ACSRT

African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism

THE QUARTERLY AFRICA TERRORISM BULLETIN (QATB)

FIRST QUARTER | JANUARY-MARCH 2023 | EDITION 004

ABOUT AFRICA TERRORISM BULLETIN

In line with its mandate to assist African Union (AU) Member States, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RMs) to build their Counter-Terrorism capacities and to Prevent Violent Extremism, the African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) has developed tools that enable it to collect, analyse, process, and disseminate information on terrorism-related incidents occurring in Africa. One of the products of this effort is the quarterly Africa Terrorism Bulletin (ATB) that is published by the Centre.

The objective of the Africa Terrorism Bulletin is to provide a quarterly assessment of terrorism and violent extremism situation and trends on the continent. This is aimed at providing African Union Member States up to date information on terrorism incidents and its related activities. The Q-ATB also seeks to keep AU Member State Policymakers, Researchers, Practitioners and other stakeholders in the fields of Counter-Terrorism (CT) and the Prevention and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE), updated quarterly, on the trends of terrorism on the Continent.

Notwithstanding the lack of a universally accepted common definition of **Terrorism**, the AU, in its **1999 OAU CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION AND COMBATING OF TERRORISM**, *Article 1paragraph 3, (a) and (b), and Article 3*, defines what constitutes a ***Terrorist Act***. The ACSRT and therefore the QATB defer to this definition.

This edition of the bulletin, covering terrorism incidents from January to March 2023 is part of the efforts of providing relevant policy stakeholders the threat situation in order to facilitate evidence-based and data driven decision making processes that may culminate into the defeat of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

General Situation. 1st January to 31st March 2023 recorded 426 terrorist attacks that resulted in 2,809 deaths across Africa. On monthly basis, January recorded 161 attacks that resulted in 965 deaths, February recorded 152 attacks that led to 936 while March recorded 113 attacks and 908 deaths. Attacks and deaths in Q1 2023 increased by 43% and 60% respectively when compared to Q4 2022. For the same period 2022 (Q1), the attacks increased by 12% but total deaths declined by approximately 1%. Of 2,809 deaths recorded, 1,226 were civilians, 788 were military/security personnel and 795 were terrorists.

Terrorist Attacks in Regions. West Africa recorded 35% of the total attacks and 52% of total deaths, East Africa recorded 33% of attacks and 22% of deaths, Central Africa recorded 23% attacks and 24% of deaths, Southern Africa was 7% of attacks and 1% of deaths while North Africa recorded 1% of attacks and 1% of total deaths.

Countries Most Affected. The five most affected countries by terrorist attacks during the period were: Somalia, Nigeria, DRC, Burkina Faso, and Mozambique (*in decreasing order*).

Focus on Epicentres. The Horn of Africa region accounted for 33% of attacks and 22% of deaths, the Sahel region recorded 17% of attacks with 27% of deaths, and the Lake Chad Basin recorded 16% of attacks with 23% deaths, the Great Lakes region recorded for 13% of attacks and 21% deaths.

Primary Targets of Attacks. From a total of 426 attacks across the continent, 226 were against Civilian targets, 160 targeted Military/Security Forces, 21 targeted International Organizations and 18 targeted Governmental Institutions/Officials. ADF/ISCAP (MTM) and JNIM concentrated their attacks against civilian targets, whilst Al-Shabaab heavily targeted the military/security forces, constituting 76% of their total attacks.

Weapons Used. The terrorist groups used Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in 79% of the total attacks, IEDs were used in 15% of attacks, mixed attacks (IED & SALW) constituted 1% and 4% were cases of kidnapping.

Casualties Inflicted by Terrorist Groups. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 481 deaths (95 Civilians, 386 Military/Security personnel); **JNIM** for 321 deaths (235 Civilians, 86 Military/Security personnel); **ADF/ISCAP (MTM)** for 262 deaths (246 Civilians, 16 Military/Security personnel); **ISGS** killed 165 people (54 Civilians, 111 Military/Security personnel); **ISWAP** killed 106 people (53 Civilians, 53 Military/Security personnel). **Boko Haram** was responsible for 50 deaths (28 Civilians, 22 Military/Security personnel) and **ASWJ** for 30 deaths (22 Civilians, 8 Military/Security Forces). **Other IS Affiliates** killed 13 people (4 Civilians and 9 Military/Security personnel) and **Unidentified groups** killed 591 people (489 Civilians, 102 Military/Security personnel).

Kidnapping. 19 cases of kidnappings were recorded. A total of 371 persons were taken hostage in Benin, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Niger, Mali, and Somalia while 209 captives were released during the same period.

Counter-Terrorism Response. CT Operations neutralized 2,051 terrorists.

Casualties Sustained by Terrorist Groups. Al-Shabaab suffered the highest number of casulties with 1,264; **ISWAP** with 448; 333 for **Boko Haram**; 174 for **JNIM**, **ISGS** with 169; **ADF/ISCAP (MTM)** with 44 and **ASWJ** lost 5 members. **IS Affiliates** suffered only 2 losses while 402 deaths were for **Unidentified groups**.

High Profile Attacks.

- On 14 January, suspected **CODECO** militiamen attacked a village in Ituri province, DRC, killing 50 people.

- **Al-Shabaab** on 20 January raided Danab military base in Galgudug, Somalia killing 15 soldiers, and 100 militants were also neutralized.

- An **Unidentified group** on 2 February attacked several communities in Katsina, Nigeria, killing 102 civilians.

- **ISGS** on 17 February ambushed a military convoy in Oudalan province, Burkina Faso killing 70 soldiers, 60 terrorists were neutralized.

- Suspected **ISWAP** on 19 March in Borno State, Nigeria, attacked the army compound and killed 5 government election, 60 ISWAP elements were also neutralized.

Conclusion/Recommendations. The incidents recorded in the first quarter of 2023 show terrorism and violent extremism acts continued unabated in the Africa. Across the continent, terrorist groups exhibited a great capability of resilience and freedom of movement along their mobility corridors. This resulted in the maiming of the civilian population and caused a great deal of destructions to military installations, security forces and critical infrastructures as well as loss of military equipment. While counter terrorism operations across the continent dislodged and disrupted a number of terrorists' activities, especially in the Horn of Africa and the Northern Mozambican Province of Cabo Delgado, a considerable amount of work is required to degrade the capabilities of the various groups and deny them the footholds that they currently operate. To do this, continued and sustainable concerted and collaborative approach, involving all relevant stakeholders at all levels of the response generation efforts are required. Understanding the factors sustaining the momentum of the terrorist groups, and identifying the gaps in the CT Approaches (both kinetic and soft approaches) would contribute significantly to prioritising interventions with the aim of reversing the current threat levels.

REPORT METHODOLOGY

Data Source: The ACSRT follows a strict Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for data collection, processing, analysis, and reporting. This is aimed at ensuring the data used for this report meets international data processing requirements and is devoid of data biases. The data collected for this report is, therefore, limited to open-source information, field missions' reports, as well as data received from ACSRT Focal Point Community from all 55 Member States of the African Union (AU), Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and Regional Mechanisms (RMs). The data are collected, categorized, and stored in the ACSRT Database in conformity with the definition of terrorist acts as defined by the 1999 OAU Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism.

Database: The ACSRT maintains a robust database that stores information on terrorism, more specifically, on terrorist groups, their leaders and members, and activities and avails this information to the African Union Commission, the African Union Member States, Regional Economic Communities, and relevant Regional Mechanisms. In the framework of its Continental Counter-Terrorism Early Warning System (ACSRT CT-CEWS), information for the Database is collected by the ACSRT Situation-Room using the Africa Media Monitor (AMM) developed in collaboration with the African Union Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) Situation-Room in the AU Commission and the European Union Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) for advanced web mining and information extraction. With the AMM, the ACSRT Situation Room scans and accesses over 1400 websites 24/7 and retrieves real time open-source information on terrorist incidents. The Centre also stores terrorism-related information received from Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and relevant Regional Mechanisms (RMs) based on existing cooperation agreements. The AU Continental Early Warning Situation-Room and reports from AU Field Missions and other field missions are also sources of information for the bulletin.

Validation: Data quality management is carried out based on internationally accepted data quality metrics to ensure data integrity is not comprised. Information validity and reliability, and source reliability and credibility based on internal SOP for information gathering are adhered to. To ensure validity, credibility and reliability, the Centre validates all accessed terrorism incidents from the ACSRT National and Regional Focal Points. The Focal Points are the institutions in AU Members and RECs/RMs designated to collaborate and share terrorism and Counter-Terrorism related information with the ACSRT. In accordance with its mandate, the information validated by the ACSRT on the number of attacks, deaths and injuries recorded are considered as the official data for the ACSRT Database irrespective of other conflicting figures.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1. Violent extremism and terrorism have continued to be the primary threats to peace, security, national stability, and development on the African continent. The geography of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa has dramatically increased over the past decade, and in more particular the last three years. All regions of Africa are currently affected by the activities of terrorist and violent extremists groups. The threats have remained resolute both in intent and capability, with growing confidence and cohesion in the launching of devastating attacks on civilians, security forces, and critical infrastructure across the continent. The phenomenon has developed into a complex mix of ideology-driven acts of violence, manifested in the multiplicity of armed groups with varying motives and trajectories that are spreading and unleashing atrocities across the African continent.

2. The underlying causal factors of terrorism and violent extremism in Africa are complex and systemic. Structural socio-economic conditions continue to contribute to the state of vulnerabilities in local economies. The worsening situation continue to thrive illicit activities such as, amongst others, the illicit proliferation and circulation of small arms and light weapons, illicit exploitation and trade of minerals and other natural resources, human and drug trafficking, and other cross border criminal activities of transnational organized criminal network groups. These structural socio-economic challenges have been worsened by global shocks, including the Covid-19 pandemic and impact of the Russia/Ukraine conflict, making local populations vulnerable to terrorists recruitment drive.

3. In the first of quarter (January -March) of 2023, the Violent Extremism and Terrorism situation in Africa shows no sign of improvement. The incidents recorded in the first quarter reveal terrorism and violent extremism is far from abating on the Continent. Across the continent, terrorist groups exhibited a great capability of resilience and freedom of movement along their mobility corridors. This resulted in the maiming of the civilian population and caused a great deal of destructions to military installations, security forces and critical infrastructures. While counter terrorism operations across the continent dislodged and disrupted a number of terrorists' activities, especially in the Horn of Africa and the North-Eastern Mozambican Province of Cabo Delgado, a considerable amount of work is required to degrade the capabilities of the various groups and deny them the footholds that they currently operate.

4. Between the last quarter of 2022 and first quarter of 2023, major changes in the threats levels across the continent has been noticed. For example, the threat of spillovers of violent extremism and terrorism in West Africa coastal states have heightened. Already Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, and Togo have been attacked, while Ghana continue to face increasing high risk level along its borders with Burkina Faso. The bordering countries have communities that share common cultures, traditions even historical ties, which contribute to a deeper connection between the communities. The coastal states threats are derived from the Sahel region, particularly Burkina Faso as rising instability and the deteriorating security situation in the country have generated concerns among neighbouring West African states about the effects of regional spillover. Also, the Great Lakes Region particularly the eastern DRC is witnessing worsening situation with the continuous growing inlay of the Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) formerly known as Madina at Tauheed wau Mujahedeen (MTM) and range of various VE groups in the security landscape.

5. Against this background, a concerted and collaborative approach, involving all relevant stakeholders at all levels of the response generation efforts are required. Understanding the factors sustaining the momentum of the terrorist groups, and identifying the gaps in the CT Approaches (both kinetic and soft approaches) would contribute significantly to prioritising interventions with the aim of reversing the current threat levels.

CONTINENTAL TERRORISM INCIDENTS MAPS
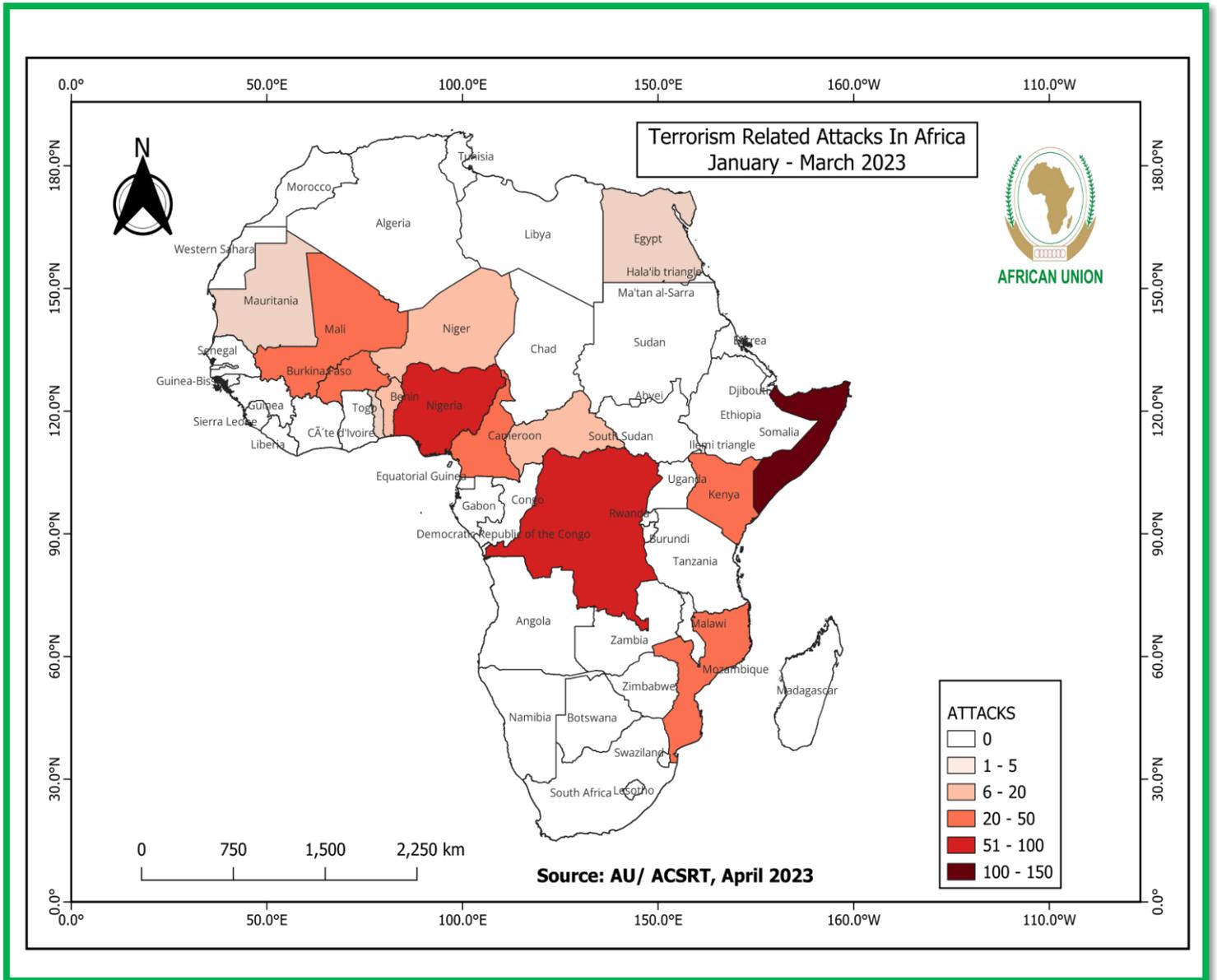
Terrorism Attacks from 1st January to 31st March 2023: Source: ACSRT Database, 2023

NUMERICAL DATA: QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

1. Total Number of Terrorist Attacks and Deaths

A total of **426** terrorism incidents including 19 cases of kidnapping were recorded from 1st January to 31st March 2023. The attacks resulted in **2,809** deaths across the continent. Also, 719 people were injured during the attacks. The data shows a consistent decline in both attacks and deaths from January to March 2023. However, the total attacks and deaths recorded for Q1 2023 increased by 43% and 60% respectively when compared to Q4 2022. For the same period 2022 (Q1), the attacks increased by 12% but total deaths declined by approximately 1% **(see Fig 1)**

Figure 1: Trend in Terrorist Attacks and Deaths: Jan.- Mar. 2023

2. Primary Targets of Attacks
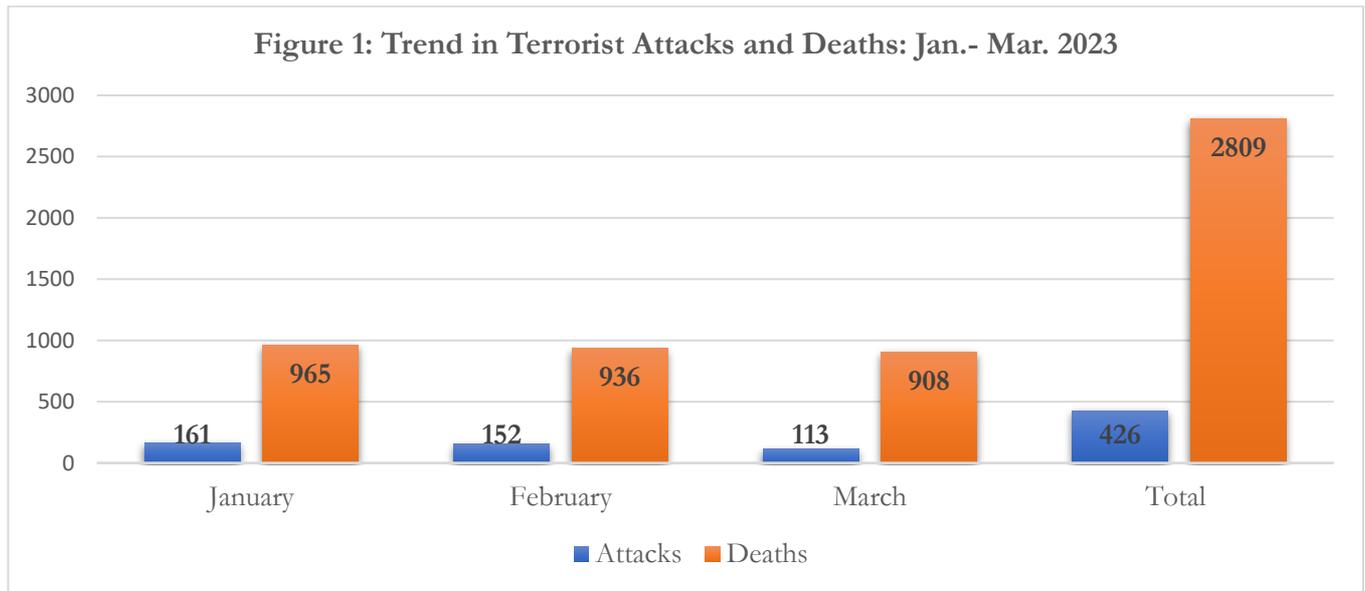
Figure 2: Primary Targets of Attacks
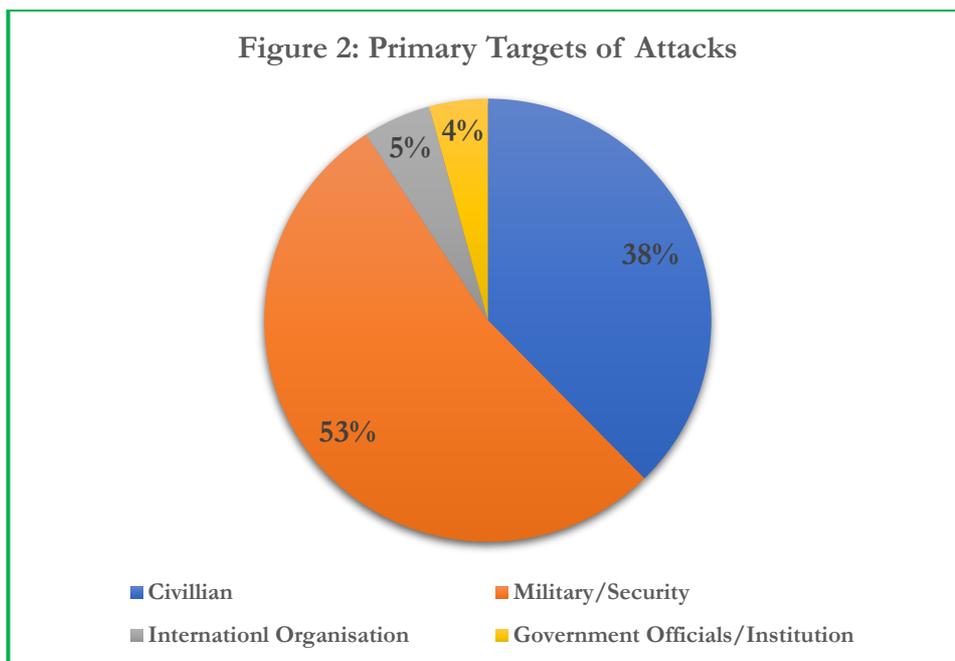
The data for Q1 2023 shows some observed changes. The primary targets of attacks historically has been high for civilians than security forces.

However, for the period under review, majority of the attacks targeted military/security forces.

The changes were due to **Al-Shabaab's** renewed attacks in Kenya and Somalia and **ISWAP's** attacks in Nigeria.

3. Deaths per Category

Figure 3: Deaths per Category
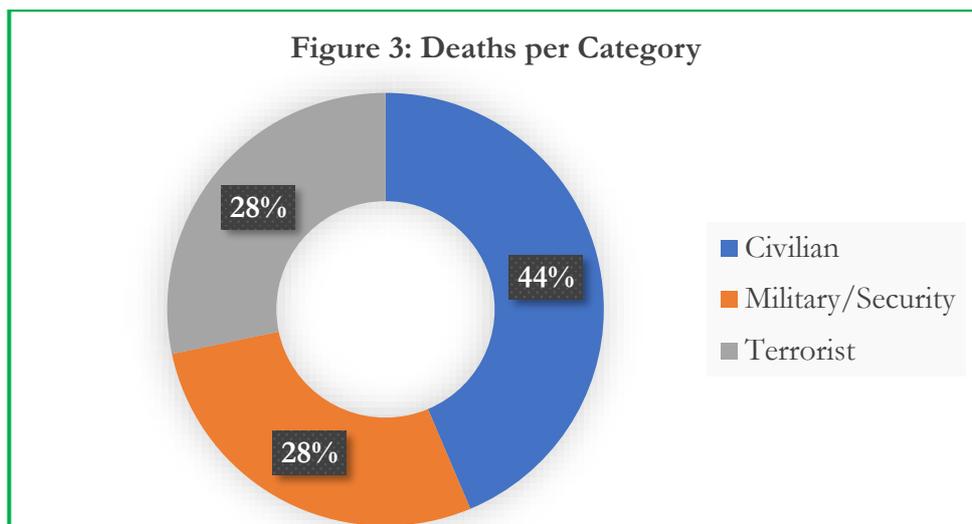
Contrary to the primary targets, Civilians casualty was the highest for the period (**1,226**). A significant number of Military/Security Forces **(788)** were killed by terrorist groups, while **795** Terrorists were also eliminated during attacks perpetrated by the groups (**see fig 3**).

4. Type of Attack

Figure 4:Type of Attacks
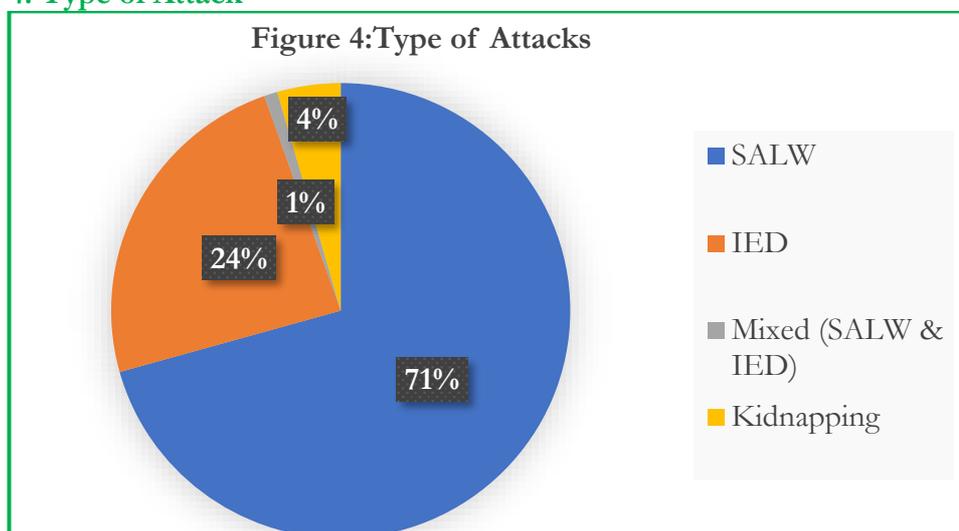
As shown in **fig 4**, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) were used for **301** out of the **426** attack for the period**.** This resulted in the death of **2,232** representing **79%** of all deaths for the period **(See fig 5).**

Also, **102** of the attacks involved the use of IED resulting in the deaths of **412** people (**15%**).

5. Deaths by Type of Attack

Figure 5: Deaths per Type of Attacks
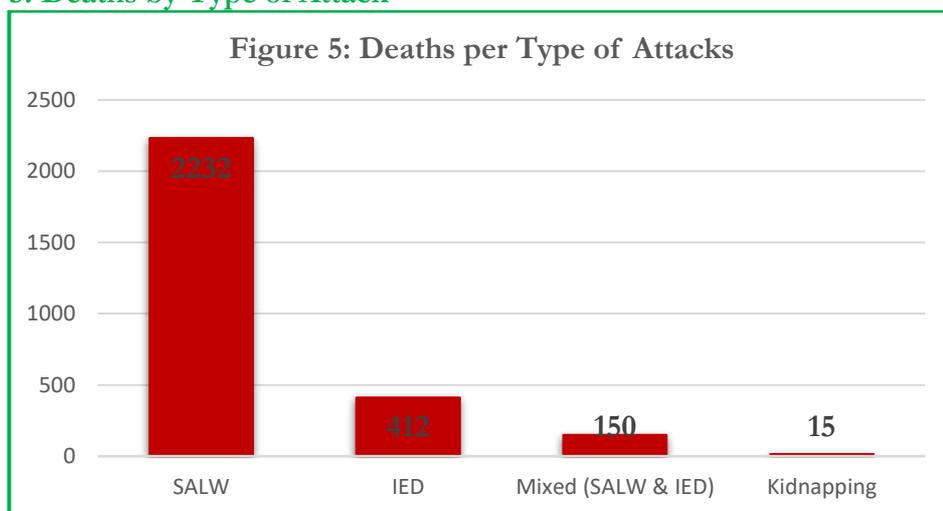
In **four** attacks, a combination of IEDs and SALWs were used, and **150** people killed (**5%**). **19** cases of kidnappings were recorded, and **15** people kidnapped were killed (**see fig 5**)

6. Total Number of Terrorist Attacks and Deaths

Figure 6: Terrorist Attacks by Region

Region	Attacks
WEST AFRICA	150
EAST AFRICA	141
CENTRAL AFRICA	98
SOUTHERN AFRICA	31
NORTH AFRICA	6
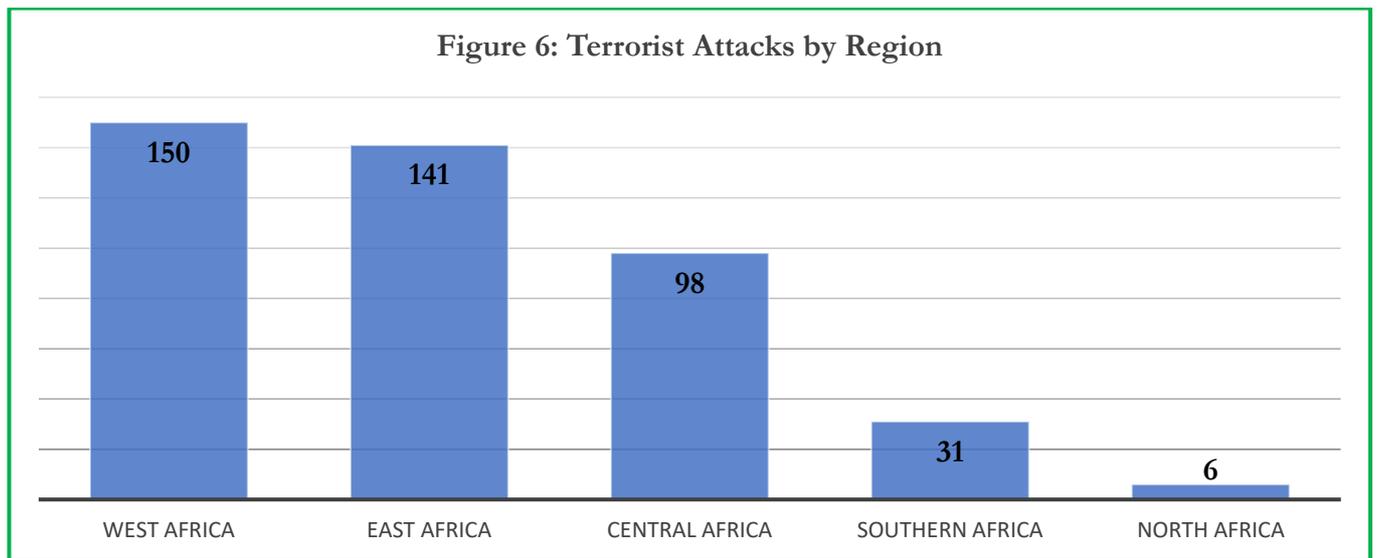
7. Terrorism Related Deaths by Region

Figure 7: Regional Breakdown of Deaths

Region	Deaths
WEST AFRICA	1463
CENTRAL AFRICA	677
EAST AFRICA	627
SOUTHERN AFRICA	35
NORTH AFRICA	7
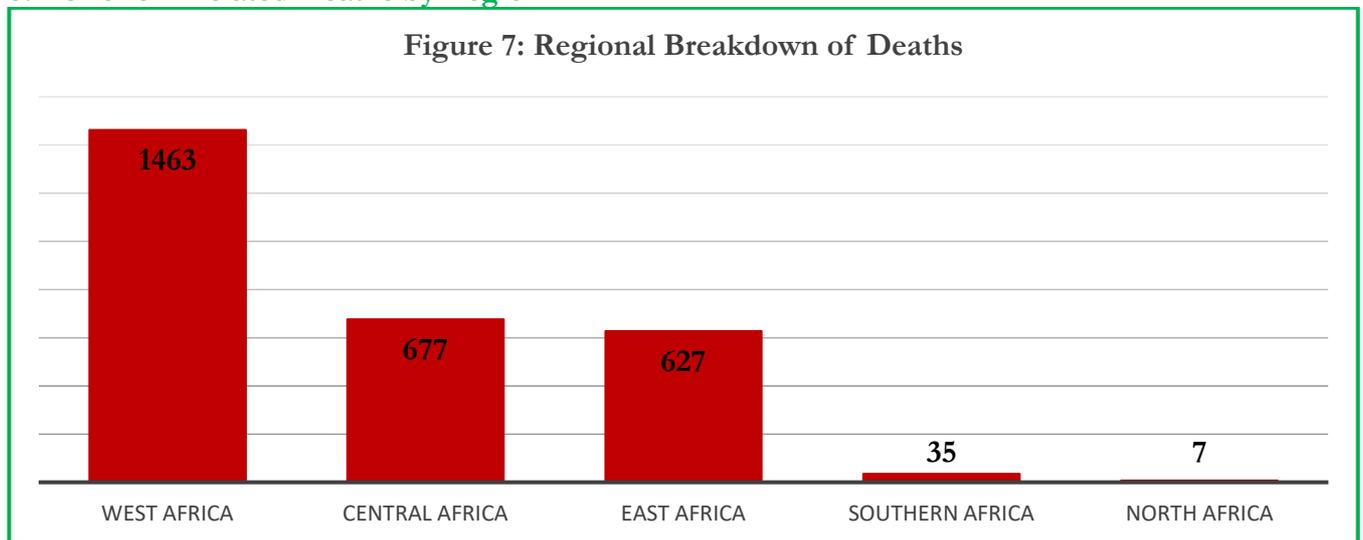
8. Regional Deaths by Categories

Figure 8: Regional Deaths per Category

Region	Civilian	Military/Security	Terrorist
WEST AFRICA	539	294	630
EAST AFRICA	95	394	138
CENTRAL AFRICA	566	89	22
SOUTHERN AFRICA	22	8	5
NORTH AFRICA	4	3	0

■ Civilian ■ Military/Security ■ Terrorist
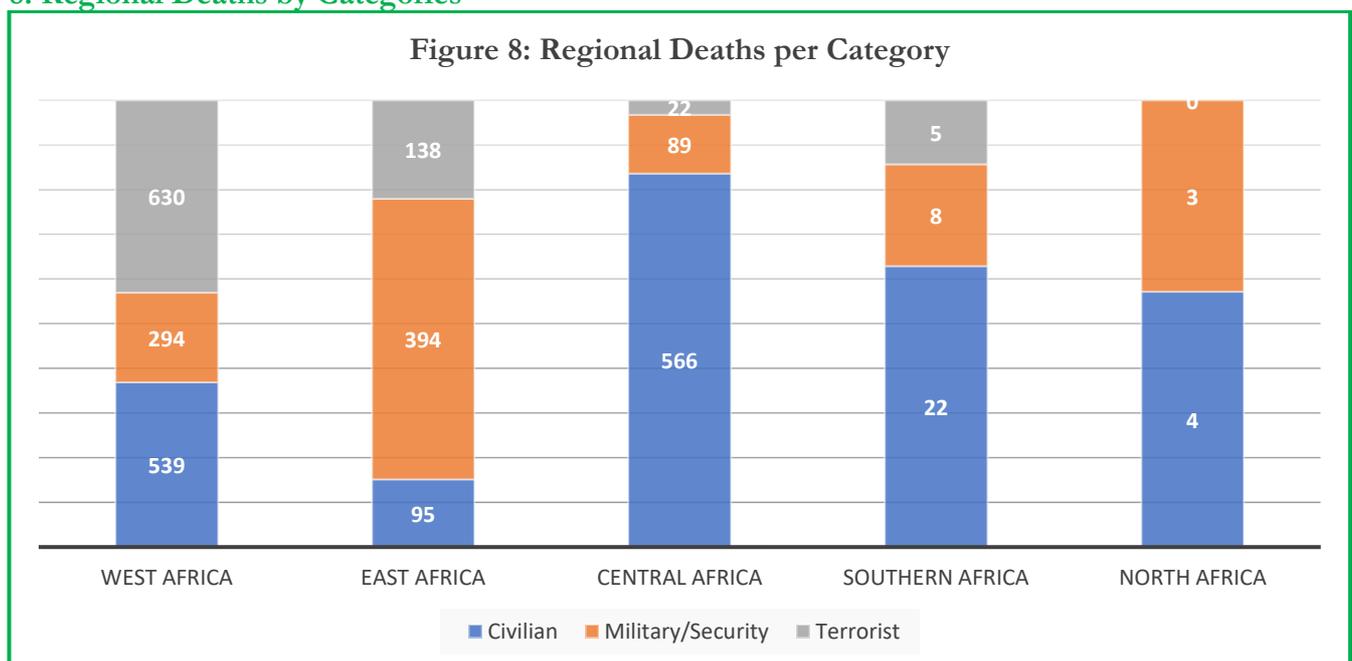
9. Type of Attacks by Terrorist Groups

Table 1: Types of Attacks by Terrorist Groups

Terrorist Group	SALW	IED	Mixed	Kidnapping	Comments
Al-Shabaab	74	57	3	1	Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) constituted the major means of attack by Al-Shabaab for the period under review. 74 out of the 135 attacks were done using IEDs. There was also high number of attacks involving the use of IEDs, as 57 attacks used IED, and 3 mixed
JNIM	37	7	-	2	JNIM attacks are predominately carried out using SALWs. 37 out of the 46 attacks were SALW. Significant number of IEDs were also used, 7 cases were recorded, and 2 kidnappings.
ISWAP	21	18	-	2	ISWAP carried out 15 attacks using SAWL and another 4-attacks using IED, 3 kidnappings, and 1 mixed (IED & SALWs).
ADF/ISCAP	35	2	-	-	JNIM attacks are predominately carried out using SALWs. 16 out of the 26 attacks were SALW. Significant number of IEDs were also used, 9 cases were recorded, and one kidnapping.
ASWJ	24	1	1	1	ISWAP carried out 24 attacks using SALW and attack each using IED, kidnappings, and mixed (IED & SALWs).
Boko Haram	17	2	-	2	Majority of the attacks by Boko Haram involved the use of SAWL. 17 attacks used SALW, 2 cases each involving IEDs and Kidnappings.
ISGS	13	-	-	1	ISGS attacks for the period were predominately carried out using SALWs. 13 out of the 14 attacks were SALW
Other IS Affiliates +	6	5	-	-	Other IS Affiliates carried out 6 attacks using SALWs and responsible for 16 cases of IED attack
Unidentified Groups*	74	10	-	10	Unidentified groups used SALWs in majority of the attacks. In 74 out of 94 attacks by these groups, SALWs were used. They used IEDs in 10 attacks. They were also responsible for 10 cases of kidnappings.
TOTAL	301	102	04	19	

+ *Other Islamic State (IS) Affiliates are all splinter IS affiliated groups mainly operating in the North Africa Region including Sinai Peninsula (IS-SP-Egypt), Somalia (ISS) and Southern Libya.*
* *Unidentified Groups are all terrorist attacks carried out by the various known terrorist groups operating in Africa, but either did not claim responsibility for the attacks, or security forces did not attribute the attack to any group. Even though, the attacks might have taken place in an operational theatre of a known terrorist group, without claiming of responsibility by the group or attribution by Security Forces or ACSRT Analysts, it is left as Unidentified Groups. In addition, Violent Extremists groups such as Separatists in the Anglophone Region of Cameroon, Banditry activities in Northwestern Nigeria, whose attacks have been conveniently classified as terrorist act by the Member States concerned are captured under Unidentified Groups.*

10. Terrorist Groups and their Primary Targets

Table 2: Details of Terrorist groups and their Primary Targets

Terrorist Groups	Civilians	Military/ Security	Gov't Inst./Of.	Int. Org.	Total Attacks Carried	Total Deaths Caused
Al-Shabaab	9	103	12	11	135	481
JNIM	24	20	-	2	46	321
ISWAP	8	29	4	0	41	106
ADF/ISCAP	27	10	-	-	37	262
ASWJ	16	9	-	3	28	30
Boko Haram	10	10	-	1	21	50
ISGS	9	5	-	-	15	165
Other IS Affiliates	3	7	1	-	11	13
Unidentified groups	54	33	4	1	92	591
TOTAL	160	226	21	18	426	2809

11. Death Categories Caused by Terrorist Groups

Figure 9: Casualties Inflicted by Terrorist groups

■ Civilian ■ Military/Security

Group	Civilian	Military/Security
Al-Shabaab	95	386
JNIM	235	86
ISWAP	53	53
ADF/ISCAP	246	16
ASWJ	22	8
Boko Haram	28	22
ISGS	54	111
Other IS Affiliates	4	9
Unidentified Groups	489	102
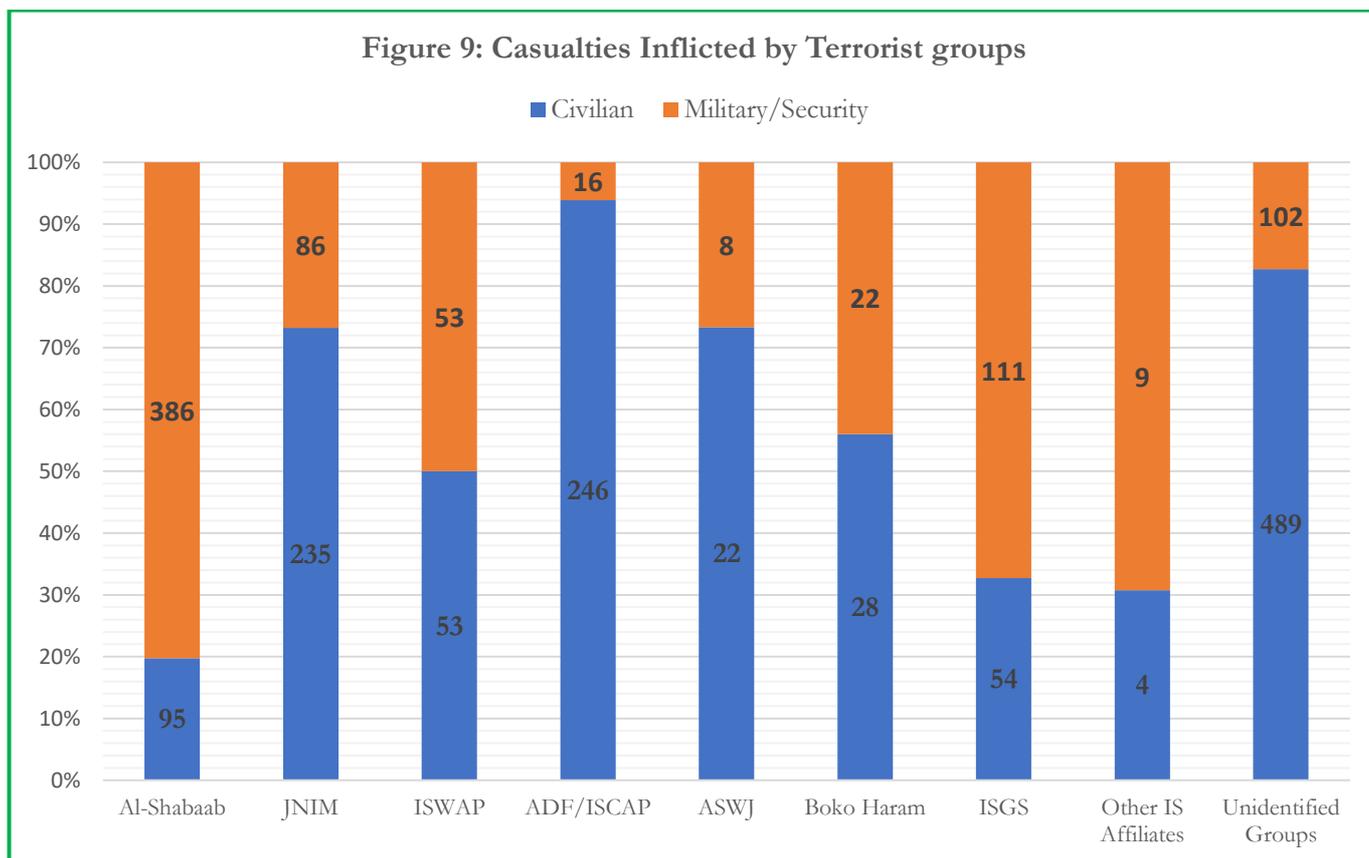
12. Members of Terrorist Groups Killed (In Attacks and CT Operations)

Figure 10: Terrorists Killed in Attacks and CT Operations

| Group	Killed
AL-SHABAAB	1,264
ISWAP	448
UNIDENTIFIED GROUPS	402
BOKO HARAM	333
JNIM	174
ISGS	169
ADF/ISCAP	44
ASWJ	5
OTHER IS AFFILIATES	2
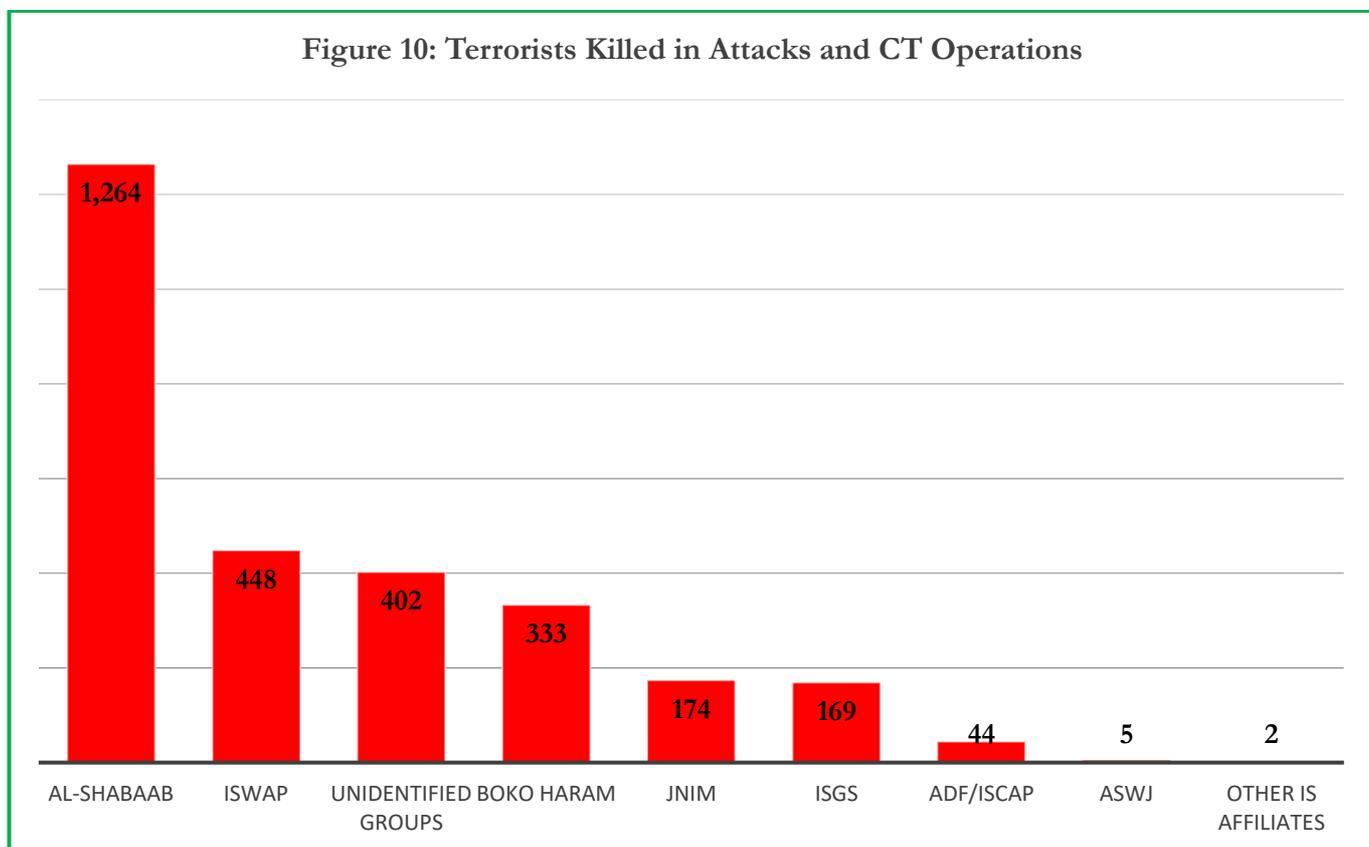
13. Country Terrorism Situation

Table 3: Details Record of Countries – January to March 2023

Country	Total Attacks	Total Deaths(Attacks)	Total Injured	Civilian Casualties	Military/Security Casualties	Terrorists Killed in Attacks	Deaths(CT)
Benin	7	14	1	4	5	5	0
Burkina Faso	34	541	20	240	136	165	157
Cameroon	24	87	69	53	24	10	3
Central African Republic (CAR)	17	62	19	30	32	0	0
Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)	57	528	131	483	33	12	39
Egypt	5	5	6	4	1	0	0
Kenya	22	29	19	24	5	0	10
Mali	27	197	37	50	49	98	85
Mauritania	1	2	0	0	2	0	4
Mozambique	31	35	25	22	8	5	28
Niger	12	35	25	18	17	0	155
Nigeria	66	633	48	184	87	375	421
Somalia	119	598	416	370	90	138	1,122
Togo	4	46	4	43	3	0	10
	426	2,809	719	1,226	788	795	2,051

14. The Five Most Affected Countries

Figure 11: Five Most Affected Countries
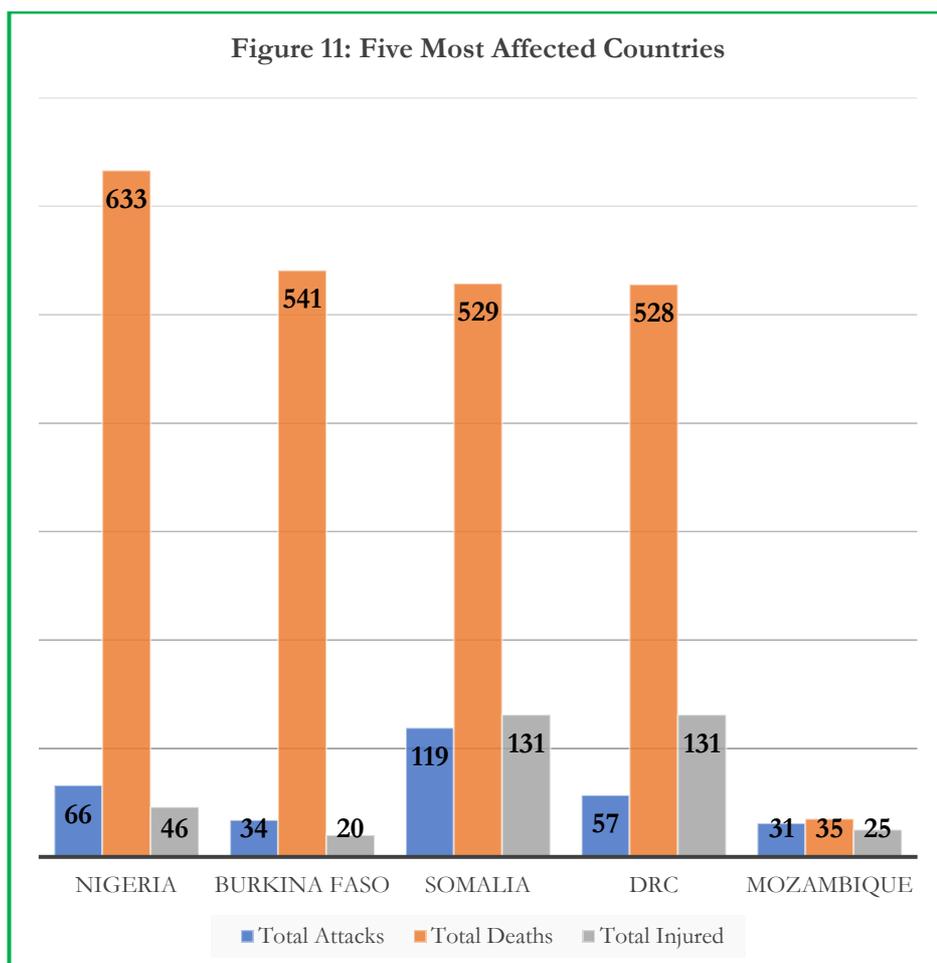
Approximately **72%** of all attacks for the period took place in the five countries most affected.

Out of a total of **426** attacks recorded across the continent, **307** of the attacks occurred in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, DRC, Mozambique and Somalia.

Similarly, about **81%** of all deaths recorded for the period, resulting from direct terrorist attacks occurred in the above mentioned five countries. **2,266** out of the total deaths of **2,809** happened in the five most affected countries.

The rate of lethality in **Burkina Faso** is the highest, as estimated 16 people are killed in each successful attack for the period.

15. Terrorist Attacks- Most Fatal Incidents

Table 4: List of high-Profile Attacks

No.	Country	Place	Date	Group	Deaths	Description
1	Burkina Faso	Oudalan	17 February	ISGS	130	Suspected ISGS militants ambushed a military convoy between Deou and Oursi in Oudalan Province, near border with Mali. At least 70 soldiers were killed. Security forces in reprisal attack killed about 60 of the assailants.
2	Somalia	Galgudud	20 January	Al-Shabaab	115	Al-Shabaab conducted a complex suicide raid targeting a US-trained Danab forces base. The attack killed at least 15 soldiers including the deputy commander of the Danab forces. Security forces in reprisal attack and reinforcement killed at least 100 al-shabaab militants.
3	Nigeria	Katsina	02 February	Unidentified Group	102	Unidentified armed individuals attacked several communities in the Bakori local community. At least 102 civilians and local vigilantes were killed.
4	Nigeria	Borno	19 March	ISWAP	65	Suspected ISWAP operatives, carried out an attack against a Nigerian army compound in the town about 45 km east of Maiduguri. At least 5 government election officials were killed. Nigerian army soldiers, with the support of fighter jets, repelled the attack, killing at least 60 ISWAP operatives.
5	DRC	Ituri	14 January	CODECO	50	Armed men belied to be militants of CODECO militia group attacked the village of.., At least 50 people were reportedly killed in the attack.
6	Burkina Faso	Komondjari	09 January	JNIM	46	Suspected JNIM militants attacked Burkinabe army and VDP militia position. At least 16 people comprising 12 VDP members and four soldiers were killed during the attack. At least 30 militants were also eliminated in reprisal attack.
7	Somalia	Hiraan	29 March	Al-Shabaab	42	Al-shabaab militants attacked military base, killing at least 32 soldiers. The militants crossed the Shabelle River from the Bardhere area, early in the morning to raid the military base. Somali National Army (SNA) forces repulsed the attack killing at least 10 militants.
8	Mali	Ségou	10 January	JNIM	40	Armed men suspected to be militants of JNIM attacked Malian Army position using IED. At least 9 soldiers were killed in the attack. Security forces repulsed the attack killing 31 militants.
9	Somalia	Lower Juba	15 February	Al-Shabaab	36	Al-Shabaab Claimed responsibility for an Ambush that Killed 36 Soldiers and Injuring 15 Others at SNA Military Base in a Barsanguni town within Kismayo.
10	DRC	Ituri	20 March	CODECO	35	At least 35 people were killed by militiamen from the CODECO in an attack on an artisanal gold mine located in Blaquette.

16. Attacks in Epicentres

Figure 12: Percentage of Attacks in Epicentres

- Horn of Africa — 33%
- Sahel Region — 17%
- Lake Chad Basin — 16%
- Great Lakes Region — 13%
- Other Parts of Africa — 21%
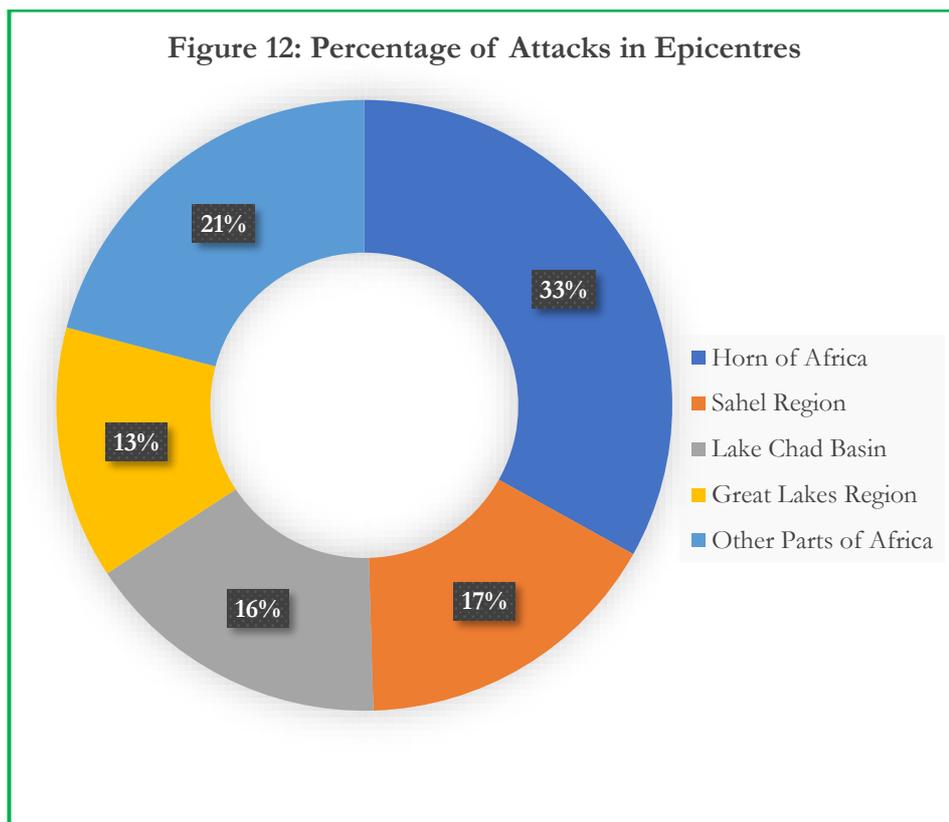
A total of 337 representing 79% of total attacks were recorded in areas considered epicentre of terrorists and violent extremists' activities in Africa. These areas are the Lake Chad Basin, The Horn of Africa, The Sahel, and the Great Lakes Region.

The Horn of Africa recorded **141** attacks**,** followed by the Sahel Region which recorded **70** attacks, the Lake Chad Basin recorded **69** attacks, while the Great Lakes Region witnessed **57** attacks**.**

17. Deaths Recorded in Epicenters

Figure 13: Deaths in Epicentres

- Sahel Region — 27%
- Lake Chad Basin — 23%
- Horn of Africa — 22%
- Great Lakes Region — 21%
- Other Parts of Africa — 7%
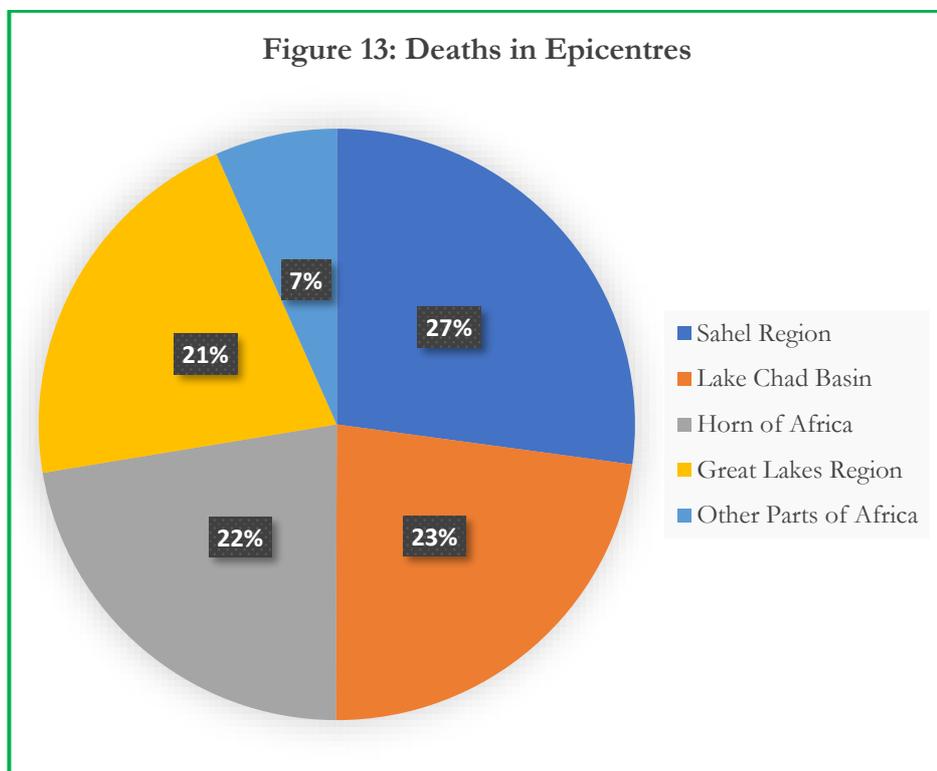
A total of 2,623 representing 93% of total deaths were recorded in areas considered in epicentres.

The Sahel region recorded **763 deaths,** followed by the Lake Chad Basin which recorded **643** deaths, the Horn of Africa recorded **627** deaths, while the Great Lakes Region witnessed **590** deaths.

Burkina Faso contributed significantly to the total deaths recorded in the Sahel region.

THREAT UPDATE: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

1. The period under review, **01 January to 31 March 2023** recorded an exponential increase in the number of terrorist and violent extremist attacks compared to the preceding period of **October to December 2022**. There was also a corresponding increase in the number of terrorism related deaths. The period recorded **426** terrorist attacks that resulted in **2,809** deaths whilst the previous reporting period registered **298** attacks and **1,761** deaths. Compared to the previous reporting period, Central Africa, East Africa, and West Africa regions registered a significant increase in number of terrorist attacks and deaths; while North and Southern Africa regions registered a decline in both number of attacks and related deaths.

2. The threat of terrorism and violent extremism continues to be the major destabilization factors on the Continent. Terrorist and violent extremist groups have become more organized and resilient. Considering the nature of attacks, the complexity and the lethality, al-Qaeda affiliated groups (al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and JNIM) and Islamic State (IS) affiliated groups (ISWAP, ISCAP and ISGS) dominated the terrorism landscape within the operational and mobility corridors of terrorist and violent extremist groups. For the period, the North-eastern state of Borno in Nigeria; Mogadishu, Lower Shabelle, and Hiraan regions of Somalia; Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) provinces of Ituri and North Kivu; Koulikoro and Mopti regions of Mali; and Namentenga, Soum, and Oudalan provinces of Burkina Faso remained the epicentres of terrorists' activities in the continent.

3. The period shows some observed changes which is a departure from previous trend, in that the civilian population has historically bore the brunt of terrorists' primary target of attacks. However, majority of the attacks (**53%**) recorded for the period were targeted at the Military/Security Forces. This observed trend is explained by the persistence in attacks against military bases in Somalia by Al-Shabaab, Burkina Faso by JNIM and ISGS, and Nigeria by ISWAP. In terms of deaths resulting from attacks, civilians constituted the majority (**44%**). However, a significant number of security forces, **788** representing **28%** paid the ultimate price in defense of their countries. The increasing military/security casualties, and the ease at which their bases are attacked, if not checked could derail the moral and the buy-in confidence of counter terrorism deployed troops.

4. In terms of Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs) of terrorist groups, Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) remain the most used means of attacks. 71% of all attacks involved the use of SALW, and 79% of deaths for the period were from attacks involving the use of SALWs. The need for effective management of government stockpiles and armouries, as well as enhancement of protective measures and reactivity for the troops on the ground, have been reiterated for a very long time. This is because, the ease access to arms and ammunitions continue to hamper the fight against terrorism and violent extremism on the continent. The use of IEDs by terrorist groups have become widespread particularly in the Horn of Africa, Sahel and the Lake Chad Basin regions. Al-Shabaab continued to exhibit great capabilities in the manufacturing and deployment of IEDs, same as JNIM in the Sahel and ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin. The need to put in place adequate measures to control the acquisition of IED manufacturing components, particularly in mining areas, - to prevent their deployment, identify and neutralise them as well, could help ameliorate the current trend of use.

5. Sahel Belt of West Africa. The security situation in the Sahel remains fragile and characterized by incessant terrorist attacks and ethnic tensions. The region recorded 70 attacks and resultant deaths of 763. Consistent with previous periods, attacks were recorded in Mali, Burkina Faso and South-western Niger of Tillabery. JNIM and ISGS were the dominant groups in the Sahel. The two main groups; JNIM and ISGS are jostling for influence in the region and as such committing deadlier cycles of violence in the region. These events undoubtedly increased terrorism activities in the region.

6. The security situation in Burkina Faso has worsened. The violent attacks in Burkina Faso has led to the country being the epicenter of terrorism and violent extremism in the Sahel region. Burkina Faso recorded 34 attacks resulting in 541 deaths. Attacks have become more complex and sophisticated. On 17 February, suspected ISGS militants ambushed a military convoy between Deou and Oursi in Oudalan Province, near the border with Mali. The incident led to the death of at least 70 soldiers while security forces in a reprisal attack killed about 60 of the assailants. This attack and many others that followed resulted in the high fatalities in the

country for the period. The situation has forced the Government to deploy community auto defense groups whose activities are sometimes violating the fundamental human rights of local population, making them further vulnerable to the cause of extremist groups' appeals. Burkina Faso requires urgent help and assistance, otherwise the country could become a Launchpad to completely destabilize the entire West Africa sub-region.

7. In **Mali**, the security crisis remains deleterious. Fighting between ISGS and JNIM resurged, and Civilians paid the price as terrorist activities flares up. The extremists are competing to extend their spheres of influence and control supply lines, while engaging in constant attacks against the Defense and Security Forces and Civilians. Despite the extensive counter terrorism operations by the Malian Armed Forces (FaMA) which have disrupted terrorist activities, the groups continue to exhibit great momentum to launch devastating attacks. In **Niger**, ISGS stepped up its attacks in South-West (Tillabery) located within the Liptako-Gourma tri-border area. On 10 February, 17 soldiers were killed by ISGS in Banibangou, Tillaberi close to the Malian Border. Other departments attacked include Tera, Tahoua, and Maradi. For instance, ISGS attacked a refugees camp at Tillia located in Tahoua close to the border with Mali and Burkina Faso and killed 18 Civilians.

8. **Coastal States of West Africa.** The terrorism threat level in coastal West Africa heightened. Countries along the coast of the Gulf of Guinea experienced an increase in attacks against their territories, threatening transport routes to landlocked nations further north. Northern **Benin** departments of Atakora and Alibori came under heavy attacks perpetrated by JNIM militants. In all, 7 attacks were recorded in the period resulted in 14 deaths.

9. In **Togo**, the situation further deteriorated in the Northern Savane region. Two attacks in the villages of Tolga and Gninga resulted in the deaths of soldiers and civilians. A total of 46 people comprising 43 civilians and 3 soldiers were killed within the period by suspected JNIM militants in Northern Togo. On 10February 2023, suspected JNIM militants attacked the Tola village, located within the northern Savanes region of Togo, killing at least 31 civilians in what appears to be the deadliest terrorist attack in Togo to date.

10. The rising instability and the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region, particularly Burkina Faso continue to generate concerns among neighbouring West African states about the domino effects on littoral states. Mobilizing the required regional and international support for Burkina Faso should be considered an urgent priority by the political authorities within the West Africa sub-region, and in particular the Accra Initiative (AI) member states. The AI may reaffirm their commitment to mobilise the necessary indigenous resources to support Sahel member countries (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger), and also conduct the "**operation enhanced Koudanlgou**" as contained in the communique of the international conference on Accra Initiative held on 22 November 2022 in Accra Ghana.

11. **Lake Chad Basin.** During the period, the Lake Chad Basin (LCB) recorded 69 attacks, leading to 643 deaths higher than those recorded in Q4 2022. Attacks were mainly concentrated in South East region of Niger (Diffa), Far North region of Cameroon, and North eastern Nigeria states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. In a bid to enhance its operations, ISWAP is attempting use of drones and other emerging technological equipment. ISWAP has been trialing the delivery of drones to carry IED attacks. This includes assessing the weight that can be carried, the distance and period of stay in the air. Given the security threat the use of drones poses to military and security installations, countries around the LCB need to effectively strategize to counter the emerging use of drones by the terrorist group. Failure to counter could worsen the conflict in the Basin and give ISWAP the upper hand.

12. The Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) continued to operate and control territory in the Northeast **Nigeria** states of Borno, Yobe, Adawama and Taraba and across the Lake Chad Basin, despite suffering major setbacks from the MNJTF counterinsurgency campaigns. ISWAP is also grappling with ongoing infighting with Boko Haram faction, the Group for the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad (JAS) for control of territory. ISWAP has also been active in the Northwest and North Central states, where dozens of Bandit groups continued to engage in deadly raids, kidnappings for ransom, and other violent criminal activities. Unidentified armed individuals attacked several communities in the Bakori local community within Katsina on 02 February. The attack led to the death of 102 civilians and scores of local vigilantes were killed. Boko Haram also conducted a significant number of attacks against civilian populations in local communities within the north eastern states.

13. In **Cameroon**, Boko Haram and ISWAP continue to generate insecurity in the Far North region. At least eight were killed in Blaram village, Far North on 02 February by Boko Haram militants when they attacked the village located within Logone-et-Chari departments in an overnight assault. The use of IEDs have become rampant, further worsening and threating the living condition of communities. An IED attack by Boko Haram on 21 March 2023 between the towns of Kolofata and Amchide, southwest of the Cameroon-Nigeria border killed 10 soldiers.

14. In Southeast **Niger,** Diffa, N'Guigmi, and Maine Soroa departments were heavily attacked by ISWAP and Boko Haram militants. On 11 March 2023, in Toumour village within Diffa, suspected ISWAP militants attacked the village, killing at least nine civilians and abducted two others near Bosso department.

15. The Lake Chad Basin, which is a hotbed for Boko Haram and ISWAP terrorism activities has begun experiencing illicit proliferation of SALW meant to prosecute the War in Ukraine and have been diverted to Africa. This was alluded to by the ***President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, H.E. Muhammadu Buhari*** when he addressed the 16th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Lake Chad Basin Commission held at the Presidential Villa in Abuja. He indicated that "The raging war in Ukraine serve as major sources of weapons and fighters that bolster the ranks of the terrorists in the Lake Chad Region. Weapons being used for the war in Ukraine are equally beginning to filter to the region". Also threatening the gains made by the MNJTF in the LCB is the deteriorating security situation in the Sahel region and the conflict in Libya which continue to serve as source and safe havens for the movement of fighters in the region.

16. East and the Horn of Africa. Despite the enhanced counter terrorism operation by countries in the East and Horn of Africa against terrorist groups, the region recorded considerable number of atrocities against civilian population, security forces and critical infrastructure installations. The region recorded 141 attacks that resulted in 627 deaths. Compared to the Q4 of 2022, there was a substantial increase of 64% in attacks, but fatalities declined by 19% in deaths (Q4 2022 recorded 86 attacks and 777 deaths). All attacks in the region were perpetrated by Al-Shabaab and the Islamic State in Somalia (ISS). Al-Shabaab, the Al-Qaeda affiliate, continue to wage deadly insurgency in the region. Its weapons of choice for attacks within the period ranged from improvised explosive devices (IED) and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs), to deploying suicide bombers to target security forces, public installations, and government officials.

17. In all, a total of 29 people were killed in **Kenya** counties of Lamu, Garissa, Mandera, and Wajir perpetrated by Al-Shabaab militants. In Kenya however, Security forces bore the brunt of the militants attacks, as 24 out of the 29 deaths were soldiers and police officers. On 14 February 2023, four police officers were killed when the vehicle they were travelling in ran over an IED in Garissa. Similarly, three soldiers were killed in Gabi Districts located in Mandera County by Al-Shabaab militants on 22 February 2023. Even though the group carried out sporadic attacks across the various operational corridors, the lethality of attacks reduced in Kenya.

18. Somalia experienced 84% of total attacks and 95% of deaths in the region. The pattern of attacks remained the same in Somalia with Mogadishu recording the highest number of attacks, at 28%. Al-Shabaab also maintained pressure in Hirshabelle by raiding clan militia positions, and by attacking civilians accused of supporting government forces and clan militias. Sanaag, a relatively stable region situated in northeastern Somaliland, recorded an attack during the period. It could be that al-Shabaab is retrieving to safer areas following revised counter terrorism operations by the new government where it has joined forces with pro-government clan militias since late 2022. The initiative, has increased counter terrorism offensive around Hiraan, Middle Shabelle and Juba regions, and significantly continues to destabilize al-Shabaab and dislodge it from those territories. The greatest persisting challenge in Somalia, however, is the ability of forces to sustain their gains in recaptured areas. While the use of clansmen in countering al-Shabaab's violence seems to be bearing fruits and possibly improving relations with local communities, arming civilians could, in the long run, increase the illicit circulation of weapons and crime against civilians, especially if it is not well monitored.

19. The trend of using IEDs in Somalia is still on the rise; 52% of the total attacks were carried out using IEDs. On 20 January 2023, al-Shabaab conducted a complex suicide raid targeting Danab military base killing 15 soldiers. In a reprisal attack, the group suffered a loss of 100 fighters. Due to ongoing robust counter terrorism

operations across southern Somalia, it is highly likely that al-Shabaab will increase its usage of IEDs to undermine the efforts as it reserves its manpower.

20. On 26 January 2023, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) commandos killed a senior Islamic State in Somalia (ISS) leader, Bilal al-Sudani, in an early-morning helicopter raid in a remote area of northern Somalia. The death of Bilal al-Sudani is expected to cause a major hitch in the financial network of not only ISS but also other provinces including IS-Mozambique/ ASWJ and ISCAP/MTM. Intelligence indicates that Al Sudani headed the Islamic State's Al-Karrar regional office which is in charge of the Sub-Saharan provinces, and their affairs and provides a bridge beyond Africa. The ISS has propped itself as a major player in the coordination and facilitation of the IS-central affairs in many parts of Africa.

21. The second phase of the war against Al-shabaab is expected to be launched in the second quarter of 2023 to sustain the gain. Somalia's government is currently running what has been described as the most significant offensive against the al-Shabaab extremist group in more than a decade. On 01 February 2023, four Heads of State from Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia met in Mogadishu to agree on a final push for joint operations in the areas that remain under the terrorists to completely liberate the whole of Somalia from Al-Shabaab, and to prevent any future infiltrating elements into the wider region. The regional leaders decided to establish a joint operations mechanism that will coordinate the drive to defeat al-Shabaab.

22. Central Africa and the Great Lakes region. The Central African region continues to register a significant increase in attacks triggered by different violent groups, particularly in Cameroon, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). During the period, region recorded a total of 93 violent attacks that resulted in 677 fatalities. Armed separatists continued their attacks in South-West and North-West regions of **Cameroon**, while various rebel groups committed atrocities in many parts of **Central African Republic (CAR)** against government security forces. At least a total of 16 government soldiers were killed in various parts of South-West and North West Regions of Cameroon by separatist groups. Similarly, armed rebel groups killed estimated 62 people in various parts of CAR comprising 32 Government Soldiers and 30 Civilians.

23. Eastern **DRC** was fraught with increased violent incidents, particularly in Ituri, North Kivu, and South Kivu provinces, perpetrated by various armed groups. The groups include the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), Islamic State Central Africa Province (ISCAP) formerly known as Madina at Tauheed wau Mujahedeem (MTM), the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), the Lord Resistance Army (LRA) among others, as well as local violent extremist group including - Congo Development Cooperative (CODECO), Zaire, Movement of 23 March (M23), range of Mai-Mai and other community-based groups. The ADF group carried out most of its attacks in North Kivu province while the CODECO and Zaire militia concentrated attacks around Ituri province. M23 dominated violent extremism activities in South Kivu province.

24. The pattern of attacks remains the same whereby the majority of attacks were against civilian targets. However, a developing trend of targets against the Christians community was detected. The ADF splinter group, MTM, consisting of mainly Muslims and operating under ISCAP banner, continue to ignite anti-Christian sentiments. ISCAP increased the use of IEDs in its attacks. The increasing use of IEDs in the region suggests that experienced Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTFs) are in the area, and ISCAP is fast developing the technical competence of manufacturing and deploying these devices, something that could in the near future change the landscape of the terrorism situation in eastern DRC. It would be advisable for the security forces to enhance capacity through counter-IED trainings.

25. The deployment of Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF) in the **Great Lakes region** is expected to improve the security situation in the region. Kenya airlifted Burundi's first contingent of about 100 Soldiers to Goma on 05 March 2023, and deployed to the nearby town of Sake. Additional Burundian troops arrived on 15 March 2023, while full deployment is expected to be completed in April 2023.

26. North Africa and the Maghreb. The North Africa and the Maghreb region remained relatively stable, registering six attacks and seven deaths during the reported period. In comparison to the same period in 2022 (Q1), this was a significant drop as Q1 2022 recorded 16 **and 57** in number of attacks and deaths respectively. The improved security situation in the North Africa and the Maghreb region could be driven by diminishing

control by ISIS and Al-Qaeda affiliated groups and failure to sustain cells due to robust counter-terrorism operations in countries such as **Algeria**, **Morocco** and **Tunisia**. Government-led de-radicalization programs and other initiatives such as enhanced monitoring of mosques and madrassas, intensified intelligence gathering and sharing, could also contribute to the ameliorating situation in the region.

27. Five of the attacks were recorded in the Sinai Peninsula of **Egypt**. However, the security situation has improved considerably in the Sinai Peninsula. It should be noted that the Egyptian government has recently been investing a lot of resources in the Sinai Peninsula in the construction and establishment of infrastructures, including electrical, residential and tourism infrastructures, with the aim of benefiting the residents of the Sinai Peninsula, who have suffered for many years from neglect, and thereby alienating elements that support ISIS, who took advantage of the situation and the accumulated frustration of the local population for taking over the area. On January 23, 2023, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced that that security forces have greatly eliminate terrorism threat in Sinai, and indicated events would be held in Rafah and Al-Arish to mark the elimination of terrorism. While the atmosphere of optimism of the Egyptian government following its achievements against ISIS's Sinai Province is reasonable, cautious must be exercised on the commitment of victory. Intelligence and counter intelligence CT operations must be enhanced in the region to avoid resurgence as witnessed in 2022.

28. In **Mauritania**, four Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) terrorists who were imprisoned at the Central Prison in Nouakchott escaped after attacking National Guards on duty on 05 March 2023. The attack resulted in an exchange of gun fire between the guards and the terrorists. Two members of the National Guards were killed during the exchange, while two others were slightly injured. However, the Mauritania Elite Unit of the National Gendarmerie, supported by the First Commando Battalion, and the Mauritanian Military Aviation, killed three terrorists who escaped from the Prison on 11 March 2023 at Al-Maddah, Lamasidi area Adrar state. Mauritania may want to consolidate its capacity, share its experience and contribute to the Sahel regional stabilization plan and strategy. The role that the G5 Sahel Joint Task Force, headquartered in Mauritania could play to rekindle the state of security preparedness of the member countries needs to be urgently pursued.

29. Southern Africa. The southern Africa region recorded 31 attacks that resulted in 35 deaths; all the attacks were registered in **Mozambique**. Compared to the same period (Q1) in 2022 the region recorded a sharp decline of 44% in attacks and 81% in deaths. (55 attacks and 186 deaths in 2022). A sharp decline compared to the same period of 2022 could be linked to foreign military intervention in Cabo Delgado. The month of February recorded the highest number of attacks in Mozambique, mainly due to increased attacks in Montepuez district of Cabo Delgado, a relatively stable inland district bordering Niassa province. Overall, violence in Cabo Delgado concentrated around Maidumbe district; out of 31 attacks registered during the reporting period, the district alone registered 10 attacks. Although there were sporadic attacks along coastal districts of Cabo Delgado, in particular Macomia, Macimboa da Praia and Palma, Maidumbe and Montepuez attacks confirm a new pattern of violence that is shifting inland away from coastal districts, which were previously designated hotspots and currently have a high presence of military forces.

30. The Al Sunnah Wal Jammah (ASWJ), also referred to as ISIS-Mozambique after allegedly gaining its wilayat status from ISIS-central in 2022, remains the known group operating in Mozambique. ISIS-central continue to feature footage of attacks and claimed responsibility for attacks in Mozambique, in its Al-Naba magazine. While ASWJ has in the past focused its attacks against civilian targets, seemingly the group has shifted its modus operandi gearing toward winning the hearts and minds of the populace. During the reporting period, the group reportedly traded with local businesses buying goods at inflated prices and sending apologies to affected Muslims in areas around Macomia and Nagande districts. By so doing, it could be that the group has identified growing distrust between local people and the government, hence trying to fill the gap. Counter-terrorism operations in Cabo Delgado have dislodged terrorists from some of their strongholds around coastal districts of Palma and Macimboa da Praia. Security Sector Reform (SSR) is needed to build the capacity of Mozambican forces in preparation for taking over when violence de-escalates, and foreign forces withdraw. Foreign forces deployments include SADC SAMIM forces, Rwanda Defense Forces (RDF), Tanzania Defense Forces among others. The CT operations of the forces limited the movement of terrorist within the period. The lack of effective cooperation, collaboration and coordination among the various troops are considered a major setback.

COUNTER-TERRORISM RESPONSE AND CHALLENGES

1. The first quarter (Q1) of 2023 has seen enhanced deliberate counter terrorism operations across many parts of the continent where terrorism and violent extremism fester. Security forces, have equally come under heavy attacks from armed groups. In all, 2,051 terrorists were neutralized in deliberate CT operations, in addition to the 795 killed in reprisal attacks, bringing the total number of terrorists eliminated within the period to 2,846 higher than those eliminated in the Q1 2022 and Q4 2022.

2. Counter Terrorism operations gained momentum in the **Horn of Africa**. Al-shabaab came under intensified pressure from the ATMIS Forces, US Military Africa Command Forces (AFRICOM), Somalia National Army Forces and Clan Militias. Significant CT successes for the period include a counter offensive operations in Janale region on 29th January, which resulted in the neutralization of 136 Al-shabaab militants. Similarly, 117 militants of al-shabaab were eliminated on 10th February, while 350 al-shabaab militants were reportedly killed in Middle-Shabelle on 16 February. In the ensuing CT operations, many communities which were under al-shabaab command were liberated. The challenge, however, is that security forces are not able to hold these liberated communities, and the militant group later recapture them. Despite the intense CT operations by local and international deployed forces, al-shabaab continue to control significant swathes of territories in Somalia.

3. While the security situation in the **Sahel** deteriorated during the reported period, counter terrorism response generation remained chaotic and uncoordinated. Mali's withdrawal from the G5-Sahel Alliance in June 2022 has rendered already weakened force inactive. Similarly, the withdrawal of European Union Takuba and French Operation Barkhane Forces has left MINUSMA in an unchartered territory. To consolidate the efforts of the regular army and the security forces, some countries in the Sahel have resorted to the use of private military contractors and community self-defense auto groups. Notwithstanding the CT operational constraints, the Malian Armed Forces (FaMA) neutralized a number of JNIM and ISGS militants, and also seized a significant number of weapons and ammunitions. In Niger security forces intensified CT operations in both Tillabery and Diffa regions that resulted in the neutralization of several terrorists. The Burkina Faso Army, in a CT operations rescued several women and children who were kidnapped in Namentenga Province on 20th January.

4. In the **Lake Chad Basin (LCB),** counter terrorism operation dealt a heavy blow to Boko Haram and ISWAP operatives. The terror groups came under intense pressure following the deliberate air and grounds operations against terrorist hideouts. This resulted in the neutralization of several Boko Haram militants in the Sambisa Forest where the group operate safe abodes. For instance, about 100 Boko Haram militants were killed in the Sambisa Forest on 10th February, while about 70 ISWAP operatives were killed in Borno on15th March. Despite the degraded capacities of Boko Haram and ISWAP by the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and the national Armies of Chad, Nigeria, Niger and Cameroon, the terrorist groups continue to exhibit considerable level of momentum. Multiple vulnerabilities including the worsening security situation in the Sahel, arms proliferation from the Libya and Russia-Ukraine war as well as climate change issues continue to fester development of terrorism in the LCB.

5. Counter terrorism operations in the **Great Lakes region** recorded a boost by the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF). After six months of delays and logistical challenges, EASF reinforced its deployment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Kenya airlifted Burundi's first contingent of about 100 Soldiers to Goma on March 5, and deployed to the nearby town of Sake. Additional Burundian troops arrived on March 15. Given the multiplicity of conflicts affecting Easter DRC, the EASF could prove a significant contributor to the peace and stability in the region. The caution, however, is that a clear concept of operation is required, and lesson from similar deployment on the continent needs to guide their operation. In **Southern Africa**, specifically **Northeastern Mozambican Province of Cabo Delgado**, poor coordination between the RDF, FADM, and the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) continue to hamper counter-terrorism operations and limited CT successes. CT operations in the **North Africa and Maghreb** recorded remarkable successes as the Egyptian Army largely reduced terrorist attacks in the **Sinai Peninsula** considerably. The CT operations have successfully halted terrorist attacks in the area and allowed reconstruction and development initiatives to take shape. In Mauritania, a well-coordinated intelligence led CT operations resulted in the neutralization four terrorists who broke jail from a Nouakchott Central Prison that holds suspected terrorists.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Terrorist and Violent Extremist groups continue to exhibit a great capability of resilience and freedom of movement along their mobility corridors. This resulted in the continued destruction of infrastructure, properties, and the loss of human lives and livelihoods. While counter terrorism operations dislodged and disrupted several terrorists' activities, especially in the Horn of Africa, Lake Chad Basin (LCB), Sinai Peninsula, and the North-Eastern Mozambican Province of Cabo Delgado, a considerable amount of work is required to further degrade the capabilities of the various groups and deny them the footholds that they currently operate.

2. Based on the analysis, the following recommendations are provided for policy actions:

A. SALW Proliferation, Management and its Impacts on CT: The period under review registered complex attacks on military bases in Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Somalia and Mali resulted in the looting of stockpiles of sophisticated government arms and ammunition by terrorist groups. The lack of effective protection of stockpiles of arms and ammunition in many regions of the Continent, particularly the Sahel region, Horn of Africa, and the Lake Chad Basin constitutes a setback to the fight against violent extremism and terrorism. The current precarious security situation in many regions on the continent requires much more rigor in the implementation of policies linked to SALW. Collective awareness, improving physical security and stockpile management of government-held SALW and ammunition as well as preventing their diversion and illicit trafficking are required in the fight against terrorism.

B. Situation in Burkina Faso: The situation in Burkina Faso for the period remained a challenging one. Terrorist groups are expanding their activities, exacerbating inter-communal tensions and exploiting the collective grievances of the local populations. The continued civilian casualties are fast eroding the confidence of citizens in the ability of the government to protect them and ensure their safety from attacks by armed groups. Burkina Faso urgently requires the mobilization of all segments of the society through a campaign aimed at winning hearts and minds of the populace. Inclusive measures that seek to protect local communities and ensure their resilience could be an enduring solution to rebuilding the confidence and trust of the citizenry. The international community, the AU, the ECOWAS may want to urgently offer assistance to the country to avoid potential destabilization of the entire West Africa region. Members of the Accra Initiative may have to recommit to their planned deployment to address the spillover of violent terrorism extremism.

C. Mercenaries and Private Military Contractors (PMC): The Convention for the Elimination of Mercenarism in Africa, the Johannesburg Declaration on Silencing the Guns in Africa, as well as the AU Master Roadmap of Practical Steps to Silence the Gun in Africa by 2030 underscores the need for AU members' states to control arms circulation and avoid the use of mercenaries. Indeed, 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government held Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in 2022 affirmed for the call for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries. Contrary to the provisions and commitments made in, a number of African countries currently in the eye of the storm of terrorism continue to engage in magnitude of proportionality the use of PMC and community self-defense auto groups as force multipliers in the fight against terrorism. This situation has the propensity of worsening the security situations, as arms, weapons and ammunition in the hands of these non-state actors are not properly identified, marked, tracked and traced. The peace and Security Council of the AU (AUPSC) may want to assess the situation and take the required policy decisions.

D. Respect for Human Right while Countering Terrorism: The period witnessed several instances of Civilian casualties during CT. Some of the security forces issued statements admitting the Civilian casualties in their operations. Deployed non-state actors engaged in CT operations also carried out their operations without regard to international humanitarian laws, human rights laws, and safety of the civilian populations. This situation could further deteriorate the trust and confidence of the local population. Training for the deployed troops on the respect human rights during CT is required.

ACSRT/CAERT
African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism
Centre Africain d'Études et de Recherche sur le Terrorisme

About The ACSRT:

The African Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) was established as a structure of the African Union in 2004. The decision to establish the Centre was taken in 2002 as part of the AU Plan of Action (PoA) to Prevent and Combat of Terrorism. Its primary role is to assist AU member States build their Counter-Terrorism capacities. Its mandate includes the conduct of research, analysis and studies on the terrorism situation and terrorist groups in Africa, maintaining a terrorism database, centralizing information on terrorism and sharing this with AU Member States. The Centre conducts assessment missions to various AU Member States in order to ascertain their Counter-Terrorism capability and compliance with International Legal instruments and then provide advice on what needs to be done. In its capacity building effort, the Centre conducts seminars, workshops, and training sessions in various aspects of Counterterrorism for Member States and facilitates the drafting of their Counter-Terrorism legislation, strategies, and Plans of Action in accordance with human rights requirements.

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