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INTELLIGENCE



RISING TIDE OF TERROR

Boko Haram strikes Chad

Executive Summary

On October 27, 2024, a devastating attack targeted a Chadian military garrison in Barkaram, Lake Chad region, resulting in the deaths of 40 soldiers. The attack, suspected to have been carried out by Boko Haram or its offshoot Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), is one of the deadliest incidents in Chad since 2020. The terrorists overran the base, seizing ammunition and destroying military vehicles before retreating. In response, Chadian President Mahamat Idriss Deby launched a military operation to track down the attackers. This incident highlights the persistent instability in the Lake Chad basin, where Boko Haram has maintained its insurgency for over a decade.



Boko Haram

Boko Haram, formally known as Jama'atu Ahl as-Sunnah li-Da'awati wal-Jihad, has been an active insurgent force since 2009, launching operations across northeastern Nigeria and extending its reach into neighboring countries such as Chad, Cameroon, and Niger.

Boko Haram's offshoot, ISWAP, emerged following ideological and strategic differences within the group, and both factions have maintained a strong presence in the Lake Chad basin. The region's marshy, inaccessible terrain provides ideal hideouts for militants, who often launch cross-border attacks on military targets and civilians.



Boko Haram

The group's violence has led to significant displacement, with over 220,000 people forced from their homes in Chad alone, according to recent UN estimates.

Despite repeated regional and international military operations, including the efforts of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to regroup and launch deadly assaults.

EXTREMISM



Geopolitical Context

Chad plays a critical role in regional counter-terrorism efforts, serving as an important ally to both French and U.S. military operations against jihadist groups in the Sahel.

The Lake Chad region, which borders Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon, is a strategic point of interest for these militant groups, given its remote islands and porous borders.

Chad's military has been a key force in combating these insurgents, but it has also faced significant challenges, such as the loss of 100 soldiers in a single attack in 2020.



Geopolitical Context

President Mahamat Idriss Deby, who succeeded his father after his death in combat in 2021, has continued his predecessor's aggressive stance against Islamist militants.

His decision to visit the scene of the attack underscores his hands-on approach to military affairs. Deby's government has been trying to maintain a stable relationship with Western allies while also navigating the complexities of regional alliances, including growing relations with Russia, which has been expanding its influence in the region at the expense of France and the U.S.



Analysis

The attack on Barkaram highlights several key operational trends of Boko Haram and ISWAP. First, the use of surprise, overwhelming force at night to target military outposts in isolated areas is consistent with past attacks.

The militants likely benefited from detailed reconnaissance of the garrison, striking when the soldiers were least prepared. Additionally, the seizure of military equipment and ammunition suggests that the group continues to struggle with supply chain issues and uses such attacks to replenish its resources.

ISWAP





Analysis

The attackers' ability to evade capture and retreat into the vast and difficult terrain of the Lake Chad region presents a major challenge for Chadian and MNJTF forces.

Although the Chadian military has launched retaliatory operations, previous efforts have shown that militants often disperse into smaller, mobile units, reassembling later in different areas.

Without sustained intelligence and surveillance, these counter-offensives often fail to yield significant long-term results.

MNJTF



Implications

The attack reinforces the importance of international cooperation in counter-terrorism operations across the Sahel and Lake Chad basin. Chad remains a vital partner in the fight against jihadism, particularly as neighboring countries such as Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso have seen a decline in Western military presence due to coups and changing alliances. Chad's stability, though fragile, is essential for containing the spread of Islamist extremism in Central Africa.

However, the evolving geopolitical landscape presents complications. As countries like Niger and Mali have turned to Russia for military support, Chad's continued reliance on Western aid, especially from France and the U.S., puts it in a delicate position.



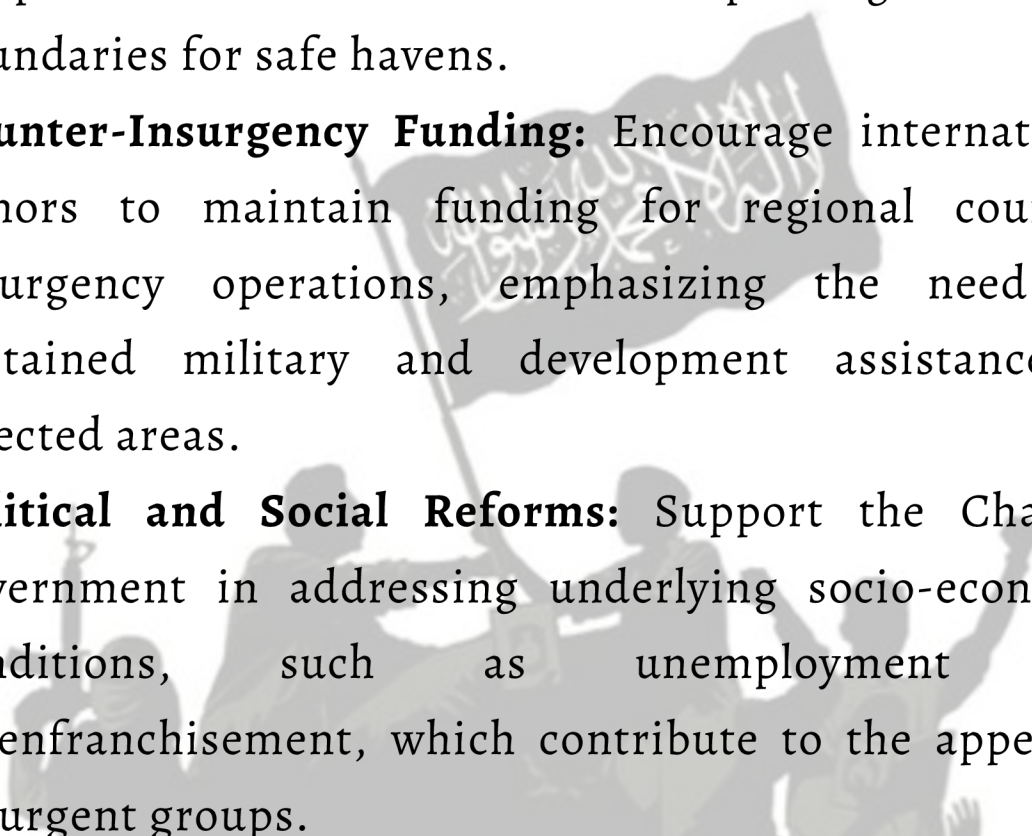
Conclusion

The growing Russian influence in the region could lead to shifts in Chad's military strategy and international partnerships, which may affect the broader regional security environment. The attack on the Chadian military garrison in Barkaram is a grim reminder of the persistent threat posed by Boko Haram and its affiliates in the Lake Chad region. While Chadian forces have made significant strides in combating insurgents, the complex geography and the militants' adaptive tactics present ongoing challenges.

As Chad continues its military operations, it is imperative that regional and international actors support the country's efforts through intelligence-sharing, capacity-building, and sustained counter-terrorism partnerships.



Recommendations

- 1. Enhanced Intelligence Cooperation:** Strengthen intelligence-sharing mechanisms within the MNJTF and with international partners to improve early warning capabilities and disrupt Boko Haram's supply chains.
 - 2. Community Engagement:** Initiate programs to engage local communities in counter-insurgency efforts, providing economic opportunities and fostering cooperation between civilians and military forces.
 - 3. Regional Security Integration:** Reinforce cross-border operations between Chad, Nigeria, Niger, and Cameroon to prevent Boko Haram from exploiting territorial boundaries for safe havens.
 - 4. Counter-Insurgency Funding:** Encourage international donors to maintain funding for regional counter-insurgency operations, emphasizing the need for sustained military and development assistance in affected areas.
 - 5. Political and Social Reforms:** Support the Chadian government in addressing underlying socio-economic conditions, such as unemployment and disenfranchisement, which contribute to the appeal of insurgent groups.
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