CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE USA
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8.22.14

NIGERIA | Boko Haram Overruns Town, Imposes Rule

Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram reportedly overran the headquarters of Gujba Local Government Area (LGA) in Yobe State, northeast Nigeria, on Aug. 21, and is imposing its religious strictures on the local population.

Eyewitnesses reported to Nigerian media that on Aug. 21 Boko Haram insurgents overran Buni Yadi Town and hoisted their flag over the residence of the District Head, which they are believed to be using as a base. The militants also began enforcing their law on residents; summarily executing two people for smoking, administering 80 lashes to a man who was allegedly co-habiting with a woman who was not his wife, and reportedly killing a known drug dealer.

Buni Yadi suffered several attacks this year. In February, over 50 people were murdered, most of them students, when sect members attacked the Federal Government College. In May, at least 14 soldiers, 11 policemen and two civilians were killed after troops were taken unaware by Boko Haram gunmen. Less than two weeks ago, Boko Haram gunmen reportedly abducted a traditional ruler and a local chemist.

The takeover of Buni Yadi comes two weeks after the sect overran Gwoza Town in neighboring Borno State, killing hundreds of residents and causing hundreds more to flee to nearby hills, where some remain. The militants also hoisted their flag and went on to appoint their own Emir. Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency currently puts the number of people displaced by the takeover of Gwoza at 11,442.

Boko Haram insurgents reportedly have re-grouped to overrun a police training center situated in the predominantly Christian town of Limankara on Aug. 21, killing an unknown number of trainees and forcing the rest to flee to the nearby mountains or to neighboring Adamawa State. This attack follows an unsuccessful attempt a fortnight earlier, in which many insurgents died.

The seizures of Buni Yadi and Gwoza are part of a recent pattern. In late May, the insurgents hoisted their flags in the Ashigashiya Ward of Gwoza LGA, declaring it their headquarters and vowing to launch further attacks on surrounding villages. In a 14-day period from late May to early June, Boko Haram overran 21 communities in Damboa LGA, one in Askira Uba LGA, and another in Chibok LGA, all in Borno State. In each of these communities, the group removed Nigerian national flags and replaced them with its jihadi flag. The fall of Gwoza Town and surrounding areas meant the insurgency was in full control of three LGAs in Borno State.

Special Forces were subsequently deployed to Borno State and reportedly have reclaimed Damboa, Manga, Wanga, Delwa and Mustafari Villages from the insurgents. Efforts to retake Gwoza have stalled due to stiff resistance from the well-resourced militants, many of whom are

said to come from the Ansaru and Harakatul-Muhajiriin terrorist groups, off-shoots of Boko Haram, which are alleged to have a combined force of around 10,000. On Aug. 19, militants reportedly chasd away the elderly women, who had been allowed to remain in Gwoza to bury murdered townsfolk, in preparation for an all-out battle with the army

Mervyn Thomas, Chief Executive of Christian Solidarity Worldwide said, “The appalling excesses of IS in Iraq and Syria have galvanized the international community into renewed efforts to combat Islamist extremism; however these efforts should not be confined to the Middle East. Islamist terror groups like Boko Haram, which appear to be primarily active on the African continent, also pose a threat to international peace and security. The fact that the alleged mastermind of the Nyanya bombings near Abuja in April is a British Nigerian who was radicalized while studying in Wales and was extradited from Sudan, where he reportedly travelled on a British passport, illustrates this point. Parallels between the actions of IS and those of Boko Haram and its allied offshoots are not coincidental. A less compartmentalized approach must be adopted in order for militant jihadism to be addressed effectively, with punitive measures formulated at international level against IS replicated in the case of Boko Haram and other similar groups, including the disruption of funding. Nigeria is facing a transnational and existential threat and every possible assistance must be rendered to this strategic nation as a matter of urgency.”