

TERRORISM AND TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

Al-Qaeda's Sahel Affiliate Targets Togo

By Jacob Zenn
OE Watch Commentary

On 11 May, the al-Qaeda-affiliated Group for Supporters of Islam and Muslims (JNIM) attacked a Togolese military checkpoint. The attack, which claimed eight Togolese soldiers, was JNIM's first known attack in Togo and may indicate further attacks to come. The excerpted article from the political affairs-oriented French-language *journalde lafrique.com* notes that the attack reflects JNIM's longtime plans to expand into Togo. It also claims that Togo's military preparations to secure its borders with Burkina Faso made the Togolese soldiers a target for JNIM. The article cites previous JNIM attacks in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin as examples of JNIM's intention to strike Togo.

The *journalde lafrique.com* article also suggests that military pressure from Mali is pressing JNIM in the tri-border

area between Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, forcing JNIM to move southward. The article notes that JNIM reconnaissance teams had previously been arrested in northern Togo but were released due to a legal loophole. The article concludes that the attack in Togo had ample warnings. However, the article does not blame the army but instead focuses its disdain on Togo's intelligence apparatus, who it claims should have noticed the 60 JNIM fighters entering Togolese territory and alerted the military that JNIM or other terrorist groups had infiltrated the country.

For a little more than two years, Togo had been preparing for the expansion of Sahelian terrorist groups on its territory.

Source: "Is Togo up to this new terrorist challenge?" *journalde lafrique.com* (political affairs oriented French-language news source), 12 May 2022. <https://lejournaldelafrique.com/le-togo-est-il-a-la-hauteur-de-ce-nouveau-terroriste/>

The terrorist attack on May 11 against the checkpoint of Kpekpakandi (Togo-Burkina border) is the work of the Group of Support for Islam and Muslims. The toll of this murderous operation was 8 dead and 13 wounded on the side of the defense and security forces of Togo.... This attack is also the first deadly one that Togo has experienced since the terrorist threat has raged in the West African sub-region.

Source: "GSIM claims responsibility for the Kpékpakandi terrorist attack," *togobreakingnews.info* (French language news website), 7 June 2022. <https://togobreakingnews.info/togo-gsim-revendique-lattaque-terroriste/>

An attack caused the deaths of eight Togolese soldiers. The attack took place in Kpinkankandi, where the Togolese army is conducting its Kondjouaré operation, which aims to secure the borders with Burkina Faso.

For a little more than two years, Togo had been preparing for the expansion of Sahelian terrorist groups on its territory.... The latter [JNIM] have seen their influence in the "Tri-Border" area dwindle under the offensive of the Malian army in recent months.... Meanwhile, Côte d'Ivoire had suffered several attacks targeting soldiers on the borders with Burkina Faso. More recently, Benin also had to deal with three deadly attacks at the end of 2021.

In Togo, the security authorities had to expect a terrorist attack. It remained to be seen when it would take place. Several members of armed group reconnaissance cells had previously been apprehended in northern Togo, and then were released after interrogation due to a legal loophole.... But the response seems to have been slow on the part of the intelligence services which will, it seems, have great difficulty in curbing the terrorist threat in the short term.