

Threat Tactics Report:

Boko Haram



TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration

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Executive Summary

- Boko Haram is a relatively new organization, having begun serious military operations against the Nigerian government in 2009.
- Abubakar Shekau leads a confederation of sub organizations with commanders who mostly control their own day-to-day operations.
- Shekau's legitimacy comes from his position as deputy to the founder of Boko Haram, Mohammed Yusuf.
- Boko Haram primarily conducts offensive raids, assaults, and ambushes against thinly-stretched and poorly-resourced Nigerian security elements and civilians in northeastern Nigeria.
- Influence from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), to whom Boko Haram recently swore allegiance, can be seen in an improved and increasing Boko Haram social media presence.
- The Nigerian military counterinsurgency campaign begun in 2013 has reduced Boko Haram's freedom of maneuver within Nigeria, causing it to setup safe havens in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon utilizing hundreds of unguarded border transit points.
- Due to a campaign of violence against civilians and businesses, Boko Haram has lost both Nigerian civilian support and recruits, causing it to look to disaffected and poverty-ridden areas in border countries, particularly Cameroon.
- Boko Haram's violent attacks have alienated it from much of the Nigerian population.

This (U) **Threat Tactics Report (TTR)** was produced in accordance with (U) **Intelligence Community Directive Number 203: Analytical Standards** (Effective: Jan 2015). This TTR was coordinated with:

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon S. Cleaves".

Jon S. Cleaves
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Cover photo: [Car Bomb: Maiduguri Market](#), Voice of America.



Introduction

Nigeria's economy is the largest in Africa, and is projected to be one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world in 2015, making the country a key to regional stability. Boko Haram,ⁱ a Nigerian home-grown paramilitary insurgency group, threatens both Nigerian and regional stability. Boko Haram's attacks, both actual and threatened, caused Nigerian officials to postpone the 2015 presidential election by six weeks to allow a military offensive into northern Nigeria to secure safe voting areas. Boko Haram's recruiting and attacks in and occupation of safe havens in border countries threaten these already volatile areas.¹

The Threat Tactics Report (TTR): Boko Haram provides an overview of Boko Haram's tactics, techniques, and capabilities. This report contains five sections. Section 1 is an introduction that provides an overview of Boko Haram. Section 2 is a discussion of Boko Haram's tactics and techniques with specific graphical and narrative examples. Section 3 provides information on Boko Haram's weapons and equipment. Section 4 details Boko Haram's organization and military capabilities. Section 5 provides a conclusion and identifies where the characteristics specific to Boko Haram are present in the [Decisive Action Training Environment](#) (DATE) and other training materials so these conditions can be easily implemented in training.

Section 1: Introduction to Boko Haram

Nigeria is a country with abundant natural resources, but also a country with great internal turmoil and challenges. Endemic corruption has concentrated much of the national wealth in the hands of a few at the expense of the many. A definitive division between the predominately Muslim north and the predominately Christian south combined with hundreds of different ethnic groups make for religious and ethnic tension. A power-sharing agreement allowing for two presidential terms alternating between leaders from the Muslim North and the Christian South was disrupted when President Umaru Yar'Adua died in office in 2010 before completion of his term at which time his vice president, Goodluck Jonathan, assumed office.² In the 2015 presidential election, Nigerians voted to elect a northern Muslim and former military dictator from the 1980s, Muhammadu Buhari.³ Buhari's election was made possible in part by the deteriorating security situation due to the government's slow response to Boko Haram as well as rising levels of poverty and corruption within the government. The electorate viewed Buhari, a former general, as a leader who could address one of Nigeria's greatest internal threats, Boko Haram.

Persistent ethnic, regional, and religious divisions; corruption; and poverty gave rise to Boko Haram, one of the most dangerous threats to the Nigerian government and regional stability. Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad)—more commonly known as Boko Haram in the local Hausa language from which it came—emerged in the 1990s from a loose-knit Islamist movement centered on its founder, Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf was an

ⁱ Some sources are emerging indicating the name Boko Haram may be changing to the Islamic State West Africa Province in deference to its allegiance to the Islamic State.

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Islamic scholar who preached in Maiduguri, Borno state, Nigeria.⁴ Yusuf died while in police custody in July 2009 in a crackdown that also resulted in the death of hundreds of his followers. Boko Haram launched military operations in 2009 with the eventual goal of creating an Islamic State in Nigeria. This goal is aimed at returning to a pre-colonial Islamic state that was in place before British colonialists established Nigerian borders, a potentially less radical goal than might be imagined.

After Yusuf's death, the Nigerian government wrongly declared Boko Haram finished. Instead, the group rallied around his deputy, Abubakar Shekau, and steadily increased the intensity and violence of its attacks. Its first coordinated attacks occurred against the Federal Police headquarters in June 2011 and United Nations headquarters in Abuja in August 2011. These were planned by al-Qaeda- and al-Shabaab-trained Cameroonian Mamman Nur. Nur led a Boko Haram offshoot called Ansaru, and was responsible for more than twenty suicide attacks in northwestern Nigeria throughout 2012 and 2013 while Shekau directed other attacks in northeastern Nigeria.⁵ In 2013, the United States declared Boko Haram a terrorist group.⁶ Boko Haram declared a caliphate in the areas under its control in 2014.⁷

Strategy and Goals

The primary goal of Boko Haram is to institute an Islamic state throughout Nigeria based on a fundamentalist interpretation of Islamic law with an inevitable regional expansion. The founder and spiritual leader of Boko Haram, Muhammed Yusuf, and his followers originally believed in a peaceful transition and made what the current Boko Haram leadership considered illegitimate concessions to and compromises with secular and government leaders. The group has since adopted a takfirist ideology—the belief that less than a strict adherence to Salafist Islam makes a Muslim an “apostate” equal to infidels and, therefore, a legitimate target. Boko Haram has targeted and killed a number of prominent Muslim leaders who have been critical of the organization. Boko Haram considers any support of Western or secular ideas, such as schools based on Western influence, heretical and worthy of attack.⁸

The movement is not without provocations which have contributed to the escalation of its use of violence in pursuit of its goals. Decades of resentment against corruption, poverty, and perceived inequality have given Boko Haram its trajectory toward becoming an ever more violent organization. The reintroduction of sharia criminal courts in northern Islamic states failed because of the general perception of unfairness by the population. Police brutality, extrajudicial killings by security forces, and disappearances of people taken into custody have bred general distrust, animosity, and resistance to the Nigerian government that has not fully investigated and prosecuted offenses. Despite being Africa's largest economy with great natural resource wealth, it has one of the poorest populations with a large percent of people living on less than \$1 a day. The disparity in distribution of that wealth is stark in its inequitable concentration with 72 percent of the North's population living in poverty compared with 27 percent in the South and 35 percent in the Niger Delta.⁹ The population in the North is caught between two violent and contesting forces, Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces.

Key Alliances

Boko Haram has historically interacted with multiple groups outside of Nigeria. Evidence points to Boko Haram fighters supporting the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Ansar Dine in 2012 and 2013 in Mali. Boko Haram fighters have come from



the border states Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. As many as one-third of Boko Haram members fled Nigeria during the 2009 Nigerian government crackdown on Boko Haram. According to relatives of former Boko Haram leader and founder Muhammed Yusuf, in 2011 as much as 40% of its funding came from outside Nigeria. Boko Haram has used Niger, Chad, and Cameroon to hide, train, plan, recruit, and transit, historically focusing attacks on Nigeria to avoid crackdowns in countries where it has safe havens. Yusuf found refuge in Saudi Arabia in 2004 and there have been historic relationships with groups in that country. Boko Haram has also taken inspiration from the Taliban, with some of its fighters having trained in Afghanistan.¹⁰

In March 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau swore allegiance to al Baghdadi and ISIL. The move away from al-Qaeda to ISIL was an evolutionary process. Yusuf considered Osama bin Laden, the founder of al-Qaeda, to be one of the four Salafist purists all Muslims should follow.¹¹ In 2002, bin Laden sent emissaries to hand out three million dollars in local currency to Salafist groups in Nigeria, one of whom was Boko Haram. That relationship was severed when Shekau threw his support to ISIL.

An integral reason for Ansaru's separation from Boko Haram was both ideological and tactical. Ansaru adhered to al-Qaeda's rejection of the takfiri ideology of accusing other Muslims of apostasy and killing of Muslims. Ansaru separated itself geographically as well, focusing attention on northwestern and central Nigeria, while Boko Haram has focused on northeastern Nigeria. Ansaru maintained network relationships with the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which became AQIM, as well as other loosely aligned groups. Many within these groups became disaffected from al-Qaeda in favor of ISIL. Ansaru's recent reintegration into Boko Haram brought these ISIL supporters with it, laying the foundation for ISIL's acceptance of Boko Haram into its caliphate.¹²

Organizational Size and Structure

Boko Haram is believed to have between 4,000 and 6,000 fighters. Abubakar Shekau is the recognized leader of the group, but he leads a factionalized organization. Relations between Shekau and other leaders have fluctuated due to personal rivalries and ideological differences. The organization is a confederation with many of the day-to-day decisions made by local leaders.¹³

Current Locations

Boko Haram has been strongest in Nigeria's three northeastern provinces of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa, leading former Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan to declare a state of emergency in those provinces in May 2013. Nigerian military operations have pushed Boko Haram into the Sambisa forest and the Lake Chad region, from which Boko Haram launches operations against a wide variety of targets, to include schools, religious and government leaders, other civilians, infrastructure, and security forces. While it released statements in 2013 and 2014 threatening to launch attacks in southern Nigeria, except for a few attacks it has not been able to follow through on the threats. It has found safe havens in the border countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, even finding fertile recruiting pockets in disaffected and poverty-ridden areas of Cameroon.¹⁴



Section 2: Boko Haram's Tactics and Techniques

Offense

Boko Haram prefers the offense; however, it has only in a few instances been able to take and hold ground against Nigerian military formations. This overmatch drives Boko Haram to primarily conduct raids, assaults, and ambushes against mostly poorly-defended targets. Targets include civilians deemed collaborators or critics, security personnel, government and religious leaders, critical infrastructure, and banks and businesses for re-supply purposes. Attack objectives include punishing and intimidating civilians, breeding distrust of the Nigerian government within northern Nigerian populations, obtaining survival resources, and defeating the counterinsurgency. While Boko Haram has conducted operations in other parts of Nigeria such as Abuja and a suspected attack in Lagos, attacks have been primarily focused on northeast Nigeria, with safe havens and minimal attacks conducted in Nigeria's neighbor countries: Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.¹⁵ The following are examples describing how Boko Haram conducts offensive operations in Nigeria.

Raid

[TC 7-100.2, Opposing Force Tactics](#), states that hybrid threat raids are characterized by damaging and/or destroying key systems, facilities, and infrastructure; securing hostages and prisoners; and supporting information warfare (INFOWAR) plans.¹⁶ This description is indicative of Boko Haram's raids, in which regular attacks on villages include burning and destroying houses and other village infrastructure and taking hostages. Boko Haram uses these attacks to support its INFOWAR campaign to intimidate local populations and encourage compliance with Boko Haram's mandates.

A notable example of a Boko Haram raid occurred in Chibok village, a primarily Christian village with a Muslim minority in Borno state.¹⁷ Located in the village is the Chibok Girls Secondary School. Schools are a common target for Boko Haram's campaign against Western education and its particular opposition to girls attending school. The school had been closed since March 2014 because of threats from Boko Haram; however, it was briefly reopened in April 2014 for the girls to take the West Africa Examination Council exams. It was during this time that Boko Haram attacked the school.

Boko Haram's raid on the Chibok Girls Secondary School is well known because of the international media attention it received. As with many other similar raids, Boko Haram made no secret of its intentions to attack Chibok. The Nigerian military had intelligence well ahead of the attack. Local leaders unsuccessfully pleaded with regional authorities at least four hours before the attack to send reinforcements to the fifteen soldiers on duty in the town.¹⁹ Villages such as Chibok are vulnerable and targeted by Boko Haram because of limited support from Nigerian security forces who are stretched thin in a hostile region of Nigeria.²⁰

The Chibok raid began on 14 April 2014 at about 2145 hours, while the female students were asleep in their dormitory.²¹ The Boko Haram support element began the raid by attacking the small security unit located on the school campus. The Nigerian security element was quickly overwhelmed, members being either killed or chased away. A Boko Haram typical follow-on technique manifested in Chibok was burning of buildings and infrastructure. The razing of buildings is intended to intimidate and communicate its authority to other villages. Boko Haram leader Shekau uses these attacks in YouTube videos to further his INFOWAR campaign.

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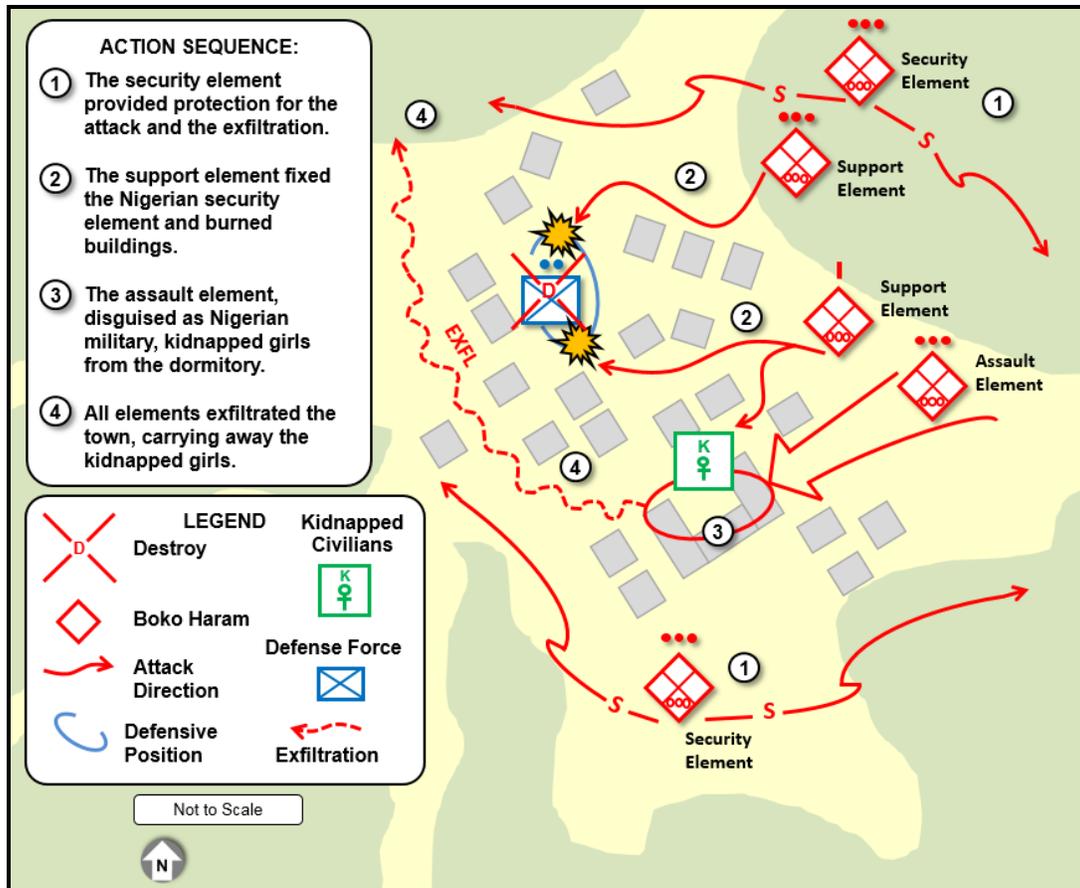


Figure 1: Raid on Chibok Girls Secondary School

While the support element fixed the Nigerian military, the assault element, wearing military uniforms, entered the dormitory where the students slept. This element moved the girls to waiting vehicles under the guise of helping them escape Boko Haram. Security elements, positioned to interdict Nigerian military reinforcements that did not appear, covered the exfiltration of the convoy filled with the girls. During the convoy movement, some of the girls escaped. One senior military source believed the girls were split up and placed in different Boko Haram camps in places like the Sambisa Forest, around Lake Chad, and in the Gorsi mountains.²³

The raid's effect was magnified when international social media campaigns called on the Nigerian military to act more aggressively to find the girls. Protests erupted within Nigeria and around the world demanding the return of the girls with a social media campaign branded with the slogan "#BringBackOurGirls." The inability of the Nigerian military to find the girls quickly weakened its and the Nigerian government's legitimacy and credibility. Boko Haram's leader, Shekau, was emboldened and claimed responsibility in videos and other media and announced his intention to continue kidnapping girls whom he claimed should not be wasting their time in school.¹⁸



Assault

The assault is the basic form of hybrid threat tactical offensive combat as found in [TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics*](#).¹⁹ An assault is an attack that destroys an enemy force through firepower and the physical occupation and/or destruction of its position. Boko Haram utilizes the assault as a fundamental element of its attacks as illustrated by the January 2015 Boko Haram assault on Baga.²⁰

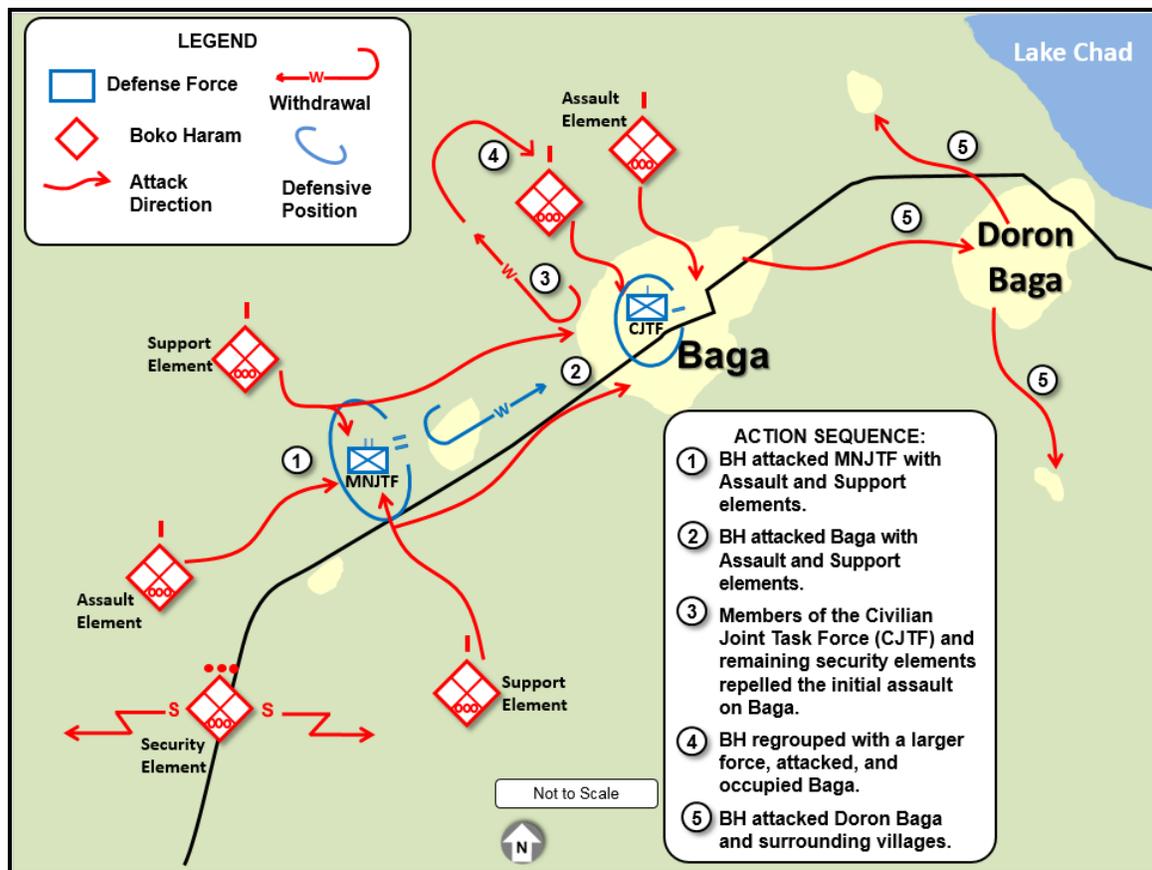


Figure 2. Assault on Baga

Baga has been targeted a number of times, in part because it is the location of the former headquarters of the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF), located five kilometers to the southwest along the main road to Baga, until it was moved to N'Djamena, Chad in June 2015. Current counter-Boko Haram operations are either conducted in loose bilateral agreements, or conducted individually. However, an MNJTF including Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Benin, and Cameroon is currently organizing to combat Boko Haram and is anticipated to replace the current operational structures in place.²¹

Baga lies beside Lake Chad in northeastern Nigeria close to the Chad and Cameroon borders and has been the target of multiple Boko Haram attacks. It and Doron Baga, five kilometers to the northeast of Baga, are fishing communities with populations around 10,000 people each. Fighting between the militant group and security forces in April 2013 left dozens dead and hundreds of homes destroyed. At

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least four dozen fishermen were killed in a suspected Boko Haram ambush in November 2014. The group also sent a threatening intimidation letter to the town in 2014.²²

In January 2015, the area was vulnerable as both Niger and Chad had just pulled their forces out of Baga, leaving the MNJTF base manned only by the Nigerian military. During the pre-dawn hours of Saturday, 3 January, Boko Haram began its advance against Baga. Traveling in a convoy of trucks, motorcycles, and an armored personnel carrier (APC)—likely stolen from Nigerian security forces—hundreds of militants attacked the MNJTF base outside Baga. Using IEDs, RPGs, and small arms, Boko Haram fighters employed a security element with support elements attacking from multiple directions, fixing the Nigerian defenders, while the assault element captured the base. The besieged troops and the local Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)—local civilians organized and armed with the blessing of the Nigerian government for the purpose of protecting their towns from Boko Haram attacks—fought for hours, but were eventually forced to flee to Baga. Militants then set fire to parts of the base and raised their flag above it.

Once Boko Haram secured the MNJTF base, fighters moved northeast toward Baga, killing those fleeing the base and civilians in their path. At about 0545 hours, the initial assault on Baga from the west was repelled by the CJTF, soldiers, and other men from the village, some fighting with machetes. Boko Haram fighters temporarily retreated into the bush, a momentary success for the citizens of Baga. A few hours later, Boko Haram attacked in approximately 20 vehicles with ten to fifteen armed men to a vehicle. Attacks from multiple directions quickly overwhelmed the outmanned and outgunned defenders of Baga.²³

The attackers began killing people on sight, as well as looting and burning homes and businesses. Local residents, who fled in all directions, were purposefully targeted and killed. Multiple reports stated that Nigerian soldiers in the town stripped off their uniforms to avoid being targeted by the advancing militants. Residents that fled toward Lake Chad, to the east, attempted to cross the lake by boat. Some succeeded in crossing the lake to nearby Chad, while others drowned or were shot by the attackers.

Having created chaos, fear, and mayhem in Baga, Boko Haram easily exploited the situation to continue the attack on Doron Baga and several surrounding villages, easily taking control of the area. With no defense, area residents and security forces hid in the bush or attempted to cross Lake Chad. Boko Haram fighters combed the bush seeking those hiding and many were drowned when their overloaded canoes tipped in Lake Chad.

Beginning on the evening of Tuesday, 6 January, and continuing into the next day, the militant group began segregating the population. Fighters went house to house, rounding up any remaining residents they could find. They reportedly killed the men and kept the younger women, but allowed older women, the elderly, and small children to go free. Young men, in particular, were considered members of the CJTF and killed. The group also burned buildings that had survived the initial assault.

Hundreds of people—and possibly as many as 2,000—were killed during the extended attack (the official Nigerian government casualty figure is only 150), with witnesses reporting bodies lying on the ground throughout the area. Thousands more have become either refugees in Chad or internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Maiduguri. Based on satellite imagery, Amnesty International estimates that around 3,700 buildings were destroyed in Baga and Doron Baga during the attack. At least 16 towns, villages, and settlements were attacked and destroyed during the five-day period.²⁴



Ambush

Hybrid threat actors, like Boko Haram, use ambushes to control the time and place of an attack to destroy or capture personnel and supplies, harass and demoralize the enemy, delay or block movement of personnel and supplies, and canalize enemy movement by making certain routes useless for traffic. (TC 7-100.2, *Opposing Force Tactics*).²⁵ With an increased Nigerian military counterinsurgency effort, Boko Haram has amplified its use of ambushes against a variety of targets.

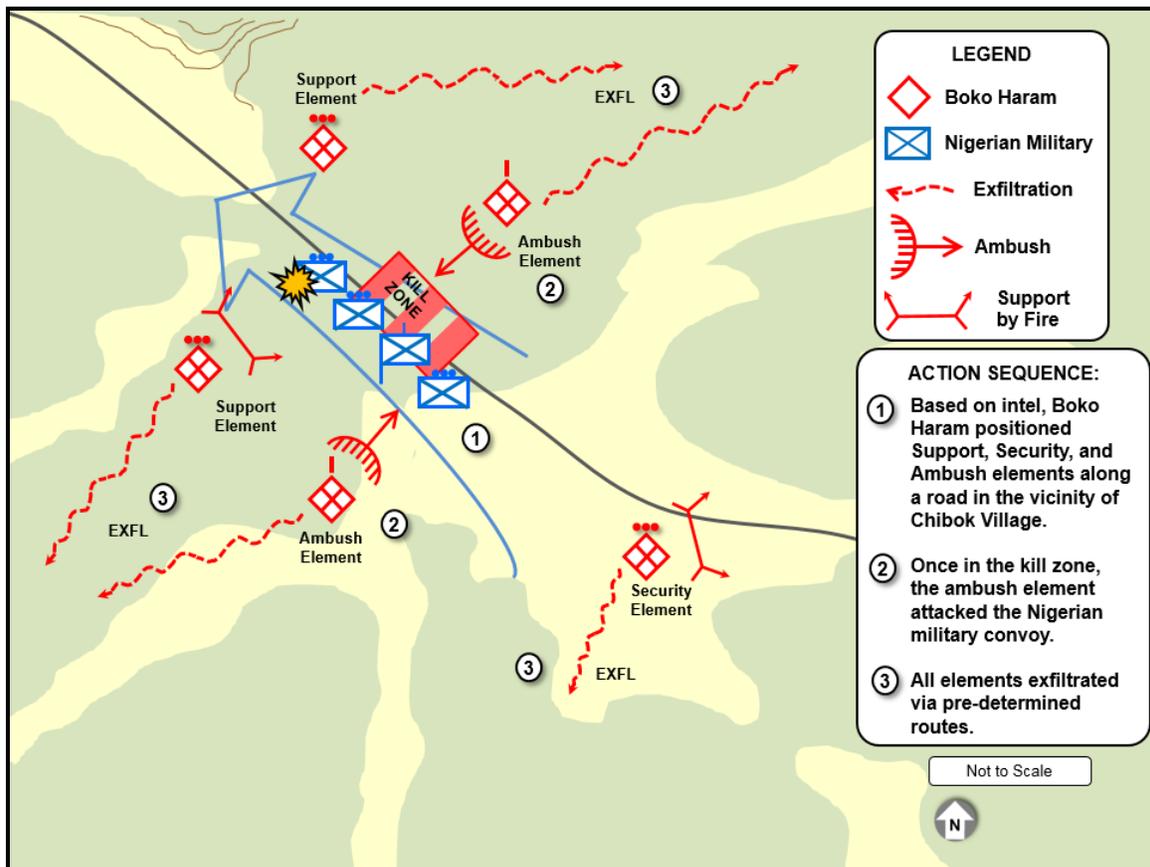


Figure 3. Ambush against the Nigerian military near Chibok

Following the Chibok Girls Secondary School kidnappings, the Nigerian government felt increasing pressure to find the girls. The military conducted multiple patrols throughout Borno State. Soldiers sent to the north to face Boko Haram are often demoralized, feeling they are outgunned by the insurgents, frequently not paid in full, and left without enough ammunition or food.²⁶ Frequent Boko Haram ambushes have added to the psychological strain on Nigerian soldiers.²⁷

On 13 May 2014, soldiers in the Chibok area were ordered to move at night based on what some believed was faulty and unverified information from locals.²⁸ Soldiers pleaded with their commander to spend the night in one of the villages to avoid moving over dangerous roads in the dark. Overruled by their commander, the soldiers' fears were realized when Boko Haram ambushed the convoy, killing between four and twelve soldiers. The ensuing fight left an unknown number of Boko Haram fighters

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dead as well. The convoy was able to push through and arrived at the Maimalari Barracks in Maiduguri that night.

Evidence of the cumulative psychological effect and success of ongoing ambushes against the Nigerian military can be found in what happened when the bodies of the soldiers killed in the ambush arrived at the Maimalari Barracks.²⁹ The arrival of the bodies coincided with the visit of the 7th Division commander, Major General Ahmadu Mohammed, who had come to pay his respects to the dead soldiers. When soldiers saw the general's vehicle, some fired on it. The general was uninjured, but his bodyguards received minor wounds.³⁰ In late 2014, a military court convicted 18 soldiers in the incident; 12 were sentenced to death, five were discharged from the military, and one was sentenced to 28 days with hard labor. Major General Mohammed, the target of the mutiny, was immediately reassigned after the shooting.³¹

Defense

Boko Haram's strength and training are generally inferior to that of massed Nigerian security forces, although the group is collecting an arsenal of weapons that, in some instances, is greater than resource-deprived outposts. It has difficulties surviving direct confrontations with large Nigerian military forces. When attacked, Boko Haram fighters maintain a defensive position long enough to exfiltrate to safer locations. Boko Haram tends to withdraw into another area not likely included in the Nigerian military's offensive, or to disperse until the offensive is over rather than attempt to attack the flanks or rear of the offensive.³² (See [Training Circular 7-100.3, Irregular Opposing Forces](#)) Tactical defensive actions will most likely use either a simple battle position or complex battle positions.³³ (See [Training Circular 7-100.2, Opposing Force Tactics](#)) The following describes an example of a Boko Haram defense in a complex battle position.

Complex Battle Position

In May 2015, largely in response to political and public pressure to find and return the Chibok Girls School girls, the Nigerian military began an offensive into the Sambisa Forest. The Nigerian Defense Headquarters stated that on 16 May 2015, its military captured ten Boko Haram defensive positions in the Sambisa Forest using regular army units, special forces, and air assets for surveillance and attack. The attacks resulted in confiscation of vehicles mounted with anti-aircraft weapons and armored vehicles. Boko Haram



Figure 4. Example of a Boko Haram withdrawal video

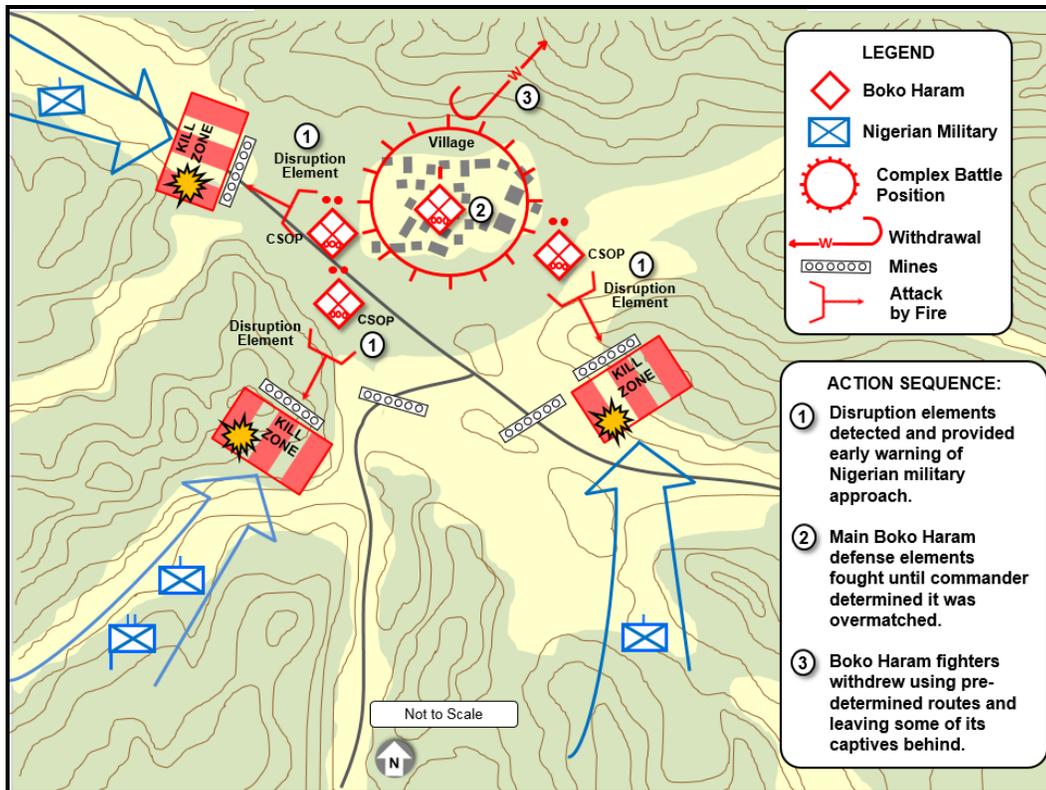


Figure 5. Defense (Complex Battle Position)

fighters were not able to carry away all of the many women and girls it had captured, so some were simply left behind with stories of mistreatment and brutality.³⁴

Boko Haram had anticipated an eventual offensive against its positions within the Sambisa forest and prepared for the attack. The Nigerian army discovered an outer belt of mines before the attack began when one soldier was killed and another wounded. This and combat security outposts (CSOP) designated as disruption elements provided early warning of an impending attack. The main defense element was responsible for defeating the attack, covering a withdrawal, and protecting the support element that consisted of the command and control personnel. Once the attack began in earnest, it was apparent that Boko Haram would not be able to defeat the attackers. The main defense element covered the exfiltration, after which it withdrew. Some of the withdrawing Boko Haram fighters ran into ambushes along their exfiltration routes and were killed. The Nigerian air force provided surveillance of some of the fleeing Boko Haram fighters.³⁵

Techniques

Improvised Explosive Devices (IED)

Boko Haram has shown an increasing capability and use of improvised explosive devices (IED) since its first vehicle-borne IED (VBIED) in June 2011. On 26 August 2011, Boko Haram attacked the UN headquarters in Abuja with a suicide vehicle-borne IED (SVBIED), killing 23 and injuring more than 76 people. Since then, targets of Boko Haram IED attacks expanded to include Christians, market centers,

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bus stations, Nigerian security and police, the media, schools, politicians, and Muslims who were deemed collaborators or who spoke out against Boko Haram.³⁶

One report suggests while IEDs are widespread across Nigeria, explosive materials and Boko Haram's bomb-making skills remain unsophisticated. Boko Haram constructs IEDs from materials such as commercial-grade explosives purchased on the black market or stolen from mining companies. Explosives used in recent bomb attacks have been of the quality used for blasting rocks in mining operations. Boko Haram also uses fertilizer to create homemade explosives (HME).³⁷ What Boko Haram lacks in sophistication, however, it has made up for in volume. Bombings in recent months continue to steadily increase, causing large numbers of casualties across Nigeria.

Boko Haram controls much of northeast Nigeria, particularly the area between Borno State and northern Cameroon, where it has found success in launching attacks against Nigerian government officials, military personnel, and civilians. Boko Haram has conducted successful attacks elsewhere including the south. A coordinated attack, likely executed by a female SVBIED, on a fuel tanker at Apapa port in Lagos (southern Nigeria) by an affiliated Boko Haram faction on 25 June 2014, signaled the opening of a new threat. Nigerians in the south had felt relatively safe and distanced from Boko Haram's reach despite three published statements by the current Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, threatening to attack targets in southern Nigeria. These attacks have been limited, but demonstrate Boko Haram's potential to expand beyond its historical areas of operation.³⁸

Of particular concern is the increasing number of suicide bombings, using both vehicles and explosives strapped to individuals. Between 27 and 30 July 2014, female suicide bombers conducted separate attacks against a university campus, petrol station, and shopping center in Kano state. Less than two months prior, the first known female suicide bombing occurred against a military barracks in Gombe. The use of females creates a new security concern and heightened anxiety about how to detect and prevent suicide attacks.³⁹

The following is a sampling of recent IED attacks in Nigeria:⁴⁰

- **14 February 2014:** A car bomb at a market in Maduguri killed at least 19 people.
- **12 May 2014:** A roadside bomb killed three soldiers travelling in a convoy in Gwaram Local Governance Area (LGA), Jigawa.
- **18 May 2014:** A suicide bomber killed four civilians in the Sabon Gari area of Kano.
- **23 June 2014:** A bomb at the School of Hygiene killed eight people in Kano city.
- **23 June 2014:** A car bomb killed three soldiers at a checkpoint in Gwoza, Borno.
- **25 June 2014:** Twenty-two people died when a bomb exploded at the Banex plaza shopping center in Abuja.
- **23 July 2014:** Two bombs killed around 40 people close to a square where a prominent Islamic cleric was speaking to a crowd in Kaduna city. The cleric is a critic of Boko Haram.
- **27 July 2014:** Five civilians and one soldier died when a bomb was thrown at people leaving church in Kano city, Kano.
- **31 July 2014:** Two people died when a suicide bomber, alleged to be a child, detonated her explosives outside Kano State Polytechnic in Kano, Kano.
- **28 November 2014:** Boko Haram attacked the Mosque of the Emir of Kano during weekly prayers with two suicide bombers and gunmen killing at least 120 people and wounding another 270 people.



- **10 January 2015:** A bomb at Monday Market killed at least 12 people in Maiduguri, Borno. The bomb may have been carried by a girl.
- **11 January 2015:** Two female suicide bombers detonated twin bombs at the GSM market, close to Brima Primary school, killing eight people in Potiskum, Yobe.
- **1 February 2015:** A suicide bomber killed himself and seven others outside a politician's home in Potiskum, Yobe.
- **2 February 2015:** A bomb exploded in a parking lot outside a stadium in the northeastern Gombe where Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan was speaking at a re-election campaign.
- **22 February 2015:** A bomb carried by a girl exploded and killed five at GSM Market in Potiskum, Yobe.
- **24 February 2015:** A bomb attack killed 10 at a crowded bus station in Potiskum, Yobe.
- **26 February 2015:** A suicide bomber killed 18 people at Tashar Gandu bus station in Biu, Borno.

Kidnapping

Boko Haram has increased its use of kidnapping, particularly women and children, for purposes as diverse as slavery and creating dissatisfaction with the Nigerian government. Boko Haram kidnappings began in 2011 and 2012 after the Nigerian government detained more than 100 wives and children of Boko Haram leaders, including members of Shekau's family. In January 2012, Shekau stated in a 40-minute video message his intention to kidnap the families of government officials, ostensibly in retaliation for the detention of Boko Haram family members.⁴¹



Figure 6. [Shekau takes credit for Chibok kidnapping video](#)

A year later, in May 2013, Shekau made good on his promise when he kidnapped a dozen government officials along with their families, taking credit for the kidnappings in a video.⁴² Boko Haram kidnapped twelve Christian women and children in a May 2013 raid on a battalion barracks in Bama town.⁴³ Shekau released a video message after the kidnapping stating the hostages would become his slaves if the Nigerian government did not meet certain requirements, including the release of the Boko Haram family members detained by the government.⁴⁴ Boko Haram takes the women and girls to temporary camps and then later to houses in towns and villages where it has safe houses for indoctrination.⁴⁵ What may have started as an act of revenge has developed into a standard raiding technique. Shekau, in multiple video messages, declared that captured females will be married to Boko Haram fighters, forced to convert to Islam, and/or sold into slavery.⁴⁶ During her three-month captivity, a girl from Gwoza in Borno State stated in an interview that the Boko Haram fighters forced her to cook and clean, convert to Islam, as well as lure government soldiers into ambushes.⁴⁷ The kidnappings have generated fear

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throughout the Nigerian population, causing many to leave their homes for safer areas and others to live in constant fear for their safety.

Beyond the human tragedy, the kidnappings greatly reduce the trust of Nigerians in their government to protect them. While only one of many such kidnappings, the Chibok Girls Secondary School kidnapping received international attention, significantly amplifying Boko Haram's message of government incompetence. While there are complex reasons for Goodluck Jonathan's defeat in the 2015 presidential election, a slow recognition of and response to the Chibok kidnappings was at least a component in his not being re-elected. Protests against the government's handling of the Boko Haram security threat continue to plague the government. In videos, Shekau cites the Chibok raid and other kidnappings to point to his successes and the government's failure, further eroding the general public's confidence in the Nigerian government.⁴⁸

Exclusive of all of the other reasons for Boko Haram's kidnappings, targeted kidnappings for ransom now serve as a readily available revenue stream. Boko Haram received \$3 million in ransom payment for releasing seven members of a French family kidnapped over the border in Cameroon on 19 February 2013. Most kidnappings, however, are not so lucrative; kidnapping victims tend to be mid-level officials or their relatives, unable to afford personal security, but who can pay modest ransoms of about \$10,000 for the return of the kidnap victim.⁴⁹

Assassination

Assassinations are deliberate actions to kill specific individuals with the intent to have a significant psychological impact on the relevant population. This technique intimidates and causes anxiety and fear and can coerce the passive support of a population.⁵⁰ In 2009, Boko Haram began targeted assassinations against not only security personnel, but also against anyone deemed a threat, including local and regional government officials, Muslim clerics who speak negatively against it, and civilians suspected of collaborating with the Nigerian government.⁵¹ Boko Haram conducts the assassinations through a variety of methods including convoy ambushes, suicide bomber detonations, and attacks on places that a target might frequent such as their homes, markets, mosques, etc.

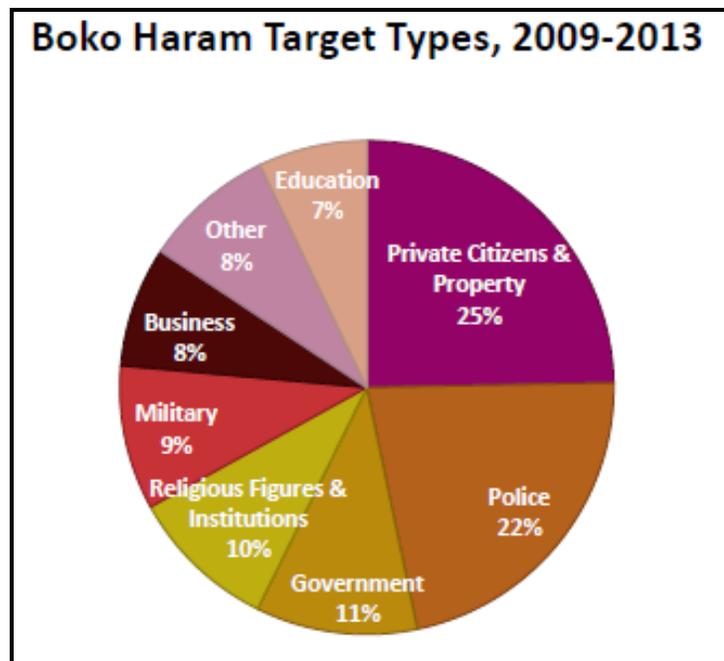


Figure 7. [Boko Haram's attack targets](#)



Boko Haram has a particular sensitivity to criticism, manifested in its targeting of openly critical Muslim leaders. In March 2011, Imam Ibrahim Ahmed Abdullahi died outside his mosque in Maiduguri after gunmen jumped from a sport utility vehicle, opened fire, and then escaped into the city.⁵² On 13 July 2012, a suicide bomber detonated himself outside a Maiduguri mosque following Friday prayers in an attempt to assassinate the Shehu of Borno, the highest traditional leader in that state, killing five other people.⁵³ In January 2013, Boko Haram attempted to assassinate Emir al Haji Ado Bayero of Kano, considered the second-most important Nigerian Muslim leader. He survived the attempt, but his bodyguards and driver died protecting him. On 1 February 2014, Boko Haram fighters killed Muslim cleric Sheik Adam, his wife, and son as he drove home from preaching at a mosque in Zaria, Kaduna State.⁵⁴ Gunmen shot the emir of Gwoza, Alhaji Idrissa Timta, in his car in May 2014 while en route to a funeral. The emirs of Uba and Askira, traveling in the same convoy with Timta, escaped unharmed.⁵⁵ Boko Haram also targets Christian ministers as evidenced by the killing of the pastor for the Redeemed Christian Church of God in Dille Village, Askira-Uba, Borno State in August 2014. Boko Haram fighters shot the minister in the head and chest as he fled his house during an attack on his village.⁵⁶

Other targets include government officials and security personnel. On 28 January 2011, Boko Haram members assassinated both Madu Fannami Gubio, a candidate for governor, and the cousin of the Borno State governor.⁵⁷ Boko Haram killed a federal legislator outside his home in October 2011.⁵⁸ In September 2012, Boko Haram gunmen shot and killed the Borno State attorney general.⁵⁹ While not assassinations in the strictest terms, Boko Haram targets security personnel in police stations, military barracks, convoys, and patrols.⁶⁰

Deception

Boko Haram employs deception primarily for purposes of infiltration prior to an attack. The technique allows Boko Haram fighters to position themselves inside a village prior to attacking. On 14 February 2014, Boko Haram fighters exploited the hope that the Nigerian military would answer repeated calls to send soldiers to protect the village of Izghe in Borno State village. Boko Haram militants showed up in Nigerian military uniforms, carrying weapons, driving pickup trucks, and initially saying they were there to protect them. Once inside the village, the Boko Haram fighters rounded up the villagers and killed at least 106 people.⁶¹ Boko Haram used a similar technique when they kidnapped the Chibok girls, discussed previously. The assault element, dressed as Nigerian soldiers, encouraged the girls to follow them by saying they were there to protect them from Boko Haram. The deception allowed the Boko Haram fighters to gain momentary trust and facilitated moving the girls to the vehicles for transport. False checkpoints set up by Boko Haram fighters in military uniforms is another variant of this technique. In September 2013, Boko Haram militants dressed in military uniforms set up a false checkpoint in the Benishek area in Borno State, shooting Nigerians in their cars and as they attempted to flee on foot after voluntarily stopping for what they thought was an official checkpoint.⁶²

Boko Haram also uses deception techniques other than military uniforms to precede an attack. On 31 August 2013, Boko Haram gunmen, dressed as traders, attacked a market in Gajiran, killing 15 people. On 6 April 2015, Boko Haram fighters dressed as Islamic religious leaders pretending to preach Islam in the rural village of Kwajafa in Borno State. After a crowd gathered to listen, the false preachers opened fire, killing 24 and wounding others. Boko Haram's use of government military uniforms, religious garb, or local clothing allows Boko Haram militants to gain the trust of the local population and closer



proximity to those it intends to attack. Boko Haram members will also dress as women or preachers as a means of escape from Nigerian security forces.⁶³

To this point, there are no open-source reports that Boko Haram is using captured vehicles as a means of deception. As the Nigerian military increases pressure and Boko Haram evolves over time, it is likely Boko Haram will follow the lead of other insurgent groups and use captured military vehicles to its tactical advantage. ISIL, for example, successfully uses captured military vehicles, packed with explosives, to get closer to its enemies before it detonates (most recently seen in Ramadi, Iraq).⁶⁴ Coupled with captured military uniforms, Boko Haram could potentially deliver fighters and/or explosives to unsuspecting Nigerian military installations via captured military vehicles in the future.

Section 3: Boko Haram's Weapons and Equipment

Weapons in the Boko Haram inventory are difficult to definitively determine. Boko Haram has been successful in capturing weapons and ammunition during attacks on military facilities. The group can be assumed to have any number of heavy weapons and equipment as well as small arms and ammunition included in the Nigerian military inventory. Boko Haram also has access to a robust arms-smuggling network and unregulated and unguarded cross-border transit routes. It has not been able to fully capitalize on weapons it now holds, however. The newly-formed relationship with ISIL will open up new opportunities for training on weapon systems and improved tactics in response to an intensified Nigerian military counterinsurgency. Improvement in the use of air defense weapons will be particularly challenging for the NAF's current air superiority.

Boko Haram's Weapons and Equipment		
Armored Equipment	AT Weapons	Anti-Air Systems ⁶⁵
T-55	Rocket Propelled Guns	ZU-23-4 Anti-Aircraft Gun
		SA-7 MANPADS
		Panhard ERC-90

Section 4: Boko Haram's Organization

Recruitment and Retention

Boko Haram lacks the sophistication of either ISIL or al-Qaeda. Its narrow focus on overturning the Nigerian government and opposing Western ideas in Nigeria is overshadowed by the regularity of violent attacks on civilian targets and forced recruitment. Teenage boys are increasingly targets since the Chibok Girls School kidnapping. Boys are sent to re-education camps, often in Cameroon, where they are indoctrinated or killed if they refuse to comply.⁶⁶

Women and girls are also increasingly being used in operations, including wives of slain and imprisoned fighters and beggars. In June 2014, six female suicide bombers, all under 16 years of age, were involved in attacks at universities, fueling stations, and military barracks. One 10-year-old girl was caught with a

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suicide vest.⁶⁷ Kidnapped women and girls are used as slaves, intelligence gathers, and to lure targets into a kill zone.

Non-forced recruiting is being carried out mostly in Cameroon, not Nigeria, because of the violent attacks in northern Nigeria and the mass migration of men out of areas of Boko Haram violence. The region where Boko Haram operates in Cameroon is an area of endemic poverty with as much as 60% of the population living in terrible economic conditions, making them easy targets for recruitment. Police are also easily bribed and coopted by Boko Haram. In January 2015, a senior inspector of police in Balaza was arrested and accused of issuing Cameroonian ID cards to Boko Haram militants.⁶⁸

Recruitment and retention will continue to be problematic for Boko Haram as it seeks replacements for its fighters. The group is not winning friends in northern Nigeria where Muslims and Christians alike fear its arbitrary violence. The loyalty of those forced into fighting will always be viewed with a degree of suspicion by Boko Haram. Increasing use of women, girls, and heavy recruitment of non-Nigerians to fight for a Nigerian insurgency point to Boko Haram's potential limitations.

Financing

Boko Haram is a well-financed organization, but determining the specifics of that financing is difficult. After the 2001 bombing of the twin towers in the US, al-Qaeda began funding Boko Haram and other groups in the region. There is some evidence that Boko Haram historically received funding from al-Shabaab and other al-Qaeda affiliates. Boko Haram has found new financiers in Borno and in Cameroon's northern region. These funders are often ethnic Kanuris like Yusuf, Shekau, and a large majority of Boko Haram members. These benefactors provide weapons and become intermediaries in negotiating with the Cameroonian government for ransom payments.⁶⁹ Boko Haram's recent pivot from al-Qaeda to swearing allegiance to ISIL may have as much to do with practical financing concerns as a major shift in ideology.⁷⁰

The most identifiable and possibly the most lucrative funding sources are Boko Haram's criminal activities. Beginning in February 2013, Boko Haram began kidnapping as a means of increasing revenues, creating distrust of the government, and discouraging Western business interests in Nigeria. The April 2014 kidnapping of 270 school girls from the northern town of Chibok gained international attention, but is only one of many kidnappings happening regularly in Nigeria. Seven members of a French family kidnapped just over the border in Cameroon on 19 February 2013 were reportedly worth \$3 million to Boko Haram. Most kidnappings, however, tend to be more modest.⁷¹ During attacks on villages, women and girls are often taken to be used as slaves or sold in human trafficking networks.⁷²

Boko Haram benefits from Nigeria's geographic positioning as a hub for drug trafficking. About a quarter to two-thirds of the cocaine transiting from South America to Europe passes through the West African countries of Cape Verde, Mali, Benin, Togo, Nigeria, Guinea-Bissau, and Ghana. Increasingly, Boko Haram is becoming a player in Nigerian drug smuggling.⁷³

Potentially the most devastating of Boko Haram's revenue-generating activities is pillaging and robbing villages. Boko Haram has targeted banks as a means of getting quick cash.⁷⁴ Other means include taxes; extortion; stealing; and looting of villages, military facilities, and other civilian infrastructure during attacks. Attacks, while usually punitive, also have the added benefit of providing ongoing resources.



However, in an area that is already economically devastated by general poverty and mass migrations to safer locations, this is the least sustainable means of revenue for Boko Haram.⁷⁵

Capitalizing on its geographic location along drug and arms smuggling routes as well as other criminal activities, Boko Haram has a sustainable way to continue its operations. The somewhat less sustainable, but well-established, pillaging, taxing, extorting, and kidnapping of members of local communities provides quick cash. Nigeria's corrupt government infrastructure provides a framework where all of these operations can thrive.

International Expansion

Boko Haram has, primarily, focused on the goal of establishing a Sharia law-based government in Nigeria; however, current circumstances are shifting those goals. A counterinsurgency campaign begun in 2013 pushed Boko Haram into safe havens in Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Poverty and dissatisfaction make areas within these other countries fertile recruiting grounds for Boko Haram fighters. This expansion of its reach beyond the borders of Nigeria will likely cause its vision to expand as well. As its ranks are filled with fighters from Niger, Cameroon, and Chad with a list of grievances against their governments, Boko Haram will have an easy transition to a regional jihad. Well-developed safe havens embedded in areas of discontent within these neighboring countries will provide ample places from which to launch attacks against governments and security forces. Boko Haram's newly-established relationship with ISIL will encourage this expansion. Its regional positioning within ISIL's vision of a world-wide caliphate, with its accompanying prestige and funding, will be hard for the Boko Haram leadership to resist.⁷⁶

Evidence of Boko Haram's recent regional expansion can be seen in an Amnesty International report which documents at least 380 civilians and dozens of security personnel killed by Boko Haram fighters in northern Cameroon since January 2015. Boko Haram is expanding techniques it has used in Nigeria such as suicide bomb attacks in civilian areas, summary executions, torture, hostage taking, abductions, child soldier recruitment, looting, and destruction of public, private, and religious property and infrastructure. Boko Haram operations have caused the displacement of at least 81,000 Cameroonians. In one attack against the village of Amchide, hundreds of fighters overwhelmed the community, killing both civilians and security forces. As in Nigeria, security force heavy-handedness against civilians in response to increased Boko Haram violence is causing discontent among civilian populations caught between. As Boko Haram continues to see success against regional security forces, finds safe havens in areas of discontent, and receives support from ISIL and other organizations, it will continue increase its disruptive and violent regional operations.⁷⁷

Military Capabilities

Command and Control

While nominally under the control of its emir, Abubakar Shekau, and a hierarchical bureaucracy, the realities on the ground point to a more disparate and fragile organization. Centralized control of Boko Haram has been weak from the beginning. In 2002 Shekau and Aminu Tashen-Ilimi briefly broke away from Boko Haram founder Yusuf. Upon Yusuf's death, Shekau emerged as the leader of Boko Haram, but



without the full loyalty of other senior leaders. Shekau has some control of Borno State, where he declared a caliphate in 2014, but leaders in other regions have significant autonomy. There are at least six other subcommands that loosely align under Shekau. Some analysts believe that his ruthlessness stems from insecurities related to his weak hold on the insurgents and a desire to consolidate power under himself.⁷⁸

Despite Boko Haram's claims to religious and political authority, particularly in Borno State, nothing about it resembles a cohesive government. After Boko Haram founder Mohammed Yusuf died in police custody, the group splintered into at least five factions.⁷⁹ Shekau works through intermediaries, with many of the day-to-day operational decisions made by semi-autonomous commanders. Shekau's coalition is often held together by fear of violent reprisals.⁸⁰ Shekau is a divisive leader; however, he retains legitimacy because of his early relationship with Yusuf. Most of those surrounding him are loyal, as most of his opposition has either defected or been killed.⁸¹

Maneuver

Boko Haram relies on moving fast against weaker opponents. It attacks using raids, ambushes, and assaults and then moves into areas of safety in mountainous terrain within Nigeria, blends in with the population, or occupies safe havens in border countries. Its knowledge of the terrain and the population allows it to use the hybrid threat principles of initiative, deception, surprise, protection, mobility, adaptability, concentration, and perseverance.⁸² Fighters operate commercial trucks and captured armored personnel carriers to maneuver to and in attacks.

INFOWAR

Boko Haram's social media capacity and capabilities have not yet risen to the level of sophistication of ISIL or al-Qaeda; however, there is ample evidence that the group is learning and improving. Adapting from hand-carrying videos to journalists within Nigeria via couriers, Boko Haram now uploads videos directly to YouTube. Early versions of these videos consist of Shekau speaking, often in rants, for extended periods of time in his native Hausa language. Newer videos include subtitles in both Arabic and English. This may be an attempt to capitalize on the social media exposure Boko Haram received during the international social media campaign advocating the return of the Chibok Girls School kidnapping victims.⁸³



Figure 8. [Shekau mocks the #BringBackOurGirls video](#)

In January 2015, an Arabic-language Twitter feed claiming to be from the official outlet for a new Boko Haram media group, Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa, was launched, a sign that the group is continuing to adopt



best practices from ISIL and al-Qaeda and is looking to capture the attention of a larger audience.⁸⁴ Twitter shut down the account after only 19 tweets. The account posted messages in English, Arabic, and Hausa and included videos hosted on Sendvid and images hosted on Justpaste.it. The account was used to send images of its attack on Gombe town. Its last tweet claimed victory in Baga in Borno State.⁸⁵ Despite Twitter's attempts to regulate illegal or terrorist content, Boko Haram will likely open a new account under a different name and continue to improve its ability to communicate to a larger audience.

There is limited evidence that ISIL may be at least indirectly influencing Boko Haram's social media improvements. The Boko Haram Twitter feed was promoted by a pro-ISIL operative known on Twitter as Abu-Malik Shaybah al-Hamad, who has claimed to be in contact with the Boko Haram leadership.⁸⁶ The jihadist site Afriqiyah Media, an ISIL adherent, has tweeted Boko Haram's messages. The video released after the Baga, Borno State attack in early 2015 showed improved high-definition quality with advanced graphics, audio effects, gratuitous violence, scripted choreography, and lens angles suggestive of ISIL productions.⁸⁷ Boko Haram has also included excerpts from ISIL videos in its videos.⁸⁸ With its inclusion within the ISIL caliphate fold, Boko Haram will continue to evolve its social media sophistication.

RISTA

Boko Haram uses the physical environment and natural conditions to neutralize or offset the technological advantage of counterinsurgent forces. It operates in adverse weather, limited visibility, rugged terrain, and urban environments that shield it from the effects of technological overmatch. Boko Haram fighters can blend in with local populations and it uses cultural standoff to protect its simple and complex battle positions.⁸⁹

The most effective RISTA tools for Boko Haram are not sophisticated. Knowledge of the local population and key leaders, intimidation, fear, and local alliances are ways in which Boko Haram is able to conduct reconnaissance, gather intelligence, conduct surveillance, and acquire targets. Cell and satellite phones, Internet, and couriers are low technology tools available to Boko Haram.

Fire Support

Fire Support is not currently a Boko Haram capability, however, with an ever-growing arsenal of weapons and pressure from a multi-national counterinsurgency campaign it will likely develop this capability in the future.

Protection

Boko Haram safe havens are regionally-based due to the group's primary focus on transforming the Nigerian government. Despite an increased military presence in northeastern Nigeria beginning with an intense counterinsurgency campaign in 2013, Boko Haram enjoys a degree of maneuverability that continues to frustrate efforts to completely eradicate it. Since the Nigerian military went on the offensive, Boko Haram has been pushed into the Sambisa Forest, a former colonial game reserve covering approximately 60,000 square kilometers, from which it launches attacks and into which it withdraws.⁹⁰ Until recently, the forest had not been penetrated by Nigerian military forces. Additional areas where Boko Haram has hideouts are the Gwoza Hills and Mandara Mountains.⁹¹

Boko Haram uses Niger, Chad, and Cameroon for refuge, training, transit, attack planning, and recruiting, but has not conducted significant attacks within those countries. Border countries are not



actively hosting Boko Haram fighters, but are de facto safe havens due to poor border policies and enforcement. This has allowed an uneasy and fragile equilibrium between Boko Haram and its neighbors.⁹² Niger's Diffa regional capital of Diffa, just across the border from Nigeria's Borno State, is a center of Boko Haram insurgency activity. The cross-border movement is aided by common languages, ethnicities, and familial ties. Nearly 60,000 people have fled northeast Nigeria for other countries, most moving into Niger, offering opportunities for Boko Haram infiltration and movement. Cameroon has also been a launching point to attack Nigerian border towns. Nigerian officials closed part of the border with Cameroon to try and mitigate attacks. Lacking resources to adequately root out Boko Haram from their countries, Niger, Cameroon, and Chad will continue to serve as easily-accessed and unwilling safe havens for the group.⁹³

While Boko Haram has relationships with other countries, it has not used safe havens extensively in countries beyond those with whom it shares a border. Mohammed Yusuf found refuge in Saudi Arabia in 2004 and there have been historical relationships with groups in that country. As many as one-third of Boko Haram members fled Nigeria in 2009 for Somalia and other areas, where they received training by al-Qaeda, al Shabaab, and other groups.⁹⁴ Boko Haram has also taken inspiration from the Taliban; some of its fighters having trained in Afghanistan.⁹⁵ If Boko Haram chooses to conduct significant and ongoing attacks within Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, disrupting its current relative security, safe havens farther afield would likely be considered and developed.

Logistics

Boko Haram is an organization made up of semi-autonomous cells. Due to this organizational reality, much of the day-to-day supply needs are satisfied through attacks on civilian businesses and government and military facilities. On 4 November 2015, Boko Haram fighters robbed a bank, blew up a police station, burned a political party office in Nafada, Gombe State, and stole dynamite and pickup trucks from a cement factory 20 kilometers away in Ashaka. After this attack, Boko Haram fighters did not attempt to hold the towns and no one was hurt during the attacks; fighters simply departed with the stolen materials. Boko Haram has also attacked military facilities where it has taken vehicles, including armored personnel carriers, as well as weapons and ammunition. Boko Haram is able to strike when and where it desires, taking advantage of a Nigerian military stretched thin and poorly provisioned.⁹⁶

The porous border between Nigeria and adjoining countries provides easy regional access for moving resources in and out of Nigeria. The country has over 1,499 illegal and 84 legal points of entry from its neighbors.⁹⁷ These transit routes are mostly unguarded and unregulated and are often only simple footpaths crisscrossing the borders.⁹⁸ Means of moving arms, weapons, drugs, etc. into Nigeria include cows, camels, and donkeys sometimes carrying specially-made smuggling bags. Other ways of getting resources across the border include empty fuel tankers, vehicle engines, and grain bags. Boko Haram is also aided by a corrupt customs system that is sometimes complicit in the smuggling.⁹⁹

Boko Haram also uses tunneling as a means of moving resources and hiding. In July 2013, security forces discovered an extensive network of tunnels connecting bunkers and houses in Bulabulin, Borno State, some of which could accommodate up to 100 people.¹⁰⁰ In April 2015, Nigerian security forces retook a village in Damboa, Borno State, where Boko Haram fighters had constructed a tunnel that could hold up to 3,000 fighters and 200 vehicles.¹⁰¹

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Boko Haram's well-developed logistics system allows its fighters to live off the land as robbing marauders, in many cases. A corrupt customs infrastructure adds options to the hundreds of illegal transit points. While Nigerian security forces will continue to root out tunnels and other logistics infrastructure, Boko Haram will have more options than the Nigerian government has resources.

Air Defense

A definitive advantage for the Nigerian military is its ability to conduct air strikes against Boko Haram. This advantage may be limited in the future as Boko Haram is not only acquiring air defense weapons, but will learn how to use them. Nigerian aircraft have not been shot down by Boko Haram fire yet. The Nigerian air force Hind helicopters and Alpha jets have been hit by up to 30-mm caliber weapons, requiring pilots to fly higher and aircraft to be fitted with longer-range rockets.¹⁰² Currently, Boko Haram anti-aircraft weapons are mounted on the backs of flat-bed trucks and used for ground attacks on villages and military facilities.¹⁰³ In the medium- to long-term, Boko Haram will likely advance its air defense capabilities; increasing the threat to Nigerian air operations.

UAVs

Use of UAVs is not a current Boko Haram capability, but one easily acquired.

Conclusion

Abubakar Shekau is the inspiration and driving force behind a confederation of faithful adherents to a violent movement intent on replacing the secular Nigerian government with an Islamic fundamentalist government. Most of the day-to-day operational and tactical decisions are made by local commanders. A decentralized command structure gives flexibility for local commanders to attack where Nigerian security forces are weakest. Boko Haram's control of the time and place of attacks is unsettling and demoralizing for Nigerian security forces and is evidence to northern Nigerians, in particular, that the government and military are incapable of protecting them.

Boko Haram's use of raids, assaults, and ambushes plays to its strengths, allowing it to control the time and place of attacks. Since the Nigerian counterinsurgency began in 2013, Boko Haram has not had unfettered control of its traditional areas of operation. In response, it launches attacks from and retreats into areas within the Nigerian borders, such as the Sambisa Forest, and safe havens in the bordering countries of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon where it has also found willing recruits.

Despite capturing Nigerian military weapons and equipment, Boko Haram has not fully capitalized on them. As the Nigerian military intensifies its counterinsurgency operations, Boko Haram will respond by improving its training, tactics, and techniques. This will be particularly true of its anti-aircraft and anti-armor capabilities. Additionally, using smuggling networks and multiple transiting points into and out of Nigeria, Boko Haram will be able to resupply itself with weapons, ammunition, and equipment from other areas in Africa.



REAL-WORLD CONDITIONS APPLIED TO TRAINING

Conditions in DATE and Doctrine

The [TC 7-100 Hybrid Threat series](#) and the [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\)](#) provide training resources for applying real-world conditions to training. Boko Haram tactics and techniques are readily accessible through these resources as referenced throughout this report. Boko Haram uses the principles of offense and defense at the detachment, battalion, and below level present in the TC 7-100 Hybrid Threat series when employing its fighters. The operational environment outlined in the DATE also provides a Boko Haram-inclusive framework.

Replication in Training

The DATE contains a number of insurgent groups that can be used to replicate particular elements of Boko Haram. The Provisional Army of Lezgin (PAL), for example, is an insurgent group operating in Southern Erdabil and western Sirvaki provinces in Atropia. PAL targets include Atropian government facilities and leaders. A reference chart with insurgent, criminal, religious, and guerrilla threat actors and their operational environments, activities, and targets is included in the [DATE](#) beginning on page 1-I-17.

Tactics graphically depicted in this report can be found in [TC 7-100.2 Opposing Force Tactics](#) and in [TC 7-100.3 Irregular Opposing Forces](#). For more information on how to replicate these actions, refer to these TCs. For information on how to build a force structure to conduct these actions, refer to [TC 7-100.4 Hybrid Threat Force Structure Organization Guide](#) (Chapter 3, Section VIII “Building an OPFOR Order of Battle”). The table below contains excerpts from [TC 7-100.2](#) that define the tactical actions discussed in this report.

TC 7-100.2 Tactics	
3-105. OPFOR commanders of detachments, battalions, and below select the offensive action best suited to accomplishing their mission. Units at this level typically are called upon to execute one combat mission at a time. Therefore, it would be rare for such a unit to employ more than one type of offensive action simultaneously. At the tactical level, all OPFOR units, organizations, elements, and even plans are dynamic and adapt very quickly to the situation.	
<i>Raid</i>	3-174. A raid is an attack against a stationary target for the purposes of its capture or destruction that culminates in the withdrawal of the raiding force to safe territory. Raids can also be used to secure information and to confuse or deceive the enemy. The keys to the successful accomplishment of any raid are surprise, firepower, and violence. The raid ends with a planned withdrawal upon completion of the assigned mission.
<i>Assault</i>	3-106. An assault is an attack that destroys an enemy force through firepower and the physical occupation and/or destruction of his position. An assault is the basic form of OPFOR tactical offensive combat.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Ambush</p>	<p>3-133. An ambush is a surprise attack from a concealed position, used against moving or temporarily halted targets. Such targets could include truck convoys, railway trains, boats, individual vehicles, or dismounted troops. In an ambush, enemy action determines the time, and the OPFOR sets the place.</p> <p>Ambushes may be conducted to—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destroy or capture personnel and supplies. • Harass and demoralize the enemy. • Delay or block movement of personnel and supplies. • Canalize enemy movement by making certain routes useless for traffic.
<p>4-105. OPFOR detachments, battalions, and companies generally participate as part of a maneuver or area defense organized by a higher command, as opposed to conducting one independently. Commanders of OPFOR detachments, battalions, or companies select the defensive action they deem to be best suited to accomplishing their mission. OPFOR detachments and below are typically called upon to execute one combat mission at a time. Therefore, it would be rare for such a unit to employ more than one of these methods simultaneously. As part of either an area defense or maneuver defense, such units often conduct tactical defensive actions employing simple battle positions (SBPs). Alternatively, as part of an area defense, they may employ complex battle positions (CBPs).</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Defense (Complex Battle Position)</p>	<p>4-108. A complex battle position (CBP) is a defensive location designed to employ a combination of complex terrain, C3D, and engineer effort to protect the unit(s) within them from detection and attack while denying their seizure and occupation by the enemy. CBPs typically have the following characteristics that distinguish them from SBPs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited avenues of approach. (CBPs are not necessarily tied to an avenue of approach.) • Any existing avenues of approach are easily observable by the defender. • 360-degree fire coverage and protection from attack. (This may be due to the nature of surrounding terrain or engineer activity such as tunneling.) • Engineer effort prioritizing C3D measures; limited counter-mobility effort that might reveal the CBP location. • Large logistics caches. • Sanctuary from which to launch local attacks.

Additional considerations for replicating Boko Haram in training environments involve using its capabilities in three key areas. These areas are logistics, INFOWAR, and RISTA. These areas provide Boko Haram with advantages that allow it to stay in the fight and challenge US overmatch. The chart below details how training centers could replicate a capability comparable to Boko Haram’s.

Threat Tactics Report: Boko Haram



Capability (What)	Actor/Order of Battle (Who)	Tactic (How)
Logistics	Insurgent groups in the DATE can be constructed to be self-sustaining with populace and regional safe-haven support and commandeered materiel.	TC 7-100.3 <i>Irregular Opposing Forces</i> Chapter 2 TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 14 To replicate Boko Haram: Highlight self-sustaining means of logistics.
INFOWAR	The DATE insurgent groups can be used to train elements of INFOWAR such as deception, perception management, and physical destruction.	TC 7-100.3 <i>Irregular Opposing Forces</i> Chapter 2, <i>Appendix A</i> TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 7 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 5 To replicate Boko Haram: Highlight low-tech INFOWAR techniques that attack critical C2, blur the battlefield picture, and affect local populations.
RISTA	RISTA concepts can be integrated into training by constituting DATE insurgent groups with population-centric capabilities.	TC 7-100.3 <i>Irregular Opposing Forces</i> , Chapter 2 TC 7-100.2 <i>Opposing Force Tactics</i> Chapter 8 FM 7-100.1 <i>Opposing Force Operations</i> Chapter 6 To replicate Boko Haram: Focus on the insurgent's advantage in using and exploiting the local population.

Related Products

- [Decisive Action Training Environment \(DATE\) 2.2](#)
- [TC 7-100 Series](#)
- Threat Report: Nigerian UN Building Bombing (September 2011)
- Red Diamond: Nigerian UN Building Bombing (September 2011)
- Threat Report: Boko Haram (March 2012)
- Red Diamond: Boko Haram (March 2012)
- Threat Report: Kidnapping in Katsina (February 2013)
- Red Diamond: Boko Haram Techniques (November 2014)
- Red Diamond: Boko Haram Baga Attack (February 2015)

See also the [Red Diamond Newsletter](#), which contains current articles on a variety of topics useful to both soldiers and civilians ranging from enemy TTP to the nature and analysis of various threat actors.

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For detailed information on weapons and equipment, see the [Worldwide Equipment Guide](#).

To see more products from TRADOC G-2 ACE Threats Integration, visit the Army Training Network (ATN) with CAC access: https://atn.army.mil/dsp_template.aspx?dplD=377

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Note: Not all references listed in this publication are readily available to the public; some require a government common access card (CAC) to view.

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