



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on January 2, 2026

Did Trump's Nigeria Strikes Really Curtail Christian Persecution?

Evidence increasingly suggests that the United States' Christmas Day bombing of Nigeria did more to help the Nigerian government than it did to save Christians.

"Tonight, at my direction as Commander in Chief, the United States launched a powerful and deadly strike against ISIS Terrorist Scum in Northwest Nigeria, who have been targeting and viciously killing, primarily, innocent Christians," President Donald Trump [wrote](#) on Truth Social as the attacks occurred.

While the president got the location of the strikes right, the rest of his assertions are dubious at best.



Ayorinde Ogundele/iStock/Getty Images Plus

Misguided Missiles

For example, few people in the know believe that northwestern Nigeria is a hotbed of Christian persecution. [The New York Times](#) reported Friday:

Sokoto State, which was hit by more than 12 Tomahawk missiles Thursday night, is populated overwhelmingly by Muslims, who bear the brunt of terrorist attacks there, according to analysts and groups that monitor conflict. Bishop Matthew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto said recently that the area does "[not have a problem with persecution](#)" of Christians.

Former U.S. Special Envoy for the Sahel Region of Africa J. Peter Pham told [PBS News Hour](#) the strikes would have "very limited impact" on violence against Christians.

Why Trump chose to attack Sokoto State is "a mystery to me," Pham said. "There are a couple other places I would have picked to hit extremists in Nigeria."

Similarly, former National Security Council Senior Director of African Affairs Judd Devermont told the [Boston Globe](#) the area where Trump struck is "90 to 95 percent Muslims" and "not the epicenter of extremist violence."

Most analysts agree that northeastern — not northwestern — Nigeria is the source of most Christian persecution in the country. Northwestern Nigeria is home to the Lakurawa, a dangerous but comparatively weak terrorist group. Meanwhile, powerful terrorist organizations such as Boko Haram and the Fulani militias operate in the northeastern section of the country.

"If the bomb had been dropped in Sambisa Forest [in northeastern Nigeria], nobody would be surprised," security analyst Kabir Adamu told the *Times*. "Because everybody kind of knows that's one of the strongholds of the target group."



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Persecution Complex

Judd Saul, founder of [Truth Nigeria](#), told the [Daily Caller](#), “We just did the Nigerian government, and the Fulani and Boko Haram a favor by going after the Lakurawa.”

The website added:

Trump’s strikes weakened a [terrorist](#) group fighting with stronger organizations posing a greater threat to Christians in the region, according to Saul. The Truth Nigeria founder estimated that Lakurawa was responsible for roughly 5% of Christian killings in Nigeria while Boko Haram and the Fulani Ethnic Militia account for 90 to 95% between them. He previously [told](#) the Caller he estimated that the Fulani were responsible for 80% of the killings.

In July, the [Observatory for Religious Freedom in Africa](#) reported that the Fulani’s

systematic campaign of violence ... has fundamentally altered the demographic landscape of Nigeria’s Middle Belt. The data reveals that 2.4 Christians were killed for every Muslim during this period, with proportional losses to Christian communities reaching exceptional levels.

“People who don’t know what’s going on in Nigeria will say [the strike] is a resounding success,” said Saul. “But if we are serious about dealing with persecuted Christians in Nigeria, you have to take out the Fulani and the Fulani infrastructure that is orchestrating the mass genocide against Christians.”

Cooperation or Cooptation?

There is little question that the Nigerian government believes the attacks were to its benefit, observed the *Times*:

Even as the Nigerian authorities have disputed Mr. Trump’s claims about a Christian “genocide,” they have chosen to respond to his threats by cooperating with his administration. Nigeria has taken the opportunity to use U.S. firepower against insurgents that have plagued rural communities in the country’s northwest.

Alkasim Abdulkadir, a spokesman for Nigeria’s foreign minister, told the paper that Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu personally approved the U.S. strikes and “that Nigeria had provided American forces with intelligence for the airstrikes.”

The strikes were “meant to deter further operations of bandits in that area,” Abdulkadir said. “Air power is something that they can’t fight against.”

He also “said there were ongoing conversations with the U.S. authorities about possible further military action,” wrote the *Times*.

But can intelligence from a foreign government that disputes Trump’s stated *casus belli* be trusted? Could Nigeria’s government be aiming U.S. missiles at its own preferred targets rather than terrorists who threaten Christians?



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“One has to be brutally honest here,” said Pham. “Certain politicians in Nigeria have their own agendas and their own political alliances with extremists.... It’s a very complex situation that doesn’t ... lend itself to easy solutions.”

Saul cautioned against trusting the Nigerian military, claiming it’s “in cahoots with the Fulani terrorists.”

Truth or Err?

Even supposing that Lakurawa is a genuine threat to Christians, it’s not clear that the strikes did any damage to the group — which, according to the *Times*, may or may not be associated with ISIS. At least some of the missiles [landed in empty fields](#). Furthermore, villagers near one such site told [CNN](#) that their hamlet “is not known for terrorist activity and that local Christians coexist peacefully with the Muslim majority.”

Trump may believe he wiped out terrorists who kill Christians. Facts and logic, however, indicate that he may be wrong. Worse still, he may be, as the Daily Caller put it, getting “used” by the Nigerian government for its own purposes.



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