

Report shows militant attacks in Africa increase 300% despite U.S. operations



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Washington, October 24 (RHC)-- A new report from the Pentagon has shown that militant attacks increased 300 percent in Africa over the past decade. The September report from the Pentagon's Africa Center for Strategic Studies showed that the west Sahel region and Somalia were the militancy hot spots where most of the attacks had been carried out.

The report added that roughly 95 percent of the increase in militant attacks was perpetrated by extremist groups affiliated to Daesh and al-Qaeda militants, such as al-Shabab. "The record 2,221 violent events reported are a 45-percent increase from the 3-year average from 2018-2020," the report said.

The report comes months into ongoing US operations against militancy in the regions. The United States military established its Africa Command 13 years ago to expand America's military footprint on the continent.

In this regard, Pentagon's African Command or AFRICOM, whose area of responsibility covers all of Africa except Egypt, describes the duties of the force as promoting regional security, stability and prosperity, while assisting to strengthen security forces of allied nations. But it also admits AFRICOM will work to advance US national interests on the continent.

Former U.S. President Donald Trump had ordered the military to pull out all its troops from Africa. However, the incumbent ordered the U.S. military to maintain a permanent presence in Africa. Last year, U.S. President Joe Biden authorized the deployment of hundreds of American troops to "reestablish a small, persistent US military presence."

According to the report, the incidents in the region which involved militants had decreased by 23 percent over the past year. The report pointed out that "virtually all 222 violent events and 313 fatalities reported in North Africa" occurred in Egypt and were linked to the Daesh militant outfit in the Sinai Province, marking a 50 percent decline over the past 3 years.

"There has been progress in the fight against militant Islamist groups in Africa, though," the report said. It underscored the great variance across regions, noting that violence in the Lake Chad Basin and North Africa had "declined by 33 percent and 23 percent, respectively, over the last year."

The report also cited a moderate increase in militant-related violence in Mozambique, compared to a reported spike between 2018 and 2020. Last year, a senior United States military commander warned of what he termed as "wildfire of terrorism" sweeping across Africa at the conclusion of massive US-led war games in the continent.

Political analysts say that from once having no strategic military interest in the continent; within just over a decade, the U.S. now has some 30 military bases scattered across Africa. In the meantime, French military forces continue to operate in the Sahel region.

Leaders of countries in the West Africa's Sahel region have abandoned their hopes in purported counter-terrorism efforts by France and started negotiating with armed militants to bring peace to the restive region.

France's Operation Barkhan, launched in 2014 to purportedly quell a militant uprising in the region, is ongoing. Last year, France boosted its troop numbers for its operation Barkhane in the Sahel by 600, involving over 5,000 soldiers at its peak.

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