



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 14, 2015

NATO Weapons Helped Make Boko Haram World's Deadliest Terror Group

The Nigerian Boko Haram terrorist group was responsible for 6,644 deaths in 2014, compared to 6,073 attributed to ISIS, making it the deadliest terrorist group in the world last year. And, in what has become a disturbingly familiar pattern in the rise of terrorist organizations, Boko Haram's growing strength is a direct consequence of NATO's war on Libya.



This information about the relative deadliness of Boko Haram and ISIS was part of a report recently released by Global Terrorism Index, a project of the Sydney, Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). The results were cited in an article by freelance writer Dan Glazebrook originally published by *RT* on November 27 and reprinted with permission the next day by the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity.

In his article, Glazebrook observed that when Boko Haram began its terrorist operations in 2009 (the group was founded in 2002) it had very little in the way of sophisticated arms. Glazebrook quoted from a 2014 article by Peter Weber in *The Week* that traced the improvement in Boko Haram's weaponry, which had "shifted from relatively cheap AK-47s in the early days of its post-2009 embrace of violence to desert-ready combat vehicles and anti-aircraft/ anti-tank guns."

As for how Boko Haram's weapons cache had increased so dramatically, Glazebrook wrote:

This dramatic turnaround in the group's access to materiel was the direct result of NATO's war on Libya. A UN report published in early 2012 warned that "large quantities of weapons and ammunition from Libyan stockpiles were smuggled into the Sahel region," including "rocket-propelled grenades, machine guns with anti-aircraft visors, automatic rifles, ammunition, grenades, explosives (Semtex), and light anti-aircraft artillery (light caliber bi-tubes) mounted on vehicles," and probably also more advanced weapons such as surface-to-air missiles and MANPADS (man-portable air-defense systems).

NATO had effectively turned over the entire armory of an advanced industrial state to the region's most sectarian militias: groups such as the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and Boko Haram.

In a May 2014 article cited by Glazebrook, Brendan O'Neil, the editor of British Internet magazine *Spiked*, documented how the West's war on Libya aided the Boko Haram terrorists. Just the previous month, Boko Haram terrorists had kidnapped 329 schoolgirls in Borno State, in far northeastern



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Nigeria, which is a stronghold of Boko Haram. Noting that both President Obama and British Prime Minister David Cameron had been photographed holding up placards replicating the tweeted message “#Bring Back Our Girls,” O’Neil employed a bit of sarcasm to expose the hypocrisy of such misplaced sentiments:

Now all we need is for [former French President] Nicolas Sarkozy to come out of retirement and do likewise and then all of the key invaders of Libya in 2011 will have registered their watery-eyed angst with Boko Haram, the Nigeria-based Islamist group that kidnapped 276 girls [53 had escaped] from a school in Chibok in north-east Nigeria, the “our girls” referred to in that ubiquitous hashtag. Which would be profoundly ironic given that nothing boosted Boko Haram’s fortunes so much as the West’s assault on Libya in 2011....

Boko Haram has found itself a beneficiary of the terrible fallout from the West’s attack on Libya in 2011. That fallout both created a new war zone, in Mali, in which Nigerian Islamists trained and fought, and it also leaked weapons across the increasingly failed-state territories of West Africa, some of which have ended up in the hands of Boko Haram.

If one were to substitute “ISIS” for “Boko Haram,” “Iraq” for “Libya,” and “2003” for “2011” in the above quote, it would spotlight the frighteningly similar scenario that has repeated itself as the United States and its NATO allies have conducted multiple encores of their interventionist road show. Observe: “ISIS has found itself a beneficiary of the terrible fallout from the West’s attack on Iraq in 2003.”

Just as the NATO invasion of Libya has helped arm Boko Haram in Nigeria, it has also helped the second-most deadly terrorist organization, ISIS, gain influence in Libya, itself. As we noted in our recent article “[ISIS Gaining Strength in Libya](#)”:

The situation in Libya in many ways resembles that of Iraq and Syria, where U.S. intervention toppled one strongman who served as a buffer against radical terrorism of the type engaged in by ISIS and al-Qaeda and has supported rebel factions attempting to overthrow another one.

The UN passed a resolution in 2011 purporting to authorize military intervention in Libya for the alleged purpose of preventing civilians deaths perpetrated by the regime of Moammar Gadhafi, but this was, at best, an uneconomical way to save lives, since tens of thousands of civilians were killed during the ensuing civil war — many by NATO and anti-Gadhafi rebel forces. Some experts have called these deaths war crimes.

Not only were tens of thousands killed during the civil war in which NATO backed the rebel side, but the post-war Libya has become much worse than the Libya that Gadhafi ruled. In an [article posted by The New American](#) last January, we observed that Libya “has now essentially become a terror state — with groups ranging from the Islamic State (ISIS) to al-Qaeda openly roaming the capital and operating training centers across large swaths of the nation under their control.”

The developments in Libya did not come as a surprise to those who understand the folly of Western intervention into Middle Eastern affairs. As *The New American* noted in the article “Thirty Years of Projecting the Lines”:

In 2011, the American political establishment celebrated “victory” when Libyan strongman Moammar Gadhafi was toppled with the help of the NATO air war, just as the establishment had celebrated “victory” in 2003 when Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein was toppled. But as was the case with Iraq, the celebration of Libya’s liberation was premature.



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This was predictable. As we observed in our November 21, 2011 cover story “Libya: Now What?”: “There are many critical and possibly irreconcilable fault lines dividing Libyan society — Islamists, liberals, tribal chiefs, ethnic groups, Gadhafi loyalists, desert nomads, regional factions, and more. Some of the competing groups and interests were able to unite around deposing the Libyan government. But now that it is officially ousted, the already-tense situation is becoming even more complex.... More violence is likely. And tensions are so high that some experts have suggested that a second ‘civil war’ is a distinct possibility.”

The devastating events that have taken place in Iraq and Libya, and are still ongoing in Syria and Nigeria, have become so predictable that one can hardly dismiss them as mere incompetence. Anyone with simple powers of observation can readily see that our interventionist foreign policy has been deliberately wreaking havoc on nation after nation in the Islamic world. We took down Saddam Hussein and now ISIS has conquered much of the territory that Saddam once controlled. We intervened in Syria by aiding the rebel forces and, as we noted in an [article yesterday](#), ISIS has accumulated a large arsenal that includes U.S.-made weapons that the terrorist force has obtained from both the Iraqi army and the U.S.-supported Syrian rebel groups fighting against Bashar al-Assad.

And, as noted today, the world’s deadliest terrorist organization, the Nigerian Boko Haram, has accumulated large quantities of weapons and ammunition from Libyan stockpiles — a direct consequence of NATO’s war on Libya.

Our State Department has created a designation, “State Sponsors of Terrorism,” that it applies to countries that the Department says have “repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism.” Given the outcome of our invasions of Iraq and Libya, and support for the anti-Assad rebels in Syria, it would be not much of an exaggeration to say that, because of the benefits we have bestowed on the world’s terrorist organizations through our interventionist foreign policy, we now qualify as a “state sponsor of terrorism” ourselves.

Photo of ruined building after a Boko Haram suicide bombing in June 2015: AP Images

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