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STATUS OF BOKO HARAM

By Hilary Matfess

In this photo taken Friday, Oct. 30, 2015, a poster featuring wanted Boko Haram members, pasted onto the wall by Nigeria army in Maiduguri, Nigeria. Nigeria's army has displayed the poster of 100 photographs of the most wanted Boko Haram militants including the shadowy leader Abubakar Shekau, large picture at center, whom they claim to have killed on at least three occasions. (Source: AP Photo/Jossy ola.)

Secretary of State John Kerry's recent trip to Nigeria emphasized the U.S. commitment to helping Nigeria defeat Boko Haram, the Salafist-Jihadi terrorist group that emerged in the northeastern town of Maiduguri in 2002. Leadership of the group is unclear, with different characterizations depending on the source. A few days before the secretary's arrival, the Nigerian military announced that Abubakar Shekau, Boko Haram's embattled leader, had been "fatally wounded" in an airstrike. Weeks before, it appeared that the group was undergoing a fragmentation, as it was announced in the Islamic State's e-magazine Dabiq that Shekau had been replaced as Wali (the top leadership position in the insurgency) by a man called Abu Musab al-Barnawi. All these developments follow the December 2015 declaration by President Buhari that Boko Haram had been "technically defeated" and a decline in the group's lethality in recent months. In these circumstances, it is important to assess the current status of the leadership of Boko Haram and the fight against violent extremism in the Lake Chad Basin. *more...*

Hilary Matfess is a Research Associate in the Africa Program at the Institute for Defense Analyses.

CAN THE UPCOMING CITES CONFERENCE STOP ELEPHANT POACHING?

By Sarah Graveline

In this April 28, 2016, file photo, a Maasai man in ceremonial dress poses in front of one of around a dozen pyres of ivory, in Nairobi National Park, Kenya. The Kenya Wildlife Service stacked 105 tons of ivory consisting of 16,000 tusks, and 1 ton of rhino horn, from stockpiles around the country, in preparation for it to be torched to encourage global efforts to help stop the poaching of elephants and rhinos. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis, File)

Elephant poaching carries a tangible cost for both animals and humans in sub-Saharan Africa. Across the continent the elephant population declined by 144,000 from 2007 to 2014, primarily due to poaching. Not only does this loss negatively affect the tourism industry in central and southern Africa, but poaching also provides revenue to criminal gangs, militias, and corrupt units of some African militaries. While these issues are well known, efforts to restrict poaching are mixed and do not address larger challenges related to interfaces between elephant populations, poachers, and rural communities. As members of the regulatory Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) prepare to meet in South Africa on September 24, African nations have an opportunity to consider adopting policies that take into account these broader concerns. *more...*

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IDA's three federally-funded research and development centers provide objective analyses of national security issues and related national challenges, particularly those requiring scientific and technical expertise.

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The Split

The appointment of al-Barnawi as Wali of Boko Haram is one of the first tangible results of the sect's pledge of *bayat* (allegiance) to the Islamic State (ISIL) in March 2015. ISIL's intervention on the leadership role could signal an intention to increase its involvement with the sect, but that is far from certain. According to most reliable accounts, affiliation has not radically altered Boko Haram's objectives and capabilities. In the year and a half since the pledge of bayat, there has been much speculation about the potential for an influx of foreign fighters or material support to the Nigerian sect, but neither has materialized.

Little is known about al-Barnawi. According to well-regarded analysts with connections to the insurgency, including Ahmed Salkida and Fulan Nasrullah, he is the son of Boko Haram's founder, Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf was killed in 2009 during a government crackdown on the then largely criminal enterprise. Nasrullah and Salkida have both asserted that after Yusuf's death, Abubakar Shekau not only took over leadership of Boko Haram, but also took al-Barnawi under his wing.

The falling out between al-Barnawi and Shekau appears to be related to Shekau's indiscriminate killing of Muslims and allegedly luxurious lifestyle. In his interview with Dabiq, al-Barnawi asserted that during his tenure he would focus on targeting Christians and Western aid.

Shekau's response to the announcement of al-Barnawi's appointment, first through an audio message and then through a video, broke his year-long silence and dispelled the claims that he had been killed. In both of these messages, Shekau expressed disappointment in ISIL's endorsement of al-Barnawi, but reasserted his commitment to the insurgency's campaign against the Nigerian state. Shekau referred to Boko Haram by its original name, "Jamaatu ahlis Sunna li'Dawati wal Jihad," rather than by its recent ISIL-affiliated moniker "Islamic State—West Africa Province," underscoring the perceived fragmentation within the group. In the video he released, Shekau featured the Chibok girls, who have come to be a valuable negotiating tool and symbol of the sect's strength. Even if Shekau was subsequently killed, as claimed by the Nigerian government, it is unclear if al-Barnawi's faction would obtain control over the Chibok girls.

Some theorists of insurgent organization, most notably Paul Staniland, suggest that Boko Haram is predisposed to fragmentation, given that it is composed of cells that are largely independent of one another. This is not the first time that Boko Haram has experienced a splintering. In 2012, a group broke off from Boko Haram, criticizing the killings of Muslims and activities as "inhuman to the Muslim ummah [nation]." The group, called "Ansaru" but formally known as

"Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan," which means "Vanguards for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa," was led by Khalid al-Barnawi (who has no apparent relation to the al-Barnawi–appointed Wali). The group's activities petered out within a few years. It is unclear if the new, ISIL-affiliated sect will have greater longevity than the previous splinter group.

According to the experienced Africanist Ambassador John Campbell, the apparent fracture is likely to result in a greater geographic scope of the insurgency. Campbell speculates that activities could spread to Kano in the North West, possibly Lagos in the country's south, and almost certainly in Cameroon and Niger. He also asserts that as a result of this fragmentation, "there may well be greater cooperation with the various criminal networks that are active across the Sahel," aimed at raising money for their operations. Campbell suggests that the ISIL affiliation, with its transnational implications, may portend a "cosmopolitanism" that would encourage pan-Sahelian cooperation between the Nigerian insurgents and groups like al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and criminal networks.

The Solution

While shifts in the group's leadership may alter the insurgency's modus operandi and geographic scope, there are no grounds to radically alter ongoing counterinsurgency efforts. As rainy season in the north is drawing to a close and ground mobility becomes easier, it is likely that the insurgents will renew their violent campaign. Regional governments should consider a multifaceted approach to countering Boko Haram, focusing not only on military operations but also on social and economic development. As Secretary Kerry emphasized during his visit, "We also know that beating Boko Haram on the battlefield is only the beginning of what we need to do." He emphasized that to counter violent extremism, "nations need to do more than just denounce bankrupt, dead-end ideologies that the terrorists support. They also have to offer their citizens an alternative that is better, that offers hope, that actually delivers on its promises." The provision of services, including health care and education, and emergency humanitarian aid, are important aspects of defeating Boko Haram and preventing the rise of similar groups.

Finally, addressing the human rights abuses that have been committed by the Nigerian police and military throughout this counterinsurgency campaign is an important measure. Secretary Kerry alluded to as much in his statement: "it is understandable that in the wake of terrorist activity, some people are tempted to crack down on everyone and anyone who could theoretically pose some sort of a threat." This message should also be conveyed in neighboring countries that share the threat posed by Boko Haram. In Cameroon, for example, reports of military abuses against civilians and extrajudicial killings of young men merely suspected of being Boko Haram fighters are particularly disturbing.

Conclusions

Recent shifts in Boko Haram's leadership structure have already indicated a distinct fragmentation of the organization. Looking ahead, it will be critical to monitor how this fragmentation will affect the geography of the insurgency and the various groups' operating methods.

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Elephant poaching carries a tangible cost for both animals and humans in sub-Saharan Africa. Across the continent the elephant population declined by 144,000 from 2007 to 2014, primarily due to poaching. Not only does this loss negatively affect the tourism industry in central and southern Africa, but poaching also provides revenue to criminal gangs, militias, and corrupt units of some African militaries. While these issues are well known, efforts to restrict poaching are mixed and do not address larger challenges related to interfaces between elephant populations, poachers, and rural communities. As members of the regulatory Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) prepare to meet in South Africa on September 24, African nations have an opportunity to consider adopting policies that take into account these broader concerns.

In this April 28, 2016, file photo, a Maasai man in ceremonial dress poses in front of one of around a dozen pyres of ivory, in Nairobi National Park, Kenya. The Kenya Wildlife Service stacked 105 tons of ivory consisting of 16,000 tusks, and 1 ton of rhino horn, from stockpiles around the country, in preparation for it to be torched to encourage global efforts to help stop the poaching of elephants and rhinos. (Source: AP Photo/Ben Curtis, File)

Poaching: Dangerous for Elephants and Humans

Poaching creates economic and security challenges for countries with large elephant populations. Economically, poaching threatens Africa's $43.6 billion tourism industry. A United Nations survey of African tour operators found that animal-watching safaris account for 80 percent of their revenue. Declining elephant populations can affect demand for these trips. A report by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's "iWorry" campaign attempts to put a price on this declining demand, estimating that poaching costs the tourism industry over $44 million annually, with each individual elephant generating an estimated $1.6 million in tourism revenue over its lifetime.

Elephant poaching also creates insecurity through first- and second-order effects. Heavily armed poachers regularly attack and kill park rangers, who are frequently the only law enforcement officials present in remote parks. In Central Africa, armed militias increasingly use revenue from poaching to sustain themselves, while preying upon local communities. Advocacy groups report that the Lord's Resistance Army and Seleka rebel groups actively poach in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR), respectively.

More concerning still, many African militaries appear to be involved in poaching networks. Park rangers in the DRC's Garamba National park have reported that the Ugandan military has taken part in poaching, shooting elephants from attack helicopters. Similarly, Sudanese, South Sudanese, and Congolese militaries have also been implicated in poaching or benefiting from poaching by controlling the illicit networks through which ivory flows. Government complicity in poaching clearly challenges conservation efforts, while simultaneously eroding security in conflict areas. When militaries and the militias they are supposed to be fighting both profit from the same illicit networks, local communities are right to question their government's commitment to ending conflict.

How Effective is CITES at Stopping Poaching?

Despite these challenges, African states and international partners have taken tangible steps toward controlling poaching. The primary tool used to fight poaching is CITES, a multilateral treaty that brings together 182 nations to identify and regulate the trade in 35,000 species to ensure their conservation. CITES entered into force in 1975. It lists flora and fauna in three appendixes, each with different levels of restriction on trade. Since 1990, African elephants have been classified in Appendix I, meaning that the trade in ivory is wholly prohibited on the international market. Some elephant populations have been moved back to Appendix II, which allows limited trade, since 1997. (Appendix III has the fewest restrictions on trade.)

This strict classification has generated debate over the impact of trade bans on poaching. Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have regularly sought permission to auction collected ivory and have held controlled ivory sales in 1997, 2002, 2004, and 2008. While activists claim these sales have increased poaching by driving up the demand for ivory, academic findings are mixed. A study that found the 2008 sale increased poaching has been contested, and a broader survey finds that corruption and access to uncontrolled markets have a stronger impact on poaching than controlled sales, which are correlated with declines in poaching.

Divided Over the Decision to Sell

While the impacts of controlled sales on poaching are not fully understood, southern African states' pursuance of special permission to sell ivory has generated fierce political debate. In the lead-up to the September CITES Conference of Parties, Namibia, South Africa, and Zimbabwe have submitted a proposal to legalize controlled ivory trade in their countries. Namibia and Zimbabwe are also requesting the complete removal of their elephants from the CITES appendixes. Led by Zimbabwe, these countries argue that removing the ban on ivory will enable money from sales to support communities near elephant territory and actually reduce poaching by driving down the price of ivory.

The proposals to sell ivory are largely opposed by other CITES parties. Kenya, in particular, has historically taken a hard line against controlled ivory trade. Richard Leakey, the Head of Kenya's Wildlife Service, strongly opposes ivory sales because he believes they drive up demand. In April this year, Kenya publicly burned 105 tons of ivory in a pointed critique of the southern states' plans to sell.

Although the disagreement over banning the ivory trade is not new, neither side is willing to concede easily. Because the academic evidence is inconclusive, nations can cherry pick studies to support their chosen policies. It therefore appears that the debate over ivory sales will dominate the 2016 CITES agenda, leaving little time to consider policies to mitigate other challenges to Africa's elephant populations.

Accounting for More Human-Elephant Interactions

When African states and the international community focus on poaching, they frequently overlook the challenges of managing the increasing number of areas in which rural communities and elephant territory overlap. Elephants can be destructive, destroying crops, homes, and occasionally taking human lives when they venture into rural villages. As Africa's population grows, and elephants' territory shrinks, experts predict there will be a corresponding uptick in conflict between human and elephant populations. African states have proposed several solutions, including fencing national parks or culling elephant herds, but these proposals are expensive and, some argue, inhumane.

Conclusion

The 2016 CITES Conference of Parties presents an opportunity for all countries invested in protecting African elephants to consider the broader ramifications of policies affecting trade in ivory. African states' priorities should be to protect communities affected by their proximity to elephant populations and to address the corresponding economic and security challenges imposed by poaching. While these policies, which may include strengthened support to park rangers and increasing community-based tourism opportunities, must be generated nationally, building consensus through deliberations within the CITES forum is an important first step toward creating international norms that protect both elephants and neighboring human communities.

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