

US deploys Air Force troops to Chad

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The US military launched a new deployment of 80 troops to Chad this week, in the latest expansion of a military “footprint” that stretches across the African continent.

The White House is asserting that the troops, who are US Air Force personnel specializing in surveillance and drone operations, will focus on efforts to locate the Nigerian schoolgirls abducted last month by the Islamist group Boko Haram. However, the military deployment is part of a broader effort to strengthen US influence throughout West Africa.

“These personnel will support the operation of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft for missions over northern Nigeria and the surrounding area,” said the official White House announcement sent by President Barack Obama to Congress.

Speaking on Wednesday, Lt. Colonel Myles Caggins confirmed that the forces deployed to Chad will facilitate a region-wide expansion of US drone operations, including both armed Predator drones and unarmed Global Hawk drones.

The timeframe for the deployment is open-ended, with the White House saying the force will remain “until its support resolving the kidnapping is no longer required.” While there are no details about where precisely the US forces will be stationed inside Chad, reports have suggested they may be deployed to a French base near the Chadian capital of N’Djamena.

The deployment to Chad has been justified by US officials on the basis that the country provides an ideal launching pad for operations inside of Nigeria.

The abduction of some 280 Nigerian schoolgirls in mid-April by the extremist group Boko Haram has been seized upon by the US, which has been planning military intervention in Nigeria for years, to ramp up its military presence in a country that is home to vast untapped oil reserves.

US drones have been carrying out expanded

operations over Nigeria since earlier this month, as additional US ground forces have been deployed to the country, where they are working in tandem with a sizable contingent of non-military US government agents from the Departments of Justice and State and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

The #BringBackOurGirls campaign, promoted by First Lady Michelle Obama in response to the abductions, is only the latest attempt to use humanitarian pretexts to further the strategic agenda of the US in Africa. In 2011, US troops were deployed to Uganda after a strikingly similar propaganda campaign focusing on the use of child soldiers by Joseph Kony’s Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). The deployments to Uganda have been followed by an ever-increasing US military presence in the surrounding countries, continuing up to the present.

In addition to the latest deployment to Chad, the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) maintains an official military presence in numerous African countries. US forces are currently carrying out an average of 1.5 military operations per day across the continent in countries including Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Central African Republic, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Especially since 9/11, the US has developed a far-flung network of permanent military installations on the continent. A US base in Burkina Faso, established in 2007, serves as the hub for a spying network operating throughout the region, carrying out missions in the Sahara and West Africa. Another major base at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti houses a force of more than 4,000 troops.

The Chad deployment comes as the US-backed Nigerian regime of Goodluck Jonathan, at this point utterly dependent on US imperialism for survival, is turning to all-out civil war against Boko Haram in an

effort to stabilize its rule.

Nigerian security forces blocked attempts by protesters to march on the Presidential Villa in the capital city of Abuja on Thursday, according to *Reuters*. Jonathan responded by issuing a statement reprimanding the protesters, writing, “When terrorists see Nigerians turn on each other in blame it gives them a huge morale boost...the terrorists are the real enemy.”

In the wake of major bombings this week against a market and bus terminal in Jos that killed at least 130, raids mounted by Boko Haram against several villages in the north of the country on Tuesday and Wednesday, and a car bomb that exploded in Kano Monday killing 24, top Nigerian officials have called for “total war” and warned that the country is “at a crossroads.”

Former top Nigerian military officer Brigadier General Williams Obene warned Nigerians Wednesday that their government would likely be at war with Boko Haram for at least another 10 years, even with military aid from the US and other European powers. Obene said that the six-month state of emergency that has been declared in the Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe is an unrealistic timeframe for defeating the Islamist group based in the country’s north.

“Nigerians need to come to terms with the fact that we are at war and it is not a conventional war, where the enemy can be identified,” Obene said. “Let’s not delude ourselves to think that we are going to use the military to stop the insurgency in six months.”

“My question is: what is the alternative to the state of emergency? In fact, we should declare total war. Nigerians should prepare for war,” Obene said.

Nigerian governor Sullivan Chime of the state of Enugu said Thursday that the country is “at a crossroads.”

“We want to also seize this opportunity to call on Enugu residents and Nigerians generally to shine their eyes; report any strange person or activity to security agents. We shall conquer these enemies of our nation,” Chime said.

The strengthening of extremist militant groups like Boko Haram is a product of the drive of US imperialism to return Africa to colonial status and counter growing Chinese influence across the continent. The imperialist powers have covertly built up groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, Al Shaabab and others

with weapons and funding, even while using their activities as the pretext for their steadily escalating military interventions in the region.



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