

Terrorism Monitor

In-depth analysis of the War on Terror

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SOUTHERN TRANSITIONAL COUNCIL SEEKS LEVERAGE WITH DECLARATION OF SELF-RULE

Brian M. Perkins

Saudi Arabia's attempts to extricate itself from the war in Yemen became increasingly complicated as the Riyadh Agreement all but collapsed on April 25, when the Southern Transitional Council (STC) declared a state of emergency and self-administration across the areas of southern Yemen it deems are under its control. The move followed catastrophic flooding in the port city of Aden. The declaration, which was not the STC's first, comes after months of failures to implement the Riyadh Agreement, which sought to ease hostilities between the President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi-led government and the rival STC and to unify the STC's allied security forces under Saudi command with forces loyal to Hadi.

The STC announced that its decision was in response to the Yemeni government's failure to ensure basic services and protections for southerners. The council accused the government of pursuing a military strategy against the STC with the aid of extremist elements. This is in

indirect reference to the STC's rival Islah party, whose members fight both within and alongside Yemeni military units loyal to Hadi (STCAden.com, May 1).

The declaration has surprisingly not drawn as harsh of a reaction from Saudi Arabia and the UAE as might have been expected, with both taking little action other than urging the STC to end the declaration and return toward implementing the Riyadh Agreement. The STC, for its part, has rejected the notion that its declaration indicates the group has given up on the agreement, noting that no progress toward its implementation had been made by the Yemeni government (Middle East Eye, May 1).

The public response to the STC's declaration of self-rule reflects the broader divisions across southern Yemen and the disparate views citizens hold for the region's future. Outside of the STC's powerbase in Aden, Lahj, and Dhale, the declaration has been viewed by many as obstructionist to the process and of little consequence to the situation on the ground in governorates that are farther afield with a smaller presence of the STC's elite forces. For instance, residents of Shabwa who support the STC noted that the declaration would have little to no effect on their daily lives, other than the potential for

clashes between STC and government-aligned forces.
[1]

The STC, however, recognizes its inability to effectively self-administer regions outside of its main powerbase. The declaration is more of a strategic power move to gain leverage against both Hadi and the Islah party than a fulsome attempt to govern southern Yemen long-term, though doing so is the ultimate goal. As noted, this is not the first time the STC has declared or threatened self-rule, and with each declaration the group has extracted concessions and consolidated its position. This carrot and stick method has so far served the STC well and is likely to be even more potent as Saudi Arabia grows increasingly weary of its misadventures in Yemen. While the STC might not be capable of governing southern Yemen at this current juncture, its declaration of self-rule is a message to the Yemeni government, Saudi Arabia, and the broader international community that it can dictate the tempo and scope of political negotiations in southern Yemen.

Notes

[1] Authors interview with Shabwa-based STC supporter on April 29.

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MULTIPLE CRISES UNFOLDING IN AFGHANISTAN

Brian M. Perkins

Afghanistan is facing a major inflection point, but civilian casualties continue to mount as the country grapples with the COVID-19 outbreak, imminent U.S. troop withdrawal, and serious fissures within the Afghan government. Navigating both the peace deal with the Taliban and the U.S. troop withdrawal is daunting in itself, but doing so with a divided government amid a major public health crisis could prove to be disastrous.

The United States now has under 10,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan, just 1,400 away from the 8,600 troops stipulated in the U.S.-Taliban Peace deal. The United States has until mid-July (135 days from signing) to drawdown to the required number, but could reach that benchmark early. Despite being ahead of schedule on the first withdrawal phase, it is unclear if the complete withdrawal will occur ahead of the 14-month deadline.

The number of civilian casualties at the hands of the Taliban increased in the month following the deal's signing in February and have since continued at a steady pace around the country, including in the capital. On April 29, a suicide bombing near an Afghan Commandos Special Unit facility in Kabul's Rishkhor area killed three civilians and wounded eight others ([Tolo News](#), April 29). The following day, five civilians—including women and children—were killed when their vehicle struck a roadside bomb in the Andar district of Ghazni Province ([Tolo News](#), April 30).

Meanwhile, the country is also facing a serious political crisis as the Taliban violence continues mostly unabated and the number of COVID-19 cases rises. Political tensions between incumbent president, Ashraf Ghani, and his rival, Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, have severely hampered the government since results of the September 19 elections indicated a victory for Ghani. The situation worsened on March 9, when Ghani took the oath of office at the same time Abdullah inaugurated himself at a parallel ceremony ([Al Jazeera](#), March 9). Political negotiations between the two sides have obstructed government effectiveness, particularly in regard to pushing the Taliban deal forward and tackling the COVID-19 outbreak. The political impasse has also raised concerns that foreign assistance could be threatened if a suitable agreement is not met, with the

EU warning that the situation and “lack of progress may negatively affect future funding for the security and development of the country” ([Tolo News](#), April 30).

The Taliban and Afghan government have been slow to meet their requirements as laid out in the peace deal, and the COVID-19 outbreak has further complicated the process, particularly regarding prisoner releases. According to a presidential decree, 100 Taliban prisoners were expected to be released per day since the agreement, but only 500 have been released in the past 50 days. The process has been slowed by a lack of will, Taliban compliance, and the political impasse. Meanwhile, COVID-19 has also started to spread through the country’s prisons, including Kabul’s Pul-e-Chakri Prison, overwhelming the bureaucratic system as officials also move to release non-Taliban prisoners. The prison outbreaks prompted the Taliban to issue a warning indicating they would seek revenge if a single Taliban prisoner becomes infected while imprisoned ([MENAFN](#), April 29).

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Al-Shabaab Threatens COVID-19 Interventions in Somalia

Sunguta West

Al-Shabaab, the Somali-based al-Qaeda affiliate in East Africa, has ramped up attacks as global attention focuses on defeating the deadly coronavirus (COVID-19).

The militant group’s prolonged insurgency has left thousands of civilians in misery in the country, which has been without a stable government since 1991. The emergence of COVID-19 has raised concerns that the ongoing attacks will disrupt interventions mounted to counter the spread of the pandemic in the war-torn country.

On April 24, African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) troops thwarted an attempt by the militants to overrun an airport in Barawe in Somalia’s South West state. According to reports, the fighters from the militant group attempted to launch a large-scale attack using vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) and mortars ([Nile Post](#), April 25).

The group’s plan was to hit the newly refurbished airport with one of the VBIEDs while another would strike a base occupied by the Uganda People’s Defence Force (UPDF). However, the “bombs on wheels” were successfully neutralized by AMISOM troops before they could strike the targets. Al-Shabaab later took responsibility for the attack ([CGTN Africa](#), April 25; [Garowe Online](#), April 25).

On April 21, at least seven Somali National Army (SNA) soldiers were killed when their vehicle hit a landmine near Billigodle army base in Southern Somalia’s Lower Shabelle region. Several soldiers in the vehicle were also critically injured.

News reports indicated that this attack on Somali government soldiers was the deadliest since the launch of a military campaign to wrest control of the region from the militant group. In March, the campaign yielded the Janaale, a town in the region, which SNA soldiers captured in a fierce battle that killed several al-Shabaab fighters ([Garowe Online](#), March 30; [Hiiran Online](#), March 22).

A series of attacks have also been reported in Lower Jubba, Gedo, and other central parts of the country. These sustained attacks are lending credence to earlier speculations that terror groups such as al-Shabaab could take advantage of the shifting focus toward the COVID-19 pandemic to launch strikes ([Daily Nation](#), April 25).

Somalia's confirmed coronavirus cases are rising, with numbers surpassing 600 this week with 28 deaths. The spread has rivaled that taking place in the neighbouring countries of Kenya, Ethiopia, and Djibouti.

Comparatively, Somalia's situation is even more dire. More than 14 years of al-Shabaab violence has destroyed the country's health system, including hospitals, health centers, and dispensaries. The few remaining health institutions are running with support from humanitarian agencies and foreign troops operating in the country, but they have to constantly withstand threats by the militant group.

The fear that al-Shabaab will intentionally disrupt COVID-19 medical interventions are not unfounded. In 2011 and 2012, al-Shabaab resisted the delivery of relief aid during a famine that left at least 250,000 people dead.

Since its founding in 2006, al-Shabaab has often used disasters such as famines, droughts, and floods to tilt the scales in its favor. In the past, it has used food aid to boost its image among the local populations. But while teams delivered aid, elsewhere its fighters would be detonating IEDs, carrying out assassinations, or engaging in battles with security forces.

With the COVID-19 outbreak worsening, a repeat is anticipated with the militant group's leadership showing no regard for UN Chief Antonio Guterres' call for a global ceasefire to facilitate action against the pandemic. In mid-April, Somalia's international partners called on al-Shabaab and other militant groups to cease acts of violence and terrorism and to enable assistance reach communities in need ([Africanews](#), April 13).

Al-Shabaab, however, has remained defiant, dismissing COVID -19 as foreign propaganda. At the beginning of April, the militant group told Muslims to be aware of infectious diseases such as coronavirus. In the warning, al-Shabaab said the diseases are spread by the crusaders who have invaded Somalia and the disbelieving countries that support them ([Garowe Online](#), April 25).

Emerging evidence shows that the group's persistent attacks are already impacting the COVID-19 response. When the first cases were confirmed in Mogadishu, AMISOM troops restricted operations in the Halane base camp, while the U.S. military operated from the Balligodle camp. The forces also turned parts of the facilities into quarantine centers ([Garowe Online](#), April 25). The troops also moved to provide essential supplies such as food and water to the population, but the attacks by the militant group have forced the armies to end the humanitarian activities. Instead, reports indicate that the troops have been forced to turn their focus to countering al-Shabaab, rather than helping fight COVID-19.

In Somalia, the speed at which humanitarian aid moves during the COVID-19 pandemic will largely depend on the security of the aid workers. In the past, al-Shabaab has killed or abducted aid workers for ransom or ambushed relief aid convoys and stolen humanitarian aid.

Al-Shabaab will likely continue to exploit the outbreak by stepping up its operations, forcing international and regional security services to focus on reducing the threat of al-Shabaab so that anti-COVID-19 guidelines can work and the medical humanitarian aid can reach the ground.

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The “Tajik Plot” Represents Continuity in Germany’s History of Terrorism

Christian Jokinen

In the early hours of April 15, around 350 German law enforcement officials arrested four Tajik asylum seekers in the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. According to the state prosecutor, the men, all between 24 and 32 years old and Tajik nationals, had formed a terrorist cell that identified itself, and was in contact, with Islamic State (IS). The cell members have been named by their first name and the first letter of their surname as Azizjon B., Muhammadali G., Farhodshoh K., and Sunatullokh K. [1] A fifth suspect, already in custody, was named as the 30-year-old Ravsan B. ([Generalbundesanwaltschaft](#) April 15).

According to the state prosecutor, all five men joined IS in January 2019. The five initially planned to travel to Tajikistan to conduct “armed jihad” in their home country. The cell was in contact and received guidance from two high-ranking IS members in Syria and Afghanistan. The plan to travel to Tajikistan changed into plotting attacks against targets in Germany. The cell started to plan attacks against two U.S. military facilities in Germany. The cell also planned to assassinate an individual it accused of having publicly criticized Islam. One of the cell members, Sunatullokh K., had already conducted surveillance on their potential victim ([Generalbundesanwaltschaft](#), April 15).

The details of the attack plot are still somewhat murky. It reportedly might have included the use of parachutes as the wife of one of the terrorist suspects had inquired about paragliding courses ([Spiegel](#), April 17).

While the cell never took up a course on paragliding, its members had already acquired weapons and ammunition. Additionally, Ravsan B. had also brought components for the construction of an improvised explosive device (IED). To finance their attack plan and IS in Syria, the cell collected money in Germany and transferred it via Turkey to IS. To generate more income, Ravsan B. had accepted a \$40,000 contract killing in Albania. To fulfill the deal, Ravsan B. and Farhodshoh K. had indeed traveled to Albania, but the plan was canceled for un-

known reasons and the pair returned to Germany ([Generalbundesanwaltschaft](#), April 15).

How or when German security authorities became aware of the cell remains unknown. According to the Interior Minister of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia Herbert Reul, the “accused had been under our surveillance for some time now” ([Welt](#), April 15).

The German authorities had indeed seemingly been looking at potential terrorists from Tajikistan for some time. In March 2019, a 19-year-old Tajik national drove his car at excessive speed through a pedestrian zone in the city center of Essen. The man was stopped and arrested. The security authorities worried it could be the opening for a string of attacks and preemptively arrested 11 individuals—the majority being Tajik nationals—in a counter-terrorism operation across the states of North Rhine-Westphalia and Baden-Württemberg. The men were suspected of being affiliated with IS, but were quickly released and not charged ([Süddeutsche Zeitung](#), March 30, 2019).

Possibly in connection to the counter-terrorism operation, Ravsan B.—who appears to have been the leader of the cell—was arrested and jailed in March 2019 after police found a handgun in his possession. His arrest seemed to severely disrupt the cell and possibly prompted the investigation leading to the dismantling of the entire group a year later ([Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung](#), April 15).

The now foiled plot shows that the threat from IS remains significant—the group was still able to inspire, connect with, and direct aspiring members into planning attacks in the West, well after the peak of the group’s strength.

The composition of the cell, consisting of Tajik nationals, is interesting as it is the second significant attack plot against U.S. military facilities in Germany with connections to Central Asia. In 2007 a trio, known as the “Sauerland cell,” plotted to attack the U.S. Ramstein Air Base in Rheinland-Pfalz. All three had received terrorist training in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan and were closely linked to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), a splinter group of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Close U.S. and German intelligence and security cooperation resulted in the timely prevention of the plot. [2]

From a broader historical perspective, attacks against U.S. military facilities and service members represent a continuum in Germany's history of terrorism. During the last five decades, U.S. military bases and service members in Germany have been repeatedly targeted by terrorists from a wide variety of terrorist groups, both domestic and foreign, reflecting in a local context the wider trends of international terrorism. In the Cold War context, the U.S. military presence in West Germany was targeted by the far-left terrorist group "Red Army Fraction" (RAF) on multiple occasions.

As RAF ceased to target the U.S. military presence, Libya saw an opportunity to strike at the U.S. on West German soil. On April 5, 1986, the discotheque La Belle in West Berlin was bombed. Three people were killed and 229 injured. The venue was commonly frequented by U.S. soldiers and two of the dead and 79 of the injured were Americans. The bombing had been planned by the Libyan Intelligence Service. After Telex messages from Tripoli to its embassy in East Berlin were intercepted offering congratulations for a "job well done," President Reagan ordered retaliatory airstrikes against Libya.

The end of the Cold War did bring a pause to attacks against the U.S. military in the united Germany. The rise of jihadist terrorism, however, has again brought unwanted attention to U.S. forces in the country. The only successful attack by jihadist terrorists against the U.S. military in Germany occurred on March 2, 2011, when a 21-year-old refugee from Kosovo, Arid Uka, shot and killed two U.S. service members and wounded another two at the Frankfurt Airport. [4] Although there has not been another successful attack against the United States in Germany, the Tajik plot highlights the fact that jihadist terrorists continue to see U.S. military installations in Germany as attractive targets. More broadly, the disrupted plot is a serious reminder of Islamic State's continuing ability to attract supporters and direct these against the West.

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Notes

[1] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty identified three of the arrested as Sunatollokh Karimov, Muhammadali Ghumolov and Ravsan Boqiev. RFE/RL [https://www.rfer-](https://www.rferl.org/a/tajik-father-stunned-by-sons-arrest-in-germany-as-alleged-terrorist/30570541.html)

[l.org/a/tajik-father-stunned-by-sons-arrest-in-germany-as-alleged-terrorist/30570541.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/tajik-father-stunned-by-sons-arrest-in-germany-as-alleged-terrorist/30570541.html)

[2] Guido Steinberg: Al-Qaidas deutsche Kämpfer. Die Globalisierung des islamistischen Terrorismus. 2014, pages 88-112.

[3] Alexander Strassner: Die dritte generation der RAF, in Wolfgang Kraushaar (ed.) Die RAF und der linke Terrorismus, 2006, page 496.

[4] Guido Steinberg: Al-Qaidas deutsche Kämpfer. Die Globalisierung des islamistischen Terrorismus. 2014, pages 9-13, 371-372.

Counter-Boko Haram Offensives in Chad, Niger, and Nigeria under the Specter of Coronavirus: Public Relations or Permanent Destruction?

Jacob Zenn

At the end of March, Chadian president Idriss Déby announced the launch of a “merciless” offensive against ‘Boko Haram,’ albeit without clarifying whether Chad would target the larger faction, Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP), or the smaller faction, Jamaat Ahlussunnah lid-Dawa wal-Jihad (JAS) ([Premium Times](#), April 1). Déby, who came to power in Chad through a military coup 30 years ago, was keen to show his military bona fides. He, for example, frequently appeared in photoshoots directing commanders on the frontlines, while his son also recently returned from his UAE ambassadorial post to “fight terrorists” ([Alwihda](#), April 4; [Thebreakingtimes](#), April 11). According to Chadian authorities, its forces killed precisely 1,000 ‘Boko Haram’ members while 52 Chadian soldiers were killed in roughly two weeks of fighting ([Rfi.fr](#), April 9).

Chad’s casualty claims suggest the offensive mostly targeted ISWAP because Chad’s claims roughly match numbers released by ISWAP. ISWAP, for example, claimed to have killed 70 Chadian soldiers, which is not too dissimilar from the number of soldiers Chad acknowledged were killed ([Twitter.com/TomaszRolbiecki](#), April 6). However, ISWAP also asserted in Islamic State’s *al-Naba* magazine that some Chadian soldiers were killed in “friendly fire” airstrikes ([Al-Naba #229](#), April 10). Moreover, Chad, if anything, had incentive to underreport its own soldiers’ deaths to make its offensive appear more successful.

Chad’s claims of killing 1,000 ‘Boko Haram’ members were also seemingly exaggerated because an examination of Chad’s extensive documentation of the offensive only revealed several dozen slain jihadists, including several truckloads of seized armaments ([Dailypost.ng](#), April 5). Chad would likely have published more photos of slain jihadists if forces had actually killed anywhere near the 1,000 it claimed to have slain.

Targeting the Other Enemy

Despite Chad’s battles with ISWAP, it was actually JAS’s March 24 attack in Bohoma, near Lake Chad, that killed 92 Chadian soldiers and prompted the Déby-led offensive codenamed “Bohoma Anger” ([tchadinfos.com](#), March 24). Although ISWAP may have borne the brunt of Chadian retaliation for the attack that ISWAP itself did not launch, an April 1 JAS audio featured Shekau calling on fighters “to endure” in their battles against Chad. [1] This indicated the Chadian offensive targeted not only ISWAP, but also JAS hideouts and cells around Lake Chad.

Typical of Shekau, he also chastised Chad for “fighting for *jahl* (ignorance)” while JAS fought for the “enthronement of Islam,” and he also called on Chadians to rebel against Déby ([Legit.ng](#), April 7). Moreover, despite Nigeria’s frequent claims about Shekau’s imminent death or surrender, including after the Chadian offensive, Shekau’s April 15 audio message titled “Message to the Coronavirus Plague” argued that only “faith in Allah” can cure “calamities ([This Day](#), April 21).” [2] This offers no indication that Shekau was under heavy pressure, let alone ready to abandon jihad.

Although the Chadian offensive was intended to deal a knock-out blow to ‘Boko Haram,’ Déby’s cessation of the offensive on April 10 assured Chad’s desired result would not be achieved ([Africa News](#), April 11). While some ISWAP and JAS hideouts were uncovered and JAS may be deterred from committing another massacre of Chadian soldiers, the offensive did not prevent ISWAP from launching attacks against Chad. ISWAP, for example, claimed to have killed four Chadian soldiers and captured a fifth soldier after attacking two Chadian naval boats near Ngouboua, Chad on April 19 ([Twitter.com/TomaszRolbiecki](#), April 19). The group subsequently released an April 25 video through Islamic State’s *Amaq* agency of an ISWAP commander speaking Chadian Arabic before executing the captured soldier. [3]

Ngouboua itself has been a flashpoint for JAS attacks and represents one of several areas around Lake Chad and southern Borno State where the two rival groups—ISWAP and JAS—overlap. In December 2019, for example, JAS unsuccessfully attacked a Chadian military outpost near Ngouboua ([ActuDaily](#), April 6). Moreover, several weeks before that operation, JAS abducted a Chadian doctor, nurse, and driver in Ngouboua, who were

later seen in a February 2020 proof-of-life video. [4] The driver's family reported that JAS informed the family that the driver was executed on April 5 in retaliation for Chad's Bohoma Anger operation ([ActuDaily](#), April 6).

JAS' Lake Chad-based faction, led by the notorious Bakura, had also claimed loyalty to Shekau and at least three military barracks raids around Lake Chad in 2019, including in Dangdalla, Chad, Blabrine, Niger, and Darak, Cameroon. [5] This indicates it was Bakura who amplified JAS' capabilities around Lake Chad from 2019 onward and conducted the Bohoma attack because JAS had otherwise been dormant there from Shekau's ouster from ISWAP leadership in August 2016 until 2019 ([Twitter.com/A_Salkida](#), March 27). Bakura, who was originally based in Lake Chad, had engaged ISWAP for a period after August 2016. But upon finding ISWAP to be too moderate compared to JAS, he decided to retained loyalty to Shekau.

Bakura was reported killed in a joint Nigeria-Niger raid along their mutual border several days before JAS' March 24 Bohoma raid ([Lemonde](#), March 20). Rumors were subsequently confirmed that the United States participated in that raid. However, "the mission ultimately failed to capture or kill the militant leader," presumably Bakura ([New York Times](#), April 18). U.S. forces also remained distant from the actual operation to avoid risking losing American lives, which reflects a more cautious approach than in 2017, when Islamic State in Greater Sahara (ISGS) forces killed four U.S. soldiers in north-western Niger. At that time, ISGS was part of IS, but not a formal "province," and was referred to by IS as its "soldiers in Niger." However, since March 2019, ISGS has formally become part of ISWAP.

Nigeria's Own Offensive

While Bohoma Anger was the focus of media attention in March and April, Nigeria had its own reasons to be concerned about ISWAP and JAS. On the same day as JAS' Bohoma attack in Chad, ISWAP launched an assault on Goniri along the Yobe-Borno border, killing around 70 soldiers ([The Cable](#), March 24). ISWAP also released a video of the operation through Amaq, showing several captured Nigerian soldiers and large explosions caused by ISWAP destroying a Nigerian multiple rocket launcher. [6]

Nigeria responded to the Goniri attack by launching its own offensive south of Goniri in Ngamdu, near Alagarano, Borno, which is an ISWAP base the group has used

to coordinate attacks into Chibok, Borno and as far as northern Adamawa State ([Guardian.ng](#), April 17; [Punch](#), February 22). If ISWAP is ever able to capture or kill its nemesis, Shekau, whose main bases are around Sambisa Forest, Borno and along the Borno-Cameroon borderlands, it would likely also be from ISWAP's Alagarano base. ISWAP has increased its anti-Shekau rhetoric to a level never seen before, including directly condemning him in a February 2020 video for the first time and again one month later in March in its Hausa language at-Tibyan magazine ([at-Tibyan](#), March 2020). [7]

Seemingly emulating Déby, Nigeria's Chief of Army Staff, Tukur Buratai, also engaged in a highly publicized visit to the frontlines to observe the Nigerian army kill specifically "105" ISWAP members ([Premium Times](#), April 19). This was despite the fact that "initial situation reports" indicated a much fewer 10 "terrorists" were killed and photos of the battle scene revealed less than 10 slain ISWAP members and an amount of recovered weaponry consistent with use by around several dozen ISWAP members ([Premium Times](#), April 19). The Nigerian army has subsequently repelled several ISWAP attacks in Yobe and Borno. However, ISWAP's attack tempo has been largely unaffected by the Chadian and Nigerian offensives, and it was able to launch an April 25 ambush on a security escort for former Borno governor Ali Modu Sheriff's father's funeral, killing several policemen ([Sahara Reporters](#), April 25).

Conclusion

The March-April offensives have not substantially affected ISWAP or JAS operations. If anything, Chad's failure to extend its offensive for more than two weeks raises questions about the sub-regional determination to defeat the jihadists. Moreover, the suspicious self-induced "suicide by poisoning" of 44 captured "Boko Haram" members in Chadian custody in April raises questions about Chad's trustworthiness, if not also its commitment to the rule of law ([Alwihda](#), April 22).

Meanwhile, Shekau's "faith in Allah" may not save him from the coronavirus in a scientific sense. However, the coronavirus is taking a toll on Nigerian leaders, including President Muhammadu Buhari's top aide, who succumbed to the virus in April; on medical workers, one of whom worked for Médecins Sans Frontières and succumbed to the virus in Borno in April; and on Nigerian and neighboring countries' resources ([Pulse.ng](#), April 18; [HumAngle](#), April 20). This means any all-out escalation against JAS or ISWAP is unlikely in the near future.

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Notes

[1] For the April 1, 2020 JAS video of Shekau, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/04/02/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-special-message-to-chadian-president-idris-deby-audio-april-1-2020/>

[2] For the April 15, 2020 JAS video of Shekau, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/04/19/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-audio-message-on-coronavirus-april-15-2020/>

[3] For the graphic April 25, 2020 video, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2019/04/11/iswap-amaq-video-of-liquidation-of-supporters-of-nigeria-april-2-2019/>.

[4] For the February 2020 JAS proof-of-life video, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/02/28/boko-haram-three-kidnapped-chadian-medics-video-february-27-2020/>

[5] For the two September 2019 and November 2019 videos from JAS' Bakura faction making such claims, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2019/09/24/boko-haram-abubakar-shekau-message-of-glad-tidings-and-advice-to-my-brothers-in-allah-in-lake-chad-september-23-2019/> and <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/02/10/boko-haram-patience-of-men-video-november-5-2019/>.

[6] For the graphic April 5, 2020 Amaq video of ISWAP's Goniri attack, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2019/04/11/iswap-amaq-video-of-liquidation-of-supporters-of-nigeria-april-2-2019/>.

[7] For the February 2020 ISWAP video, see the author's book's companion website at: <https://unmaskingbokoharam.com/2020/02/15/iswap-slay-them-whenever-you-catch-them-video-part-2-february-14-2020/>.