

*Terrorism Threat Remains Strong in Africa*

*Military gains against Islamist fighters answered with terrorist attacks | As It Is*

Hello, and welcome to As It Is from VOA Learning English.

I'm Christopher Cruise in Washington.

Today we report from Africa on how the continent is dealing with the growing threat of terrorism.

"We also need to fight the causes of radicalization: poverty, a sense of frustration and rejection by the state, and under-development."

## **Terrorism Threat Remains Strong in Africa**

2013 appears to have been the year the world woke up to African terrorism terrorists in Africa. Military gains against Islamist fighters in places like Mali and Somalia were followed by major terrorist attacks in neighboring countries. Such events demonstrated how complex and strong the threat remains.

Caty Weaver reports...

2013 began with France sending troops to Mali, its former colony. Al-Qaida-linked fighters in control of northern Mali were moving south to try to capture the whole country. Mali's army was not strong enough to defeat the rebels. French and African troops stopped the move, and re-captured control of the north. But Islamist fighters then attacked a natural gas center in nearby Algeria. They took hundreds of people hostage and killed at least 36 foreigners.

In Somalia, conditions appeared to be improving at the beginning of last year. Kenyan and African Union troops had forced the militant group al-Shabab from several cities. But in September, a small number of al-Shabab fighters attacked a shopping center in the Kenyan capital Nairobi. They killed more than 60 people. The attack uncovered weaknesses in Kenyan security and intelligence agencies.

The world watched as hundreds escaped the shopping center.

"All I could remember people saying is 'lie down, lie down.' And so everyone kept lying down. Everyone was crawling."

Nigeria says it is winning its fight against Boko Haram, the Islamist rebel group it has been fighting since 2009. In May, Nigeria launched an offensive against the group that continues today. The United Nations says more than 1,200 people have been killed in the offensive. But Boko Haram continues to attack.

This pattern has been seen throughout Africa: Islamist fighters seize territory and create safe places from which they can plan further attacks. They may even try to govern their captured territory. But when soldiers attack, the Islamists cross borders. They attack in new places. And, they seek young fighters to strengthen their groups.

Bakary Sambe is a Senegalese researcher. He says military action -- especially by Western forces -- often hurts the fight against terrorists.

“It’s absurd to say you can make war on terrorism which by nature is constantly regenerating and evolving. We also need to fight the causes of radicalization: poverty, a sense of frustration and rejection by the state, and under-development.”

Experts say al-Shabab is the best-organized of the al-Qaida-linked groups in Africa. They say it has fighters in more countries than any other terrorist group. The experts say the Westgate Mall attack strengthened the group and helped it attract new fighters.

Abdiwahab Sheikh Abdisamed is a Horn of Africa expert based in Nairobi. He says the international community must keep putting pressure on al-Shabab.

“They have an agenda beyond Somalia. They have an agenda beyond, beyond the region. They are going to Islamize the whole world by force -- not by preaching, by force.”

The United States and the European Union are watching the fight against terrorism in Africa closely. And France will continue its military presence in Mali. But other Western powers do not plan to deploy troops in the fight. They will, however, continue to give money to support and train African troops to fight terrorism.

I'm Caty Weaver.

Finally, recently, we received our supply of VOA wall calendars for 2014. This year, the calendars not only show all 12 months of the New Year, but include beautiful pictures of the Washington, DC area. They also have pictures of all the Presidents from Harry Truman to Barack Obama. To get your calendar, simply send an e-mail to us at [learningenglish@voanews.com](mailto:learningenglish@voanews.com). Make sure to include your mailing address when you write. We have several hundred 2014 calendars. But when they are gone, they are gone. So write to us today!

And that's our program for today. It was written in Special English from reports by VOA correspondents Anne Look in Dakar and Gabe Joselow in Nairobi.

Every day on As It Is we report on issues that we believe are of interest to you.

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And don't forget to listen to VOA World News at the beginning of every hour Universal Time, every day of the year.

Thank you for spending some of your time with us today.

I'm Christopher Cruise reporting from VOA Learning English headquarters in Washington.

Steve Ember will be here tomorrow with another edition of As It Is, beginning at 0030 Universal Time, with rebroadcasts

throughout the day. I hope you'll join him then, here on The Voice of America.

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