

Boko Haram Recent Attacks

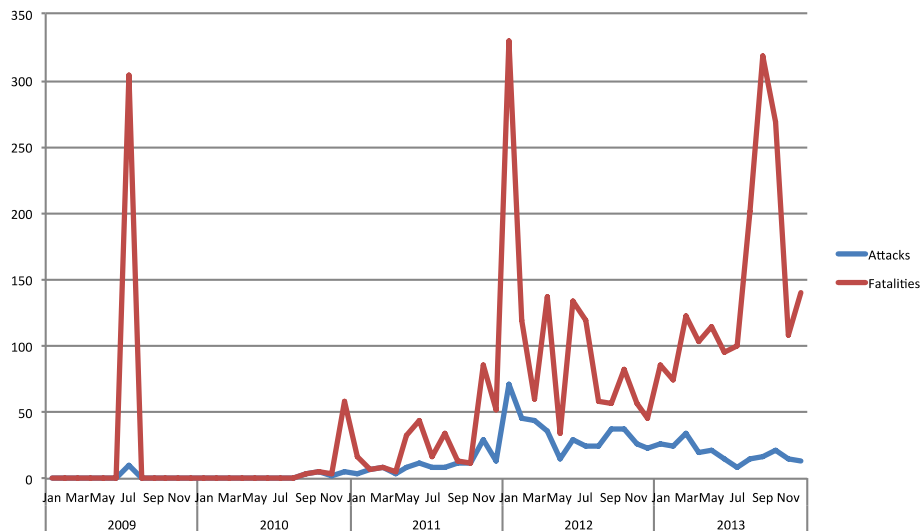
On Tuesday, April 15, 2014, the terrorist organization Boko Haram attacked a girls' school in Chibok, Borno state, in northern Nigeria, abducting between 250-300 young school girls. Boko Haram's leader, Abubakar Shekau, released a video on May 5, threatening to sell the girls as "wives" and citing ideological opposition to the education of young girls. The abduction and subsequent developments have prompted several nations to send logistical support teams and the Nigerian government to offer a \$300,000 reward for information leading to the girls' rescue. On May 5, Boko Haram took advantage of a distracted military and attacked the unprotected town of Gaboru Ngala, reportedly killing up to 300 civilians. START has compiled the following background information on the history and networking relationships of Boko Haram, and updated data from a previous background report on the group.

HISTORY OF BOKO HARAM

Founded in the Muslim-dominated northern Nigeria in 2002 by Mohammed Yusuf, Boko Haram was originally labeled as the Nigerian Taliban because of its ideology and methods. Boko Haram, which translates to "Western education is forbidden," is also known as "Jama'atu Ahl as-Sunnah li-Da'awati wal-Jihad" (People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad).

Prior to 2009, Yusuf's followers were not as active as members of Boko Haram are today, but they did attempt several attacks against Nigerian security forces, only one of which was successful.¹ In 2003, a group of Yusuf's followers established a small settlement near the border of Niger called "Afghanistan." Local officials denounced the settlement and called for it to be disbanded.² Eventually, escalating tensions culminated in the group assaulting the homes of local officials and police,³ to which the Nigerian security forces retaliated, killing several group members and destroying their "Afghanistan" settlement.⁴ Despite frequent arrests of Yusuf, the group and the Nigerian government were able to maintain a truce for the next five years.⁵

Boko Haram Attacks and Fatalities* by Month, 2009-2013



Source: Global Terrorism Database

*Includes perpetrator fatalities

¹ The American Foreign Policy Council's World Almanac of Islamism, "Boko Haram", August 21, 2013, <http://almanac.afpc.org/boko-haram>

² Ibid

³ Benjamin Maingwa and Ufo Okeke Uzodike, "The Changing Dynamics of Boko Haram Terrorism", Al-Jazeera Center for Studies, July 31, 2012, <http://studies.aljazeera.net/ResourceGallery/media/Documents/2012/7/31/20127316843815734The%20Changing%20Dynamics%20of%20Boko%20Haram%20Terrorism.pdf>

⁴ The American Foreign Policy Council's World Almanac of Islamism, "Boko Haram", August 21, 2013, <http://almanac.afpc.org/boko-haram>

⁵ Ibid

2009-present

- In July 2009, Nigerian police cracked down on Yusuf's group, now more commonly being referred to as Boko Haram, after its members refused to follow a new motorbike helmet law. A series of violent clashes between the group and security forces soon erupted in Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, and Kano states. Yusuf was captured during a battle with security forces in Borno, and he was later executed while in police custody.⁶
- The group was inactive for the next year until July 2010 when the former second-in-command of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekau, released a video assuming leadership as well as promising attacks.⁷ The threat was acted upon when Boko Haram conducted several suicide bombings and assassinations around the country as well as carrying out a prison break in Bauchi, which freed close to 700 inmates.⁸
- On August 26, 2011, Boko Haram detonated a car-bomb at United Nations headquarters in Abuja, killing 23 people and injuring 81 others.⁹
- January of 2012 saw Boko Haram's most deadly single day assault, with bomb and gun attacks killing an estimated 185 people.¹⁰
- The influence of al-Qa'ida and its associated movement on Boko Haram also increased between 2009 and the present. The intensity of attacks prompted a declaration of a state of emergency in three states, Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa as well as a Joint Task Force (JSF) effort to push Boko Haram out of cities.
- Despite having minimal support from the Muslim-dominated north, Boko Haram remains highly active.
- On Nov. 13, 2013, The U.S. Department of State announced the designation of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.

ORGANIZATION CHARACTERISTICS

IDEOLOGY

Boko Haram is a violent Sunni jihadist group founded by cleric Mohammed Yusuf, who was previously a leader within a Salafist group in the 1990s, and was inspired by 14th century fundamentalist scholar Ibn Taymiyyah.¹¹ As Boko Haram's alliances with al-Qa'ida-linked groups, such as al-Qa'ida in the Land of Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM), have strengthened, its interpretation of violent jihad has changed, increasing the scope of its targets and areas of activity beyond the borders of Nigeria.

SPECIFIC GOALS

- Boko Haram wishes to expel the political community of northern Nigeria which they believe has been seized by corrupt and false Muslims¹² and to establish a fundamentalist interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law) across all of Nigeria.¹³
- The group also advocates against Western influence in Africa and has allied with several militant organizations to fight government forces in Mali and Nigeria.
- As evidenced by the increasing number of attacks against educational targets, Boko Haram also seeks to rid Nigeria of any Western education, including schools for girls.

⁶ Mohammed Aly Sergie, "Boko Haram", Council on Foreign Relations, February 26, 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739>

⁷ Counter Terrorism 2014 Calender, "Boko Haram", http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/boko_haram.html

⁸ Mohammed Aly Sergie, "Boko Haram", Council on Foreign Relations, February 26, 2014,

⁹ National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). (2012). Global Terrorism Database [Data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Mohammed Aly Sergie, "Boko Haram", Council on Foreign Relations, February 26, 2014,

¹² Andrew Walker, "What is Boko Haram", United States Institute of Peace, May 30, 2012, <http://www.usip.org/publications/what-boko-haram>

¹³ Raifu Oriyommi, "Nigeria's Boko Haram", On Islam, December 26, 2011,

<http://www.onislam.net/english/news/africa/455146-nigerias-boko-haram-profile.html>

POLITICAL ACTIVITY

Boko Haram does not engage in any form of nonviolent or conventional political activity, although it does denounce all forms of government that do not adhere to an Islamic system.¹⁴ There have been minimal communications between government officials and Boko Haram regarding ceasefires, but they are unlikely to succeed as neither side will accept the others' terms and Boko Haram is ideologically opposed to any rule of other than its interpretation of Sharia.

FINANCING

Boko Haram receives funding through several avenues including abductions, robberies, donations, extortion and financing through its network of alliances with other terrorist organizations. Boko Haram has most likely received funding from Al-Qa'ida in the Land of Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM, or AQIM).¹⁵¹⁶¹⁷ With the help of AQLIM, Boko Haram has reportedly been able to secure additional donations from organizations based in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia.¹⁸ Boko Haram also engages in kidnapping for ransom and bank robberies.¹⁹

LEADERSHIP, STRUCTURE AND STRENGTH

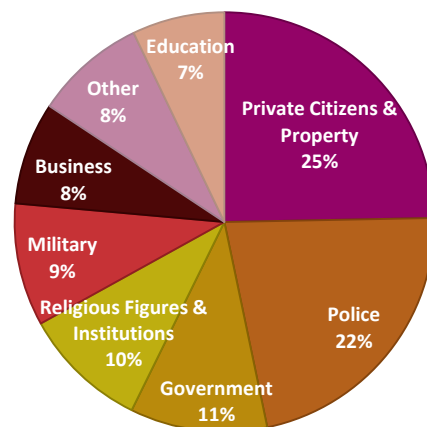
Boko Haram is organized in a hierarchical structure with one overall leader. The founder, Mohammed Yusuf, was killed in 2009 while in police custody. Since July 2010, Abubakar Shekau has led Boko Haram,²⁰ working primarily through intermediaries. Individual cell commanders have a great deal of autonomy in day-to-day operations. The exact strength is unknown although estimates range significantly. In the 2013 United States Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism, Boko Haram is listed as having anywhere from several hundred to a few thousand members.

BOKO HARAM TARGETS

TARGET TYPES

Boko Haram most commonly targets private citizens and property (25% of attacks), police (22% of attacks), government targets (11%), religious figures and institutions (10% of attacks), and the military (9% of attacks). Boko Haram's major attacks on churches and religious figures have at times been followed by rioting and retaliatory attacks against Muslim targets, exacerbating religious polarization of the Nigerian population.

Boko Haram Target Types, 2009-2013



¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Abuses in Nigeria", October 11, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/node/110632/section/7>

¹⁵ The American Foreign Policy Council's World Almanac of Islamism, "Boko Haram", August 21, 2013, <http://almanac.afpc.org/boko-haram>

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State "Country Report on Terrorism 2013", April 2014. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/225886.pdf>

¹⁷ Combating Terrorism Center at West Point "Boko Haram's International Connections", January 14, 2013 <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-harams-international-connections>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ John Campbell, "Why are Boko Haram Fighters Successful", Nigerian Tribune, March 8, 2014, <http://tribune.com.ng/index.php/columns/backpage/in-out/item/818-why-are-boko-haram-fighters-successful>

²⁰ Counter Terrorism 2014 Calendar, "Boko Haram", http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/boko_haram.html

ATTACKS ON EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Boko Haram's name and ideology indicate antipathy towards Western educational norms. Despite this, Boko Haram did not initially target schools, with only three attacks recorded prior to 2012. In 2012, Boko Haram started targeting schools on a regular basis, with 47 attacks that year resulting in 77 fatalities.

While attacks on schools decreased in 2013, perhaps due to frequent school closures in its areas of operations, Boko Haram carried out 14 attacks on schools in which 119 people died. In February 2014, Boko Haram attacked a boarding school in Yobe state, killing 29 male students but sending the female students away with admonitions to get married.²¹

BOKO HARAM IN CONTEXT

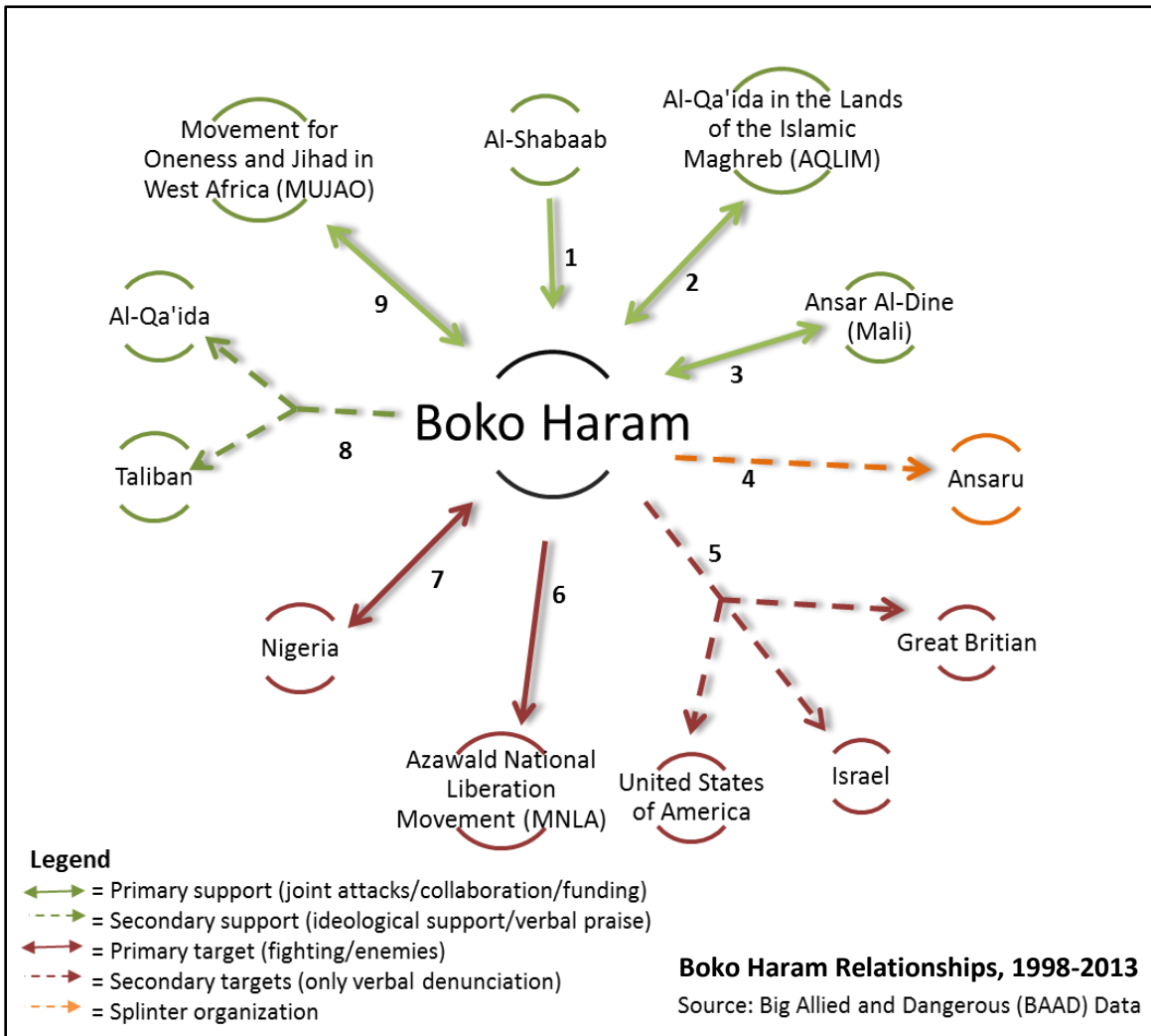
More than 480 perpetrator groups committed terrorist attacks during the time period that Boko Haram has been active. From 2009-2013, Boko Haram was responsible for 2.34 percent of more than 34,000 terrorist attacks that took place worldwide. Additionally, Boko Haram was responsible for 5.9 percent of fatalities from terrorist attacks during this same period. The group is now among the deadliest in the world.

Most Lethal Perpetrator Groups (2009-2013)	# of Attacks	# of Fatalities
Taliban	2328	7348
Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	761	3804
Boko Haram	801	3666
Al-Qa`ida in Iraq	786	3417
Al-Shabaab	837	2149
Al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)	467	1939
Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist)	1356	1660
Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant	139	1436
Al-Nusrah Front	66	1010
Lashkar-e-Jhangvi	68	829

In Nigeria, Boko Haram was responsible for more than 80 percent of all terrorist attacks between 1970 and 2013 for which a perpetrator group was identified, despite their relatively recent onset of violence in 2009. Likewise, deaths from Boko Haram's attacks represented nearly 70 percent of all fatalities from terrorist attacks in Nigeria during this time period. The next most active group in Nigeria was the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which carried out more than 70 attacks and killed approximately 280, beginning in 2006.

Ansaru splintered from Boko Haram in 2012. Since then, the group has carried out a number of attacks in Nigeria, including targeted kidnappings of international figures. According to statements made by Ansaru following several of its attacks, the group acts in retaliation for military intervention by Western nations in places like Afghanistan and Mali. Examples of these attacks include the kidnapping of a French national in December 2012 and seven foreign nationals kidnapped in an attack on a Lebanese construction company in February 2013.

²¹ "Nigeria School Raid in Yobe State Leaves 29 Dead," BBC, February 25, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26338041>



- 1) **Al-Shabaab** and Boko Haram share similar ideologies and in 2011 Boko Haram member Mamman Nur reportedly received trainings from Al-Shabaab in Somalia before launching an attack against the United Nations headquarters in Abuja on August 26, 2011.
- 2) **Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQLIM, or AQIM)** has worked extensively with Boko Haram, including training individuals who are now members of Boko Haram as early as the mid-2000s. Although the exact beginning and extent of the relationship is unknown, in 2010 AQLIM released statements offering training, supplies, and militants to support Boko Haram. Since 2011, AQLIM has provided Boko Haram with financing, including reportedly facilitating donation lines from organizations in Great Britain and Saudi Arabia, trainings and weapons. The two organizations conduct joint operations in Mali and the magnitude of AQLIM's influence on Boko Haram can be seen in their increasingly sophisticated and coordinated attacks.
- 3) **Ansar Al-Dine** and Boko Haram fought alongside each other in Mali against the Azawad National Liberation Movement and several reports have documented Boko Haram activity in Ansar Al-Dine controlled territories.
- 4) **Ansaru (Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan)** splintered off from Boko Haram due to ideological differences in January 2012. Ansaru criticized Boko Haram for not adhering to the same interpretation of defensive jihad. Although the groups' ideological differences influence their tactics and target selection, Ansaru's goals of eradicating Western influence in Western African and establishing Sharia are similar to Boko Haram's.

- 5) Boko Haram's ideology is strongly opposed to **Western influence** in Nigeria. In 2012, Boko Haram released a video calling for jihad against the United States, Israel, and Great Britain. However, Boko Haram has never directly targeted any of these nations. In response to Boko Haram's recent abduction of over 250 school girls and threats sell them, both the United States and Great Britain offered advisers to support the Nigerian government's recovery effort.
- 6) In 2012, Boko Haram joined with AQLIM, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) and Ansar Al-Dine to create the Islamic State of Azawad and rebuff the **Azawad National Liberation Movement (MNLA)** from areas in the Malian region of Gao. Although Boko Haram clashed with MNLA, the group has not been a significant target of Boko Haram's attacks.
- 7) Since its formation in 2002 and move to greater militancy in 2009, Boko Haram has ideologically and militarily opposed the **Nigerian government**. Boko Haram wishes to create an Islamic state in Nigeria and has targeted government security forces throughout its existence. The Nigerian government has responded with military and police forces, attempting to destroy Boko Haram's strongholds and arrest militants responsible for attacks, including the high profile execution of former leader Mohammed Yusuf in 2009. Although the two sides have communicated regarding ceasefires and concessions, no significant progress toward peace talks has been made.
- 8) In 2010 Boko Haram released a statement offering support and pledging alliance to the **Afghani Taliban and Al-Qa'ida Central**. In the same statement Boko Haram conceded to not currently having contact with either group. Although ideologically both groups have strongly impacted Boko Haram, there is no evidence that either has provided any material form of support.
- 9) **The Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)** has provided training camps and conducted joint operations with Boko Haram militants in Mali. The groups are ideologically aligned and wish to establish Sharia beyond the borders of their respective home bases.

OTHER NOTABLE BOKO HARAM ATTACKS

SEPTEMBER 17, 2013

Gunmen dressed in military fatigues set up illegal checkpoints in order to assault civilians in Beni Shiek village, Borno state. Approximately 142 people were killed in the attacks, which were later claimed by Boko Haram.

MAY 7, 2013

Gunmen launched a series of coordinated attacks in Bama Town, Borno state, which included assaults on a military barracks, a police station, a prison, and several government buildings. At least 55 people, including a number of the assailants, were killed in the attacks.

JULY 6, 2013

Assailants set fire to the Government Secondary School in the Potiskum local government area of Yobe state. As school children and staff fled the burning building, the perpetrators opened fire, killing 46 and wounding 4 others. Boko Haram later claimed responsibility for the attack in a video posted online.

NOVEMBER 25, 2012

In two coordinated attacks in the city of Jaji, Kaduna state, assailants crashed an explosive laden bus into St. Andrew Military Protestant Church. After the bus crash, a car bomb parked outside the church exploded, targeting first responders. Thirty-two people were killed and 11 wounded across both attacks.

OCTOBER 18, 2012

In a series of coordinated attacks, Boko Haram members attacked an Islamic seminary school and two primary schools in Potiskum in Yobe state killing approximately 23 people.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2012

In a series of six coordinated attacks in Damaturu, the capital of Yobe state, Boko Haram militants attacked the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the Pilgrims Welfare Commission building, two primary schools, a fire station, and an electoral office. The attacks killed approximately 15 people.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

In at least 21 coordinated attacks, members of Boko Haram attacked cell towers with explosives. In total, approximately 31 towers were attacked across four states late Tuesday and early Wednesday, killing approximately 15 people. Boko Haram claimed that the towers were targeted because the cell companies were assisting the government in their counterterrorism efforts.

JULY 7, 2012

In six coordinated attacks, Boko Haram operatives attacked six villages across Plateau state near the city of Jos. This series of armed assaults left 56 people dead.

APRIL 8, 2012

In one of two bombings in Nigeria on Easter Sunday, a suicide car bomb exploded outside of All Nations Christian Assembly Church in Kaduna, killing at least 40 and wounding at least 10. No group claimed responsibility for the attack, but Boko Haram was suspected.

FEBRUARY 20, 2012

Armed members of Boko Haram stormed a market in Maiduguri and opened fire on civilians. Joint Task Force (JTF) forces at the market noticed the group planted bombs and a gunfight ensued. At least 38 people were killed in the attack, including eight assailants. The bombs were detonated, either by Boko Haram or in controlled detonations carried out by JTF.

DECEMBER 25, 2011

Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attack on St. Teresa Catholic Church in Madalla, Nigeria. This attack was one of four that day. A bomb exploded while the church was full of people attending Christmas mass. The explosion destroyed cars in the area and did substantial damage to the church itself. In total, 37 people were killed and 57 were wounded. A man named Kabiru Soko was arrested for his role in the bombing.

NOVEMBER 4, 2011

In a series of coordinated attacks across Yobe and Borno state, Boko Haram attacked at least six churches, four police stations as well as the military Joint Task Force Office, the State Security Services building, a college, and local businesses. At the end of the attacks, more than 60 people were dead. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for all of the attacks.

JUNE 26, 2011

On Sunday afternoon in Maiduguri, Borno, Nigeria, between 8 and 10 suspected Boko Haram members threw bombs and fired gun shots in the Dala Kabompi neighborhood at a beer garden. The assailants attacked from the back of seven motorcycles. They set fire to a local bar, and shot anyone trying to escape. At least 25 civilians were killed and approximately 30 more were injured. Military sources suspect that three sets of explosives were used in the attack. The attack caused an unknown amount of property damage. No group claimed responsibility for the attack.

JUNE 16, 2011

At approximately 11 a.m. Thursday, in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria, a suicide car bomb detonated at the Nigerian police headquarters. The Inspector General of Police, Hafiz Ringim, may have been the intended target of the attack. The perpetrator, a traffic warden, and one other person were killed and at least five people were injured. The attack completely destroyed at least 33 vehicles and slightly damaged at least 40 vehicles. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attack.

DECEMBER 24, 2010

On Friday night, in Jos, Plateau, Nigeria, in one of four related attacks, 38 people were killed and 74 others were injured when militants detonated four improvised explosive devices made with dynamite in the Kabong shopping market just minutes apart from one another. Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the attacks.

JULY 27, 2009

During an uprising in July 2009, Boko Haram carried out 10 attacks against a variety of targets including a customs office, police headquarters and a number of police stations, a primary school, a prison, a state unemployment bureau, an unspecified number of churches, and local residences in several cities. These attacks and the police response that followed resulted in the deaths of more than 300 people, including nearly 100 perpetrators.

ABOUT THIS REPORT

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The data presented here are drawn from START's Global Terrorism Database (GTD) and reports from news media. The GTD contains information on more than 113,000 terrorist incidents that have occurred around the world since 1970. For more information about the GTD, visit www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

Data are also drawn from the Big Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) project, which focuses on the creation and maintenance of a comprehensive database of terrorist organizational characteristics and linking that data to prominent event, insurgency and country-level characteristics datasets. The project is led by START investigators Victor Asal and R. Karl Rethemeyer through the Project of Violent Conflict at Rockefeller College, University at Albany-SUNY.

