

United States Imperialism and Militarism Breeds Instability in Africa

Training exercises coordinated by the Pentagon take place again on the continent

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

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An escalation in violence in Libya has prompted the call from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi for military intervention by the “international community.”

Such an appeal suggests that the Egyptian leader, who staged a military coup against the former President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013, is requesting a renewed imperialist-led campaign in North Africa, utilizing the political crisis in Libya as a rationale. Cairo is subsidized by the United States Government with over \$2 billion in taxpayer funds which are largely channeled to the military for joint cooperation agreements with the Pentagon and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

Egypt carried out airstrikes in Libya on Feb. 16 in response to the brutal execution of Coptic Christians by Islamic State (IS) operatives now escalating their destabilization efforts in Libya. The Egyptian airstrikes killed mainly civilians and no real assessment was made of the damage done to IS capabilities in the country.

IS was said to have claimed responsibility for the bombing of the Corinthia Hotel in the capital of Tripoli on January 27. The hotel provides accommodation for foreign guests to the North African state and initial reports said that nine people were killed including five foreign nationals, one being from the U.S. and another from France. (BBC, Jan. 28)

Since the 2011 U.S. and NATO-sponsored counter-revolution against the government of Col. Muammar Gaddafi, there has been an escalation of internecine violence including the targeting of Christians and their churches. Under the Jamahiriya, the system of government designed under Gaddafi, the country was guided by a secular ideology based on popular committees and mass organizations.

After the Pentagon-NATO bombings which lasted for over seven months, and the coordination of disparate rebel groups which followed the trail established through the aerial bombardments across strategic areas of the country, Libya has been destroyed as a nation-state. There are no viable political, social, military, cultural or legal institutions within the country which could serve to stabilize the situation.

Another aggressive Pentagon-NATO operation in Libya would be just as disastrous as the outcome of the war of regime-change in 2011. The situation in Libya has spread instability throughout other regions of North and West Africa, creating conditions for the escalation in foreign occupations from France as well as the U.S. in nearby Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad and other states.

Another series of bombing by IS in the east of Libya in the town of al-Qubba caused the deaths of over 40 people on February 20.

In a report published by the BBC, the news agency said “Three bombs exploded, targeting a petrol station, a police station and the home of parliamentary speaker Agila Salah, a security source told the news group. According to an online statement, IS fighters said they struck in retaliation for Egyptian air strikes.” (Feb. 20)

What is often overlooked or distorted by the corporate media and U.S. government officials is the role of the CIA, the Pentagon and NATO in destabilizing Libya four years ago. This process of destabilization continues through the presence of intelligence and military assets inside the country.

On September 11, 2012, an attack on a U.S. diplomatic compound resulted in the killings of Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three other intelligence and military personnel. The nature and circumstances surrounding the attack has been a source of criticism by Republican members of Congress that are clearly directed towards the domestic weakening of the Obama administration and its then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Stevens had served as the U.S. liaison for the war against the Gaddafi government in 2011 which was initiated in the east of country in Benghazi, the second largest city. There are at present pronounced divisions between the political factions based in the east and west of Libya.

U.S. Carries Out Annual Maneuvers in West Africa

In addition, Washington has conducted military maneuvers in West Africa ostensibly as a show of support in the increasingly regional fight against Boko Haram. Nonetheless, elements in the Nigerian government have said that the role of Washington has been less than helpful in the conflict which has killed over 10,000 people and dislocated millions. (Allafrica.com, Feb. 11)

Since 2009, Boko Haram has carried out a military campaign against the central government through attacking and occupying large swaths of territory in the northeast of the country. The rebels have also carried out operations in neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger.

Nigerian governmental sources indicate that Washington has blocked arm sells from various suppliers throughout the world including the state of Israel. Although the administration of President Barack Obama has repeatedly pledged to assist the government of President Goodluck Jonathan in the battle against Boko Haram, Abuja has complained that this assistance has not been carried out effectively through arms transfers and intelligence sharing.

A report published by Reuters on February 16 says that “Chad launched a U.S.-backed counter-terrorism exercise on Monday with 1,300 soldiers from 28 African and Western countries, billing it as a warm-up for an offensive against Nigeria’s Islamist insurgent group Boko Haram.

The “Flintlock” maneuvers unfolded as Chad and four neighboring states prepare a task force to take on Boko Haram, the biggest security threat to Africa’s top oil producer Nigeria

and an increasing concern to countries bordering it.”

This same article reports:

“The annual exercises, which began in 2005, aim to improve cross-border military cooperation in the Sahel, a region prey to al Qaeda-linked and home-grown Islamists, separatist insurgents and criminal gangs. ‘This exercise to a large extent can be considered a warm-up to enable our special forces to learn techniques in the fight against terrorism,’ Chadian Brigadier General Zakaria Ngobongue, director of the exercise, said in a speech at a ceremony launching it.”

The Christian Science Monitor noted the international character of the U.S.-led operations saying:

“It includes counter-terrorism forces not only from the U.S. but from other Western countries and a number of African militaries including several of the armies who have pledged to support Nigeria in its battle against the jihadists.”

Nigeria was scheduled to hold national elections on February 14 and 28 for the presidency, parliament and local government offices. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) on the recommendation of the armed forces postponed the polls until late March and early April saying that the lack of security in the war-impacted areas of the country precluded the holding of a free and fair vote.

The Nigerian military along with forces from the impacted regional states have reported counter-insurgency operations where hundreds of Boko Haram fighters were killed. Nonetheless, it is not clear whether these offensive operations are adequate to break the military capacity of Boko Haram.

Although the government in Nigeria is closely allied with the imperialist states including the U.S., there are tensions between Washington and Abuja. The U.S. is no longer the major importer of Nigerian crude oil and it is reported that trade between the two countries in the petroleum industry has been severely curtailed.

At present India is the largest purchaser of Nigerian oil. The drop in oil prices, which provides Nigeria with over 90 percent of its foreign exchange earnings, has prompted an economic crisis inside the country. This is a reflection of the dependence on this industry in maintaining the current status of the national economy.

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