

Paris security summit steps up military intervention in Nigeria

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On Saturday, President François Hollande hosted a security summit in Paris to coordinate the escalating imperialist intervention in Nigeria, launched after the Islamist militant group Boko Haram abducted over 200 schoolgirls in Chibok in northern Nigeria on April 14.

The summit brought together officials from France, the United States, and Britain, from Nigeria, and from several nearby former French colonies with close ties to Paris: Chad, Niger, Cameroon and Benin. They vowed to wage “total war” against Boko Haram.

The call for “total war” against Boko Haram is a warning to the working class. Washington, Paris, London and their allies are preparing to deploy the methods of torture and drone murder developed in the “war on terror” against Nigeria, Africa’s most populous and oil-rich state.

The summit resolution maintained the fiction that it was coordinating the operations of African states. “Nigeria will coordinate patrols, pool intelligence and exchange weapons and human trafficking information with Benin, Cameroon, Chad and Niger,” it declared.

In fact, the summit was designed to allow Paris, London and Washington to discuss how to harness France’s proxy regimes to the intervention in Nigeria. France, the United States, Britain and the European Union pledged to “coordinate their support” of cooperation between Nigeria and the other African countries at the summit. They also committed to accelerating sanctions against Boko Haram through the United Nations.

“Boko Haram is an organization that is linked to terrorism in Africa and whose will is to destabilize the north of Nigeria, certainly, and all the neighboring countries of Nigeria and beyond that region,” Hollande said.

Speaking to France 24 television on Saturday, Hollande claimed French troops would not be sent to Nigeria, but would simply support an offensive by African countries. “France will not intervene in Nigeria, simply because

Nigeria has its own armed forces that are ready and efficient,” said Hollande.

Hollande’s statement that French troops will not deploy to Nigeria is flatly contradicted by reports in international media that French forces are already working with US, British, Canadian and Israeli special forces and military “advisors” inside Nigeria. US officials participating in the summit openly referred to the Western forces already operating on the ground in order to pressure the Nigerian regime to attack Boko Haram more forcefully.

Speaking after the summit, US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman noted that the US has an “interagency team” in Nigeria. According to Sherman, the US force in Nigeria is working with French and British forces: “We are making sure that our assets are deployed in a coordinated way.”

Washington is already conducting surveillance flights over Nigeria, and the United States sent a team of “advisors” to Nigeria in the run-up to the Paris summit. The team includes officials from the State Department, the Pentagon, the US military’s Africa Command, and the FBI, who set up an office in the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

US and French officials are cynically exploiting the media campaign over the abduction of the Chibok schoolgirls to deploy forces and increase their influence over the largest oil producer in Africa, which occupies a geo-strategically central position in West Africa. The claim that the campaign against Boko Haram is part of a “war on terror” being waged by Washington and its European allies is an old and tired lie.

Indeed, there is good reason to suspect that the operations of Boko Haram itself rely on assistance the Western powers have given, both directly and indirectly, to far-right Islamist groups in the region.

Boko Haram reportedly collaborates with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), a force operating throughout northwest Africa that is fighting French troops

in Mali. AQIM itself has been strengthened by aid from Libyan Islamist militias that Washington and Paris armed and helped put in power during the 2011 NATO war in Libya.

While cynically claiming it is fighting terrorism, Paris is pressing for a war on Syria, in which its allies would be the Al Qaeda-linked Islamist militias the NATO powers have armed and backed against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's regime. Last week, on an official visit to Washington, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius voiced his "regrets" over Washington's failure to launch air strikes against Syria last year.

In line with plans for escalating the war with Syria, the Western powers are deepening their collaboration with Islamist militias elsewhere in Africa. They are tolerating an Al Qaeda presence at a Libyan base near Tripoli, which US officials described as a "major thoroughfare, the I-95 [highway] for foreign fighters into Syria from Africa." (See: Libya: Ex-US base now headquarters of Al Qaeda-linked forces)

Claims that imperialist intervention in Nigeria would help save lives are reactionary lies. As shown by the bloody proxy wars in Libya and Syria, in which tens and hundreds of thousands of people have lost their lives, a full-fledged intervention in Nigeria would cause far more death and destruction than Boko Haram's raids.

The drive for military intervention in Nigeria over the Chibok kidnappings marks a new stage in the campaign to re-colonize Africa that began with the NATO war in Libya. Since then, the US has assisted France with logistics and intelligence as Paris launched interventions in Ivory Coast, Mali and the Central African Republic. Extending such wars to Nigeria, a huge country of 169 million people, would signify an enormous escalation of this reactionary offensive.



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