



Mali and Burkina Faso Consider Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: On 19 August, Burkina Faso experienced the largest terrorist attack against its soldiers in the country's history. Following this attack, neighboring Mali resolved to increase its coordination with Burkina Faso. The excerpted French-language article from *Le Monde* discusses this prospective Mali-Burkina Faso counter-terrorism cooperation.

As the passage notes, the Malian Defense Minister said that Mali wants to strengthen its military cooperation with Burkina Faso to “defeat terrorist groups.” In addition, the article quotes a Malian government official who states that it is Mali's duty to assist Burkina Faso because they share a border and claims they would both benefit from pooling resources. Nevertheless, the coordination is still in an evaluation phase. It is not clear whether there is broader consensus, desire and capacity among mid-level officials to increase coordination with Burkina Faso or what concrete will be taken towards greater coordination.

The attack in Burkina Faso had such a significant impact that the country issued a three-day mourning period. The attack occurred in Soum Province, which is in the east of Burkina Faso near the Malian and Niger borders where both al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) sub-groups and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)-loyal sub-group called Islamic State in Greater Sahara operate. According to the article, 500 people have been killed primarily in northern and eastern Burkina Faso since 2015. While the article acknowledges the jihadist groups have been ascendant since 2015, it also mentions that coordination between countries in West Africa been slow. As the article points out, five Sahel states (Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad) have formed a multinational military force (the G5 Sahel) to fight against the many Islamist groups in the region, but “this force is struggling to gain momentum.” It therefore remains to be seen whether Mali-Burkina Faso military coordination will be effective or will remain primarily rhetorical. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**



General Honore Traore (Burkina Faso).

Source: Zoumana Wologo (VOA) via Wikimedia, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Honore_Traore_\(Burkina_Faso\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:General_Honore_Traore_(Burkina_Faso).jpg), Public Domain.

“The government of Mali stands in solidarity with the brotherly people of Burkina Faso.”

Source: “Le Mali veut davantage coopérer avec le Burkina pour ‘venir à bout des groupes terroristes’ (Mali wants to cooperate more with Burkina to ‘overcome terrorist groups’),” *www.lemonde.fr*, 27 August 2019, https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/08/27/le-mali-veut-davantage-cooperer-avec-le-burkina-pour-venir-a-bout-des-groupes-terroristes_5503257_3212.html

Mali wants to strengthen its military cooperation with Burkina Faso to “defeat terrorist groups”, after the deadliest ever jihadist attack was conducted against the Burkinabe army, said the Malian Minister of Defense on August 26 in Ouagadougou. “The government of Mali stands in solidarity with the brotherly people of Burkina Faso, which was the victim of a cowardly attack that caused the loss of many of our comrades-in-arms,” said General Ibrahima Dembélé at an audience with the Burkinabe Prime Minister Christophe Dabiré.

He presented the condolences of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita and the government of Mali to the government and people of Burkina Faso after the attack that killed twenty-four people in the ranks of the army of the neighboring country on August 19. Seven soldiers were also wounded in the assault on a military detachment in Koutougou in the north of the country.

General Dembélé “reaffirmed in Burkina Faso the support and commitment of Mali by his side to meet the challenge we all face. Currently, we have a field operation at the border that we are evaluating with my counterpart [Burkina Faso]. We will work together and see how to improve this operation and strengthen our capabilities, pool our resources to overcome terrorist groups,” said the Malian Minister.

Burkinabé President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré ordered a three-day national mourning in honor of the victims of the Koutougou attack in Soum province, bordering Mali. This West African country has been caught in a spiral of violence for four and a half years, attributed to a dozen groups, some affiliated with al-Qaida and others affiliated with the Islamic State. Since early 2015, jihadist attacks have become more and more frequent and deadly, especially in the north and east, and have killed more than 500 people.

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