his time that the prisoners can only be kept and not killed, we felt this is not the right time for us to keep prisoners; that is why we will continue to see that the grounds are crimsoned with the flowing blood of prisoners. And, as you can see here in this video, we have made sure the floor of this hall is turned red with blood, and this is how it is going to be in all future attacks and arrests of infidels.

“From now, killing, slaughtering, destructions and bombing will be our religious duty anywhere we invade. As you can see, and as Islam has prescribed, we don’t live together in the same place with infidels. The covenant we had with God is for the infidels to be six feet down in the earth and we walk the earth or vice versa.

“Another message to our brethren and people all over the world is, don’t be deceived that we are killing innocent people recklessly; be assured that all those we killed are not innocent people - they are infidels. God that created mankind has said in the Holy Quran that He created man and among them are believers and among them are infidels. He did not give a third category. So it is either you are a Muslim believer or an infidel. Even the people of Bama whom we have killed now may call themselves Muslims, but we see them under the category of infidels; that is why we killed them.

“And to our great leader, Abubakar Shekau, we plead with you to be patient with us as you lead us in this holy mission. We will always be loyal to you, and would never go against your instructions. We remain like a bullet in the rifle to you; anywhere you fire us, that is where we will go.”

A very short video from Abubakar Shekau surfaced the next day, 22 December, on numerous Jihadist websites. Significantly, most of the links identified the speaker as “Darul Tawheed”. In the video, Shekau is standing as his usual in front of several armored cars and is flanked by six masked fighters. Shekau was extremely upset, waving his hands about and pointing threateningly at the camera. Shekau started by rejecting democracy. He then focuses on lambasting the “disbelievers” masquerading as Muslims. He includes in the list of “disbelievers” the Salafis and Shiites. Shekau specifically denounces Saudi Arabia as “not Islamic” because they do not follow the authentic teachings of Prophet Muhammad, and therefore they will “enter the Hellfire” soon. Shekau then vowed that the Boko Haram will soon “perform the Hajj” and “visit the Kaaba” in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. This is because he and the Boko Haram mujahedin are the true people of the Holy Quran. Shekau concluded the video shouting: “We will kill! We will hold slaves!” and adding “we will sell” the slaves. Shekau’s video was aimed to reassure al-Baghdadi and the leadership of the Islamic Caliphate that Shekau and the Boko Haram consider themselves integral part of the Takfiri Jihad to cleanse Islam and liberate the two Holy Shrines of Mecca and Medina.

Military Initiatives at Strategic and Operational Levels

In late December 2014, the Boko Haram was seizing and sustaining the military initiative at the strategic and operational levels. The Boko Haram forces were operating in internal lines and exploiting fully their superior speed of force movements. Highly mobile and heavily armed columns strike repeatedly and frequently and in different locations - forcing the Nigerian military to operate its forces in external lines. The military exhausts resources in pursuits and counter attacks when the bulk of the Boko Haram forces are long-gone and



shifting to new attack spots. The Boko Haram succeeded to shoot down helicopters and strike aircraft - thus negating air power that is usually the greatest advantage regular armies have over irregular forces. The Boko Haram forces frequently ambushed and defeated Nigerian Army units up-to and including battalions. Meanwhile, the Nigerian military's recapturing of cities proved short-lived because of ferocious counter-attacks by the Boko Haram that also forced IDPs by the tens of thousands.

The Boko Haram could field a force of up-to 50,000 fighters. Of these, between 15,000 and 20,000 mujahedin were highly trained and well equipped fighters. They used the bulk of the armored vehicles, Technicals, all-terrain tractors and motorcycles. The remaining 30,000 mujahedin were auxiliary fighting forces of varying qualities. These included about 15,000 locally recruited volunteers. The high unemployment throughout the North has created large groups of disgruntled youth who have proven susceptible to Boko Haram recruitment. Moreover, Boko Haram began to offer signing bonuses and monthly payment to local youth. The volunteers initially underwent rudimentary military training. Equipped largely with small arms and low-quality vehicles, they performed guard and patrol duties. As the training and experience of these fighters improve - they will be integrated into the main high-quality fighting forces. The Boko Haram also had about 10,000 forced recruits that routinely provided technical and logistical services but could be pressed to defensive duties when needed. Most alarming were the over 5,000 boy-soldiers. Most of them were kidnapped boys that were indoctrinated into Jihadist zeal. Teams of boy-soldiers started as back-up second wave fighters. After gaining experience and proving their zeal, they are moved to special units where they are involved in sensitive missions such as intelligence collection, transporting sabotage equipment, and assassination of Nigerian "high value targets." In a few years these boy-soldiers will become a zealot hard-core of the Boko Haram elite forces.

The rising international profile and growing international cooperation of the Boko Haram had major impact on the composition of their manpower. In the elite mujahedin units there are several hundreds, probably well over a thousand, fighters from Chad, Niger and Cameroon. The initial cross-border recruitment was from population groupings that belong to the same tribes and speak the same local languages. However, as the notoriety of the Boko Haram grew throughout west Africa - there emerged a steady flow of local Jihadists seeking frameworks, training and experience they can subsequently bring back to their own home countries. These Jihadists are being integrated into the units of Nigerian local volunteers and like them acquire experience and move up-ward in the hierarchy.

In mid-2014, there also began a flow of returning Nigerian and other African volunteers arriving from foreign Jihads. At least 100 Nigerian veterans returned from Syria-Iraq, and dozens of others returned from Somalia, Mali and the training camps in Libya. Over 100 highly trained Nigerians are expected to arrive from the training camps in southern Libya during 2015. A few friends from other west African states accompanied their Nigerian counterparts from foreign Jihads and joined the Boko Haram. In mid-2014, recruiters of the Islamic Caliphate arrived in Nigeria with returning Jihadists from the Middle East. They are seeking Muslim volunteers for the Jihad fronts in Syria-Iraq and Libya. Since summer 2014, the KHI recruited 40-60 such Nigerian volunteers. These volunteers will receive advanced training and, if they survive, will be returning to Nigeria as experienced commanders starting 2016. Since many of these recruits are from the Lagos slums and other cities in the South - they will expedite the spread of the Jihadist struggle to the South.

Meanwhile, the Boko Haram maintained a separate system of manpower dedicated to the destabilization of Nigeria through terrorism in the North, Abuja and increasingly throughout the rest of the country. In late



November, Khalid al-Barnawi agreed to activate some of Ansaru's networks and sleeper-cells in northwest Nigeria and integrate elements of Ansaru's networks into the Boko Haram's national network. Together, these networks would be able to undertake the marked escalation of terrorism against the civilian population. The campaign is aimed to scare people away from government-related buildings and crowded areas and will thus have dire impact on the people's willingness to take risk and go to vote.

As well, this clandestine network included recruiters and sustainers that kept more than fifty female would-be martyrdom bombers at the ready for striking throughout the north. Additional terrorists are constantly recruited, indoctrinated and prepared so that the number of bombers at the ready remains fairly constant. A female would-be suicide bomber captured in early December in Maiduguri claim that the ultimate objective of the terrorism campaign was to kill 100,000 people before the end of the Muslim year (mid-October 2015) and thus make Nigeria unlivable. Another new system of networks focuses on the penetration and subversion of the IDP camps and the local hunter (vigilante) forces. The Boko Haram clandestine cadres both collect intelligence and incite and destabilize the IDP population and the hostile cores in the northeast. The effectiveness of these networks will increase markedly starting early 2015 with the arrival of Nigerian Jihadists and Sudanese experts trained by Sudanese intelligence.

Starting mid-December, the Boko Haram also started refining the camps and bases in order to facilitate more professional operations and simultaneous offensives. Most significant was the establishment of a major command center near Bama, Borno State, some 70 km from Maiduguri. The Bama center was to supplement the Boko Haram's main headquarters near Gwoza, Adamawa State. Indeed, supplies, ammunition and military equipment, as well as an elite unit with its Technicals and motorcycles, were transferred from Gwoza to Bama in mid-December. Most important is the network of local bases in eastern Borno State and northeastern Adamawa State with solid enough infrastructure and logistical support to permit the use of large forces. In mid-December, some 5,000 fighters launched simultaneous attacks on border towns and villages in Cameroon. During the attacks, the Boko Haram set off a few roadside IEDs that hit military convoys and isolated the Boko Haram's area of operations from the arrival of Cameroonian reinforcements. On 29 December, some 1,000 Boko Haram fighters simultaneously attacked five townships in northern Cameroon and briefly occupied a military camp. Cameroon had to conduct air strikes before the military could recapture its base. This is might be the beginning of acquiring capabilities to better confront the Nigerian military. Meanwhile, the Boko Haram also expanded its camps and storage sites in Chad, Cameroon and Niger in anticipation for the arrival of supplies and reinforcements. New bases are established in the Lake Chad area where the four countries' borders meet.

The Boko Haram continued to conduct operations throughout northeastern Nigeria during the transformation period. On 30 December, a small force attacked Kautakari, Borno State, some 10 km from Chibok, in order to further consolidate the Boko Haram's hold over the area and the access to the border with Cameroon. A few vehicles rushed through Kautakari with the fighters shooting in all directions and throwing bombs - killing at least 15 people. The next day, the Boko Haram attacked the military barracks at Ungwar Madaki area of Gombe, Gombe State. The Boko Haram force penetrated into the barracks unnoticed and about 8pm threw several IEDs around the military facility. The Boko Haram exploited the mayhem to rob the armory and withdraw safely.



Boko Haram's Activities at the Beginning of 2015

Uniquely devastating was the Boko Haram's 3 January 2015 assault on the neighboring townships of Baga and Doron Baga on the shores of Lake Chad in northeastern Borno State. Fighting continued till January 7. The primary objective of the Boko Haram was to capture and destroy the local headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force comprised of troops from Chad, Niger, and Nigeria. In addition, raiding parties began to systematically destroy the two townships, force the entire population to flee, and indiscriminately kill those who did not escape fast enough. By the time the fighting subsided, more than 3,100 structures were destroyed by fire in the two townships. Significantly, over 2,000 people are unaccounted for and presumed dead. A few hundred bodies were recovered, but refugees described making their way through kilometers of bush trails strewn with corpses. In mid-January, the Boko Haram remained in control of the vital roads leading to and from Baga - roads that are likely to be crucial for the anticipated flow of supplies from Sudan via southern Chad.

On January 20, 2015, Shekau delivered a speech defining the Boko Haram's policy concerning the overall situation in Nigeria and the Heart of Africa while standing in front of several combat vehicles he and another commander would later claim were captured from the Nigerian military in Baga. Shekau first acknowledged the Boko Haram's responsibility for the recent carnage in Baga and promised more bloodshed. "We thank God for making us enter Baga and Doro-Baga in victory. We have today declared Baga as part of our territory and one of our operational base," he announced. "This is just the beginning of the killings; what you've just witnessed is a tip of the iceberg; more deaths are coming. This will mark the end of politics and democracy in Nigeria. This is to confirm to you that we carried out the Baga massacre, and we are going to do more."

Shekau ridiculed the Nigerian military for their failures against the Boko Haram. "Is it not amazing that we, who started with sticks and machetes, are today the biggest headache to the almighty Nigerian soldiers? What a shame!!" He then declared the two presidential candidates in Nigeria to be infidels and enemies. He boasted that the Boko Haram would soon bring Nigeria to its knees. Shekau warned the leaders of Chad, Cameroon and Niger against the dire ramifications of helping Nigeria. "Kings of Africa, you are late. I challenge you to attack me even now. I am ready," he taunted. Shekau ended his speech by burning a Nigerian flag and hoisting the Boko Haram's flag and the Jihadists' black banner. "I pledge to Allah, my God. To be Faithful Loyal and Honest. To serve Allah with all my strength. To defend his Islam. Allahu Akbar! Nigeria is dead; her constitution is dead! Islam and Islam; war by war upon the Kafir who is the unbeliever," Shekau declared.

In the evening hours of January 24, the Boko Haram launched a surprise attack on Maiduguri, Borno State. In the early morning hours of January 25, the Boko Haram also launched attacks on several other towns all over northern Borno State. This offensive turns out to be at least a mile-stone in the Caliphate's war against Nigeria, and perhaps also a turning point in Nigeria's own political fortunes. The political context of the Boko Haram offensive is unique because the offensive was launched less than 24 hours after President Goodluck Jonathan campaigned in Maiduguri and promised the restoration of stability and the imminent defeat of the Boko Haram. In order to ensure the safety of the President's visit, the military and security forces had amassed huge forces in and around Maiduguri. Still, they were surprised by the Boko Haram attack and could not repel it quickly and without inflicting heavy damage on the city.

Back on January 23, Abuja announced that "[the] Nigerian military is reviewing strategy in the combat against terrorists to accommodate joint and combined operations with neighboring military organizations. Massive deployment of air and amphibious assets are expected to feature in the operation." Abuja stressed that the Nigerian military finalized plans to conduct a "once and for all comprehensive operations" towards the



elimination of the Boko Haram terrorists and bring to a conclusive end their “laying claim to Nigeria’s territories.” Nigeria was assured of the cooperation and support of Cameroun, Niger and Chad in the elimination of Boko Haram safe-havens. “The deployment for the mission is expected to facilitate the elimination of safe havens and escape routes of terrorists in or out of Nigeria. The arrangement has enlisted the support of the military forces of neighboring countries towards ensuring that the plan to effectively block the terrorists for elimination while they are being pounded in the ongoing counter terrorism campaign is effectively attained,” Abuja explained.

Major force build-up started immediately for both strategic reasons and in order to provide security for a campaign rally by President Jonathan. In the morning of 24 January, several thousand troops, new tanks and armored vehicles were deployed to the streets of Maiduguri. The soldiers were equipped with new gear and assault rifles. The troops closed the entire area from the airport to the major roads and streets in the city’s center. In some areas, the soldiers were stationed five meters apart. The election rally was successful and was accomplished quietly. The president and his entourage flew out of Maiduguri - leaving behind the huge force in place. Alas, Nigerian intelligence had failed to discover and locate several task forces of the Boko Haram also amassing and lying in wait at the immediate vicinity of Maiduguri.

On 24 January, at 8 pm, the Boko Haram launched a diversionary attack on Jimtilo - a community and a military base some 20 km west of Maiduguri. The military rushed reinforcements from Maiduguri. Overnight, these forces were soon entangled in street fighting with small highly mobile Boko Haram forces. In the early morning of 25 January, the military deployed additional forces and artillery in order to flush out the marauding Boko Haram forces. Meanwhile, the Boko Haram forces attacked and bombed civilian targets - forcing massive escape of the population toward Maiduguri. By morning, the flow of refugees further clogged the roads also used by the military.

Then, also in the early morning hours of 25 January, the Boko Haram attacked Maiduguri itself with a large force of a few hundred fighters. The attack on Maiduguri came from different directions at short intervals. The largest Boko Haram force arrived through the Damaturu road around 5am. Smaller forces entered Maiduguri from the Dalwa and Limanti axes. The Boko Haram offensive caught the Nigerian military by surprise. Meaningful defensive engagements began only around 9am, followed by a few fighter strikes and several helicopter raids. The military’s bombing and shelling caused heavy civilian casualties and heavy damage to the city. As huge numbers of civilians sought to escape town - the military imposed a complete curfew with no end in sight. Moreover, the military could not move forces quickly from Jimtilo over the roads clogged with recently displaced crowds. By mid-day, air and ground operations continued as the nimble Boko Haram forces kept roaming all over Maiduguri and extending their hold over large swaths of the city.

Concurrently, a major force of the Boko Haram attacked Monguno, 140 km northwest of Maiduguri and 65 km from Baga, and quickly seized the town. Shortly afterwards, around 8-9am, the Boko Haram forces also took over the local military barracks. The Boko Haram won in Monguno even though the local garrison had warnings that the Boko Haram would attack between January 22 and 25, and even though local commanders ordered their forces to remain on high alert. The advance force of the Boko Haram succeeded to get close to the barracks largely unnoticed and unharmed because they were hiding in the midst of an herd of more than 5,000 cows. The cows were collected from Fulani herdsmen in neighboring villages. The Boko Haram assault forces included both militias comprised of Monguno youth and an elite assault unit comprised mainly of hundreds of Chadian Arabs. By mid-day, the Boko Haram hoisted their black flags all over Monguno. The



capture of Monguno will both prevent the military from moving quickly on Baga and the Lake Chad area, and open a new attack route on Maiduguri from the northeast.

Meanwhile, in the early morning hours of 25 January, smaller Boko Haram forces launched a series of localized offensives throughout Borno State in order to improve and consolidate earlier gains. Boko Haram forces rampaged through Konduga, 35km southeast from Maiduguri. The Boko Haram raiders caused extensive damage and inflicted heavy casualties before leaving. A Boko Haram mobile force also raided the Bama area down the road and about 60 km from Maiduguri. Over 55 people, including 22 police officers, were killed in the Bama attack. Finally, the Boko Haram seized the village of Damboa, south of Maiduguri, hoisted their banners over the key buildings, and forced the villagers to flee their homes.

The Boko Haram renewed their thrust in Maiduguri during the night of 25-26 January. Additional small raiding forces drove into town and expanded the areas of rampaging and clashes. They repeatedly clashed with military units trying to hunt them down. Most of the Boko Haram forces left Maiduguri on their own before darkness on the evening of 26 January after almost two days of rampage. During this period, they roamed the city at will. A number of Boko Haram fighters went underground and are still hiding in Maiduguri - most likely shielded by local supporters. The Boko Haram never intended to occupy Maiduguri. Even Shekau knows that it is impossible to seize a city of 2.5-3.0 million inhabitants (including IDPs) with a force of a few hundred raiders. Indeed, the Boko Haram fighters did not try to hoist their flags over any building - their usual manifestation of occupation. During the fighting, the Boko Haram lost about 100 fighters and several vehicles including two armored cars originally captured from the military and a few Technicals. The military lost at least 60-70 troops and numerous combat vehicles. Hundreds of civilians were killed mostly by military shelling and bombing. A large number of houses were burned or heavily damaged in the fighting, bombing and shelling. Maiduguri is still under curfew - albeit in a relaxed regime.

The events of 24-26 January bode very badly for the Nigerian military. For days, huge military and security forces deployed to Maiduguri, and all intelligence resources focused on discovering potential threats to the President during his brief visit to Maiduguri. Nevertheless, Nigeria failed to discover the major force concentrations of the Boko Haram so close to Maiduguri during the Presidents's stay and was taken by surprise by the ensuing offensive. The large military forces fell for diversions and failed to react in time to the main offensive. Throughout the fighting, the Boko Haram sustained the strategic, operational and tactical initiative with the Nigerian military reacting slowly and ineffectively. Simply put, the fighting in Maiduguri and northern Borno State took place under most favorable conditions for the Nigerian military and security forces - and yet, their performance has been lackluster and wanting at best.

Soon afterwards, the Boko Haram returned to emphasizing the significance of the Caliphate building in the context of both the global and regional Takfiri Jihadist trend, as well as the centrality of the Baga operation in furthering this endeavor. Significantly, this was the first major use of the Boko Haram's new Jihadist media outlet. Back around January 18, the Boko Haram introduced a media outlet named al-Urwah al-Wuthqa (The Indissoluble Link in Arabic) tailored after the KHI's Takfiri Jihadist media. For example, the broadcasts and posting start and end with the Caliphate's statement "nashid ummati qad lah al-fajr" ("my ummah's dawn has appeared" in Arabic). Like the KHI media, the al-Urwah al-Wuthqa started posting general reports (including the training of boy-soldiers) and not just statements by Shekau.

Subsequent al-Urwah al-Wuthqa postings introduced a new official spokesman of the Boko Haram called Abu Musab al-Barnawi or Abul-Barnawi (the former in the Arabic, and the latter in the Hausa and English



postings). It is not clear if he has any relations with Khalid al-Barnawi except that both Barnawi's come from Borno State.

On January 27, 2015, al-Urwah al-Wuthqa posted a conversation between Abu Musab Abul-Barnawi and a hooded interviewer about the strategic and economic context of the Baga offensive, the consolidation of the Caliphate, the essence of the Boko Haram's relations with the Muslim population they control, as well as the new relations with the Takfiri Jihadist trend. This was the first comprehensive and pragmatic articulation of the Caliphate's vision of itself. Indeed, this post was also distributed widely through the KHI media channels.

Abul-Barnawi started by explaining the importance of Baga to the Boko Haram in the context of building a regional "Islamic State in Africa":

"First, this city is located in the northeast of Nigeria, in the vicinity of Lake Chad. It is important from both the trade and military aspects for the Nigerian government. As for its military importance to the Nigerian government, it has an alliance with the countries of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger. It is an alliance against our project to establish a State of Sharia, and it is an alliance to control Lake Chad, which is considered the most important economic resource in the region. As for us, its importance lies in removing this military gathering from the lands of the Islamic State, and thus, to establish the Sharia of Allah in this area, and provide security and safety for the Muslims in it. It is known that if these military gatherings enter an area they will corrupt it and oppression will prevail in it. By the grace of Allah alone, we were able to open this city and to include it with the cities of the Islamic State in Africa. The land is for Allah and He will bequeath it to whomever He wills from among his worshipers, and the good end is for the pious. Allah knows better."

Abul-Barnawi explained that he was addressing the Jihadist media via al-Urwah al-Wuthqa because the general media had constantly distorted the mission and the name of his group Jama'at Ahl al-Sunnah Lil Dawa wal Jihad - which he pronounced in correct Arabic. Back on November 9, 2014, Shekau also stressed that they were "Jama'tu Ahlus Sunna Lidda'awati wal Jihad" and not the Boko Haram. Now, Abul-Barnawi stressed, the international and media perception of the forces behind the Caliphate were intentionally deceptive and demeaning.

"Praise be to Allah, the media is changing much of the facts and spreading lies, especially the media outlets that are controlled by the tyrants when the matter is related to the mujahedin. It is the one that wages the distortion campaigns against the actions and words of the mujahedin, and if there was no response to them, the truth would be confused with falsehood. Therefore, we say that we did not name ourselves 'Boko Haram'. Our call is not limited to prohibiting foreign schools and democracy. We are Jama'at Ahl al-Sunnah Lil Dawa wal Jihad. Therefore, this name [Boko Haram] is an attempt to bury the truth. We carry out the support for the Sunnah and establish governance of Allah in the land."

Abul-Barnawi shifted to a damage control effort regarding the carnage inflicted by the Boko Haram against civilians, particularly Muslims, in the cities they overrun. He denied that the Boko Haram was intentionally harming Muslims. He started by refuting the accusations that the Boko Haram forces committed a massacre in Baga.

"As for those accusing us of shedding Muslim blood, this is unreal and Allah bears witness to that. How can we fight them while we fight for their sake? When we entered the city [Baga] there was the so-called carriers of the Catodqora stick, who cooperated with the soldiers of the tyrant and carried their



weapons and stood by their side. So we fought who we fought. They know they fought us. When they saw our severity they escaped from the city and some of them rode into the sea and some of them went into the forest. However, we send this message to those who fought us or did not fight us: Whoever from among them comes to us in repentance, we accept their repentance and he shall have safety and security from us, because we are people.”

Abul-Barnawi stressed that the Boko Haram is actively seeking repentance and cooperation from the local population, rather than confrontation and carnage. He explained that informing the population in advance about this option is “achieved by many ways such as putting out leaflets and also posting them on the internet.” There is a proactive effort to inform the population in advance and seek their repentance and cooperation. Abul-Barnawi noted that this campaign worked in other cities seized by the Boko Haram. There, the Boko Haram capitalized mainly on local emissaries.

“If some of them come in repentance, we send him back to his brothers to inform them and to come in repentance. The best proof for that is the cities we have entered such as Mubi, Damaturu, and Fika. In these cities we did not cause harm to anyone, because they did not fight us. We fought those who fought us. If they stop their assault on us we will stop our assault on them. If you are not with us, do not be against us. We want to take the worshipers out of worshiping worshipers to worshiping the Lord of the worshipers, and from the oppression of religions to the justice of Islam, and from the narrowness of this world to the vastness of this world and the hereafter.”

Abul-Barnawi reiterated that when raiding a community, the Boko Haram refrains from attacking innocent civilians and only kill those who actively resist. The percept is valid “for all the cities.” He stressed the point by contrasting the Boko Haram’s handling of the civilians in Baga on the one hand, and Mubi and Damaturu on the other. “For example, the people of Baga know they fought us and when we went to them they escaped and many from among the people of the cities did not fight us. Therefore, let them not escape from the city if we enter. For example, the people of Mubi and Damaturu welcomed our arrival and they invoked Allah in the streets. We see much of that. Therefore, we advised them to repent and to return safely to their homes and to stand with us to repel this crusader project which the crusader, deceitful Nigerian government imposed on the people, may Allah’s curse be upon it.”

Abul-Barnawi concluded by discussing the regional context of the ascent of the Boko Haram. He warned of a major regional escalation if Cameroon, Chad and Niger come to the aid of Nigeria. He appealed to the neighboring states as Muslim brethren who are committing grave errors oblivious of their consequences. “Stop your evil from us; otherwise, just as you raid our houses we will raid your houses. For example, Cameroon started to attack us so we attacked it. Therefore, we say to Niger and Chad that if they stop their assault on us and we will stop our assault on them; otherwise, just as you fight us we will fight you. We will inflame against you a war of which you have not before tasted its bitterness. Withdraw your soldiers before you regret what will come soon and you have no time to regret. As for whoever cooperates with them and stands with them, we say: come back to your senses and stand with your mujahedin brothers, who did not go out and leave their families and homes but to defend you and your religion,” Abul-Barnawi urged.

Meanwhile, the Boko Haram has not abandoned the strategic offensive in Borno State. In late January there were growing indications that the Boko Haram were preparing a renewed offensive on Maiduguri and other key areas of Borno State. Refugees from Boko Haram controlled areas report large groupings of fighters regrouping for a major offensive on Maiduguri before the presidential elections. There are reports of the arrival



to forward camps of numerous Technicals, trucks, motorcycles and camels. As well, the removal of long-range artillery from the Monguno barracks for positions in the vicinity of Maiduguri is being reported. By 30 January, the Boko Haram nearly completed the encirclement of Maiduguri - leaving air traffic the only secure communications.

Most disturbing are recent eyewitness reports mainly the area between Monguno and Maiduguri, Borno State. According to these reports, helicopters dropped arms in wooden boxes and food items in large sacks into Boko Haram camps in the bushes. Some of these Boko Haram bush camps, particularly in around Marte and Monguno, include "many foreign fighters and some external supporters." Other camps, mainly near the Chikungudu and Kwalaram villages, have only Nigerian Boko Haram forces. The eyewitnesses described professional drops with Boko Haram fighters in wait rushing to the spots, picking up the dropped items, and loading them on trucks, camels and donkeys waiting nearby, and quickly disappearing into the bush.

On February 1, the Boko Haram launched their heaviest and most sophisticated assault on Maiduguri to-date. The attack began at 3am in the southern edge of the city. The Boko Haram launched a barrage of artillery and rocket fire from weapons recently seized from the Nigerian military. Several highly mobile and heavily armed fists surged into the city under the fire cover. The main assault started around 7am from three directions, with the largest column arriving from Konduga road, and two smaller columns entering from Damboa and Damaturu roads. A fourth attacking force joined in a couple of hours later from the north. By late morning, the key Boko Haram thrusts into the center of Maiduguri were from four different axes - through Njimtilo, Dalwa, Ngom and Mulai. Inside Maiduguri, the raiding forces divided into smaller units and spread all over town - rampaging and attacking security forces and civilian targets with heavy fire, rockets and bombs. Meanwhile, artillery and rocket fire exchanges continued during the day, causing heavy damage to the dense neighborhoods. Throughout, the military failed to react to the constant maneuvers of the nimble but powerful Boko Haram strike fists.

The battle for Maiduguri will keep escalating in the coming days. Tribal elders from Borno State learned that the Boko Haram intends "to overrun Maiduguri" before the mid-February presidential elections. Indeed, by mid-day February 1, the Nigerian military HQ in Maiduguri reported that "soldiers and Boko Haram terrorists engage in battle over the control of Maiduguri, the Borno State capital." Both sides are thus cognizant of the immense importance of the battle for Maiduguri. The Boko Haram might be able to briefly occupy a city the size of Maiduguri - but they cannot hold onto it with the currently available forces. The Boko Haram can lay a stifling siege to Maiduguri, and then aggravate and exacerbate the situation with rampaging raids. However, the mere large-scale presence of the Boko Haram near Maiduguri is politically and strategically intolerable for Abuja. Therefore, disproportionate numbers of military and security forces will be diverted to confronting the Boko Haram in the Maiduguri area at the expense of other fronts.

Conclusion

The Boko Haram upper-most leaders expect a major escalation in the fighting in northeastern Nigeria. Back in mid-December, the Boko Haram's operational plans for the first months of 2015 envisaged attacks on 25 communities and villages all over the five states of Adamawa, Borno, Bauchi, Gombe, and Yobe. The aggregate impact of these attacks should be the further consolidation and large expansion of the Caliphate. Therefore, the Boko Haram's amirs and kwamandoji (commanders in the Hausa language) invoked the percept of "Kufr al-Akbar" - that is, cardinal or mortal apostasy - as a definition for any forbidden action by Boko Haram units and



commanders. Kufr al-Akbar now covered withdrawal from cities and towns, as well as negotiations with any government authorities (Military, State and Federal). Any notion of compromise was declared Kufr al-Akbar. This means that the only way to defeat the Boko Haram is occupation of the territory they hold and the killing of their commanders and leaders. Meanwhile, the sponsoring states that are ready to invest more in protecting and expanding the Boko Haram Caliphate through the growing flow of weapons, funds and experts.

In January 2015, state sponsorship is the dominant factor in the transformation of African Islamism-Jihadism - including the Boko Haram. The objectives of the Boko Haram Caliphate in the northeast are no longer only inward looking - that is, to liberate Nigeria's Muslims, to establish a righteous Islamic State, and to destroy the apostate Nigerian State. The Boko Haram Caliphate has evolved into also becoming a major pillar - along with the Derna Caliphate in Libya - of the Islamist-Jihadist three-prong surge throughout the Heart of Africa. The Boko Haram joins other regional entities like the Ansar al-Sharia, al-Murabitun, and al-Shabab in defining their own area of interest and activity as extending from the Red Sea to the Atlantic. Indeed, the Boko Haram's ideology now inspires other Islamist-Jihadist movements in Africa. In late-December 2014, Ghana police uncovered in Akim Ofoase Zongo, eastern Ghana, a small cell that formed "a Boko Haram group" committed to "running a pure Islamic community." The mid-January 2015 Charlie Hebdo riots in Niger turned very violent and lethal. Throughout, the Islamist rioters also chanted support for, and solidarity with, the Jihad of the Boko Haram.

The Boko Haram's quest for military power has thus evolved from focusing on insurrection and terrorism to defeating armies and conquering and holding large swaths of territory. Toward this end, the Boko Haram began acquiring the capacity to fight conventional wars against the armed forces of states. Such military capabilities can only be provided by sponsoring states that, in return, will demand the Boko Haram's active participation in the pursuit of their own strategic and economic objectives. Thus, the pursuit of the Caliphate has already transformed the Boko Haram into an integral part of a larger geo-strategic and geo-economic mega-trend. The long-term threat of the Boko Haram is growing because the Islamic Caliphate in Syria-Iraq provides proof and precedents that establishing a Caliphate against all odds is possible in the 21st Century, and the sponsoring states - Sudan, Iran and Qatar - make this possible in the Heart of Africa through their largesse. Hence, the Boko Haram is no longer just a threat to the State of Nigeria but to the entire continent of Africa and the West.

The brewing crisis in Nigeria has global and all-African ramifications. Nigeria produces 2.6% of the annual international consumption and Nigeria's energy reserves are among the most unutilized and thus have long-term promise. With a population of 175 million, Nigeria is the most important country of sub-Saharan Africa and has the largest economy in Africa. If Nigeria explodes - the rest of Africa will burn and the West will feel the pain acutely.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.