

# Possible Union Between Boko Haram and ISIS Threatens Africa

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*Terrorism continues to advance in Africa. Brutal attacks in Cameroon earlier this week raised suspicions about an integration between Boko Haram and a regional branch of ISIS. The result of this unification process could be the formation of an even stronger and more influential terrorist organization.*

This Tuesday, unidentified terrorists murdered five soldiers and a civilian in a violent attack against a military base in Zigue, a city in the northern region of Cameroon. Previously, on Saturday, another military base had been attacked in Sagme, also in the north of the country, near the border with Nigeria, leaving at least seven soldiers dead. Apparently, other attacks have recently taken place in the same region, both against the military and civilians. However, the precariousness of data reporting – something common in African countries due to the inefficiency of state services – makes it difficult to reveal the real dimension of the problem.

The geographic proximity to Nigeria favors the action of terrorists in Cameroon. The neighboring country is the territory of operations of Boko Haram – a Sunni fundamentalist and jihadist organization that since 2002 has been trying to implement Sharia in Nigerian territory. Despite having been founded in Nigeria and having this country as its main focus of action, Boko Haram has expanded its power to neighboring countries such as Chad and Cameroon in recent years, taking advantage of the political and social instability of these nations to increase its area of occupation. It is not by chance that the most recent attacks in Cameroon took place precisely in regions close to the border with Nigeria.

However, the problem is not restricted to Boko Haram, as this group is unlikely to operate alone in these attacks. In May, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekaku died, allegedly by suicide. Following this event, a regional branch of **ISIS, the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP), began a process of absorbing the remaining members of Boko Haram**, forming a much stronger, more equipped, prepared, and unified militia. ISWAP has claimed responsibility for many of the recent terrorist attacks in the three countries where Boko Haram is present, including Cameroon – and, interestingly, Boko Haram did the same. This integration explains the intensified frequency and brutality of operations, in addition to

generating fears about the future of local security, considering the possible formation of one of the most dangerous terrorist organization of the African continent.

As has been denounced by several experts, ISIS has turned its attention to Africa since the beginning of the Russian intervention in the Syrian civil war, when this organization suffered a major blow against its structures in the Middle East. The instability of local governments, the absence of foreign troops and the abundance of natural resources make Africa an attractive place for international terrorism, being at the same time strategic and easy to occupy. ISIS's strategy, apparently, has been to integrate with pre-existing local extremist militias, which has already happened in many countries. Now, such integration appears to be taking place with one of the most powerful organizations of African terrorism, resulting in a truly alarming situation.

This integration seems to be happening quickly and easily due to a simple factor: ISWAP originates from Boko Haram itself. In 2016, there was a split in the Nigerian militia, where a new group was formed. This dissident faction did not agree with some attitudes of the leader of Boko Haram, Abubakar Shekaku. This group later joined ISIS and adopted the name by which it is known today. With Shekaku's death, the way is free for both organizations to seek reunification. Apparently, it is ISIS which is in control of the situation and the rapprochement between both groups will certainly mean an absorption of Boko Haram by ISIS.

The scenario becomes even more worrying when we consider the fact that since 2019 the ISWAP has been integrated into the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), which is the ISIS branch occupying Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. The possibility of joint actions between these organizations, in addition to the growth in the number of combatants with the affiliation of current Boko Haram soldiers, form an unprecedented situation, leading to the domination of a considerable part of the African territory by ISIS - which will definitively displace its center of activities for this continent.

Once again, Africa needs international help. Local states are not able to deal with this type of situation and the delay of international society in helping them can have a serious consequence: the creation of a great international caliphate on African soil.

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