

US-backed Chadian forces invade Nigeria as Pentagon prepares broader war in West Africa

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Chadian soldiers invaded northern Nigeria and seized the towns of Malam Fatouri and Damasak and asserted control over portions of the northeast Borno State Monday, after crossing the Cameroonian border in a force numbering thousands.

Long convoys including Chadian tanks and some 200 troop transport trucks crossed the border into Nigeria Monday, witnesses in Niger told the Associated Press.

The invasion takes place in the context of a major escalation by Washington and the European powers of their military presence throughout West Africa, and was spearheaded by Chadian forces, including the Special Anti-Terrorist Group (SATG), that have received extensive training and equipment from the US military.

Chadian President Idriss Deby has built close relations with Washington and Paris since taking power at the head of a coup in 1990. The Deby regime plays a lead role in the US-funded Trans-Saharan Counterterrorism Partnership and is helping to coordinate the African Union (AU) multinational force of some 8,700 troops called for by the AU in January.

Chadian units fought alongside Western forces during the 2013 French-led invasion of Mali, and the Chadian government has since authorized the permanent stationing of thousands of French troops in its capital at N'Djamena.

Since February, US Special Forces have been leading war games alongside Chadian and other African military units in territories centered around the Lake Chad Basin. In the course of joint maneuvers, training and technology transfer operations known as Operation Flintlock 2015, US forces established a "command and control and information sharing system" with local military leaders that will allow close coordination between AFRICOM and local forces, according to a US general.

As the International Committee of the Fourth

International argued in its 1991 manifesto, "Oppose Imperialist War & Colonialism," the dismantling of the Soviet Union and the launching of the first Gulf War marked the beginning of a renewed drive by the US and European states to impose more direct forms of colonial rule in Africa through military means.

The ICFI noted from the very beginning of the post-USSR period that, unable to balance any longer between Washington and the Stalinist regime in Moscow, Africa's national elite would accept ever-deeper integration into the structures of world imperialism.

"The cynical abandonment by the Soviet bureaucracy of its longstanding 'clients' in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America has removed all reasons for restraint and compromise on the part of the imperialists," the manifesto stated.

"Recognizing the change in the international environment, the leaders of the national bourgeoisie are seeking desperately to work out an accommodation with imperialism that would still permit them to hold on to power," the ICFI wrote. "Far from striving to liberate their countries from the grip of international finance capital, the national bourgeoisie beg for the establishment of 'special enterprise zones' in which the imperialists are permitted the unrestrained exploitation of the region's natural and human resources."

"The struggle against imperialism must be waged by the working class on the basis of an international revolutionary program. The liberation of the masses cannot be achieved through the alteration of borders in favor of this or that country, but through the overthrow of the national bourgeoisie and the destruction of the imperialist-drawn borders of the national-state system which is an absolute barrier on the economic development of the oppressed countries," the ICFI wrote.

The accelerating militarization of Nigeria and bordering areas comes as the latest confirmation of the analysis made by the ICFI more than two decades ago. The total subordination of the African bourgeoisie to the Western financial elites makes clear that Africa's masses can achieve real independence only through an international revolutionary movement led by the working class.

The US and European governments are asserting direct control over the continent's cheap labor and natural resources. Colonial-style occupation forces are conspiring with national governments and militaries throughout the continent, making a mockery of the African states' nominally "independent" status.

In addition to the US Africa Command's (AFRICOM) growing military network, which reaches in every corner of the continent, France already maintains an occupation force of thousands headquartered in Chad and tasked with counterinsurgency operations throughout the Sahel desert, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Mauritania and Chad.

The German government is preparing to get in on the action, announcing plans in January to develop independent military operations in West Africa, supposedly for the purpose of targeting Boko Haram.

The German army is also developing a regional expeditionary Pioneer Regiment in coordination with Ghana, and German troops are already forward-deployed to outposts in Somalia, Central Africa, Sudan and Western Sahara.

US and European strategists view Africa as a critical stake in their global power struggle with the Stalinist regime in Beijing.

"From Pivot to Symmetry? Integrating Africa in the Rebalance to Asia," an award-winning 2014 thesis published by the US Air War College, argues that the Obama administration's strategic pressure campaign against China, the "pivot to Asia," can succeed only if combined with coordinated political-military pressure against Chinese positions in Africa, which include substantial investments in oil and uranium production in West Africa and the Sahel.

"Ultimately, the unregulated predation of African resources could lead to regional hegemony, exercised by China. Therefore, Africa must be included in the US strategic shift to Asia if China's rise is to be managed," Lieutenant-Colonel Pierre Gaudilliere wrote.

"Accepting the leadership of allies and the ownership of African partners provides a way to cope with growing Chinese power in Africa," the military officer wrote,

highlighting the confidence of the imperialist war planners in the loyalty of Africa's nationalist elites.

Gaudilliere recommends "entanglement of China in a multilateral and cooperative web" in order to stymie efforts by Beijing "to protect its ever-growing interests on African soil."

Claims that Boko Haram has affiliated with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are being repeated endlessly by the US media and echoed by African political and military leaders in defense of the escalation.

"A new axis of evil has emerged—and it's spreading across two continents. Nigerian extremist group Boko Haram declared formal allegiance to ISIS in a disturbing new message, according to reports," the *New York Daily News* warned Monday.

J. Peter Pham of the Atlantic Council, a leading spokesman and theorist on behalf of US imperial policy in Africa, is peddling similar claims that the rise of Boko Haram is bound up with a global surge of jihadi groups.

"Rather than trying to expand [like Al Qaeda] from the center, the Islamic State is mushrooming all over the place," Pham said.

Chadian General Zakaria Ngobongue commented this week that the region is beset by a cancer of "extremism" and demanded a sustained international military intervention.

Far from fighting against "Islamist militants" and "extremism," however, the US is clearly pushing ahead with longstanding plans to assert more direct US control over Nigeria, which produces some 2.5 billion barrels of oil per day and is home to West Africa's main pipelines. This is the real source of the endless media hysteria over Boko Haram, in reality a tiny tribal-sectarian militia which many experts say commands as few as 5,000 fighters.



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