



**SAR Consultancy (Security Analysis and Research)**  
**Special Bulletin – Recent North Central Incidents**



**July 2015**

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After an apparent calm in incidents in the six weeks before the elections, the last two weeks have clearly illustrated that the reduction in incidents has most likely has been a strategic response by Boko Haram rather than the result of any sustainable suppression by the Nigerian military forces. In fact, the last weeks would appear to have been the deadliest week on record since Buhari has come into power, with respect to deaths attributed to Boko Haram. The location of the most recent attacks in Kano, Kaduna, Jos and Yobe, with the exception of Yobe, have not been known strong holds of Boko Haram, yet have been previously attacked. The resurgence of Boko Haram since the elections is not surprising, nor is the apparent expansion of its activities to previously targeted areas outside the three states of emergency; Adamawa, Borno and Yobe, . For those monitoring Boko Haram, patterns emerging which were purported by the military and some onlookers as indicators of military advancement and territorial re-capture, have more similarities with previous patterns where Boko Haram appeared to strike then retreat and regroup, avoiding direct combat with the military. This withdrawal of its members from territory thought to be under the control of Boko Haram shared many of the hallmarks of its activities in 2013 and 2014, where the groups reportedly held much territory along the border area and throughout part of the south of Borno but who withdrew when the military response reportedly increased.

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#### **Security Situation in North Central Nigeria**

As forecasted in SAR's last bulletin, 'one off' incidents outside of the North East are occurring with attacks in Yobe, Plateau, Kanoo and Kaduna, been seen in the last week. Furthermore, Bauchi State remains on high alert, as do many neighbouring states. As mentioned above, the recent military advancements do not appear to have had a considerable impact on Boko Haram, who appear to be increasing their momentum. That being said, the Nigeria military response in conjunction with the regional response have had some impact albeit, it is still difficult to determine the exact level of impact. This is marred, in part, by the lack of information from the authorities in regard to senior members being killed or captured, or numbers in respect to Boko Haram member deaths. Irrespective of this information, however, recent patterns have shown, as forecasted, that the remaining group, regardless of size, have not been significantly impacted and still retain the capacity to adapt to the environment in which they find themselves. This has clearly been illustrated in the recent North Central attacks and in Chad and Niger.

#### **Recent Attacks**

On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2015, two attacks occurred in the North Central city of Jos, Plateau State. Reports suggest that at least 44 people were killed, with slightly more injured. The explosions occurred in Yantaya mosque and Shagalinku restaurant, about ten minutes apart. As in many similar incidents there was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the incidents have all the hallmarks of Boko Haram initiated attacks. Jos is not unaccustomed to these attacks, having experienced much violence over the last number of years, but it should be highlighted that only a percentage of these could be

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attributed to Boko Haram. Jos is often better known for conflict between its Muslim and Christian community, and for clashes between Fulani herdsmen and its settled farmers. However, given the nature of this incident, the mode of attack, the locations targeted and similar incidents elsewhere Boko Haram has been assessed as the most likely perpetrators. The timing of the attack appears to have been strategic with the incident occurring shortly after the breaking of Ramadan fast. Both the mosque and the restaurant were understandable busy as a result. The attack in the restaurant was said to have been the result of an IED, while the attack in the mosque was reportedly a suicide bomber. Some argue that the Imam of the mosque was the target, Sheikh Muhammad Sani Yahya Jingir, a known preacher for his words against Boko Haram.

## Middle Belt Attacks

Whilst Nigeria, and a lot of the world focus on Boko Haram and calculate the death and destruction caused by them, little in the way of debate, discussion or dissent has been heard about the continued death and destruction caused in the middle belt. While these incidents rarely impact the international community directly, they may find themselves indirectly impacted. That aside, the death toll associated with many of these incidents in the middle belt is as high, if not higher in than Boko Haram related incidents.

On Sunday, 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2015, a suicide bomber reportedly detonated an explosive device at a church in Potiskum, Yobe State in which at least five people were reportedly killed, whilst many others were injured. The attack took place at 9:30am in the Redeemed Church in Jigawa ward, whilst people attended Sunday service. The next day, on Monday night, 6<sup>th</sup> of July 2015, it was reported that a female in her early teens was killed when explosives attached to her body appeared to prematurely detonate. The incident took place outside a major mosque in Kano city, the Umar Ibn Al-Khattab mosque, which the police said was the most likely target of attack. However, it would appear that the girl did not get close enough to the mosque before the explosives detonated. As a result she was the only one killed. On Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> July 2015, an explosion was reported in Sabon Gari LGA of Zaria, Kaduna State. The explosion occurred at a packed government office, and was said to have been detonated by a suicide bomber. At least 25 people were reportedly killed and over 40 people were said to have been injured. The explosion occurred at about 9am as a large number of teachers and public sector workers queued at the office. On the same day, at about 10:30 am, a female suicide bomber reportedly killed four people and herself when she detonated explosives after getting out of a vehicle at a military checkpoint in Damboa LGA, Borno State. Yet again the alleged perpetrator was female. Similar factors across these incidents include soft targets, female suicide bombers in many of the cases, previous general areas of attack, large gatherings within communities, which may imply some level of local knowledge, especially with regard to the attack in Zaria.

### **So, why this pattern of attacks?**

The Holy Month of Ramadan is seen by many jihadists as a preferred time to conduct attacks, thereby increasing the risk at this time. Furthermore, given the call by IS, for attacks on infidels during Ramadan, Boko Haram may have taken them at their word hence the apparent increase. However, there has not been major changes to the MO, tactics or targets of these attacks and therefore does For further information, please contact SAR Consultancy @ [info@sarconint.com](mailto:info@sarconint.com) or follow on twitter @ SAR\_Consultancy. Copyright © SAR Consultancy 2014. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission from SAR Consultancy. SAR Consultancy is an Irish registered trading name.

not provide any evidence that these are specifically motivated by these calls from IS. Some have argued that the increase in attacks is due to the removal of military check points throughout the country. Such an explanation may not be entirely valid given that at least one of these attacks was against a military checkpoint, which either remained in place or was not ordered to leave. Some suggested that President Buhari's order for the military to move its command to Maiduguri would have an immediate impact in Borno State; could this explain shift towards the North Central for targets? The accuracy of this argument is difficult to determine given that there is still a significant lack of intelligence on which to forecast the groups next move which makes it difficult, if not impossible, to respond quickly to Boko Haram's changing tactics. The current reality is that Boko Haram still remain a huge threat to the North East, and as demonstrated over the last few days a continued threat in the North Central. Unfortunately, SAR believes this too may spread.

#### **Impact of New Presidential figure - Buhari**

A number of analysts have noted that President Buhari's promise to act decisively against Boko Haram, in conjunction with an improved regional cooperation and the move of the military command to Maiduguri, are indicative signs of political will to address the issue. A cautious optimism prevails. However, SAR are slightly more cautious. Given Boko Haram's strategic direction over the past few years, it is believed that even with a new and improved government response, the group will be adaptive, with less attacks likely to indicate another withdrawal from combat rather than military success. That being said, this may be for longer periods than before. However, military and political will alone will not get rid of Boko Haram. As the outgoing British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Andrew Pockock, recently said, a successful response needs to be three fold, namely a proper security response, new and more appropriate governance for the North with targeted policies and a strategy developed which focuses on development and economic growth. Understandably, this will not happen overnight, and as a result expectations will have to be measured in how successful responses can be in the short to medium term.

**Conclusion** *While there are risks with doing business and delivering programmes in Nigeria at present, organisations can mitigate against many of them with proper security awareness, risk assessment and monitoring. Where getting out into the field is of primary importance, security must be prioritised. SAR's next bulletin will examine the apparent increase in Boko Haram attacks in Niger and Chad.*

**Is Nigeria witnessing any clear signs that IS are increasing their capacity and extension of the Caliphate beyond their purported allegiance to Boko Haram?**

- No major increase in the of IS flags
- No reports of IS courts, assemblies, etc.
- No reports of low or high level international targets being attacked
- Recent attacks could be seen as continued attacks on softer national targets
- Recent video of Boko Haram shared similarities to IS style of video
- Tactics & MOs used recently share many elements of Boko Harams attacks over the least three years

***All in all, this may illustrate that there is still not enough evidence to demonstrate IS presence in Nigeria or a clear shift in the behaviour of Boko Haram since the declaration of allegiance. However, that is not to say it will not happen in the future.***