

WEST BRIDGE

Boko Haram in 2013: Year in Review

Report #: NG-104

Current as of: 28 January 2014



Boko Haram 2013: Year in Review

PURPOSE

This report reviews Boko Haram's (BH) operations in 2013, with a particular focus on attacks, targets, and casualties. The report is based on open-source research conducted throughout 2013.

DETAILED METHODOLOGY

- Throughout 2013, Navanti analysts recorded incidents of Boko Haram-related violence. Specific data gleaned mainly from a combination of Nigerian and international media sources in English, French, and Hausa was tracked.
- Only violence determined likely attributable to Boko Haram was included in the dataset, based on factors such as target, location, means of attack, and local reporting or claims. For example, although the extent of Boko Haram's relationship to events in Nigeria's Middle Belt is unclear, instances of specific rural and localized sectarian violence are not included, in addition to obvious criminal activity in traditional areas of BH operations.
- The reliance on Nigerian media can be problematic. Outlets tend to be southern dominated, and credibility varies greatly. To adjust for this, incidents avoid single sourcing whenever possible. Nonetheless, 2013 proved particularly problematic. A shutdown in telecommunications under a state of emergency (SOE), lasting for almost six months in Borno, resulted in scare and spotty reporting.
- In many cases, reporting was reduced to the publication of Nigerian military press statements. Claims from security officials have been unreliable in the past – casualty numbers of Boko Haram fighters tend to be inflated, while civilian and armed forces reduced.^{1,2} In addition, it is likely that cases of smaller Boko Haram violence went unreported during this period, while others were often reported late.
- The lack of a true operational spokesman for Boko Haram further complicates matters. Only 14 attacks (5%) were officially claimed by Boko Haram, while security or political officials confirmed 65%, leaving the remaining 30% of incidents that appeared in the press either unconfirmed or unclaimed. In addition, Boko Haram experienced a number of overt indications of division in 2013, more so than in previous years. This further obscures the view of Boko Haram as a monolithic entity, as well as the ability to assign culpability for all attacks to a single command.
- In this sense, given the inherent difficulties in tracking Boko Haram-related violence, this product is not designed to represent a catalogue of all violent Boko Haram activity in 2013. Rather, the data should be viewed as a window into BH operations, and a means of highlighting key trends observed over the past 12 months.



Boko Haram logo from an April 2013 video message, Source: AFP

2013 marked a watershed year for Boko Haram. While at the beginning of the year some considered Boko Haram to be a weakened movement, a series of bold attacks and claims of territorial control prompted a state of emergency (SOE) in the three northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa on 14 MAY 13. The introduction of increased military personnel and the utilization of airpower under the SOE drastically affected BH operations, along with the emergence of civilian vigilante movements. Attacks were reduced and limited to a smaller geographic area, but continued with a heavy emphasis on softer and more rural civilian targets. Thus, despite a reduction in overall violent incidents, casualties remained significant, punctuated by episodic high-profile attacks that raised questions regarding the ability of Nigerian security forces to bring the three and a half year insurgency to an end.

In addition, Boko Haram emerged as an increased threat to the Lake Chad Region, demonstrating a newfound willingness to cross Nigerian borders in order to conduct kidnapping operations. Security forces from Chad and Niger also reportedly partook in skirmishes against BH along Nigeria's borders.³

Moreover, multiple claimed spokesmen or Boko Haram members issued public statements at odds with leader Abubakar Shekau, whose demise was rumored a number of times, most notably after a statement from Nigerian security officials in August 2013.⁴ Many of these purported Boko Haram members spoke out in favor of ceasefire and dialogue efforts with the Nigerian Government, a refrain Shekau consistently opposed. This disconnect was due in part to outreach efforts on behalf of the Nigerian Government, which established a Committee on Dialogue as the nonmilitary portion of a two-track approach to dealing with the sect.

2014 will be another important year for the sect. The SOE, renewed in October 2013, is set to expire in April, while increased politicking ahead of crucial Presidential elections in early 2015 may distract the Nigerian Government from its efforts to contain BH. In 2013 nonmilitary maneuvers were limited in their success, whereas military operations proved incapable of fully eradicating the sect. In this sense, while the Nigerian Government has been able to somewhat curb the movement's activities, it has not eliminated the threat, a dynamic likely to persist well into 2014.

Timeline of Major Events in 2013

****CLICK A CATEGORY TO VIEW
THE TIMELINE FOR EACH CASE****



Categories:

MAJOR
ATTACKS

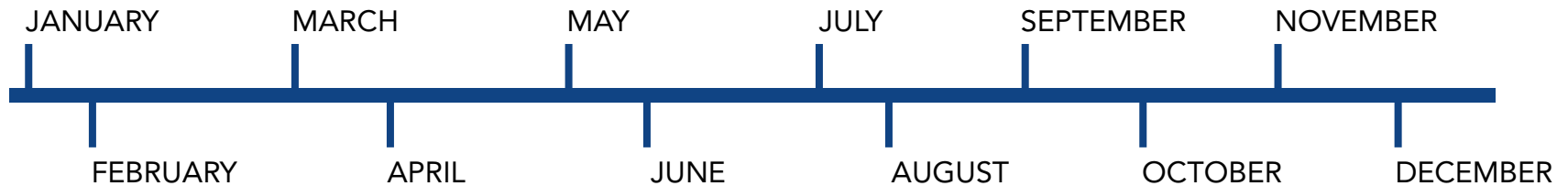
MESSAGING

FOREIGN
KIDNAPPINGS

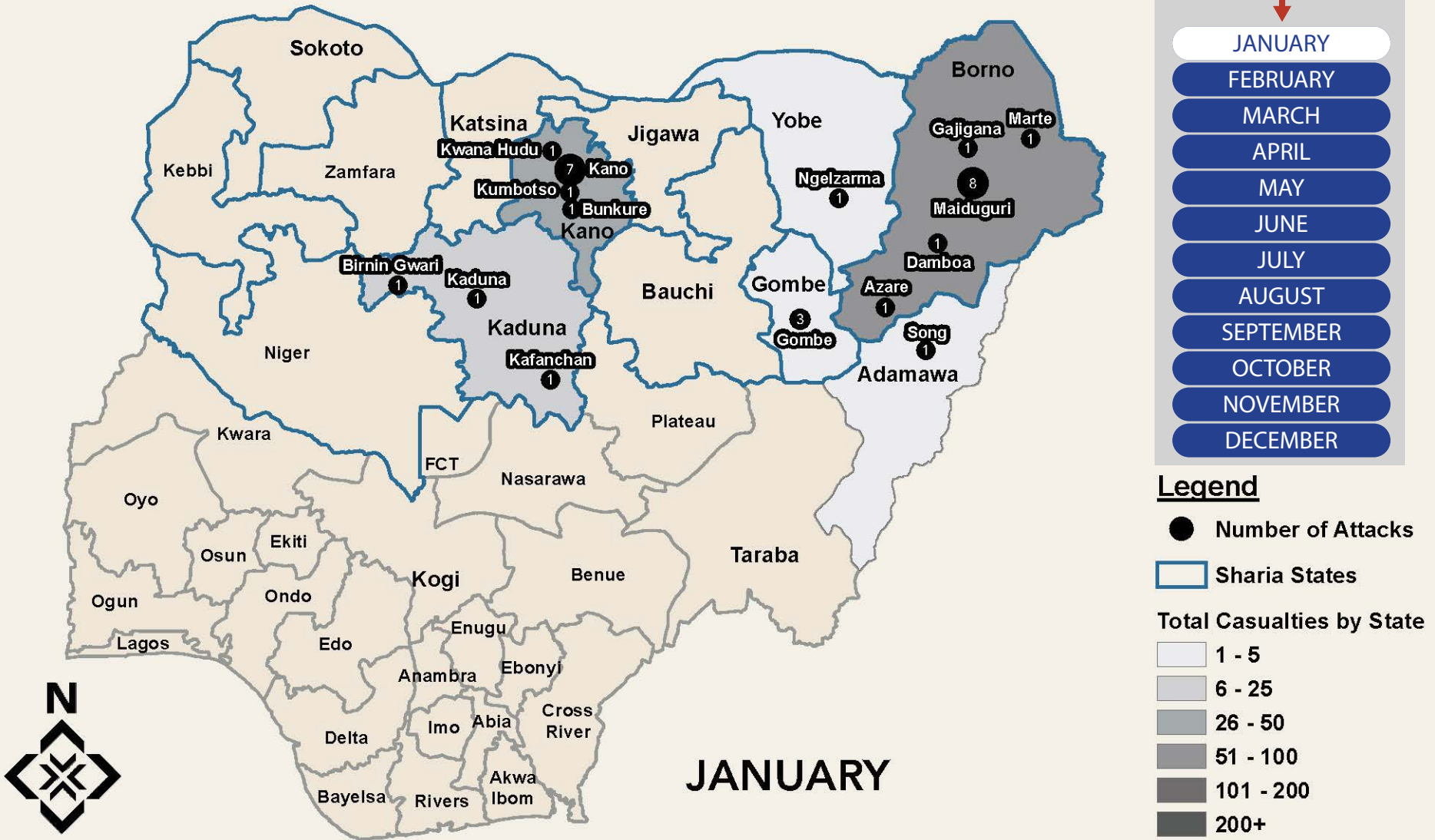
SECURITY FORCE
OPERATIONS

GOVERNMENT
ACTIONS

OTHER



Attacks Attributed to Boko Haram in 2013



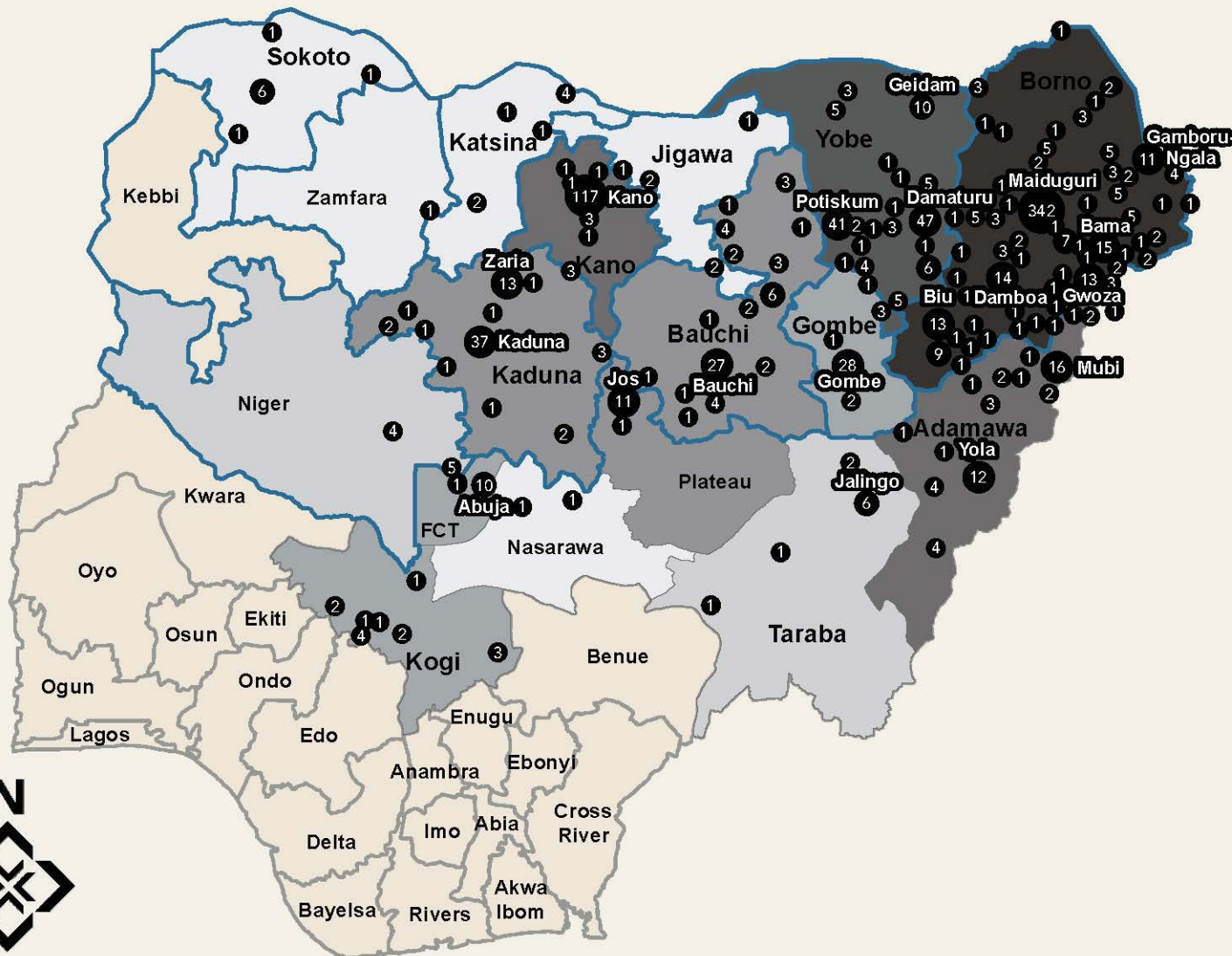
Attacks Attributed to Boko Haram Through DEC 2013

Click to view attacks per year

2012

2013

SEE ALL



Legend

● Number of Attacks

□ Sharia States

Total Casualties by State

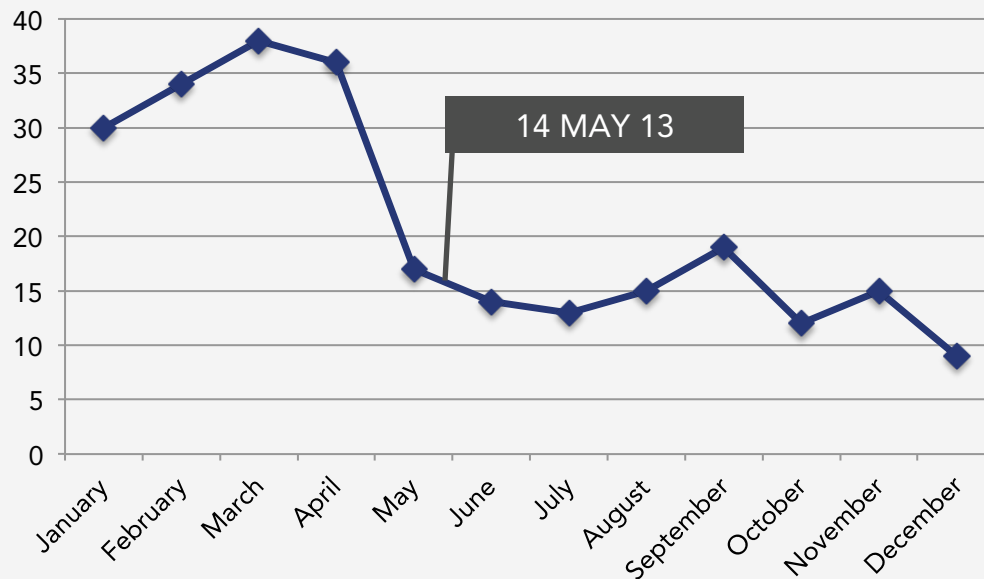
- 1 - 20
- 21 - 50
- 51 - 100
- 101 - 200
- 201 - 500
- 501 - 1000
- 1001 - 2500



Attack Analysis: Rate of Attacks in 2013

- Boko Haram attacks declined sharply in 2013, after a record high in 2012.
- Despite claims of ineffectiveness and the persistence of episodes of large scale violence, the rate of attacks per month dropped significantly after Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan imposed a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states on 14 MAY 13, falling from an average of 33.1 attacks per month to 13.7.
- Despite the decrease in overall attacks, however, casualties in 2013 were at their highest ever recorded level (see next page).

Recorded BH Attacks per Month in 2013



Year	Boko Haram-attributed incidents	Recorded Casualties
2010	21	152
2011	186	646
2012	562	1,674
2013	252	1,923
Total	1,021	4,395

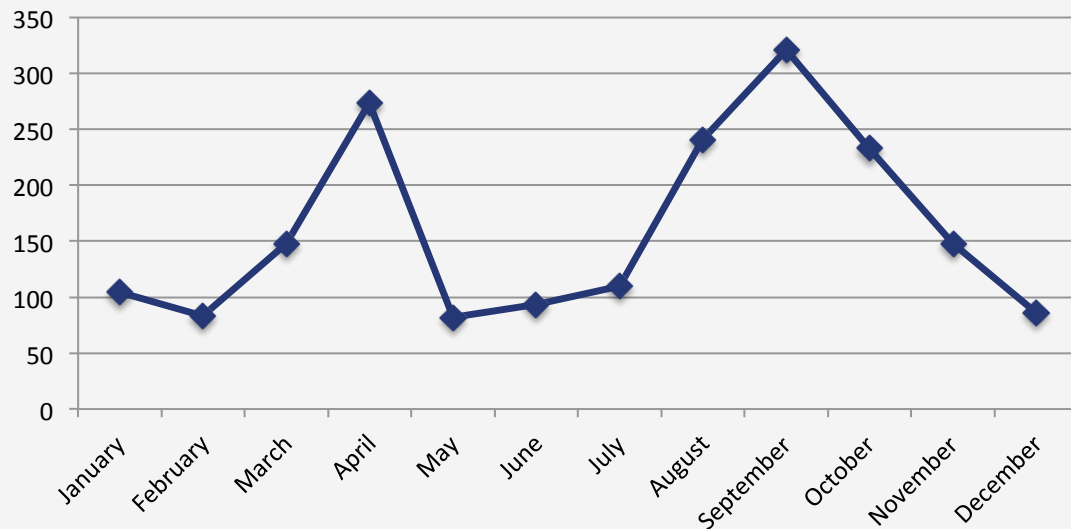


Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau during a November 2013 video statement, Source: AFP

Attack Analysis: Rate of Casualties in 2013

- Casualty numbers are difficult to verify, and often rely on reporting from sources that have proved to be unreliable in the past. Nevertheless, the general trend suggests that the average Boko Haram attack resulted in over seven casualties in 2013, up from three in 2012.
- Three of the four months with the highest recorded casualties occurred during the SOE.
- A number of high-profile incidents involving the deaths of large numbers of civilians support the overall increase. The eight largest incidents in terms of casualties (bottom right) consisted of nearly 35% of total recorded deaths in 2013.
- The average Boko Haram attack, however, remained small in nature. Attacks with 20 or more deaths comprised of only 9.5% of all incidents, while 69.4% of attacks resulted in less than five casualties. No deaths were recorded in 15.8% of all incidents.

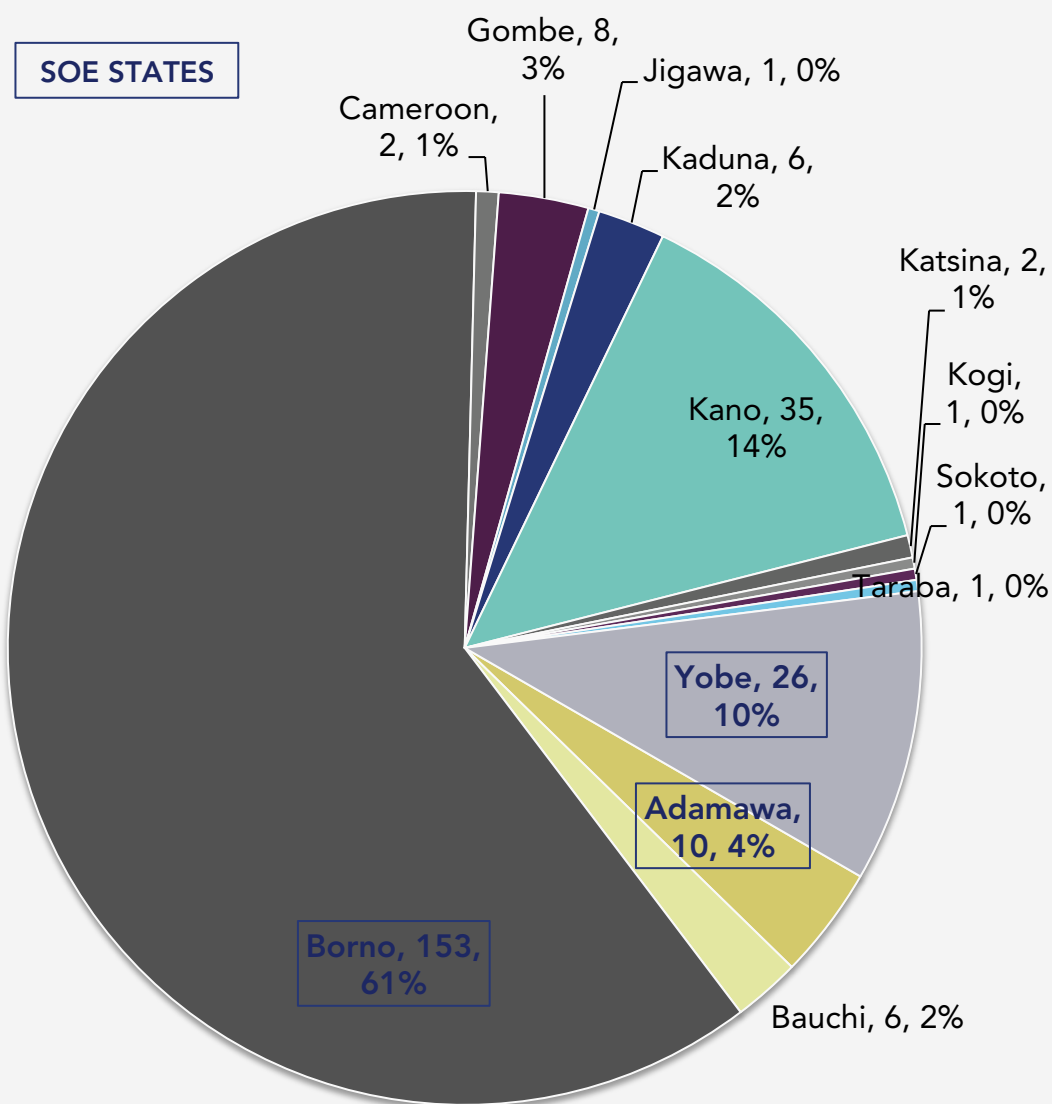
Casualties per Month in 2013



Date	Location	Casualties
16 APR 13	Baga, Borno	187
24 OCT 13	Damaturu, Yobe	127
17 SEP 13	Benesheikh, Borno	142
07 MAY 13	Bama, Borno	55
11 AUG 13	Konduga, Borno	44
18 MAR 13	Kano, Kano	41
29 AUG 13	Gujba, Yobe	41
19 AUG 13	Demba, Borno	35

Attack Analysis: Location of Violence in 2013, by State

- Borno state bore the brunt of Boko Haram attacks in 2013 (61%), even more so after the SOE. The high percentage of attacks in Borno is consistent with Boko Haram attacks in 2011, but represents an increase on 2012 (37%), when Boko Haram attacks were dispersed at a wider geographic range than at any other point in its history.
- Within Nigeria, Boko Haram did not launch attacks in any new states in 2013. Rather, its area of operations shrunk, with states such as Abuja Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Niger, or Plateau not experiencing any Boko Haram-related violence, despite operations in those areas in previous years. BH-related violence in Nigeria's Middle Belt (encompassing Kaduna and Plateau states) also declined significantly, from 8.5% of attacks in 2012, to less than 3% in 2013.
- Boko Haram, however, claimed two foreign national kidnappings in northern Cameroon. These incidents were significant in that not only did they represent a new tactic, but also occurred in a new geographic area external to Nigeria, with the sect publicly claiming operations across international boundaries for the first time.



Location of Attacks in 2013

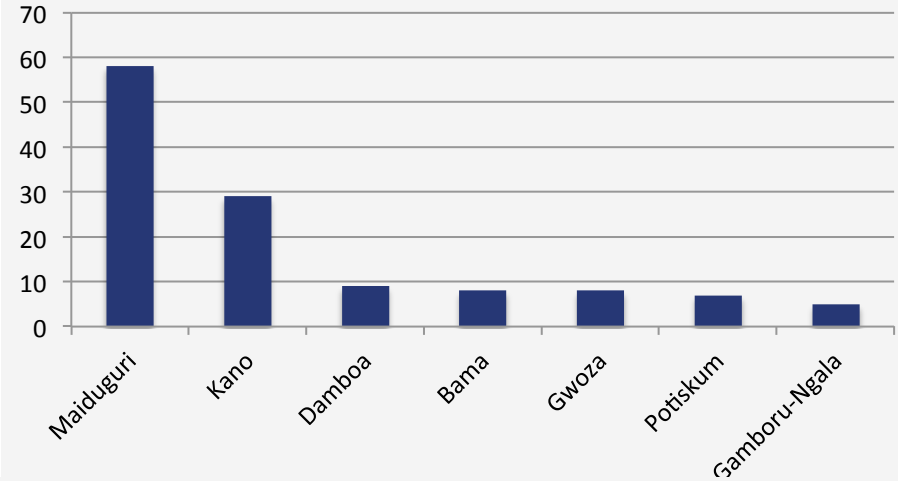
Attack Analysis: Location of Violence in 2013, by City

- Maiduguri, Kano, and Potiskum repeated on the list of cities with the most BH attacks, similar to 2012. However, the rest of the 2013 list consisted of smaller and more rural towns in Borno state, indicative of shifting attack patterns.
- Attacks in Kano, the largest city in northern Nigeria, dropped significantly as the year went on. Only two of the 29 recorded attacks in Kano occurred after April 2013.
- Damaturu, the capital of Yobe state, was also relatively calm throughout the year, with only two recorded attacks. However, a major assault on the city on 24 OCT 13, which Shekau claimed he personally led, resulted in up to 127 deaths.⁵

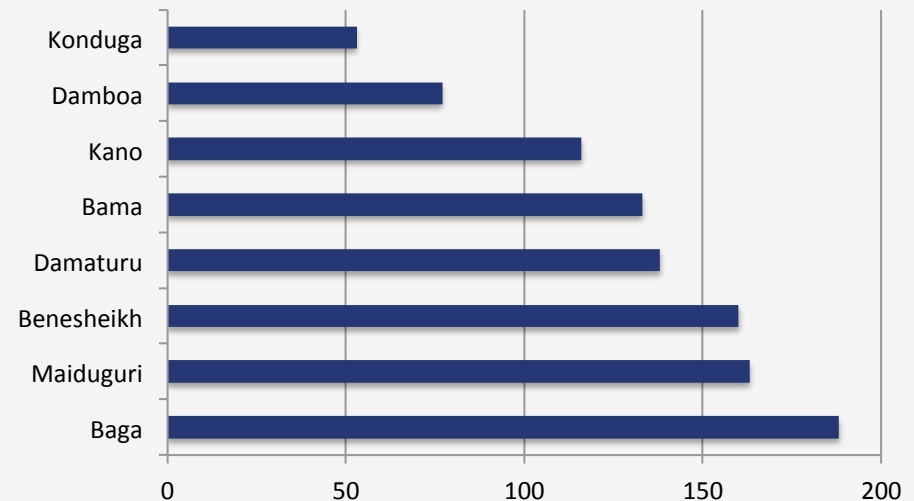


Image from a Boko Haram video claiming a 02 DEC 13 attack on an airbase in Maiduguri, Source: AFP

Cities with the Most Attacks in 2013

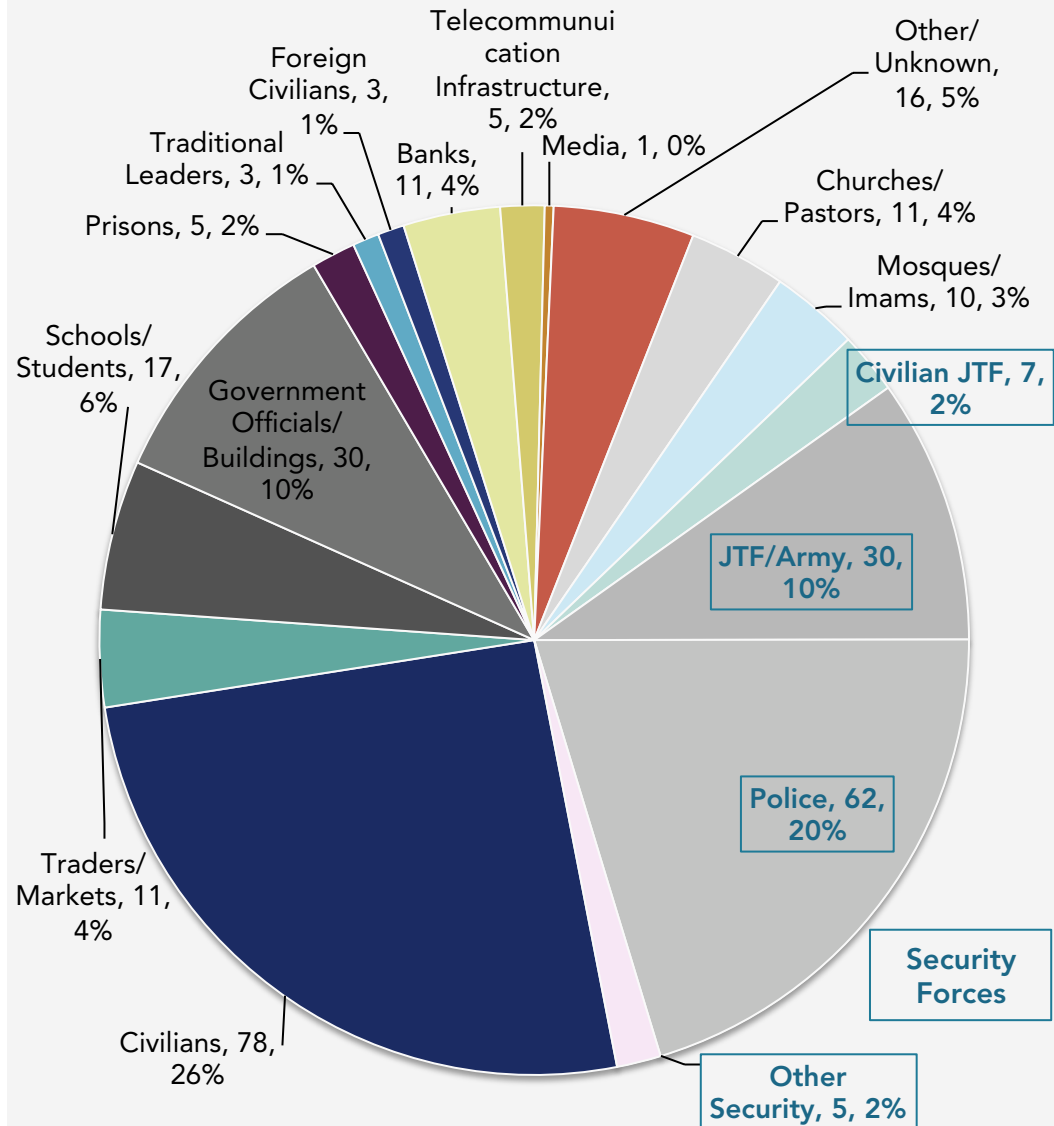


Cities with the Most Casualties in 2013



Attack Analysis: Targeting in 2013

- Out of 305 total targets recorded, 104 (34%) were directed at security forces, including the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF). The police was a particular recipient, with 62 total attacks, while the JTF/army lagged behind. The focus on the police over the JTF/army is similar to data from previous years.
- Seventy-eight attacks (26%) were categorized as intended for civilians, representing the second largest proportion of all targets in 2013. This is also a percentage increase from civilian attacks in 2012 (15%). BH's focus on punishing perceived informants in 2013 helps explain this rise.
- Attacks directed specifically at Christian institutions declined in 2013 (11), after significant violence in 2012 (38).
- Attacks on traditional Boko Haram targets, such as banks, prisons, and government institutions, continued. Attacks on more recent targets introduced in 2012, such as the media, telecommunication infrastructure, and schools also repeated in 2013, albeit at lower levels.
- Aside from the CJTF and foreign nationals in Cameroon, no new target categories were inaugurated by BH in 2013.



Attacks by Target in 2013

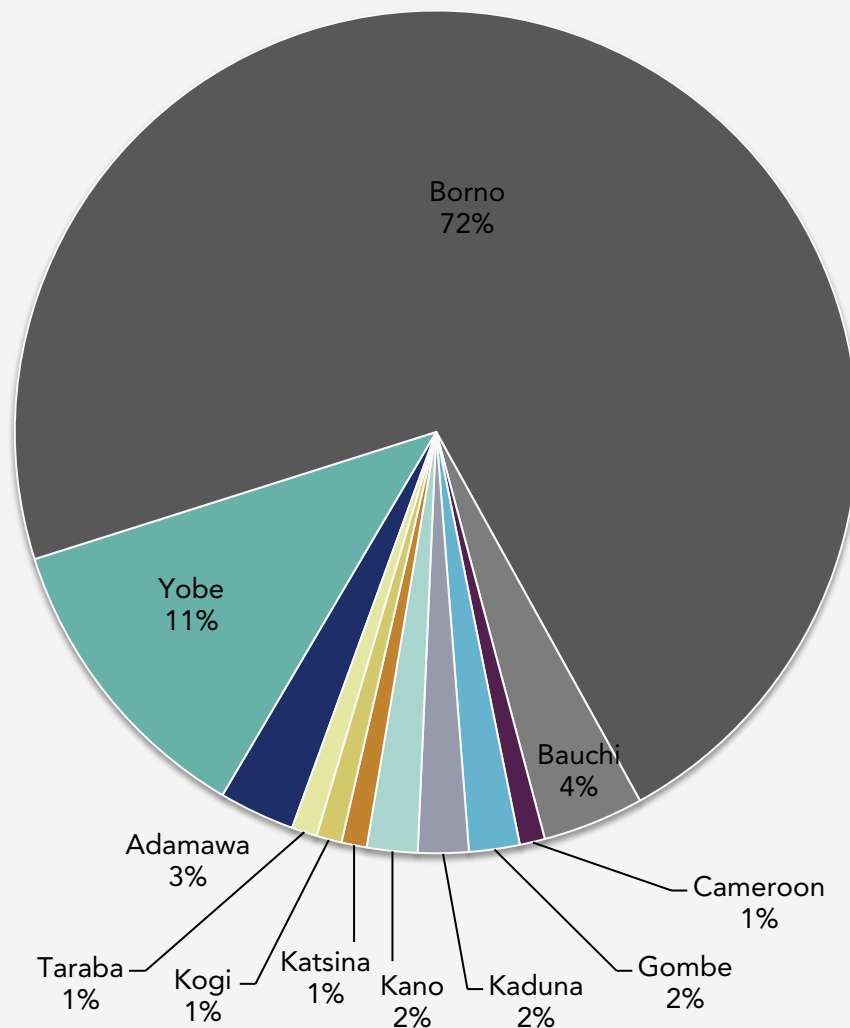
Attack Analysis: After the State of Emergency (SOE)

- Seventy-five percent of all attacks recorded in 2013 occurred in the northeastern states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa – the three states placed under the SOE.
- Nearly 60% (149) of Boko Haram's attacks in 2013 occurred in the 4.5 months prior to the SOE on 14 MAY 13. Less than half occurred (103) in the 7.5 months after.
- As evidence of a shrinking area of operations, 86.4% of recorded BH violent incidents from 14 MAY 13 onwards occurred in Borno, Yobe, or Adamawa states. Incidents in Borno state accounted for the majority, demonstrating a further concentration of violence.



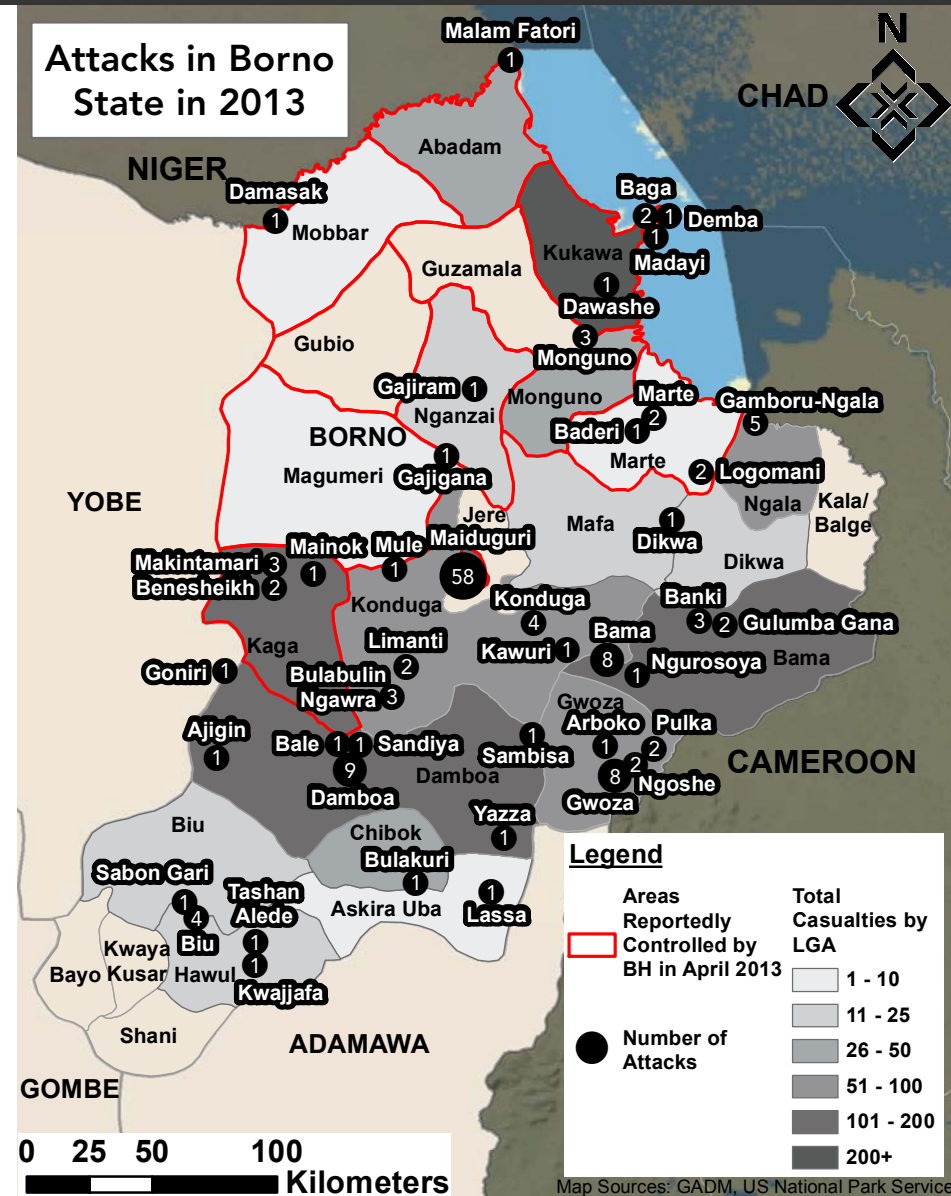
Soldiers in Maiduguri after the SOE declaration, Source: Facebook

Location of Recorded BH Attacks Post-SOE



Attack Analysis: Borno State

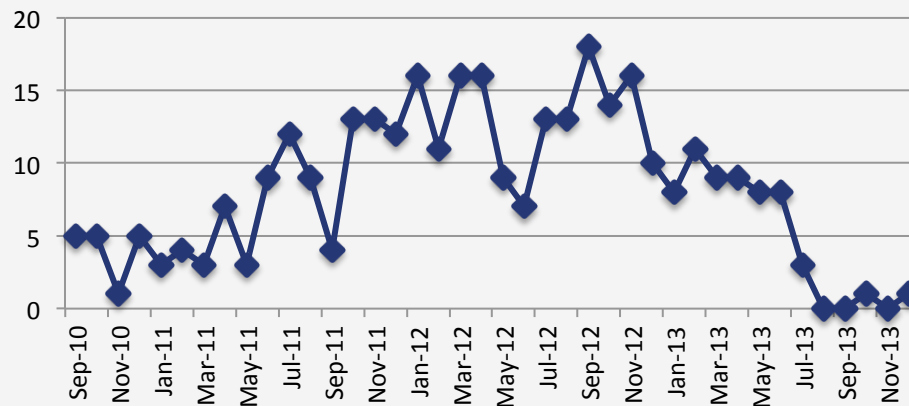
- Boko Haram's attacks in Borno occurred throughout much of the state, although certain local government areas (LGA) witnessed heavier violence than others.
- During the spring of 2013, media reports circulated claiming that 10 northern Borno LGAs had come under Boko Haram control, a major impetus behind the May 2013 SOE.⁶ However, prior to April 2013, these areas did not suffer from significant violence.
- The areas near Sambisa Game Reserve in southeast Borno state (Damboa and Gwoza LGAs) became a hotspot after the SOE, where BH reportedly maintained camps.⁷ Media reports also claimed militants retreated to hideouts in the hills around Gwoza, an area with a significant Christian population.⁸
- A number of attacks also occurred after BH militants set up fake roadblocks and slaughtered travelers along major highways leading from Maiduguri to other cities, such as Damboa or Damaturu in Yobe state.
- The more southern areas of Borno did not experience much violence in 2013, with no recorded attacks in the three southernmost LGAs.



Attack Analysis: Maiduguri Case Study

- Violence in Maiduguri, Boko Haram's traditional stronghold, significantly declined in the latter half of the year. Only 17 total Boko Haram attacks were recorded after the SOE.
- A major additional factor influencing security dynamics in the northeastern city related to the emergence of youth vigilante groups operating in opposition to Boko Haram, collectively known as the CJTF.
- After the CJTF began working with political and military officials around June 2013, the attack rate in Maiduguri dropped abruptly. In the latter half of the year, only five total attacks were recorded, down from an average of 9.5 per month in the preceding 32 months (dating back to the resumption of armed violence by Boko Haram in September 2010).
- While many questions surround the CJTF's status, and it is uncertain the exact degree to which the movement is responsible for the relative calm in the city, its emergence has coincided with the most peaceful period in Maiduguri's recent history.

Recorded BH Attacks per Month in Maiduguri since September 2010



A CJTF member in Maiduguri, Source: AP

Attack Analysis: Other Attack Patterns in 2013

- Suicide bombings were an infrequent, but consistently utilized tactic in 2012. Often conducted in the form of Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices (VBIEDs) and directed at churches in Nigeria's Middle Belt, 28 total suicide attacks were recorded in 2012. However, this number dropped dramatically in 2013, with only two recorded instances, both of which occurred before the SOE. The lowered use of such tactics occurred in concert with a reduction in the targeting of churches in the Middle Belt as well.
- In 2012, a former spokesman denied that Boko Haram utilized kidnapping as a tactic.⁹ However, 2013 saw a shift in this stance, with two claimed high-profile incidents occurring in Cameroon. In addition, reports detailing the kidnapping of Nigerian citizens increased, and Boko Haram leader Shekau appeared in a video in May 2013 with local women and children, held hostage in return for the freedom of wives and children of Boko Haram members.¹⁰
- The advent of the CJTF led to an increased targeting of civilians, perceived by the sect as part of informant networks. Boko Haram has traditionally dealt violently with suspected informants, but the emergence of the CJTF led the sect to essentially view anyone from Borno state in a similar light, and/or to expand targeting to family members and friends of perceived informants.¹¹



Scene from 18 MAR 13 Kano motor park blast, *Source: Daily Trust*



Hostages reportedly rescued from Boko Haram, *Source: Nigerian Ministry of Defense*

Conclusion: Looking Forward to 2014

Best viewed in 75%



Interactive

In 2014 various trends regarding
Boko Haram in Nigeria may occur:

THE END OF THE SOE?

PRE-ELECTION
VIOLENCE

REGIONAL
DYNAMICS

INTERNATIONALIZATION

DIALOGUE &
DIVISIONS

CIVILIAN TARGETING
& CJTF

****CLICK A BUTTON
TO VIEW TRENDS****

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