

BOKO HARAM vs AL-SHABAAB

Boko Haram revealed itself to the global audience in the wake of its abduction of 276 school girls in the town of Chibok, Borno State (Nigeria), on the night of 14 to 15 April 2014. By 2015, the group had become Africa's deadliest terrorist organization. Yet, in 2016, Somali-based Al-Shabaab has overtaken Boko Haram as the deadliest Islamist group in Africa. The following infographics reviews six factors summing up Al-Shabaab's continued superiority to Boko Haram for the period January-June 2017.



GROUP COHESION / UNITY

In August 2016, Boko Haram was split into two factions when IS named Abu Musab al-Barnawi as the group's leader to replace Abubakar Shekau. Al-Barnawi's faction opposes Shekau's indiscriminate targeting of civilians and other Muslims.

In late 2015, in-fighting began to emerge as some commanders sought to align with IS. Group cohesion not affected, as the main commanders — aligned to Al-Qaeda — remain in control of the situation.

ATTACKS

High frequency (at least 3 per week), but mostly with low-level intensity and against soft targets (civilians). Most of the attacks were suicide bombings, the deadliest were recorded in Maiduguri (Borno state). Low-level suicide bombings in northern Cameroon. 5 UN contractors were killed by the group on the Cameroonian border. Deadliest attack recorded on 7 June: at least 17 civilians were killed and 34 wounded, in Maiduguri (Borno state).

Frequent high-level attacks against both military and civilian targets, many of which were executed in Mogadishu. Attacks were also recorded in Kenya. Wide variety of targets (military, government officials, civilians, UN offices, NGOs) demonstrates the group's superior operating capabilities. Deadliest attack recorded on 8 June: 70 people killed and dozens wounded at the Af-urur military camp, in Puntland.

MODUS OPERANDI

Shekau's faction carried out raids on villages, looting of food, abductions and mass murders of civilians, and forceful recruitment of women and children as suicide bombers. Al-Barnawi's faction mainly laid ambushes against the armed forces.

Suicide bombings, grenade attacks, explosives (IEDs, VBIEDs, land mines), regular attacks against military camps (including AMISOM's) and police stations. Kidnapping of aid workers (4 Somali nationals working for the WHO in Luuq, Gedo province, in April 2017).

ABILITY TO MOBILIZE RESOURCES

A UN report released in February 2017 revealed that the group's two factions were running out of cash and unable to pay fighters' monthly salaries, but the recent wave of release of girls previously held in captivity may have generated some cash.

The high frequency and modus operandi of attacks targeting government and AMISOM troops as well as other public places, are evidence of the group's continued access to financial resources.

ENEMY EFFECTIVENESS

A relatively strong and better-resourced federal government and the multinational joint-task force (MNJTF) have been effective in retaking occupied territories.

A struggling central government in Mogadishu, unable to meet people's basic welfare needs. Foreign troops (AMISOM) whose commitment to ending the crisis may be questioned.

LOCAL ACCEPTANCE

Mass abductions of girls and targeting of civilians have greatly eroded communities' trust towards the group.

Distribution of humanitarian aid to affected communities has projected a positive image and increased communities' trust towards the group.