



Boko Haram's Resurgence

A recently released report drafted by the United States' Department of State is making waves in Nigeria, with some politicians and media outlets seizing upon the contents to critique the Nigerian government's fight against terrorism. The report, prepared by the State Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism, is no bombshell. Fittingly titled "Country Reports on Terrorism", it is simply the department's annual mandated assessment of trends in international terrorism in 2016.

Although the report was released in mid-July of this year, true to its name, it is specifically focused on developments that occurred in 2016. This makes the contents of the report old news, but you wouldn't know that by the reaction of some opposition figures in Nigeria. A combination of the timing of the report's release and some material critical of how Abuja is conducting its fight against Boko Haram has become fodder for the Nigerian government's opponents. Excerpts like "the Nigerian military was unable to hold and rebuild civilian structures in those areas it cleared (of Boko Haram)" and "much of its reported progress was merely duplication of failed efforts carried over from the end of the last dry/fighting season" certainly give the Nigerian military little to crow about. Other Nigerian institutions came in for criticism as well, with the report disparaging the government's attempts to resettle civilians displaced by fighting, saying that "there was no evidence... of the implementation of a coordinated plan to restore civilian security in recaptured territories" and the "government continued to facilitate the return of internally displaced persons to their home communities... before appropriate conditions were in place for safe, informed, voluntary returns."

Ayodele Fayose, governor of Nigeria's Ekiti State, wasted little time using the report to blast the government for overstating its progress in its ongoing fight against Islamist militants. In July Nigeria's *Vanguard*

“

An attempt to rescue the geologists resulted in a public relations disaster for the military, which initially announced their rescue attempts were successful. Later, it admitted more than a dozen Nigerian soldiers, 11 members of a civilian joint task force, and five university staff had been killed in the attack and subsequent rescue mission.

”

newspaper quoted Fayose referencing the report and saying, "With over 120 Nigerians killed by the Boko Haram insurgents in Borno State last month alone, it is necessary for the federal government to face the reality that it has a very long walk to victory in the fight against the insurgents." The governor also accused federal authorities of lying about progress made against Boko Haram.

Elements of the press also used the report to sully the military's efforts against Boko Haram. The Lagos-based *This Day* said the report contained "shocking revelations" and claimed the document revealed weaknesses in the government's approach to fighting the militants.

Ironically, earlier in July, before the report was made public, Nigeria's army chief Lt. General Tukur Yusuf Buratai told the BBC that Boko Haram had been militarily defeated, though not eliminated. His assessment followed announcements by the Nigerian military that hundreds of Boko Haram militants, including a high-profile leader, had surrendered to the army. The announcements gave the distinct impression that the Boko Haram threat was under control.

Then, later in the month, members of a Nigerian oil prospecting team made up in part of employees of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and the geology department of the University of Maiduguri were ambushed in Lake Chad Basin and taken hostage. The kidnapping of the scientists garnered international headlines, embarrassing the military and highlighting the fact that Boko Haram violence had actually been increasing in recent months. However, the worst was yet to come.

An attempt to rescue the geologists resulted in a public relations disaster for the military, which initially announced their rescue attempts were successful. Later, it admitted more than a dozen Nigerian soldiers, 11 members of a civilian joint task force, and five university staff had been killed in the attack and subsequent rescue mission. Moreover, several university staff remained missing even after the rescue attempt, despite claims by the military that all hostages had been rescued.

Although the government announced that the incident would not hamper further attempts at oil exploration in the Lake Chad Basin, there seems to be some doubts as to how serious the NNPC is about continuing prospecting in the face of a resurgent Boko Haram. Before the attacks in July Abuja was bullish on the prospect of finding oil in Boko Haram's heartland. In fact, President Muhammadu Buhari has been keen to

“

While only time will tell if the recent attacks will temporarily dampen the government's enthusiasm for oil exploration in the Lake Chad Basin, they do underscore that finding new sources of oil away from the Niger Delta will not necessarily solve Nigeria's problems with militants.

”

diversify the country's oil supply away from the restive Niger Delta region, especially since attacks by Delta-based militants last year crippled the country's oil production. Earlier this year NNPC spokesman Ndu Ughamadu told AFP “the president would be very happy if we made a significant find in commercial quantities (in the Lake Chad Basin).”

Now, however, Buratai has walked back his earlier statements about Boko Haram being militarily defeated. According to various Nigerian sources, while addressing soldiers after the attack on the geologists Buratai said the war on Boko Haram “has not been won and is not over until it is over.”

Despite the government's eagerness to diversify its sources of oil, it seems recent events will force Abuja to acknowledge that Boko Haram remains a strong adversary in some of the regions the Buhari administration had hoped would be a central part of Nigeria's oil industry. While only time will tell if the recent attacks will temporarily

dampen the government's enthusiasm for oil exploration in the Lake Chad Basin, they do underscore that finding new sources of oil away from the Niger Delta will not necessarily solve Nigeria's problems with militants.



Yemi Osinbajo

Many Delta militant groups have long funded their activities through profits from black market oil, a problem hinted at by Nigerian Vice President Yemi Osinbajo in July when he addressed a meeting of the Council of Ministers of the African Petroleum Producers Organization (APPO, formerly APPA). “Around the world today we are increasingly seeing crude oil, often of untraceable origins, funding the activities of terrorist groups and purveyors of violence and conflicts,” he said.

Osinbajo was using his address to advocate for a way to trace oil produced in Africa so it couldn't be sold on the black market by militant groups, but he was also unwittingly laying out a case for restoring order to the Lake Chad Basin before getting serious about oil exploration. If Nigeria develops an oil industry in the region before stamping out militant groups, it could unwittingly provide Boko Haram with a source of revenue like the one enjoyed by Niger Delta militant groups. While it may be many years before Nigeria's part of the Lake Chad Basin sees the type of oil production Abuja is hoping for, Boko Haram has shown the potential to survive for long periods of time. Therefore, it seems prudent for the government to fully eradicate Boko Haram before getting too serious about turning the militant group's heartland into Nigeria's next oil region. **PA**



SHOWCASE YOUR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AT AME TRADE'S OIL & GAS EVENTS.

SURIMEP
1 - 3
NOVEMBER 2017

**2ND SURINAME INTERNATIONAL MINING,
ENERGY & PETROLEUM CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

PARAMARIBO, SURINAME | AMETRADE.ORG/SURIMEP
JMP
21 - 23
NOVEMBER 2017

**7TH INTERNATIONAL MALI MINING AND PETROLEUM
CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

BAMAKO, MALI | AMETRADE.ORG/JMP
MMEC
25 - 26
APRIL 2018

**6TH MOZAMBIQUE MINING, OIL & GAS AND ENERGY
CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

MAPUTO, MOZAMBIQUE | AMETRADE.ORG/MOZMEC
ALC
14 - 16
JUNE 2018

**2ND AFRICA OIL AND GAS LOCAL CONTENT
CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION**

LUANDA, ANGOLA | AMETRADE.ORG/ALC

**PARTICIPATE IN AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING DEBATE AND ENJOY MULTI-LAYERED NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES WITH A VARIED AUDIENCE FROM BOTH
THE INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC PRIVATE AND PUBLIC SECTORS, FROM LARGE-SCALE COMPANIES TO SMEs.**

FOR SPONSORSHIP AND EXHIBITING OPPORTUNITIES, PLEASE CONTACT: SERGIO@AMETRADE.ORG TEL: +44 207 700 4949