

Burkina Faso: Extremism and Terrorism

On March 31, 2024, more than 200 militants from the al-Qaeda affiliated Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) ambushed Tawori village in central Burkina Faso. The assailants kill at least 73, including civilians, Burkinabe security forces, and militias from the *Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (“Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland” or VDP), the state sponsored civilian-led counterterrorism militia. High casualty attacks have also been coordinated across regions. On February 25, suspected jihadists ambushed three villages in central Burkina Faso, a northeastern Catholic church, and a southeastern Mosque, collectively killing more than 185 civilians. Although Burkinabe Security Minister Mahamadou Sana has claimed that Burkina Faso-based terror groups are struggling due to destroyed training camps and aggressive international financial sanctions, Burkina Faso remains subject to an Islamist insurgency that has resulted in the deaths of more than 7,000 in 2023 alone and the displacement of over 2 million. (Sources: [RFI](#), [Deutsche Welle](#), [BBC News](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Defense Post](#))

The almost decade-long insurgency has resulted in Ouagadougou’s further adoption of non-state auxiliary counterterrorism support. On February 20, 2024, after months of speculation, Burkina Faso and Russia announced their plans for greater military cooperation. Russia will deploy 100 paramilitary fighters from the “Africa Corps” or “Expeditionary Corps” to assist Burkina Faso in protecting its borders, securing the safety of the country’s junta leader, and protecting Burkinabe civilians from terror attacks. An additional 200 Russian military personnel are expected to be deployed in the future. The Africa Corps serves as a rebranded Wagner Group, the Russia-based private military company that was disbanded and absorbed by the Russian Ministry of Defense in August 2023. (Sources: [African Defense Forum](#), [BNN Bloomberg](#), [BBC News](#))

Burkina Faso has further distanced itself from western allies and has increased cooperation with its pro-Kremlin neighbors in recent months. On February 15, 2024, the junta governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger announced they were moving forward with their Alliance of Sahel States (AES) confederation. Initially implemented as a pact in September 2023, AES signaled a move to further distance the three countries from other regional decision-making blocs. The announcement followed the trio’s January 2023 withdrawal from the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS), further compromising broader west African cooperation. Further details on how the confederation will cooperate along political, economic, and military lines to combat the Islamist insurgency were not revealed. Prior to their ECOWAS withdrawal, Burkina Faso and Niger withdrew from the G5 Sahel, a Sahel-region counterterrorism force. First deployed in 2014 to offset developing terrorist threats in the region, Burkina Faso and Niger accused the G5 of “failing to achieve its objectives.” (Source: [Reuters](#))

Extremists do not present the only threat, however. According to the Africa Center, in the period between January 2022 and August 2023, the number of civilians killed by the military or volunteer militias more than tripled. Additionally, the military and VDP troops reportedly killed 762 civilians. The accusations are significant because the VDP, which boasts tens of thousands of volunteers, was established by the Burkinabé government in January 2020. (Sources: [Defense Post](#), [Reuters](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Defense Post](#), [Defense Post](#), [Reuters](#), [France 24](#), [Africa News](#), [Africa Center](#))

Overview

Before the January 2016 attack on the Splendid Hotel and Cappuccino Café in Ouagadougou, which killed 30 people, Burkina Faso had been largely free of extremist and terrorist incidents. This history was all the more remarkable considering the country’s proximity to terrorist groups operating in neighboring [Mali](#), where the government has long struggled to combat terrorist groups like AQIM, al-Mourabitoun, Ansar al-Dine, and others. (Source: [BBC News](#), [U.S. State Department](#))

Beginning in 2015, however, Burkina Faso began to suffer intermittent cross-border raids targeting Burkinabe police and military outposts near the country’s northern border with Mali. When Roch Marc Christian Kaboré replaced Burkina Faso’s longstanding president Blaise Compaoré in December 2015, Kaboré announced that counterterrorism would be among his government’s top priorities. In November 2020, Kaboré was reelected as president of Burkina Faso. During his December 2020 inauguration, he vowed to focus on national reconciliation in order to address ethnic and religious tensions fueling terrorism. (Sources: [LeFaso.net](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Burkina24](#), [Voice of America](#))

The attack in Ouagadougou two weeks after Kaboré’s first inauguration revealed the country’s susceptibility to terrorism. Since the January 2016 attack, Burkina Faso has reported several terrorist incidents, including the kidnapping of foreigners by al-Qaeda’s Sahel-based group AQIM, and two attacks by an ISIS-inspired breakaway group. Facing discontent and calls to resign in October 2016, Kaboré claimed that the terrorism situation in Burkina Faso is “under control.” To secure his country’s borders, Kaboré announced his efforts to recall Burkinabe soldiers deployed in U.N. missions in Sudan and Mali, among other efforts. On January 24, 2022, Burkina Faso’s military deposed Kaboré, dissolved his government, and suspended the constitution. The coup came amid a deteriorating security situation and protests against the government’s inability to counter Islamist

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militants. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [LeFaso.net](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Burkina24](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

For the first time since independence from French colonial rule, Burkinabe state authorities have lost control of parts of the country, according to a January 2019 International Crisis Group report. Throughout 2018, jihadist violence spread from the Soum province—the epicenter of the Ansar-ul-Islam lil-Ichad wal Jihad insurgency—into other provinces in the north. Eastern Burkina Faso also suffered from violent extremist attacks, which were targeted at military personnel and civilians. In early 2020, the jihadist violence also spread west to the Boucle du Mouhoun region, known as the country’s breadbasket, threatening a major food source in a country where food insecurity affects two million people. According to the United Nations Office on the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Burkina Faso has become home to “one of the fastest-growing humanitarian crises in Africa” in 2019. By October 2019, 486,000 were forced from their homes in Burkina Faso—more than six times as many people who were displaced in January. Within one year, the number of displaced people doubled to 1 million. The U.N. Acting Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Ramesh Rajasingham warned in February 2021 that Burkina Faso is on the brink of becoming a protracted crisis. As of December 2021, more than 1.4 million people have been displaced inside Burkina Faso, according to the government. On December 1, 2021, following a visit to the country, the U.N. Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet warned that more than 3.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in Burkina Faso—a 60 percent increase since January 2020. Burkina Faso also continues to host more than 20,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from Mali, as of July 2021. In April 2022, the Associated Press reported that nearly 630,000 people were expected to be on the brink of starvation. A May 2022 Human Rights Watch report asserted violent atrocities against civilians are increasing in Burkina Faso. Human Rights Watch recorded dozens of rapes, hundreds of killings, and the destruction of villages by extremists across the country between September 2021 and April 2022. The report also accused government security forces of committing abuses such as summary executions while confronting militant violence. (Sources: [International Crisis Group](#), [Associated Press](#), [UNOCHA](#), [UNHCR](#), [UNHCR](#), [Associated Press](#), [United Nations](#), [UNHCR](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#), [Human Rights Watch](#))

Burkina Faso plays a key role in counterterrorism efforts in West Africa. Under former President Compaoré, Burkina Faso was known to have opened lines of communication with al-Qaeda to negotiate the release of several Westerners, a policy that—due to the quick release of an Australian hostage taken by Islamist militants in January 2016—is suspected to have continued under former President Kaboré. Agence France-Presse reported that the government allegedly made contact with jihadists at the local level in northern Burkina Faso in 2020. Burkinabe media subsequently reported that 29 jihadists had been released that year as part of negotiations with local community leaders. According to the New Humanitarian, Burkinabe government representatives allegedly met with jihadists near Djibo town in Soum province to negotiate a cessation of violence ahead of November 2020 general elections. As part of the effort to combat the threat from terrorism, Burkina Faso has served as a member of the G-5 Sahel group and the U.S.-backed Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership. Burkina Faso has also worked closely with African actors to develop international cooperation on counterterrorism-related efforts. The government has served as a key partner in Western counterterrorism operations in the region, hosting both U.S. and French Special Forces in the country. (Sources: [ABC News](#), [Telegraph](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Guardian](#), [U.S. State Department](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [New Humanitarian](#))

By 2023, Burkina Faso’s counterterrorism policy dramatically changed. In January of that year, Burkina Faso gave France one month to withdraw its troops and to end a military accord that allowed French troops to carry out counterinsurgency operations in the Sahelian country. The demands for immediate withdrawal coincided around the time reports cited a growing relationship between Burkina Faso and the Kremlin-backed Wagner Group, a private mercenary corporation. Furthermore, according to a 2023 report released by the United Nations, Burkina Faso experienced over 2,725 deaths linked to terrorism between January and June 2023. The president of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) later announced that instability in the region is driven by terrorism, armed rebellion, organized crime, unconstitutional changes of government, illegal maritime activities, environmental crises, and fake news. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Associated Press](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

For nearly three decades of military rule under President Blaise Compaoré, Burkina Faso had been free from armed conflict and documented instances of Islamist terrorism. Since the 2012 uprising in neighboring Mali, however, the country has become wary of its vulnerability to infiltration by terrorist actors from the region. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#))

This danger was borne out in 2015, when the country experienced a series of cross-border raids. [Al-Qaeda](#)-affiliated militants are suspected to be behind several small-scale attacks on Burkinabe police posts in the north, near the border with Mali, resulting in the deaths of at least three Burkinabe soldiers. In January 2016, the country witnessed its first major terrorist incident in recent memory, as al-Qaeda-affiliated militants attacked a hotel in Burkina Faso’s capital, killing 30 people, and wounding more than 70 others. (Sources: [Institute for Security Studies](#), [Associated](#)

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[Press](#), [UNODC](#))

Recruitment and Radicalization

Despite being one of the poorest countries in the world, Burkina Faso has been frequently heralded as a relatively secure and moderate country in a notoriously volatile region. For that reason, the extremist threat to Burkina Faso is believed to come primarily from neighboring countries. (Sources: [Institute for Security Studies](#), [Associated Press](#), [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#))

While the threat of homegrown radicalization is believed to be small, there have been documented incidents of terrorist recruitment within Burkina Faso. Augustin Loada and Peter Romaniuk, writing for Denmark's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2014, have done extensive research into the threat of radicalization from within Burkina Faso and concluded that although there are cases of recruitment within Burkina Faso, there is "no firm evidence of [systematic] radicalization within the country." Loada and Romaniuk have heard of extremist foreign preachers sometimes visiting Burkina Faso. Nonetheless, the researchers concluded in 2014 that the threat of homegrown radicalization from within Burkina Faso was small. (Sources: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#), [Newsweek](#))

Since then, however, the country has experienced numerous terrorist incidents, making a number of arrests and reportedly thwarting a terrorist cell in the Ouagadougou neighborhoods of Yagma and Kilwin. Of the extremist groups operating in the region, some have managed to remain active within Burkina Faso. In a June 2017 interview, Lomoussa Robgo, coordinator of Equal Access, a counter-extremism NGO, said extremism "is taking hold" in Burkina Faso. "This was foreseeable in the sense that religious extremism began to increase in recent years among certain Muslims, notably with the creation of a mosque with help from associations in Qatar and also with the return of people who studied the Koran in Mali with extremist preachers," Robgo said. In November 2019, following a months-long surge in deadly attacks that caused tens of thousands to flee their homes, World Food Programme (WFP) spokeswoman Marwa Awad warned about the potential for recruitment in the country. Speaking to the press, Awad said, "...people here have told us they are seeing the exploitation of inequality, with young people joining armed groups." (Source: [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#))

Jihadists have also targeted members of the Fulani ethnic group, a nomadic Muslim people in the Sahel, for recruitment. The Fulani have historically been a minority within Burkina Faso, a fact that Salafists and al-Qaeda-linked groups have exploited. For example, Ansar-ul-Islam lil-Ichad wal Jihad has stoked ethnic tensions by directing violence at non-Fulani businesses to try and cause non-Fulani people to leave the area. In response, some military police and ethnic militias have raided and attacked Fulani villages because of their apparent association with the Islamist extremist group. According to interviews with villagers and human rights researchers, members of the country's military have carried out extrajudicial killings of suspected collaborators and destroyed villages believed to be harboring extremists, in retaliation for insurgent violence. According to the U.S. State Department's Country Reports on Terrorism 2019, abusive tactics at the hands of Burkina Faso's counterterrorism forces have harmed the relationship between civilians and the government, fueling recruitment into terrorist groups. (Sources: [Critical Threats](#), [Reuters](#), [Economist](#), [New York Times](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb

[Al-Qaeda](#)'s North African branch, [al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb \(AQIM\)](#), operates out of neighboring Mali and has carried out attacks throughout the Sahel, including in Algeria, Niger, Libya, Mauritania, Tunisia, and Côte d'Ivoire. While AQIM is just one of many jihadist groups operating in Mali, analysts consider other groups to be extensions of the larger al-Qaeda brand. (Source: [Associated Press](#))

AQIM and its affiliated group al-Mourabitoun claimed responsibility for the January 2016 attack on a hotel in Ouagadougou.

AQIM and its affiliated group [al-Mourabitoun](#) claimed responsibility for the January 2016 attack on a hotel in Ouagadougou, an attack that left 30 people dead and 71 more wounded in what was the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's modern history. The two extremist groups—formerly competitors—had reconciled and regrouped in December 2015, with the al-Mourabitoun cell operating under the broader AQIM banner. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

Although AQIM and other affiliated terrorist groups were not known to recruit in Burkina Faso before 2015, Burkinabe police in 2016 claimed to have uncovered and dismantled a terrorist cell in the Yagma and Kilwin neighborhoods of Ouagadougou. According to the government, the police had received tips that there was a cell looking to recruit Burkinabes there to join and train with terrorist groups abroad and return home to carry out attacks. Their specific terrorist affiliation was not disclosed, and the incident remains under investigation. However, due to AQIM's ties to various local terrorist outlets in the region, it is suspected that the cell was in some way linked to the broader AQIM movement. (Sources: [Ministry of](#)

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[Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#), [LeFaso.net](#))

In March 2017, AQIM announced it was merging with local Salafist groups al-Mourabitoun and Ansar al-Dine (AAD) to form Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM), or Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims. JNIM also absorbed the Macina Liberation Front (MLF), an AAD-affiliated Islamist group. Though it is operating under a new name and with a new emir, JNIM appears to remain under the command of AQIM and al-Qaeda central. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Long War Journal](#), [Center for Strategic & International Studies](#))

Though it is mostly active in Mali, JNIM has conducted operations in Niger and Burkina Faso. JNIM leader Iyad Ag Ghaly named France as the JNIM's primary enemy, stating that the former colonial power in the Sahel has historically been the number one enemy of Muslims in the region. The group has claimed several attacks on French regional interests in 2018. On March 3, 2018, JNIM launched coordinated attacks in Ouagadougou, striking France's embassy and the Burkinabe military headquarters. The attack left 16 dead, including nine attackers, and another 85 people injured. The U.S. Department of State designated JNIM as a Foreign Terrorist Organization on September 5, 2018. The group continues to launch attacks in the area—including a November 11, 2020 ambush on a military convoy from Tin-Akoff, an area of Burkina Faso that borders Mali and Niger. The attack left 14 soldiers dead and has also been claimed by ISGS. (Sources: [Center for Strategic & International Studies](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

In 2020, al-Qaeda and its affiliates in the region suffered at least two high-profile leadership losses. On June 4, French troops launched an operation in northern Mali, which targeted and killed [Abdelmalek Droukdal](#), the head of al-Qaeda's affiliates in North Africa and the Sahel. Droukdal oversaw the organization's expansion in the Sahel and Maghreb through financing, planning, and carrying out terrorist attacks. In November, French troops in eastern Mali killed [Bah ag Moussa](#), a U.S.- and U.N.- designated terrorist leader who served as the top commander and military head of the JNIM. Moussa was considered JNIM leader Ghaly's right-hand man and was the suspected mastermind of attacks on both Malian and international forces. (Sources: [The Hill](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

Al-Mourabitoun

[Al-Mourabitoun](#) ("The Sentinels") is a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization operating primarily in Mali, Algeria, southwestern Libya, and Niger. There was little documented activity by al-Mourabitoun within Burkina Faso until 2015. However, the group claimed responsibility for the January 2016 hotel attack in Ouagadougou, believed at the time to be the deadliest terrorist attack in the country's modern history. (Sources: [CNN](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Ansar al-Dine

Ansar al-Dine ("Movement of Defenders of the Faith," or AAD) was founded in November 2011 by Malian Tuareg fighter Iyad Ag Ghaly, cousin of AQIM senior leader Hamada Ag Hama. A largely homegrown movement comprised of Tuareg and northern Malian Berber Arabs, AAD works closely with AQIM in their joint goal of implementing sharia. Many of its members are Tuaregs who previously fought alongside deceased Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and returned to Mali after his overthrow. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Smithsonian Institution](#))

AAD does not have a longstanding history of terrorist activity in Burkina Faso, but the group stepped up terrorist activity in 2016. On January 15, 2016—the same day as the deadly AQIM attack in Ouagadougou—AAD kidnapped an elderly Australian couple from the northern Burkinabe town of Djibo. The group released one of the hostages the following month, but has not disclosed the location of the other. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Guardian](#))

Ansar-ul-Islam lil-Ichad wal Jihad

Ansar-ul-Islam lil-Ichad wal Jihad (IRSAD) is an al-Qaeda-linked group suspected behind a wave of terrorist attacks in Burkina Faso in late 2016. Led by radical Burkinabe preacher Malam Ibrahim Dicko, the group reportedly seeks to reestablish the Peulh kingdom—also known as Djeelgodji—which had been toppled through French colonization in the late 1800s. According to security analysts Héni Nsaibia and Caleb Weiss, IRSAD is the first native jihadi group founded in Burkina Faso. (Sources: [International Business Times](#), [International Business Times](#), [CTC Sentinel](#))

The newly-formed group claimed responsibility for an attack on December 12, 2016, targeting a Burkinabe military post near the northern border with Mali and leaving 12 soldiers dead. On New Year's Eve, simultaneous assassination attempts by unidentified militants left one former IRSAD

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member dead and another critically wounded, in attacks that were believed to have been carried out by IRSAD. On March 5, 2017, suspected IRSAD assailants targeted a Malian army post near the border with Burkina Faso, killing 11 Malian soldiers. (Sources: [International Business Times](#), [International Business Times](#), [Africa News](#))

IRSAD was responsible for at least 78 attacks in northern Burkina Faso since December 2016. The group's primary targets appear to be civilians and civilian infrastructure, but it has also routinely targeted the Burkinabe security apparatus. (Source: [CTC Sentinel](#))

Lassane Yameogo, a former researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute, says IRSAD has managed to recruit and train radicalized young men. "The main problem is the absence of Malian authorities on their side of the border. If the security forces of the countries involved cooperated, terrorists could not run over borders into hiding after attacks," Yameogo says. (Source: [Nordic Africa Institute](#))

On February 20, 2018, the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Department of the Treasury designated the group as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist. (Sources: [CTC Sentinel](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#))

Boko Haram

[Boko Haram](#) is a Nigerian-based terrorist group that is believed to have had some activity within Burkina Faso. According to the 2014 report by researchers Augustin Loada and Peter Romaniuk, there is evidence of fundraising and weapons smuggling within Burkina Faso. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#))

There is also unconfirmed evidence that Boko Haram has already carried out an attack in Burkina Faso. On August 23, 2015, unidentified gunmen targeted a police post in northern Burkina Faso, near the country's border with Mali. Two soldiers were wounded in the attack, one of whom was seriously injured. A witness at the scene claimed that the assailants announced their affiliation with Boko Haram. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [aOuaga.com](#))

In March of 2015, Boko Haram became an affiliate of ISIS. A year later in August 2016, infighting led to a split within Boko Haram, which created two splinter groups—Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP), which is led by Mamman Nur and Abu Musab al-Barnawi, and Jama'atu Ahl al-Sunnah lil-Dawa wal-Jihad (JAS), which is led by Abubakar Shekau. (Sources: [Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation](#), [International Crisis Group](#))

Islamic State in Greater Sahara/Islamic State in the Sahel

In addition to suffering attacks by AQIM and its affiliates, Burkina Faso also suffers attacks by the Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS), a breakaway faction of the AQIM-linked al-Mourabitoun group. The ISGS faction is led by al-Mourabitoun defector [Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi](#), a former spokesperson for al-Mourabitoun who pledged allegiance to [ISIS](#) leader [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) in May 2015. (Sources: [Long War Journal](#), [Long War Journal](#))

Since announcing his allegiance to Baghdadi, Sahrawi has maintained control over what is believed to be a small section of al-Mourabitoun. His group has claimed responsibility for two attacks in Burkina Faso, both in the country's north near the borders with Mali and Niger: the first in September 2016, targeting a customs post; and the second in October 2016, targeting an army post. The attacks by Sahrawi's group have collectively resulted in the deaths of three Burkinabe soldiers and one customs official, as well as the injury of several others, including civilians. (Source: [Long War Journal](#))

In May 2020, ISIS fighters detonated a truck bomb along the desert frontier between Mali and Burkina Faso. Unlike similar previous attacks—where ISIS fighters targeted soldiers and villagers—this attack targeted al-Qaeda militants. The attack led to a series of reprisals by JNIM against ISGS, ending a yearlong truce between the local franchises of al-Qaeda and ISIS. On November 11, 2020, extremists ambushed a military convoy from Tin-Akoff, an area of Burkina Faso that borders Mali and Niger. Two days later, JNIM claimed responsibility for the attack that had left 14 people dead. The following day, ISIS's Amaq News Agency announced that ISGS was responsible for the attack, claiming it killed 20 soldiers. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Since March 2022, ISGS—which had rebranded under the name Islamic State Sahel Province (IS Sahel) as the group was declared a separate province—battled with JNIM in the region of Menaka and Gao, northern Mali. Their fighting from March until October 2022 resulted in around 1,000 civilian deaths and the displacement of tens of thousands. Furthermore, according to U.N. analysts, IS Sahel has shifted their operations further south close to the border of Burkina Faso, having seized the town of Talataye in early September 2022. As of August 2023, IS Sahel has not

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been ousted from Talataye, and continues to be a heavy threat to Mali and Burkina Faso as the two countries, and increasingly Niger, are unable to sustainably curtail the extremist group's activities. (Sources: [U.N. Security Council](#), [Middle East Media Research Institute](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project](#), [Global Initiative Against Organized Crime](#), [U.N. Security Council](#))

Macina Liberation Front

Macina Liberation Front (MLF) is a militant jihadist organization based in Mali that emerged in early 2015. President of analysis group Afrique Consulting Bat-el Ohayon has claimed that the MLF attracted foreign fighters from Burkina Faso. Ohayon further emphasized and that the threat posed by these foreign fighters is underestimated. (Source: [Newsweek](#))

The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa

The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) is a militant jihadist group that splintered from AQIM. There is some evidence that MUJAO has recruited within Burkina Faso, and there are claims that the group has offered 300,000 West African CFA francs to recruits in exchange for a commitment to fight alongside the terrorist group. MUJAO has named the country's capital, Ouagadougou, as a target for a suicide bombing attack on at least one occasion. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#))

Foreign Fighters

The United Nations published its assessment of foreign fighters traveling to Iraq and Syria. In these reports, there is no mention of Burkinabe fighters with ISIS, nor any proof of Burkinabe forces working with other jihadist groups in Iraq and Syria. There are, however, reports of Burkinabe foreign fighters in Mali. There are also reports of terrorist recruiting cells within Burkina Faso that have worked to lure Burkinabes to train in neighboring countries and return to carry out attacks. (Sources: [United Nations](#), [LeFaso.net](#), [LeFaso.net](#))

There are, however, reports of Burkinabe foreign fighters in Mali.

Within the Sahel region, researchers Augustin Loada and Peter Romaniuk writing in June 2014 gathered "a little evidence attesting to Burkinabe involvement in regional extremist conflicts," but could not deduce estimates for the number of Burkinabes who are believed to have been involved in local conflicts. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#))

Loada and Romaniuk did find a few examples of Burkinabes arrested by French forces in Mali, although it was not known with which groups they were associated. They also reported a small group of young Burkinabes who were intercepted in Mali's capital while seeking to travel to the country's north, allegedly to receive religious education. At the time, the part of Mali where the young Burkinabes were reportedly traveling to was overrun by jihadist organizations. (Source: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#))

On June 11, 2020, dozens of suspected jihadists attacked a security post in Kafolo, near Côte d'Ivoire's northern border with Burkina Faso. The assault began at around three in the morning and left at least 10 soldiers dead, six injured, and two others believed missing. However, Burkinabe and Ivoirian sources provided differing accounts of casualties. The attack occurred in the same area where the Burkinabe-Ivoirian militaries launched Operation Comoé in May 2020, an effort to expel extremists from the border region. Later that month on June 25, an Ivoirian army statement identified the suspected mastermind of the ambush in Kafolo as a national of Burkina Faso, named Sidibe Ali. (Sources: [France 24](#), [Reuters](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Burkina Faso had not experienced a major terrorist incident on its soil until 2015. The country has, however, been embroiled in domestic conflict over the transition from decades-long military rule to democracy. The uptick in border post raids and kidnappings beginning in 2015, as well as the January 2016 attack in Ouagadougou appears to have ushered in a new wave of concern over the country's vulnerability to terrorist infiltrators. Between 2017 and 2019, kidnappings and forced disappearances by armed groups in Burkina Faso increased seven-fold, from eight to 54 reported incidents. (Sources: [Institute for Security Studies](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

2016 Ouagadougou Attack

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On January 15, 2016, three AQIM-affiliated assailants stormed the popular Splendid Hotel and nearby Cappuccino Café in Ouagadougou, opening fire on patrons, killing 30 people and wounding 71 others. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Telegraph](#), [Reuters](#))

The attacks began at approximately 8:30 p.m. GMT, when three gunmen wearing Turbans fired into the air shouting “Allahu Akbar” before turning their AK-47 assault rifles on pedestrians, diners, and guests at the nearby Splendid Hotel. According to witness reports, the assailants targeted Westerners and white patrons in particular, with some witnesses pretending to be dead for nearly an hour in an attempt to avoid execution. As one witness said, “They shook people by the foot to see if they were alive or not and if they were alive, they shot them.” (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Telegraph](#))

After walking among the patrons and picking off targets, the assailants set the café—and at some point the lobby of the Splendid Hotel—on fire, shooting at patrons who attempted to flee the smoke. As one witness from Cappuccino Café told France 24, “They were shooting people at point-blank range. When they left they set fire to the place and the smoke started to suffocate me and the other survivors.” (Sources: [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#))

The assailants moved between the café and the Splendid Hotel, both of which were popular tourist hubs. As one witness told Reuters, “They kept coming back and forth into [the café]. You’d think it was over, then they’d come back and shoot more people. They would come back and see if the white people were moving and then they would shoot them again.” (Source: [Reuters](#))

By 10:00 p.m. GMT, dozens of Burkinabe officers were prepared to start a counter-attack alongside French Special Forces. Together, the forces first stormed the Splendid Hotel. After extinguishing fire on the first floor, troops went door-to-door, freeing hostages and searching for the militants, who had managed to escape. After hours of clearing the hotel, the forces then went to Cappuccino Café, which had been scorched to the ground. The forces ultimately found and neutralized the three assailants at the nearby Bush Taxi restaurant, after discovering bullet casings in the nearby Yibi Hotel. Although there was confusion as to the number and gender of the assailants in the immediate aftermath of the attacks, the Burkinabe government confirmed that there were a total of three male assailants. Al-Qaeda released what it said were the names of the assailants soon after, naming them as Battar al-Ansari, Abu Muhammad al-Buqali al-Ansari, and Ahmed al-Fulani al-Ansari. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

Attacks on the Mining Industry

Since 2019, al-Qaeda and ISIS affiliates in the region have increased deadly attacks on gold mines in Burkina Faso. Authorities in the region struggle to protect gold mines, due in part to a lack of financial and military resources. Additionally, Burkinabe security forces have been reluctant to send troops to rural areas where the mines are located and where residents may be hostile to state authority. Jihadists operating in these areas have reportedly resorted to forcing miners to sell gold only to them and extorting a “protection tax” from communities that live near the mines. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [Deutsche Welle](#))

In January 2019, suspected jihadists killed Canadian national Kirk Woodman after kidnapping him near where he worked. The mining site in Tiabongou belonged to the Vancouver-based Progress Mineral Mining Company. Later that year on November 6, gunmen attacked a convoy carrying employees of Canadian mining company Semafo that was traveling to an open-pit gold mine in Boungou, eastern Burkina Faso. The ambush left at least 37 people dead and 60 others wounded. In March 2020, multinational mining company Endeavour took over the Boungou mine from Semafo. In January 2021, the Africa Report reported that expenses related to security comprised up to 25 percent of operating costs for mining projects in central and northern Mali and Burkina Faso. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [New York Times](#), [The Africa Report](#))

In June 2021, Burkinabe government ordered the cessation of artisanal mining activities in the gold-rich areas of Oudalan and Yagha, following a jihadist attack earlier in the month that killed at least 130 people in Solhan. The government and analysts assert that militants are increasingly targeting gold-rich territory in Burkina Faso and the wider Sahel region, as mining is believed to be a main source of income for the Islamist insurgency. (Sources: [MarketWatch](#), [Financial Times](#))

Attacks on the gold mining industry continued in the second half of 2021. On August 31, assailants fired on a convoy belonging to Canadian mining company Iamgold, as it traveled to the Essakane gold mine, the company’s biggest operating mine. Although no passengers were injured, a police officer in the security detail was wounded while repelling the attack. Nearly two weeks later on September 12, a convoy escorted by gendarmes hit a roadside bomb and was ambushed, leaving six people dead and seven other injured. The vehicles were traveling from Bongou gold mine, which is owned and operated by multinational company Endeavor Mining. In October, assailants attacked another convoy of Iamgold staff and contractors as well as three supply trucks traveling from the Essakane mine. In the weeks that followed, some mining companies began flying local staff to mines, a mode of transport previously reserved for foreign staff. However, the bulk of transportation needed for operations continues via convoy, raising concerns over the security of gold mining, a main source of income for Burkina Faso. In another blow, insurgents attacked a military police outpost

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near a gold mine in Inata, killing 53 people on November 14. The assailants killed 49 officers, reportedly making it the deadliest attack suffered by the country's security forces since Islamist militant violence surged in 2017. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Deutsche Welle](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Voice of America](#), [Reuters](#))

In March 2022, at least three separate attacks on mines and mining towns killed over more than 40 people in northern Burkina Faso. On March 12, nine people died in an attack on an informal gold mine in Oudalan province. On March 14, at least 13 gendarmes were killed in an ambush in the mining town of Taparko, in Namentenga province. In the same province on March 30, twenty 20 civilians died in an overnight attack on a gold mine in Kougdiguin. In April 2022, Russia's Nordgold announced it was shuttering its mine in Taparko, citing the worsening security situation. The Taparko mine was launched in 2005 and was Burkina Faso's first industrial gold mine, according to the company, which acquired the mine in 2008. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#))

Attacks on Religious Targets

In May 2019, militants launched several attacks against Christian targets in northern Burkina Faso, threatening to spark sectarian strife between the Muslim and Christian populations. The Burkinabe government has blamed the surge in violence on armed groups that operate in the country and the surrounding Sahel region. On May 12, gunmen encircled and opened fire on attendees departing Sunday mass at a Roman Catholic church in Dablo, killing a priest and five of his congregants. The attackers proceeded to burn a church, loot stores, and destroy all places serving alcohol in the town. On May 15, assailants with guns stopped a group of worshipers in a Catholic procession in the remote village of Zimenga, killing four people and burning their religious statue. On May 26, heavily armed men killed four people during Sunday prayers at a Catholic church in the town of Toulfe. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

- **March 31, 2024:** More than 200 JNIM militants ambush Tawori village in central Burkina Faso, killing at least 73. The casualties include 32 civilians, 16 Burkinabe security forces, and 25 VDP militias. Source: [RFI](#)
- **February 25, 2024:** Suspected jihadists ambush the villages of Komsilga, Nordin, and Soro in central Burkina Faso, killing at least 170 civilians. An undisclosed number of civilians are wounded. According to Burkinabe Security Minister Mahamadou Sana, the massacre was “coordinated” with other attacks on a church and mosque that occurred the same day. Furthermore, Sana states the change in the “enemy’s tactical approach is because terrorist bases have been destroyed as well as training camps and actions were carried out to dry up the enemy’s source of financing, as well as its supply corridors.” Source: [Deutsche Welle](#)
- **February 25, 2024:** Suspected JNIM terrorists ambush a mosque in Natiaboani, southeastern Burkina Faso. The gunmen reportedly kill dozens of civilians. Sources: [Defense Post](#), [BBC News](#)
- **February 25, 2024:** Suspected jihadists ambush Sunday services at a Catholic church in Essakane village in Oudalan province, close to the border of Mali. The gunmen kill at least 15 and injure two others. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Defense Post](#)
- **December 26, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush a military base in Nouna, northwestern Burkina Faso. The number of casualties is not reported. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **December 24, 2023:** JNIM and suspected jihadist militants attack two military bases in Solle and Gorgadji. JNIM claims at least 60 soldiers are killed in Solle, but Malian security forces specify only “several” casualties. Casualty figures from Gorgadji are not reported. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **December 3, 2023:** The military leaders of Burkina Faso and Niger announce that they are quitting the G5 Sahel, a counterterrorism force made up of states across the Sahel. The G5 was first deployed in 2014 to offset developing terrorist threats in the region, however, according to Burkina Faso and Niger, “[t]he organisation is failing to achieve its objectives.” Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **November 26, 2023:** JNIM militants carry out multiple attacks in Djibo, ambushing military bases, homes, and three displacement camps. At least 40 civilians are killed and another 42 are injured. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **November 5, 2023:** Unidentified assailants ambush Zaongo village, northern Burkina Faso. The ambush kills at least 70 and injures an unidentified number of others. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **September 21, 2023:** Suspected jihadists carry out multiple attacks in the central region of Koulponso and the western region of Sirasso. The attacks kill at least 16 and injure at least two others. The targeted victims were members of the VDP civilian military. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **September 14, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush a cap for internally displaced people in Seno province, northern Burkina Faso. The attack kills at least eight. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **September 5, 2023:** Suspected militants ambush Burkina Faso's security forces in Yatenga Province, northern Burkina Faso. The ambush kills at least 53 security forces—17 soldiers and 36 civilian militia troops. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **August 7, 2023:** Suspected jihadists carry out an attack in the Center-East region of Burkina Faso, near the Togolese border. The attack kills around 20 and wounds another dozen. Source: [Agence France Presse](#)
- **July 6, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush a town in Gnagna, eastern Burkina Faso.

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- The attack kills 15. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **June 30, 2023:** Suspected jihadists engage in combat with members of the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP), Burkina Faso's auxiliary force, in Noaka.
The gunfight kills 33 VDP members. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **June 26, 2023:** Suspected jihadists carry out two ambushes on soldiers in Noaka, Centre-Nord region.
It is estimated that dozens are killed, and several are wounded in the clashes. The majority of casualties were troops from the VDP, a civilian counterterrorism force. Source: [Voice of America](#)
 - **June 3, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush VDP troops and soldiers in Sawenga, central Burkina Faso.
The ambush kills 14 VDP troops and four soldiers, and wounds five others. Source: [France 24](#)
 - **May 19, 2023:** AQIM militants release an Australian doctor, Dr. Kenneth Elliott.
Elliott was originally abducted with his wife Jocelyn in 2016 at a 120-bed clinic they ran in Djibo, near Burkina Faso's border with Mali. Due to public pressure and guidance from leaders, AQIM released Jocelyn after three weeks. The reasons behind Elliott's release were not reported.
Source: [Reuters](#)
 - **May 19, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush Kie village, western Burkina Faso on the border of Mali, killing at least 12 civilians.
That same day, another 20 casualties were recorded in separate attacks in eastern Burkina Faso. Source: [North Africa Journal](#)
 - **May 18, 2023:** Unidentified jihadists carry out a series of raids in northern Burkina Faso, killing around 20.
Source: [North Africa Journal](#)
 - **May 13, 2023:** Armed assailants ambush vegetable farmers in Boucle du Mouhoun region, western Burkina Faso.
The ambush kills at least 33 and wounds three others. Source: [Voice of America](#)
 - **April 28, 2023:** Violent extremists attack Burkina Faso's military in Ouagarou, eastern Burkina Faso.
The assault kills at least 33 and wounded a dozen others. Source: [Fox News](#)
 - **April 19, 2023:** Suspected jihadists launch two attacks in Bittou, near the Togolese and Ghanaian borders.
One ambush kills 16 VDP soldiers and four civilians, while the other attack kills at least four others. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **April 14, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush and kill at least 32 VDP troops and 10 soldiers, while also injuring 33 others in Ouahigouya, northern Burkina Faso.
Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **April 9, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush two villages in northeastern Burkina Faso.
The attack in Kourakou kills at least 31 and the ambush in Tondobi kills at least 13. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **March 27, 2023:** Burkina Faso indefinitely suspends France 24 news channel's broadcast license following the broadcaster's interview with AQIM leader al-Anabi.
Source: [Financial Times](#)
 - **March 23, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush a unit of soldiers and members of the of the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP), a civilian militia.
The attack kills 14 and injures an unspecified number of others. Source: [France 24](#)
 - **March 6, 2023:** France 24 interviews AQIM leader al-Anabi. In the interview, the leader states that AQIM's key interests are exclusive to Africa and that the Sahel is the "epicenter" of jihad today.
He further claims there are no limits to the group's possible expansion and also confirms AQIM's de facto war with Islamic State in the Greater Sahara. Source: [France 24](#)
 - **February 17, 2023:** Suspected jihadists attack Partiaga, eastern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills five. No group claims responsibility. Source: [Africa News](#)
 - **February 13, 2023:** Suspected jihadists ambush a Burkina Faso army unit in Oudalan province, northern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills 51 and injures an unspecified number of others. Later that month, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Reuters](#)
 - **January 19, 2023:** Suspected jihadists launch two attacks targeting civilian forces.
One attack occurs in Rakoegtenga, northern Burkina Faso, killing seven and injuring 10. The second attack occurs in Nayala province, northwestern Burkina Faso, killing 11. The civilian force, VDP, assists the national army in offsetting the terrorist threat in the country. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
 - **January 12, 2023 - January 16, 2023:** A group of unidentified armed men abduct around 50 women and girls in two separate incidents on January 12 and January 13.
The victims, who were reportedly gathering wild fruit at the time of the abduction, were kidnapped in Arbinda and another locality in Soum province. Source: [CNN](#)
 - **January 12, 2023:** Suspected jihadists attack a mosque in Goulgountou, northeastern Burkina Faso.
The assailants shot and killed nine worshippers. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **December 30, 2022 - December 31, 2022:** The bodies of 28 civilians killed by gunfire are found in Nouna, northwestern Burkina Faso.
The discovery garners international condemnation which has incited an investigation into the perpetrators of the killings. Local sources claim a volunteer militia, Volontaires pour la Defense la Patries (VDP) were behind the attacks. Sources: [Defense Post](#), [Reuters](#), [France 24](#))
 - **December 27, 2022:** A bus strikes a mine in Bougui, eastern Burkina Faso.
The explosion kills ten and injures five others. The government suspects jihadists were behind the attack. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **December 7, 2022:** Suspected jihadists launch an attack in Boala, Center-North of Burkina Faso.
The attack kills 12 and wounds several others Source: [Defense Post](#)
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- **October 24, 2022:** Armed militants ambush a military base in the northern city of Djibo. The attack kills at least 10 Burkina Faso soldiers and wounds 50 others. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **October 15, 2022:** Jihadists ambush Bouroum district, northern Burkina Faso. The militants kill three soldiers and eight civilian auxiliaries. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **September 26, 2022:** JNIM militants ambush a supply convoy in Gaskinde as it was on its way to Djibo, northern Burkina Faso. The attack kills 11 soldiers and injures 28 others. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#)
- **September 5, 2022:** A military convoy carrying supplies on the road between Bourzanga to Djibo, north of Burkina Faso hits an improvised explosive device. The explosion kills 35 and injures 37 others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. However, the area is regularly targeted by extremist groups. Source: [Guardian](#)
- **August 28, 2022:** Gunmen ambush a convoy at the Boungou gold mine in eastern Burkina Faso. The attack kills six and wounds two others. No group claims responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **August 9, 2022:** Two explosives detonate on the road from Bourzanga to Djibao, northern Burkina Faso. The explosions targeted military convoys, killing 15 soldiers and injuring one other. No group claims responsibility. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **August 5, 2022:** Suspected jihadists ambush troops in Bam, northern Burkina Faso. The attack kills at least four soldiers and nine civilian army volunteers from the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP). Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 4, 2022:** Armed assailants ambush Kossi, northwestern Burkina Faso. The assailants kill 22 and wound several others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 11, 2022:** Armed men kill at least 100 civilians in the Seytenga district of northern Burkina Faso, near the border with Niger. The assailants reportedly aim their guns only at male residents—appearing to spare women and children—and set fire to shops. The attack also forces approximately 3,000 people to flee from their homes. Burkinabe authorities' attempt to recover bodies is impeded by suspected booby-trapped devices planted by the assailants at the site. No group immediately claims responsibility, though the attack occurs in borderlands where al-Qaeda and ISIS linked militants are engaged in an insurgency. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [Reuters](#)
- **June 9, 2022:** Assailants raid the Karma industrial goldmine, killing one employee and one soldier, while injuring several others. Nere Mining Group, which owns the mine, suspends operations at the site. Also in the country's north, armed men attack a military police post in Seytenga, Seno province, and kill 11 gendarmes. In an assault in the western province of Kossi, attackers kill four military police. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **May 26, 2022:** Burkinabe security forces kill militant commander Tidiane Djibrilou Dicko and 10 other terrorists in an airstrike. Dicko—one of 46 jihadists on the armed forces' most-wanted list—had been a member of ISGS, but in mid-2021 joined JNIM, an al-Qaeda-linked alliance and the largest jihadist network in the Sahel. He allegedly had a role in some of the most devastating violence in northern Burkina Faso, including a January 2020 attack that left more than 40 dead. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **May 25, 2022:** Unidentified gunmen attack the rural town of Madjoari in Kompienga province, killing approximately 50. The attackers reportedly surrounded the town and intercepted fleeing civilians as they tried to escape when food ran out. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **May 22, 2022:** Unidentified jihadists kill at least 11 in two villages in Seno province. Another 14 who were recorded as missing after the raids are reportedly found dead. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#)
- **May 21, 2022:** Unidentified militants kill at least five soldiers during a large-scale attack in the Central-North region. The Burkinabe army claims to kill approximately 30 militants. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **May 19, 2022:** Unidentified militants attack a military base in Madjoari in Kompienga province, killing 11 soldiers and wounding 20 others. Aerial reinforcements kill 15 gunmen. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **May 15, 2022:** Unidentified gunmen attack a VDP position in the Palsegue village, killing at least nine. According to sources cited by Xinhua, eight civilians, including the village chief, are among the casualties. Source: [Xinhua](#)
- **May 14, 2022 - May 15, 2022:** Unidentified militants launch an overnight raid on police and gendarmes' posts in Faramana, wounding two. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **May 14, 2022:** Suspected jihadists kill approximately 40 people in multiple attacks. Militants kill approximately 25 people, including 13 VDP volunteers, in two attacks in the Sahel region. Militants attack a VDP-escorted civilian convoy in Kompienga, killing approximately 15 and wounding almost a dozen. Sources: [Africanews](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **May 7, 2022 - May 8, 2022:** Unidentified militants launch an overnight raid on the city jail in Nouna, freeing the approximately 60 prisoners housed there. The attackers are armed with Kalashnikovs and heavy machine guns and riding 4x4s and motorbikes. They also set vehicles on fire and ransack the jail's offices. There are no casualties reported. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **May 5, 2022:** Militants launch two ambushes that kill seven soldiers and four civilian volunteer troops. In the first attack, militants kill two soldiers and four civilian volunteers near the town of Solle. A second attack that day kills five paramilitary troops at Ouanobe. Nine people are wounded in both attacks. Soldiers recover the bodies of 20 attacks in follow-up operations. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **April 24, 2022:** Assailants launch two simultaneous attacks on Burkinabe military detachments, killing nine soldiers and six civilians, including two volunteer fighters. The early morning assaults in Gaskinde and Pobe-Mengao also leave 30 wounded. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **April 8, 2022:** An attack on an army base in the northern Sanmatenga province kills at least a dozen soldiers and four paramilitary fighters.

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The army states more than 20 other soldiers are wounded, but gives no details on the assailants. However, groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS have sought to gain control in the area. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)

- **April 4, 2022:** Armed men kidnap an 83-year-old American Catholic nun, Sister Suellen Tennyson, in northern Burkina Faso. The kidnapers vandalize rooms and sabotage the communal vehicle before taking the nun away from the Yalgo parish in the diocese of Kaya, where she has served since 2014. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **March 30, 2022:** Dozens of armed men on motorbikes attack a gold mine in northern Burkina Faso, killing at least 20 civilians. The assailants launch an overnight attack on the gold mine, located in Kougdiguin in Namentenga province. Local sources claim that approximately 20 other people are wounded, with women and children among the casualties. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **March 20, 2022:** Two suspected jihadist attacks kill 24 soldiers in eastern Burkina Faso. In one incident, 11 soldiers are killed and eight more are wounded in what the armed forces label a “complex attack.” One security source claims a military vehicle hit an improvised explosive device. In the second incident, near Natiaboani, armed men ambush a Burkinabe military unit engaged in a security operation, killing at least 13 soldiers and injuring eight. The attacks come amid a military campaign to wrest control of areas that are overrun by Islamist extremists, including Pama, Madjoari, and Foutouri. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Guardian](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **March 14, 2022:** Militant fighters attack and kill eight people collecting water in Arbinda, Soum province. In the same province, armed men attack a water drilling site, shooting dead three civilians and four VDP members. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **March 13, 2022:** Gunmen ambush a gendarmerie unit in the mining town of Taparko, killing at least 13 gendarmes and wounding eight others. That same day, two people die onboard a bus that strikes a landmine in the same town. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **March 12, 2022:** Islamist militants kill nine people in an assault on an informal gold mine in Oudalan province. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **February 7, 2022 - February 8, 2022:** French troops clash with IRSAD fighters near the town of Ouahigouya, near the border with Mali. Four civilians die after being caught in the exchange of fire and 10 militants are killed. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **January 18, 2022:** A French army convoy vehicle hits an improvised explosive device (IED) near Ouahigouya Airport, injuring four French soldiers, one seriously. The troops, who are part of the Operation Barkhane task force, are transported to Mali. No perpetrators are identified, though al-Qaeda and ISIS are active in the area. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **January 11, 2022:** Jihadists attack a military detachment near Burkina Faso’s border with Niger, killing at least four soldiers. The assault occurs in Oudalan province, at the center of the tri-border area—a hotbed of groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS. That same day, Burkinabe authorities arrest eight soldiers on suspicion of conspiring against the government. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#)
- **January 1, 2022:** Armed assailants attack military and police units in the northwestern Gomboro area, injuring 11 soldiers. Security forces kill 29 terrorists in a counteroffensive, according to an army statement. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **December 23, 2021:** Insurgents ambush a group of VDP members conducting a sweep of a remote area in northern Loroum province, killing at least 41 civilian fighters. On December 26, the government declares two days of national mourning. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Deutsche Welle](#)
- **December 9, 2021:** Gunmen attack and kill at least 14 members of the VDP near the northern town of Titao. The assailants ambush members of the government-backed civilian militia as they travel to reinforce other civilian forces. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **November 14, 2021:** Insurgents attack a military police outpost near a gold mine in Inata in northern Burkina Faso. The terrorist attack kills 53 people, including 49 police officers and four civilians—making it the deadliest attack suffered by Burkina Faso’s armed forces since the onset of militant attacks in 2017. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **November 12, 2021:** Armed men kill seven police officers and wound another five who were on a security mission in northern Burkina Faso. ISIS and al-Qaeda linked militants are active in the area. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **November 6, 2021:** One Burkinabe soldier and 15 jihadists die in fighting in eastern Komadjari province. Three other soldiers are wounded. The army recovers weapons and seizes a large quantity of ammunition and motorcycles. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **November 1, 2021:** Suspected jihadists attack a group of civilians driving their carts from Dambam to a market in Markoye, leaving ten people dead and four others missing. The armed men, suspected of belonging to an ISIS affiliate, intercept the group on their way to the market by setting up a fake checkpoint on the road. The attack occurs in an area of Burkina Faso’s Sahel reserve that borders Mali and Niger, where Islamist militants launch frequent attacks. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **October 31, 2021:** An armed group kills five police officers in Sorou province in the borderlands near Mali. The attackers ambush security forces in the early hours and a firefight ensues, leaving 15 of the attackers dead. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 29, 2021:** Assailants attack a convoy transporting staff and contractors of Iamgold’s Essakane gold mine in northern Burkina Faso. Three buses carrying 33 people and three supply trucks come under attack while traveling on the road a few miles from the mine. Although there are no reported casualties, two people go missing during the attack. Three days later, Iamgold announces that the two individuals are safe and accounted for, the mine site is secure, and operations are not affected. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#)
- **October 11, 2021:** Two Burkinabe soldiers are killed when their motorbikes run over an improvised explosive device (IED). The homemade bomb is planted in the town of Farakorosso, in the Cascades region of southeast Burkina Faso. According to an estimate by the Agence France-Presse, the use of IEDs in the country has increased since 2018 and such attacks have killed nearly 300 people. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)

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- **October 4, 2021:** Extremists launch a predawn attack on a military barracks in Yirgou, Sanmatenga province, killing at least 14 soldiers and injuring seven others, according to the government.
The government immediately launches an aerial and ground offensive, killing several militants. A local official claims that a large amount of equipment was taken away by the attackers. Though there are no claims of responsibility, the province is overrun by insurgents linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **September 12, 2021:** Unidentified armed men attack a convoy of empty fuel trucks escorted by gendarmes in eastern Burkina Faso, killing six people and injuring seven others.
The tankers are traveling from Bongou gold mine, owned and operated by multinational company Endeavor Mining, when they hit an improvised explosive device on the road and come under heavy gunfire. No group claims responsibility, though jihadist groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and ISIS are active in the area. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#), [Reuters](#)
- **August 31, 2021:** Gunmen attack vehicles belonging to Canadian mining company Iamgold, injuring a police officer in the convoy's security detail.
The attackers fire from a distance at the convoy enroute to the Essakane gold mine, but security personnel repel the assault. No passengers are injured. Following the attack, Iamgold suspends convoys to and from the Eassakane gold mine, the company's largest operating mine. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **August 18, 2021:** Suspected Islamist extremists ambush a civilian convoy that is being escorted by military police between the towns of Gorgadji and Arbinda.
The government initially reports 47 people killed and several wounded, but the death toll rises to 80. The Burkinabe president declares three days of national mourning the following day. ISIS and al-Qaeda aligned jihadists are known to carry out similar attacks in the area, but no groups claim immediate responsibility. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#), [United Nations](#)
- **August 8, 2021:** Suspected jihadists ambush military forces in the Boucle du Mouhoun region, near the northwest border with Mali, killing at least 12 troops and injuring eight others.
One security source claims the attack is revenge for the killing of two jihadist leaders, Sibide Ousmane and spiritual leader Banda Amadou, in the same region the day prior. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **August 4, 2021:** Jihadist rebels kill at least 30 people in attacks on several villages outside the town of Markoye in Oudalan province near the border with Niger.
In the first wave of attacks, the insurgents lead a midday assault that kills 11 civilians. Four hours later, the jihadists ambush a detachment of military and volunteer fighters securing the area. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **July 16, 2021:** Two IED blasts kill three Burkinabe soldiers and one militiaman, and injure five others, traveling near the town of Dablo.
The joint force of army, police, and gendarmerie personnel is returning from an operation when a military vehicle and a motorbike in the convoy hit two bombs planted on the highway. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Andalou Agency](#)
- **July 12, 2021:** Unidentified assailants attack Niha-Mossi in northern Burkina Faso, setting fire to homes and the village market.
The armed men kill three civilians and seven members of the VDP, who are reportedly the target of the attack. Though there is no claim of responsibility, jihadist insurgents are active in the region. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **June 21, 2021:** Militants ambush a police unit traveling on a relief mission to the violence-affected town of Yirgou, killing 15 officers.
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 4, 2021:** Heavily armed militants launch an overnight assault on the village of Solhan, killing more than 132 people, including at least seven children.
The perpetrators reportedly execute members of a local defense force, target civilians, destroy homes, and burn down a local market. Human rights group claim it is the worst attack on civilians in the country in years. According to the government, more than 7,000 people are forced flee their homes in Solhan. A government spokesperson later tells reporters that the assailants were mostly children between the ages of 12 and 14. On June 25, authorities arrest two suspects in connection to the attack who are believed to be members of al-Qaeda-affiliated JNIM. Sources: [Reuters](#), [NPR](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Washington Post](#), [France 24](#)
- **May 18, 2021 - May 19, 2021:** Unidentified assailants attack and kill 15 villagers who are celebrating a baptism in Adjarara, near the northern border with Mali.
In a separate attack the following day, at least one soldier is killed and two are seriously injured when a military vehicle hits a roadside bomb in eastern Burkina Faso. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, though jihadists are active in the region. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **May 3, 2021:** Suspected jihadists attack Kodyel village in the eastern Burkinabe province of Komandjari, leaving at least 30 people dead.
The gunmen surround the village and travel house to house, setting fire to the structures and killing residents, according to a government official. The assailants reportedly target the civilians because fellow villagers had earlier joined the volunteer defense forces. Source: [France 24](#)
- **April 26, 2021:** Suspected jihadists ambush an anti-poaching patrol, abducting three foreign nationals and a Burkinabe soldier and leaving at least three injured.
The convoy of approximately 40 people is attacked while traveling near the Pama Reserve in eastern Burkina Faso, bordering Benin. The following day, the Spanish government and Burkinabe officials confirm that two Spanish journalists and the Irish director of the Chengeta Wildlife Foundation are killed. The journalists were working on a documentary about Burkina Faso's preservation efforts against poachers and the communities living in the national parks. Audio message purported to be from JNIM claims responsibility for the attack, according to the Associated Press. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [El País](#), [Guardian](#)
- **April 21, 2021:** Armed men on motorcycles attack a Burkinabe security patrol in Sanmatenga province, killing at least four soldiers and injuring two.

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Members of the VDP are among those on the patrol when the joint unit is ambushed. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)

- **April 14, 2021:** Assailants attack a VDP patrol in the Gorgadji area of north Burkina Faso, leaving eight members of the anti-jihadist civilian militia dead and several others missing.
The patrol is ambushed while searching for cattle stolen by the armed men the previous day. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **April 5, 2021:** Armed men on motorbikes ambush a joint unit comprised of gendarmerie and civilian forces, killing three police officers and five armed civilians.
The civilians are members of the government backed VDP. There is no immediate claim of responsibility, though militants linked to al-Qaeda and ISIS are active in the area. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#)
- **March 3, 2021:** A land mine kills six people on-board an ambulance traveling near Burkina Faso's border with Mali, in an area hit by militant attacks.
The ambulance strikes the highway bomb between the towns of Gaskindé and Namissigui, on route to the capital Ouagadougou. The victims are a pregnant woman, her husband, two women accompanying her, a young girl, and the ambulance driver. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 18, 2021:** Suspected Islamist militants launch a deadly attack between the towns of Markoye and Tokabangou in northern Burkina Faso.
The assailants ambush local traders who are traveling to a market across the border in Dolbel, Niger. Eight people are killed and nine others are wounded, one of whom later dies from their injuries. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Defense Post](#)
- French forces in Burkina Faso kill more than 20 militants in the first three weeks of the month during counter-insurgency operations near the Malian border.
Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **January 4, 2021:** Approximately 100 gunmen attack the village of Loubila in northern Burkina Faso, near the border with Mali.
The assailants raid a health center and local market, stealing goods such as food and motorbikes, and then set fire to several sites. The attack leaves at least six people dead, including two militiamen supporting anti-jihadist security forces. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **November 11, 2020:** Armed extremists ambush a military convoy from Tin-Akoff, an area of Burkina Faso that borders Mali and Niger.
A government spokesman puts the death toll at 14 people killed. Two days later, JNIM claims responsibility for the attack. The following day, ISIS's Amaq News Agency announces that ISGS is responsible for the attack, claiming it has killed 20 soldiers. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **November 6, 2020:** An assailant throws a flammable bottle into a mosque in Ouagadougou as people arrive for Friday evening prayers.
The attack leaves six people injured. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **October 14, 2020:** Armed groups kill 20 people in attacks on the villages of Demniol, Bombofa, and Peteguerse across northern Burkina Faso.
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 4, 2020:** Gunmen ambush a convoy of IDPs attempting to return to their village.
The assailants separate the men and execute 25 of them, leaving one seriously injured, and release the women and children. The attackers identify themselves as jihadists carrying out the attack in retaliation for the presence of volunteer defense fighters in Pissila, a town in Burkina Faso's Central-North where the IDPs had been staying. Sources: [UNHCR](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **September 14, 2020:** Four soldiers are killed during a reconnaissance mission near Mentao in Soum province, where jihadists are believed to have established operations.
The next day, the Burkinabe army kills two jihadists during an operation to dismantle a terrorist base in the same province. Source: [Agence-France Presse](#)
- **August 7, 2020:** Gunmen attack a cattle market in eastern Burkina Faso, killing at least 20 people and injuring many others.
Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)
- **June 21, 2020:** Burkina Faso's security forces destroy jihadist bases in two separate operations in the country's north and east.
That same day, Burkinabe forces arrest two suspects during a joint operation with Ivorian forces to secure their shared border. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **May 30, 2020:** Militants attack a cattle market in the village of Kompienga, in Burkina Faso's east, killing 25 people and wounding several others.
In a separate attack, armed groups target a humanitarian convoy near the northern village of Foubé, killing five civilians and five military police. The attack on the convoy leaves 20 people injured. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **May 29, 2020:** Jihadists attack a convoy of traders, which were being escorted by a civilian self-defense group known as the Koglweogo, traveling between towns in Burkina Faso's Loroum province.
The attackers kill 15 people, including at least four women and several members of the Koglweogo. Sources: [France 24](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **May 14, 2020:** Burkinabe police detain 25 people on suspicion of terrorism offenses and twelve of them are found dead in their cells, having died overnight.
Burkina Faso's security launch an investigation into the deaths of the men, who were of the Fulani ethnic group. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **May 13, 2020:** Jihadists ambush Burkinabe troops in the village of Kankanfougouol, Yagha province, near the border with Niger.
The attackers kill four soldiers on site and another four soldiers are later found dead. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- ISIS fighters detonate a truck bomb along the desert frontier between Mali and Burkina Faso.
Unlike similar previous attacks—where ISIS fighters targeted soldiers and villagers—this attack targets al-Qaeda militants. It is suspected that several al-Qaeda fighters were killed. The explosion set off a series of al-Qaeda reprisal attacks against ISIS, and both camps disseminated statements and sermons threatening and denouncing the other jihadist entity as “apostates.” The violence follows a yearlong truce between the

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jihadi franchises in Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Chad. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#)

- **April 9, 2020:** Burkinabe security forces detain 31 members of the Fulani ethnic group during a counterterrorism operation against Islamist militants in the northern town of Djibo.
The 31 unarmed men are summarily executed by army gunfire. Source: [Human Rights Watch](#)
- **March 8, 2020:** Unidentified assailants raid at least two villages settled by Fulani herders in the north, near Burkina Faso's border with Mali. According to the government, the attack kills at least 43 people and is one of the deadliest such attacks of the past year. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **February 17, 2020:** A group of unidentified "armed terrorists" ambush a Protestant church in Pansi, northern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills 24 and wounds 18 others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Guardian](#)
- **February 10, 2020:** Suspected jihadists seize seven people at the home of a pastor in Sebba.
Five of the seven bodies are found three days later, with no report on the status of the other two victims. Source: [Guardian](#)
- **February 1, 2020:** Unidentified gunmen attack Lamdamol village, northern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills over 18 people. No group claims responsibility for the attack, but it is expected that the perpetrators were Islamic extremists.
Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **January 25, 2020:** In a suspected terrorist attack, gunmen ambush a village in Soum province, northern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills at least 39. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [France 24](#)
- **January 20, 2020:** Militants attack the neighboring villages of Nagraogo and Alamou, killing a total of 36 civilians.
Sources: [New York Times](#), [French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#)
- **January 4, 2020:** A school bus strikes an improvised explosive device in Sourou province, northern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills at least 14 and injures another 19. It is suspected that ISIS or al-Qaeda linked groups are behind the attack. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **January 2, 2020:** Assailants attack a gendarmerie in Djibo, Soum province.
At least ten people are killed in the attack. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Xinhua](#)
- **December 25, 2019:** Suspected jihadists ambush an army patrol near Hallale, northern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills at least a dozen soldiers. No group claims responsibility of the attack. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#)
- **December 24, 2019:** An ISWAP militant drives into a military base in northern Soum province.
He then detonates a bomb within the premises. The attack kills seven and injures an unconfirmed number of others. Also on the 24th, a suspected group of over 200 militants attack the city of Arbinda. The hours long raid kills more than 35 before the assailants are repelled by armed forces and the air force. Source: [France 24](#)
- **December 3, 2019:** Unidentified gunmen attack military positions in Toeni, Sourou province, and Bahn, Loroum province.
The attack kills three and wounds seven others. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **December 1, 2019:** Unidentified armed men attack a church in Hantoukoura, eastern Burkina Faso.
The attack kills 14 and wounds an unidentified number of others. It is suspected that an Islamist group launched the attack on the Christian church. Source: [France 24](#)
- **November 29, 2019:** Burkina Faso's armed forces carry out a raid in Nahouri province to dismantle the extremist group Ansarul Islam's presence in the area.
The operation kills Ansarul Islam's leader, Abdoul Hadi, as well as five of his supporters. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **November 20, 2019:** Extremists attack a security base in Arbinda.
The attack kills one and injures seven others. No group confirms responsibility for the attack. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **November 15, 2019:** Unidentified armed men attack a military patrol in Yorsala.
It is unconfirmed if any soldiers were killed, but at least 24 extremists were killed in the clash. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **November 6, 2019:** Gunmen ambush a five-bus convoy carrying employees of Canadian mining company Semafo, leaving 37 people dead and 60 others wounded.
The convoy, escorted by Burkina's Faso military, are attacked while traveling to Bongou, an open-pit gold mine located in the country's east. Burkina Faso's ruling party, People's Movement for Progress, calls for a state of emergency to be declared. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Financial Times](#), [Globe and Mail](#), [International Crisis Group](#)
- **November 3, 2019:** Terrorists gun down and kill Oumarou Dicko, the mayor of Djibo and a parliamentarian for Djibo province.
Two other men traveling with Dicko are killed. It is the highest-profile political assassination to date in Burkina Faso, according to the U.S. State Department. Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Human Rights Watch](#)
- **October 28, 2019:** Suspected jihadists storm the commune of Pobe-Mengao, located approximately 160 miles north of the country's capital.
The insurgents threaten to kidnap children and command villagers to aid them in purchasing weapons. Those who refuse are shot, leaving 16 people dead. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 23, 2019:** Gunmen ambush soldiers near the village of Guiendbila, killing five and wounding four others.
Another soldier is killed in a separate ambush in Sidogo. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **October 20, 2019:** Armed attackers storm the village of Zoura and open fire, killing nine people.
Before leaving the area, the assailants loot a store and steal cattle. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
- **October 19, 2019:** Terrorists launch nearly simultaneous attacks on military units in Bahn in Loroum province and Yense in Yatenga province.
The attacks leave five soldiers and one police officer dead. Source: [France 24](#)
- **October 11, 2019:** Suspected extremists launch an attack on the grand mosque in the northern village of Salmossi.
The attack takes place during Friday evening prayers, killing at least 16 worshipers. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **October 4, 2019:** Unidentified assailants attack a gold mining site at Dolmane in Soum province, leaving 20 people dead.
Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Agence France-Presse](#)

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- **September 29, 2019:** 20 men on motorcycles plunder the village of Komsilga in Bam province, leaving shops burned and nine people dead. Later that day in the same province, attackers kill seven people in the village of Deneon. A soldier is killed in a third attack on an army unit. Source: [Guardian](#)
 - **September 8, 2019:** Two separate attacks target a food convoy and transport truck, killing at least 29 people in the northern province of Sanmatenga. According to a government statement, terrorists deliberately target the food convoy carrying provisions for civilians displaced by fighting. The truck is hit by an improvised explosive device. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#)
 - **September 5, 2019:** Gunmen ambush armed forces patrolling in Soum province. One soldier and five assailants are killed. Source: [Xinhua](#)
 - **August 30, 2019:** JNIM fighters ambush an army patrol near Tongomayel, injuring one soldier. JNIM claims responsibility for the attack and states that the group captured vehicles, weapons, and ammunition, and exploded barracks. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **August 19, 2019:** Heavily armed assailants launch an attack on a Burkinabe military base in Koutougou, near the border with Mali, killing at least 24 soldiers and wounding several others. An army statement calls it the deadliest attack against the country's armed forces, carried out by "several dozen terrorists," but does not identify the attackers' identities or affiliation. On September 19, ISIS releases an issue of its online magazine al-Naba, claiming that fighters from its West Africa Province is responsible for the attack. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [France 24](#), [Defense Post](#)
 - **July 25, 2019 - July 26, 2019:** Alleged jihadists on motorbikes launch an overnight raid on the village of Diblou in Burkina Faso's north. The assailants ransack and burn the village's market and leave 15 people dead. Source: [Voice of America](#)
 - **June 18, 2019 - June 19, 2019:** Militants launch a nighttime attack on the village of Belhede in the Tongomayel department of Soum province, killing 17 people, according to the defense minister. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **June 10, 2019:** Suspected jihadists attack Arbinda, a village in the country's north, killing 19 people. Arbinda has been subject to increasing jihadist attacks and ethnic clashes since April 2019. Sources: [France 24](#), [International Crisis Group](#)
 - **May 26, 2019:** Gunmen attack worshippers during Sunday prayers at a Catholic church in Toulfe, in the country's north. The heavily armed men kill four people and cause panic, forcing many residents to hide in their homes or seek cover in the wilderness. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
 - **May 15, 2019:** Armed men stop a group of churchgoers during a Catholic procession in Zimtenga, a remote village in the Kongoussi area of northwest Burkina Faso. The attackers free the children, but execute four adults and proceed to burn a statue of the Virgin Mary. Source: [CNN](#)
 - **May 12, 2019:** Jihadists encircle and open fire on congregants as they depart Sunday mass at a Roman Catholic church in a northern town called Dablo. The attack kills a priest and five other people. The gunmen reportedly burn the church, loot businesses, and destroy places serving alcohol before fleeing. Source: [Reuters](#)
 - **April 28, 2019:** Six people, including a pastor, are killed in a Sunday attack on a Christian church. Days earlier on Friday, gunmen shoot and kill five teachers in the country's east. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for either attack. Source: [Associated Press](#)
 - **April 1, 2019:** Sixty civilians die in an exchange of hostilities between ethnic communities in northern Burkina Faso. The recent spike in ethnic clashes is caused by Islamist extremists who aim to expand their influence in the region. Source: [Reuters](#)
 - **February 5, 2019:** Jihadists attack the town of Kain in the Yatenta province, killing 14 civilians. The attack occurs the day before a G5 Sahel summit in Ouagadougou. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
 - **January 28, 2019:** Ten terrorists open fire on a group of villagers in Sikire in northern Burkina Faso. The attackers ransack the village, setting fire to businesses, and leave 10 people dead. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
 - **January 15, 2019:** Suspected jihadists kidnap a Canadian national named Kirk Woodman during a raid on a mining site in Tiabongou. Woodman, who worked for Profess Mineral Mining Company, is found dead and riddled with bullets two days later. Source: [Associated Press](#)
 - **January 11, 2019:** Gunmen attack a village market in broad daylight, killing 12 civilians and wounding one other. The attackers also reportedly ransack shops and set fire to a barn, a cart, and six stalls. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
 - **January 1, 2019:** Suspected jihadists attack the central-northern village of Yirgou, killing the village chief and five others from the Mossi ethnic group. The incident spurs an ethnically motivated revenge attack, during which Mossi villagers lynch herders from a nearby camp of the nomadic Fulani group and burn down their homes. In total, the attacks result in 13 deaths. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
 - **December 4, 2018:** Unidentified militants ambush a Burkinabe security patrol convoy in eastern Burkina Faso, opening fire and damaging the lead vehicle. Officers fire back, killing six of the attackers. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
 - **September 26, 2018:** An improvised explosive device, planted at the foot of a bridge, explodes and kills eight soldiers in the lead vehicle of a Burkinabe military convoy traveling in northern Burkina Faso. There were no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [France 24](#)
 - **September 15, 2018:** Assailants in Burkina Faso's east launch two attacks that kill at least nine civilians. Six people, including an imam, are killed during one attack on a mosque. The attackers also shoot three members of the same family in the second attack. Source: [Associated Press](#)
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- **September 5, 2018:** Burkinabe soldiers attempt to diffuse mines laid by jihadists in eastern Burkina Faso and are themselves hit by an IED. Two soldiers are killed and six are injured. Source: [France 24](#)
 - **August 28, 2018:** A roadside bomb strikes a Burkinabe security vehicle en route to support the police in the country's east, where earlier there had been a jihadist attack. The mine explosion instantly kills seven persons and wounds six others. Sources: [Defense Post](#), [Associated Press](#)
 - **August 27, 2018:** Militants launch a two-hour-long attack on a gendarmerie in the eastern city of Pama. No one is killed, but the assailants burn buildings of the police headquarters before fleeing the scene. Source: [Defense Post](#)
 - **August 13, 2018:** Jihadist militants target a Burkina security forces convoy, exploding the lead vehicle with a mine and attacking the rest of the convoy with gunfire, killing five police officers and one civilian. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#)
 - **March 2, 2018:** Islamic jihadists launch coordinated attacks in Ouagadougou against the French embassy and the national army headquarters. Militants in a pick-up truck open fire near the prime minister's office and attempt to enter the French embassy. At approximately the same time, assailants detonate an explosives-laden vehicle and engage in a gunfight at the Burkinabe military headquarters. According to the International Crisis Group, 16 people were killed, including nine assailants, and an estimated 85 were wounded. Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM)—formed through a merger of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar al-Dine, and al-Mourabitoun—claimed responsibility for the attack. Sources: [Guardian](#), [CNN](#), [International Crisis Group](#)
 - **August 13, 2017:** Two suspected jihadist gunmen on motorcycles storm a café popular with expats in Ouagadougou, killing 15 people and wounding 22 others. Sources: [BBC News](#), [CNN](#)
 - **March 5, 2017:** Assailants target a Malian army post near the border with Burkina Faso, killing 11 soldiers. The attack is attributed to IRSAD, led by extremist Burkinabe preacher Malam Ibrahim Dicko. Sources: [International Business Times](#), [International Business Times](#)
 - **March 3, 2017:** Militants on motorbikes kill two persons, one a school headmaster, Kourfayl, a village in northern Burkina Faso, and then go to other villages demanding schools either close or teach the Koran and Arabic. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Nordic Africa Institute](#)
 - **February 27, 2017:** Militants attack two police stations in the northern Soum province, injuring one woman. Ansar-ul-Islam claims responsibility. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Associated Press](#)
 - **December 31, 2016:** Assailants linked to extremist preacher Malam Ibrahim Dicko carry out simultaneous assassination attempts, killing one person and critically wounding another. Source: [International Business Times](#)
 - **December 16, 2016:** Unidentified gunmen attack a Burkinabe military post in the country's north, near the border with Mali. The attack leaves 12 soldiers dead and is later claimed by extremist group Ansar-ul-Islam lil-Ichad wal Jihad (IRSAD). Sources: [Reuters](#), [International Business Times](#)
 - **October 12, 2016:** Militants kill three Burkinabe soldiers at an army post near Burkina Faso's northern border with Mali. Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi—leader of the ISGS breakaway group from al-Mourabitoun—claims responsibility for the attack, the second such claim in little over a month. Source: [Long War Journal](#)
 - **September 2, 2016:** Militants kill a customs official and civilian near Burkina Faso's northern borders with Mali and Niger. Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi—leader of the ISGS breakaway group from al-Mourabitoun—claims responsibility for the attack, the first ISGS attack in Burkina Faso. Sources: [Jeune Afrique](#), [Long War Journal](#)
 - **January 15, 2016:** AQIM-affiliated assailants target a hotel and café in the country's capital of Ouagadougou, taking hostages at the Splendid Hotel and killing 30 people. Also on January 15, the AQIM-affiliated Ansar al-Dine claims responsibility for the kidnapping of an elderly Australian couple from Djibo, a town near the borders with Mali and Niger. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Guardian](#)
 - Unidentified assailants use IEDs, RPGs, and small arms to target a convoy in Djibo, killing one person. Source: [U.S. State Department](#)
 - **October 9, 2015:** Around 50 gunmen attack a police station near the northern border with Mali, killing three police officers and wounding two civilians. Burkinabe authorities blame Malian separatists for the attack. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)
 - **August 23, 2015:** Gunmen attack a police post in northern Burkina Faso, near the country's border with Mali. Two soldiers are wounded in the attack, one seriously. One witness claims that the assailants said they were operating on behalf of Boko Haram. Sources: [Reuters](#), [aOuaga.com](#)
 - Al-Mourabitoun kidnaps a Romanian hostage from northern Burkina Faso. The hostage is since believed to be held by al-Mourabitoun breakaway group ISGS, led by former al-Mourabitoun spokesperson Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Long War Journal](#)
 - - : Burkina Faso experiences an estimated 20 terrorist incidents, including the kidnapping of foreigners, attacks on border posts, and a major terrorist attack in the country's capital, Ouagadougou. Source: [Reuters](#)
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Domestic Counter-Extremism

In December 2018, the government in Burkina Faso declared a state of emergency in several provinces located along the country's northern border with Mali. The declaration occurred after jihadists attack a detachment of military police on the border with Mali, killing 10 gendarmes. In January 2019, the state of emergency was extended by six months after suspected jihadists attacked a village in the central-northern area of the country and killed 13 people. The incident led to an eruption of ethnic violence in the area. On July 11, 2019, the government again extended the state of emergency in 14 provinces through January 12, 2020. The state of emergency remained in place through mid-2021, according to a private security firm, though no announcements were made on its status as of October 2021. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [Garda World](#))

During his tenure, Burkinabe President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré repeatedly declared his commitment to combat the threat from terrorism. Nonetheless, corruption and scarcity of adequate military personnel continue to plague the country's counterterrorism forces. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Prior to Kaboré's inauguration in December 2015, Burkinabe police were documented carrying out abuses against civilians and violently harassing journalists, practices that have eroded trust in Burkina Faso's police and military apparatus. In October 2016, Kaboré faced calls to resign after a series of ISIS-inspired terrorist attacks on border posts in the north, in response to which Kaboré said that the terrorism situation in the country was "under control." The following month, Kaboré pledged to withdraw Burkinabe forces from U.N. missions in Sudan and Mali in order to strengthen Burkina Faso's own security forces. In June 2019, following growing accusations that security forces were committing human rights abuses, the government announced the creation of a commission on national security to address these issues. In April 2020, Human Rights Watch alleged that Burkinabe security forces executed 31 unarmed detainees of the Fulani ethnic group, during operations against Islamist militants. The defense ministry announced it had ordered an investigation into the incident and that the perpetrators would be held responsible if found guilty. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Burkina24](#), [Reuters](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [Human Rights Watch](#))

In a similar incident on May 14, 2020, 12 people were found dead in their jail cells, believed to have perished by asphyxiation overnight. The men who died were part of a group of 25 people who were detained on suspicion of terrorism offenses and were members of the Fulani ethnic group from the town of Fada N'Gourma. Authorities reportedly launched an investigation into the incident. Earlier that month, according to a local human rights group, a Fulani teacher accused of having links to terrorists was found dead in an Ouagadougou police station. (Source: [BBC News](#))

The Kaboré government made a push to combat the threat of terrorism in Burkina Faso's borders, and claimed to have disrupted terrorist recruiting and financing networks in the country using its police force. In July 2018, the Burkinabe army launched an operation to dismantle terrorist bases in the country's north. The army said it arrested 100 people and seized IED materials during the raids. After further investigation, 60 people were transferred to the police and the others were released. (Sources: [LeFaso.net](#), [LeFaso.net](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Following his inauguration to a second term in December 2020, Kaboré appointed the first-ever minister for national reconciliation in order to address ethnic and political conflicts that he said were fueling terrorism. (Source: [Voice of America](#))

On November 14, 2021, insurgents attacked a military police outpost near a gold mine in Inata and left 53 people dead, making it the deadliest attack suffered by the country's security forces since Islamist militant violence surged. The gendarmes who were attacked had reportedly gone two weeks without food rations, even after alerting authorities that they were in need of resources. Hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Ouagadougou to express outrage over the attack and called on Kaboré to resign for failing to rein in the Islamist insurgency during his six-year tenure. In response, Kaboré fired Prime Minister Christophe Dabire on December 8, 2021. Dabire officially tendered his resignation, which triggered a resignation of the entire cabinet. Kaboré also reshuffled his military leadership. On December 10, 2021, Kaboré nominated Lassina Zerbo, a physicist who led the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization for eight years, as prime minister. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Deutsche Welle](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Reuters](#))

On January 23, 2022, soldiers mutinied at several army bases across Burkina Faso, demanding the removal of military top brass and more resources to fight Islamist insurgents. The following day, the country's military announced that they had removed Kaboré from office, suspended the constitution, and dissolved the government and parliament. The political upheaval unfolded after weeks of protests against Kaboré's handling of the fight against al-Qaeda and ISIS-linked militants. The military coup was met with condemnation, including from neighbors in West Africa, France, and the United Nations. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) suspended Burkina Faso from its governing bodies but stopped short of imposing sanctions. The African Union (AU) followed on January 31, suspending Ouagadougou from the organization's activities

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effective until constitutional order is restored. Shortly after, the junta in Burkina Faso—officially named the Patriotic Movement for Preservation and Restoration (MPSR)—announced it had lifted suspension of the constitution and appointed coup leader Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Damiba as president. Damiba also called on the international community to back the country in its fight against al-Qaeda and ISIS militants. (Sources: [Radio France Internationale](#), [Reuters](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

On September 30, 2022, armed soldiers ousted President Paul-Henri Damiba from his office. The coup began with gunfire near a military camp in Ouagadougou and an explosion near the presidential palace. Captain Ibrahim Traoré was proclaimed the new leader of Burkina Faso. According to Traoré, Damiba was removed due to his lack of progress in defeating Islamists. A statement signed by Traoré claimed national stakeholders will soon be invited to adopt a new transitional charter and designate a new civilian or military president. Damiba resigned, but with seven conditions that Traoré accepted. One such condition would ensure that the country would return to constitutional rule by July 2024. Supporters of the coup later attacked the French embassy, believing the embassy was harboring Damiba. France has drastically lost favor throughout Burkina Faso as Traore supporters have shifted their allegiance towards Russia, calling for military support from the Kremlin. In nearby Mali, Russian mercenaries are active, purportedly countering extremists in the jihadist-plagued country. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Axios](#))

Despite Traoré's ambitions to rid Burkina Faso of the jihadist threat, on October 24, 2022, armed militants ambushed a military base in the northern city of Djibo. The attack killed at least 10 Burkina Faso soldiers and wounded 50 others. Given the continued strength of the insurgency, Burkina Faso launched a drive in October 2022 to recruit 50,000 civilian defense volunteers to help the army fight jihadists. However, on December 30 and 31, 2022, the bodies of 28 civilians killed by gunfire were found in Nouna, northwestern Burkina Faso. The discovery garnered international condemnation which has incited an investigation into the perpetrators of the killings. Local sources claim members of the volunteer militia were behind the attacks. (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [All Africa News](#), [Reuters](#), [France 24](#), [Africa News](#))

Military and Armed Civilian Efforts

As president, Kaboré repeatedly emphasized the need to strengthen the country's military capabilities and border security in an effort to combat the threat from terrorism. To secure his country's borders, Kaboré announced in November 2016 his intention to recall Burkinabe soldiers deployed in U.N. missions in Sudan and Mali. The government also secured funding from France and Canada to invest in building new border posts with Mali and Niger to better monitor and control the country's borders. In 2017, Burkina Faso's Army-Gendarmerie-Police counterterrorism task force Groupement des Forces Anti-Terroristes (GFAT), was tasked with bolstering the effort to counter terrorist activities along its northern border. The GFAT more than tripled the amount of task force members from 500 troops in 2016 to 1,600 troops in 2017. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Africanews](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Armed civilian groups formed to respond to instability that followed the 2014 revolution and overthrow of President Blaise Compaore. The Burkinabe government has historically tolerated these vigilante groups, including a powerful self-defense group called Koglweogo ("guardians of the bush"). The Koglweogo has primarily served as an anti-crime group but has been implicated in human rights abuses. Following the November 6, 2019 attack on a mining convoy, Kaboré announced that the government planned on providing support to armed civilian groups to defend against the surge in militant violence. On January 21, 2020, Burkina Faso's parliament passed the "Law Instituting the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland," which will provide funding and training to local vigilante militias to aid in fighting jihadist groups. Around this time, the government and military established a civilian auxiliary force called Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP), sometimes called Volunteers for the Defense of the Motherland. Civilian volunteers receive two weeks of military training before working alongside the security forces, sometimes involved in surveillance, information-gathering, or escort operations. According to an April 2021 estimate by Agence France-Presse, 200 VDP members have died since January 2020. (Sources: [International Crisis Group](#), [Reuters](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Agence de Presse Africaine](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Some of these armed volunteers have reportedly complained about insufficient funding and the lack of equipment needed to conduct patrols, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting economic downturn. In some areas, the supply shortages have emboldened jihadists, who have targeted and killed vigilantes. In July 2020, human rights groups accused the government-sanctioned vigilantes, including the Koglweogo, of using brutal tactics and exacerbating inter-ethnic violence. Between February and October 2020, more than half of the 19 attacks launched by the armed volunteers targeted Fulani civilians. The Burkinabe military has also been implicated in human rights abuses. Over eight months, villagers in the northern town of Djibo uncovered the bodies of 180 men thought to have been killed by security forces and dumped in fields, by roadsides, and under bridges—according to a July 2020 report from Human Rights Watch. Burkina Faso's Minister of Defense Chérif Sy said in a statement that they would investigate the allegations and claimed that some of those responsible could be terrorists disguised in army uniforms. In July 2021, Human Rights Watch claimed that the June 2021 attack in Solhan, which killed more than 130 people, was retaliation for activity by the VDP in the area. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#), [New Humanitarian](#), [New York Times](#))

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In September 2018, Burkina Faso's government established the Brigade Spéciale des Investigations Antiterroristes (BSIAT), a special anti-terrorism unit that would conduct investigations, aimed at ensuring fair trials. In August 2019, the BSIAT reached operational capacity. By the end of 2019, BSIAT closed 18 of the 31 terrorism cases opened since the brigade began its work, leading to the arrest of 78 terrorist suspects. However, the U.S. State Department noted that the BSIAT suffers from a lack of budget for basic logistical resources, such as phone service or food for detainees. Furthermore, there remains a lack of clarity over whose authority takes precedent in terrorism investigations vis-à-vis the military and gendarmerie, despite the BSIAT's attempt at inter-agency dialogue. (Sources: [Xinhua](#), [International Crisis Group](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

From January 2021 to October 1, 2021, the number of civilian fatalities at the hands of state security forces dropped 77 percent compared with the previous year, according to data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). The decrease in security abuses was part of a wider trend in the Sahel region, including in Mali and Niger. Human rights organizations say the change could be attributed to more reporting and international pressure. Some analysts believe that other factors, such as outsourcing of military activities to government-backed militias, could have impacted the numbers. However, a May 2022 Human Rights Watch report accused government security forces of committing abuses such as summary executions while confronting militant violence. According to the report, government security forces and VDP volunteers were responsible for unlawful killings and enforced disappearances of dozens of civilians and suspected Islamist fighters, largely in Burkina Faso's eastern and southern regions. Military and VDP violence has escalated, and according to August 2023 figures released by the Africa Center, a reported 762 civilians were killed by the military and VDP troops (Sources: [Voice of America](#), [Associated Press](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Africa Center](#))

On January 21, 2023, Burkina Faso's junta government ordered hundreds of French troops to depart the country within a month. The decision, which suspended a 2018 military accord with Paris, was reportedly made on January 18, 2021, to end French military deployment in the West African country. Around 400 French special forces were stationed in Burkina Faso, with tensions coming to a head the previous week when protestors took to the streets of Ouagadougou to demand the removal of the French ambassador and the closure of the French military base in the north of the country. The French army officially ended their operations on February 19, 2023. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [France 24](#))

Cooperation with Wagner Group and Russia

On December 15, 2022, media sources reported that Burkina Faso supposedly made an agreement with the Wagner Group, a mercenary outfit with direct links to Russia. The agreement would involve the mercenaries assisting in countering jihadi violence in exchange for a mine. While the Wagner Group has established footholds across Africa, in 2022, the group was accused of committing human rights abuses and extrajudicial kills in Mali. Media sources did not confirm when the mercenaries will arrive in Burkina Faso. (Source: [Associated Press](#))

The Wagner Group has positioned itself as a security fixture in the Sahel as Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have aligned with the private mercenary company. The trio further distanced themselves from the West and democratic governments on August 7, 2023, when Burkina Faso and Mali dispatched a joint delegation to Niamey, Niger to support the coup government that seized power from the democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26, 2023. Following the coup, ECOWAS demanded that Bazoum be reinstated by August 6 at midnight, otherwise the economic bloc would resort to force to restore constitutional order. Niger failed to comply with the conditions, and instead closed their airspace. ECOWAS has yet to deploy troops to Niger, but has issued financial sanctions against Niamey. To further reiterate their support, Burkina Faso and Mali announced that "any military intervention against Niger would be tantamount to a declaration of war against Burkina Faso and Mali." The two countries also announced their refusal to apply the "illegal, illegitimate and inhuman sanctions." (Sources: [France 24](#), [Africa News](#))

On September 16, 2023, Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso signed a joint military pact. The Alliance of Sahel States pact guarantees mutual military support to one another in the instance of any rebellion or external aggression. Niger is a critical Western ally to the fight against violent extremists in the Sahel, especially as Burkina Faso and Mali, who are both ruled by juntas, have shifted their alliance towards Russia. However, on August 5, 2023, Niger's new military junta officially asked for help from Wagner, with media sources claiming the Kremlin-backed group would become "their guarantee to hold onto power." (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#))

By November 2023, the Russian Defense Ministry announced that Wagner was "finally disbanded." Later that month, the Defense Ministry launched a recruitment campaign for the "Africa Corps"—a military deployment based in Africa, further cementing the Kremlin's military footprint on the continent. The name of the unit reportedly refers to the German battalion Afrika Korps that fought in North Africa during World War II. (Sources: [Le Monde](#), [ABC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Le Monde](#), [Newsweek](#), [Armed Conflict Location and Event Database](#), [Middle East Media Research Institute](#), [Times](#))

On February 20, 2024, after months of speculation, Burkina Faso and Russia announced their plans for greater military cooperation. Russia announced the deployment of 100 paramilitary fighters from the "Africa Corps," or the "Expeditionary Corps" to assist Burkina Faso in protecting

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its borders, securing the safety of the country's junta leader, and protecting Burkinabe civilians from terror attacks. Wagner troops that remained in Africa were officially transferred into the Africa Corps, a formal division of the Russian Ministry of Defense. An additional 200 Russian military personnel are expected to be deployed in the future. (Sources: [African Defense Forum](#), [BNN Bloomberg](#), [BBC News](#))

Legislative Efforts

During the Kaboré administration, Burkina Faso also worked to address the threat from terrorism through its judicial system. In December 2009, Burkina Faso passed two laws modeled after French legislation in an effort to combat the threats of domestic terrorism and terrorist financing. The government later established a Financial Intelligence Unit to combat terrorist financing and a counterterrorist police force. Following the January 2016 attack in Ouagadougou, Burkinabe judicial authorities met in the capital to discuss new legislation to combat terrorism, including the commissioning of a "central organ" for arresting and prosecuting terror suspects. The government moved forward with draft legislation to create the specialized organ within the Burkinabe judicial system in December 2016. Experts from the U.N. Office on Crime and Drugs assisted in analyzing the draft law to ensure compliance with international conventions. Burkinabe legislators passed the legislation in January 2017. (Sources: [Shanghai Daily](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Africetime](#), [United Nations System in Senegal](#))

In 2019, the Burkinabe government adopted two decrees that allowed for defense forces and public servants who were victims of terrorist attacks to receive compensation. On May 29, 2019, Burkina Faso's National Assembly established a new code of criminal procedure, which is meant to shorten the timeline for terrorism proceedings. Under the new code, a special chamber will adjudicate terrorism and terrorism financing cases following law enforcement investigations, eliminating an additional step that involved the Court of Appeal. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Despite creating the penal code in 2019, only two people have been tried and convicted on terrorism charges in Burkina Faso. As of October 2021, at least 400 citizens have been arrested and are being held in custody on suspicion of terrorism-related offenses. Some of those awaiting trial are under the age of sixteen. According to a Burkinabe human rights activist, some of the detainees have been in pre-trial detention for more than five years. On October 1, 2021, Kaboré said that the country faced financial difficulties that could hamper proceedings, but the government would continue to prosecute terrorism suspects. (Source: [Voice of America](#))

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE)

The U.S. State Department notes in its 2017 Country Reports on Terrorism that in order to counter violent extremism, the Burkinabe government deployed the Sahel Emergency Plan, which seeks to strengthen the government's role, develop community law enforcement, and spur opportunity in its Sahel region. The government has taken other steps to counter the threat from extremism beginning several years prior, reportedly sending officials to places of worship to instill messages of peace and tolerance, and monitoring the media for signs of extremist and sectarian content. Burkina Faso also hosts several international organizations that work to counter extremism. Several have sought to provide economic and vocational support to populations deemed vulnerable to radicalization and terrorist recruitment. In 2019, the Burkinabe government planned to invest \$249 million (USD) to support the Sahel Emergency Plan and had completed 50 percent of the plan's overall activities. The Ministry of Territorial Administration began working with the U.S. Agency for International Development to build a framework to consult with religious leaders on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) issues. (Sources: [Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In 2017, a CVE program implemented by the U.S. Agency for International Development launched a regional messaging project in the country called Voices for Peace. The program produces and broadcasts counter narratives to terrorism over radio and social media. It also includes an effort called Partnerships for Peace, aimed at building capacity for national government, civil society, and regional organizations to counter violent extremism. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Despite these efforts, Burkina Faso appears increasingly susceptible to terrorist activity. In a report released in April 2016, the U.S. Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) assessed the terrorism risk in Burkina Faso as a medium-level risk, up from a low-risk rating in 2015. On June 7, 2017, the U.S. State Department issued a revised travel warning for the country noting a "fluid" security environment with attacks possible "anywhere in the country." It also said that ISIS, AQIM, and al-Mourabitoun all have declared their intention to attack foreign targets in North and West Africa. In late 2016, Kaboré reiterated his efforts to combat the threat from terrorism, after facing criticism over his handling of the terrorist threat. (Sources: [OSAC 2016](#), [OSAC 2015](#), [Burkina24](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

On June 17, 2021, Burkina Faso launched a two-day talk on the country's worsening jihadist insurgency. The initiative, which is taking place in the capital, Ouagadougou, brought together the governing and opposition parties, to also talk about the 2022 local elections, the COVID-19 pandemic,

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and national reconciliation. The talks came about two weeks after, heavily armed militants launched an overnight assault on the village of Solhan in Burkina Faso's Yagha province, near the border with Niger on June 4. Over 132 people, including at least seven children, were killed and 40 others were injured. As of July 2021, more than 1.3 million people—six percent of the country's population—have been displaced inside Burkina Faso in just over two years, according to the U.N. Refugee Agency. In the first half of 2021, more than 17,500 people fled to neighboring countries, nearly doubling the number of Burkinabe refugees and asylum seekers across neighboring countries to 38,000. (Sources: [Yahoo News](#), [Reuters](#), [UNHCR](#))

International Counter-Extremism

Burkina Faso has worked with regional and international agencies to combat the threat from international terrorism. Burkina Faso had previously deployed soldiers to U.N. peacekeeping missions in Sudan and Mali. Due to the strain in domestic security resources, however, the government has had to scale back its support for international counterterrorism efforts. In November 2016, Burkina Faso gave notice that it was planning to recall soldiers from Mali, and announced that it would withdraw its U.N. peacekeepers in Sudan by July 2017. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Burkina Faso has historically been active in regional and international counterterrorism organizations, collaborating on counterterrorism-related matters with the United Nations, United States, France, and the African Union, among other governments and bodies, including the G-5 Sahel group, the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS), the Global Counterterrorism Forum's Sahel Working Group, and the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP). In January 2017, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali agreed to set up a joint counterterrorism force to address the transnational terrorist threat in the Liptako region. The group expanded the following month to include representatives from the entire G5 Sahel, including Chad and Mauritania. (Sources: [U.S. State Department](#), [Africanews](#), [Africanews](#), [Africanews](#))

On April 29-30, 2017, French forces, operating in partnership with the multinational G-5 Sahel group, reportedly killed about 20 suspected jihadists in a forested border region between Mali and Burkina Faso. They recovered weapons, including rocket-launchers and ammunition, according to a statement by a French counterterrorism unit. French authorities gave no indication of the jihadists' affiliation. The operation took place in an area where a French soldier was killed on April 5, 2017. In January 2013, France launched Operation Serval, which supported Mali's fight against a jihadist offensive. As violent conflict intensified and spread to neighboring countries, France expanded its mission and launched Operation Barkhane in August 2014. Operation Barkhane is an ongoing anti-insurgent campaign with French forces deployed across five former French colonies, including Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Niger, and Mauritania. In January 2021, citing successes against Islamist militants and the arrival of troop reinforcements from other European countries, French President Emmanuel Macron said he would withdraw some of the 5,100 French soldiers deployed in the Sahel. In February 2021, President Macron reversed his decision to reduce troops, following a virtual summit with the five Sahel countries and their allies. During the summit, Chad announced it would deploy 1,200 of its own soldiers in the tri-border area of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger; to support the French forces. On June 10, 2021, France announced that it would end Operation Barkhane. According to Macron, the mission will allegedly be replaced by a more international effort that would focus on supporting and cooperating with armies in the region that ask for assistance. Central to the new effort will be the Takuba Task Force—the European military task force led by France which advises, assists, and accompanies Malian Armed forces in the Sahel. Although the French army would be the “backbone” of the effort, the new forces will be completed by special forces from European and other countries in the region. The details will be finalized by the end of June following consultations with the United States, other European countries deployed in the region, and the five Sahel countries under Operation Barkhane's purview. On July 9, 2021, following a virtual summit with the G5 Sahel leaders, Macron announced that France over the next six months would focus on dismantling Operation Barkhane and reorganizing troops—shifting military resources to the tri-border area where Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger meet. He also said that France would reduce its force to 2,500 to 3,000 troops over the long term. (Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [France Ministry of the Armed Forces](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

In June 2021, the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS convened for the first time in two years in Rome, Italy. Though not an initial party to the coalition, Burkina Faso was invited to the summit. During the meeting, Italian Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio proposed the establishment of an African task force to address the ISIS threat on the continent. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Burkina Faso also works with the inter-governmental Financial Action Task Force (FATF) to combat streams of financing for terrorist groups in West Africa. A report released by the FATF in October 2016 showed that Burkina Faso was working to stem the illegal trafficking of RIVOTRIL to contacts in Mali and Niger, with several people identified in the trafficking ring as having links to terrorist organizations. Burkinabe nationals have also been identified as suspected traffickers in neighboring countries, including Mali. In February 2021, the FATF added Burkina Faso to its so-called “grey list” of jurisdictions that are subject to increased monitoring. According to the inter-government organization, Burkina Faso is among jurisdictions actively working with the FATF to “address strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing.” (Sources: [FATF](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [FATF](#))

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Burkina Faso is a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group Against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), which is an FATF- Style Regional Body (SFRB), and specialized institution of ECOWAS that facilitates adoption and implementation of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing standards. (Source: [GIABA](#))

In addition to working with regional counterterrorism bodies, Burkina Faso has previously taken an active role in the Malian civil war, contributing peacekeepers since 2013, hosting French forces for that country's counterterrorism campaign in Mali, and serving as an intermediary and negotiator between the Malian government and insurgents. In June 2013, Burkina Faso hosted negotiations that yielded the signing of a ceasefire agreement between Tuareg rebels and the Malian government. In the wake of the January 2016 attack in Ouagadougou, the prime ministers of Burkina Faso and Mali met to develop integrated counterterrorism efforts between the two nations, pledging new intelligence sharing and joint border patrols. On September 7, 2021, Burkina Faso and Mali announced an agreement to mount joint military operations against jihadist groups in the tri-border area with Niger. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Christian Science Monitor](#), [Economist](#), [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

In September 2019, ECOWAS members as well as leaders from Mauritania and Chad met in Ouagadougou. At that meeting, ECOWAS pledged \$1 billion to a common fund to financially support counterterrorism efforts from 2020 to 2024, inviting Chad and Mauritania to join the financing initiative. The fund's aim is to bolster the military operations of individual countries involved in the fight against terrorism, as well as joint operations in the region, including the G-5 Sahel group forces. According to an Al Jazeera report, the G-5 Sahel joint task force has had limited effectiveness due to a lack of finance, training and equipment. As of September 2019, the force has 4,000 troops, which is 1,000 troops short of its original planned figures. During the ECOWAS meeting, leaders called on the United Nations to strengthen peacekeeping operations in the region, and announced that it would seek aid from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). In October 2020, the United Nations announced that more than 20 donors pledged \$1.7 billion to Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, following the High-Level Humanitarian Event on the Central Sahel. U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned that the region is "at a breaking point" and the U.N. humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock said, "nowhere in the world worries me as much as the Sahel in the medium-term." (Sources: [Reuters](#), [ECOWAS](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [U.S. State Department](#), [Associated Press](#))

In May 2020, military officials from Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire launched Operation Comoé in Côte d'Ivoire's northeastern region of Ferkessedougou to expel extremists from the shared border. Burkina Faso volunteered 30 soldiers to the joint military offensive. By May 25, the operation reportedly resulted in the killing of eight terrorist suspects, capturing of 38 others, destruction of a terrorist base, and seizure of a cache of weapons, supplies, and electronics. (Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

In 2021, Burkina Faso participated in several joint military operations to counter militants in the region. In November, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, and Togo launched a five-day joint military operation against Islamist insurgents in their shared borderlands. Their troops arrested over 300 suspects and seized weapons, ammunition, vehicles, drugs, and IED materials. The 5,700-strong force was deployed as part of a security cooperation deal agreed to in 2017 to prevent Islamist violence spreading from the Sahel. In December 2021, Burkina Faso's military announced that a two-week joint operation with Niger had led to the deaths of at least 100 extremist rebels, arrest of 20 suspects, and dismantling of two bases—one in western Niger and the other in eastern Burkina Faso. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Following Burkina Faso's second coup in September 2022 and the regime's subsequent demands for the withdrawal of French forces in January 2023, Burkina Faso's counterterrorism program has become increasingly isolated from the rest of the region, except for Mali and Niger, which are also ruled by military coup governments. On December 3, 2023, the military leaders of Burkina Faso and Niger announced that they would quit the G5 Sahel, a counterterrorism force made up of states across the Sahel. The G5 was first deployed in 2014 to offset developing terrorist threats in the region, however, according to Burkina Faso and Niger, "[t]he organisation is failing to achieve its objectives." (Source: [Defense Post](#))

Burkina Faso and its Sahel neighbors continued to strengthen their cooperation. On February 15, 2024, the junta governments of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger announced the establishment of the Alliance of Sahel States (AES) confederation in a move to further distance the three countries from other regional decision-making blocs. The move followed the January withdrawal of the three Sahelian states from the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS), further compromising broader west African cooperation. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Public Opinion

Burkina Faso is 60-percent Muslim and 40-percent Christian and Animist, and the country has long been lauded for its history of religious cohesion and coexistence. An April 2016 report by OSAC found that Burkinabes also have a "very positive attitude" toward Americans, with Burkinabes often found wearing clothes or owning trinkets decorated with the U.S. flag. An April 2016 Pew Research Center Poll found that 60 percent of people in Burkina Faso did not believe the country's laws should be influenced by the Quran. About 77 percent of Christians were more likely to say

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that laws should not be influenced by Islam, with 50 percent of Muslims surveyed agreeing. (Sources: [Foreign Ministry of Denmark](#), [OSAC](#), [Pew Research Center](#))

Nonetheless, a November 2015 poll by the Pew Research Center uncovered some support for violent extremist and anti-Western groups in Burkina Faso. Eight percent of those polled by Pew in November 2015 had a “favorable” opinion of ISIS, for example, while 28 percent indicated that they were unsure of their stance on the group. (Source: [Pew Research Center](#))

For most Burkinabes, national security was not one of the top three concerns that government needed to address, nor was it an issue that citizens believed necessitated additional government resources, according to polls conducted in April and May of 2015. In the years that followed, however, terrorist attacks and insecurity surged in the Sahel prompted an apparent shift in public opinion. In a May 2020 report—based on surveys conducted between late 2016 and late 2018—Afrobarometer found that 10 percent of people in Burkina Faso had feared and experienced violent extremism, while 40 percent feared and had not experienced violent extremism. An overwhelming majority, 78 percent of Burkinabes surveyed, believed that in the event of a threat to public security, the government should be allowed to limit movement. Furthermore, according to a survey conducted in December 2019 and published in December 2020, 56 percent of respondents felt that crime and insecurity were one of the top three most important issues facing the country. (Source: [Afrobarometer](#), [Afrobarometer](#), [Afrobarometer](#))