

ACSRT/Incident-Preliminary-Report-06-2018

3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2018

## Preliminary Report

### SUSPECTED BOKO HARAM ATTACK IN MAIDUGURI KILLS 20 PEOPLE

1<sup>ST</sup> APRIL, 2018

#### INCIDENT:

On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2018, Armed fighters suspected to be members Boko Haram attacked the city of *Maiduguri*, in the north-eastern state of *Borno* and its surrounding villages leading to the killing of 19 civilians and an army officer. Another 84 people were wounded. 13 terrorists including 7 suicide bombers also died during the episode. Maiduguri is considered by many as the epicentre of the Boko Haram insurgency.



According to a Nigerian military spokesman Colonel *Onyema Nwachukwu*, the incident occurred around 08:10pm local time (1910 GMT) when the suspected Boko Haram fighters attacked the base in the Cashew Plantation area on the outskirts of the city of Maiduguri with suicide bombers, mortars and guns. The attack led to a prolonged battle between government troops and the militants as the latter tried to enter the City.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to penetrate the military base and enter Maiduguri, the terrorists reportedly retreated and resorted to attacking locals in the surrounding villages in *Bille Shuwa* and *Alkaranti*.

## **ANALYSIS:**

This latest brazing Boko Haram's onslaught is the third major attack carried out by the group since the beginning of 2018.

- The first major attack was the triple bombings at the fish market in *Kinduna*, some 40 kilometres from Maiduguri in February in which 22 people including the 3 attackers, 18 civilians and a soldier were killed (**ACSRT/Incident-Preliminary-Report-02-2018 dated 18 February 2018**).



- The second attack took place in *Dapchi* in *Yobe* state on Monday 19th February 2018 when the group launched an incursion into the village and abducted about 111 students of the Government Girls Science and Technical Secondary School (GGSTC) (**ACSRT/Incident-Preliminary-Report-03-2018 dated 22 February 2018**). All but one of the girls have been reunited with their families following government negotiation for their release.

In between these major attacks, the terrorist group has also successfully carried out deadly raids in the three most affected regions of the insurgency, *Borno*, *Yobe* and *Adamawa* states. Indeed on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> March, four teenage girl suicide bombers killed two people in multiple attacks in *Zawuya* settlement on the outskirts of Maiduguri.

The recent attacks have occurred within two weeks of the Nigerian government announcement that it has been in negotiations with at least one faction of Boko Haram thought to be the one led by *Abu Mus'ab al-Barnawi* that is affiliated with the Islamic State, on ceasefire arrangement and an amnesty programme for what the government called repentant jihadists. According to the government, the release of the *Dapchi* school girls was part of broader negotiations with the group to lay down their arms.

No faction has yet claimed responsibility, which might indicate that the attack may have been perpetrated by a faction for three possible reasons:

1. To spoil the ongoing negotiation process through the creation of suspicious between the parties involved,
2. To attract sufficient attention to be considered in the negotiation by the government as a key actor,
3. To demonstrate their total rejection of the government approach.

The public disclosure by the Nigerian government that it was in talks with Boko Haram to secure a permanent ceasefire is a tacit admission that contrary to earlier claims of its defeat, the insurgent group is alive and deadly. The negotiations may be part of president *Buhari's* broader strategy to ensure that Boko Haram related violence is reduced to the barest minimum as country heads for presidential elections in 2019. Following his investiture in 2015, the Nigerian leader had prioritised improving security in Africa most populous country culminating in the establishment of the Multi National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger and Chad.

The MNJTF has debased the capability of Boko Haram and reclaimed most of the territories the group once occupied in Nigeria. Despite the loss of territory and claims of its defeat, the terrorist entity continues to kill and maim.

### **CONCLUSIONS:**

While the government has not released the details of its dialogue with Boko Haram or any of its factions, any such negotiations should encompass other segments of the group as negotiations with the faction led by Abu *Mus'ab al-Barnawi* may spur the other faction led by *Abubakari Shekau* to launch further attacks in order to frustrate the government dialogue or to draw attention to itself.

Continues deterioration of security in Nigeria could prove challenging for President *Muhammadu Buhari* in the run up to the presidential elections.