

# 2025 United States strikes in Nigeria

On 25 December 2025, the United States in coordination with the Nigerian government conducted strikes against Islamic State militants in northwest Nigeria.<sup>[4][5][6]</sup>

## Background

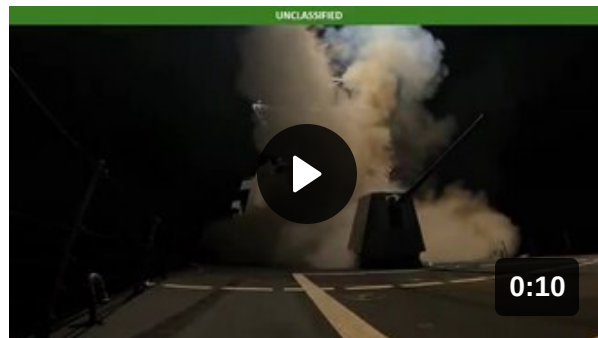
The Nigerian government has been combating jihadist groups for several years, including Boko Haram and its Islamic State-linked splinter groups.<sup>[7]</sup> Jihadist groups in Nigeria's northeast, the center of the insurgency, killed tens of thousands of Nigerians from 2016 to 2025.<sup>[8]</sup>

According to Nigeria's military, the Islamic State-aligned Lakurawa rebel group became more active on the Nigerian side of the border with Niger following the 2023 Niger coup, which impacted the countries' joint border operations.<sup>[1]</sup> In 2017, the Lakurawa were formed as an anti-bandit force and were initially welcomed into villages; however, they became increasingly oppressive. They control territories in Sokoto and Kebbi states.<sup>[1]</sup>






In November 2025, the United States Africa Command drafted plans to strike at militant compounds in northern Nigeria.<sup>[9]</sup> Later in November, 25 schoolgirls were abducted from a Catholic school in Kebbi state and 303 schoolchildren and 12 teachers were kidnapped at another Catholic school in Niger state.<sup>[10][11]</sup> US president Donald Trump said that Christians in Nigeria were facing an "existential threat"; locals and experts emphasized that Nigerians of all faiths are targets of violence.<sup>[12]</sup>

### 2025 United States strikes in Nigeria

Part of the Boko Haram insurgency, the Nigerian bandit conflict, the war on terror and war against the Islamic State



Video of a missile launching during the strikes

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Type</b>         | <u>Tomahawk missile strikes</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Location</b>     | <u>Sokoto State, Nigeria</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Planned by</b>   |  <u>United States</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Commanded by</b> | <u>Donald Trump</u><br><u>Pete Hegseth</u><br><u>Bola Tinubu</u><br><u>Christopher Gwabin Musa</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Target</b>       |  <u>Islamic State</u> <sup>[1]</sup><br>└ <u>Sahel Province</u><br>└ <u>Lakurawa</u> <sup>[2]</sup><br><u>Bandits</u> <sup>[2]</sup>                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Date</b>         | 25 December 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Executed by</b>  |  <u>United States Navy</u><br> <u>United States Air Force</u><br> <u>Nigerian Armed Forces</u> <sup>[3]</sup> |
| <b>Casualties</b>   | 200 militants missing<br>155-200+ militants killed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

## Strikes

Early on 26 December 2025, the US conducted airstrikes which it said were against Islamic State (IS) militants in northwest Nigeria. According to the US, the strikes were approved by and in coordination with the Nigerian government, and killed "multiple" Islamic State militants.<sup>[13][14]</sup> AFRICOM said that the strikes focused on targets in Sokoto State.<sup>[15]</sup>

The strikes were conducted by a US Navy warship using BGM-109 Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAM), the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS Paul Ignatius, in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>[16][17][18]</sup> Nigerian information minister Mohammed Idris Malagi said that the operation took place on 26 December between 00:12 and 01:30 WAT, and targeted two prominent IS sites in the Bauni forest in Tangaza. Malagi said that 16 GPS-guided munitions were fired using MQ-9 Reaper drones at the fighters, who were attempting to infiltrate Nigeria from the Sahel. A US defense official told The New York Times the strikes involved over a dozen Tomahawk missiles targeting two IS camps.<sup>[8]</sup>



Sokoto state in northwest Nigeria was targeted by US airstrikes

Malagi added that debris from munitions mistakenly hit Jabo and Offa, but caused no civilian casualties.<sup>[14]</sup> According to Isa Salihu Bashir, the chairman of Tangaza, strikes hit Lakurawa camps, killing many fighters and forcing others to flee.<sup>[7]</sup> At least four missile warheads failed to explode and fell short of their targets, landing in Offa, Zugurma, and Jabo.<sup>[19]</sup> In Jabo, Tambuwal, farmland was destroyed.<sup>[20][3][21]</sup> In Offa, former state official Tajudeen Alabi told the BBC that "about five structures" were destroyed, with some injuries but no deaths.<sup>[22]</sup>

The New Humanitarian reported that two missiles hit a Lakurawa camp in Tangaza. The first strike killed around 30 fighters, and the second strike killed survivors who had gathered to assess the damage. An estimated 155 Lakurawa were killed in total, including 19 who succumbed to their wounds. Another 200 were missing, and almost half the group's cattle were killed. Lakurawa commander Dando Sib was reported to have survived the strikes, leaving the area five minutes before the second missile impacted.<sup>[4]</sup>

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth stated that the strikes were related to stopping the killings of Christians in Nigeria.<sup>[23]</sup> Conversely, the Nigerian government stated that the strikes were not intended to protect any specific religions.<sup>[24]</sup>

The Nigerian Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement that said "precision hits" had been made and that the country's authorities remained "engaged in structured security cooperation with international partners, including the United States of America, in addressing the persistent threat of terrorism and violent extremism".<sup>[25][26]</sup> The Nigerian Armed Forces said the strikes were jointly conducted with approval from the government, and came after "credible intelligence and careful operational planning" to minimize collateral damage.<sup>[27]</sup>

The casualties have been reported as being in a range of 155-200+ fighters killed.<sup>[28]</sup>

## Targets

---

According to the FDD, the missile strikes targeted camps of the Islamic State's Sahel Province (ISSP) in northwestern Nigeria, the main IS affiliate responsible for operations across the Sahel region and Sokoto State.<sup>[29]</sup> The FDD added that the attack target was indicative of the inroads that ISSP had made in Nigeria.<sup>[30]</sup>

A spokesperson for Nigerian president Bola Tinubu told Agence France-Presse that the strikes targeted "ISIS, Lakurawa and bandits", saying that IS supplied and trained Lakurawa and bandits through the Sahel. He noted that the strikes hit an area with a historic Lakurawa and bandit presence, and that US intelligence had detected an influx of IS fighters there from the Sahel.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Analysis

---

When the strikes were originally proposed in November 2025, Judd Devermont, former US president Joe Biden's national security advisor for African affairs, criticized the Trump administration stating that instability in Nigeria "will not be reversed overnight by an influx of U.S. resources".<sup>[31]</sup>

Nigeria's Minister of Defence Christopher Musa said that military intervention would only solve 30% of the conflict, with 70% depending on good governance, notably addressing poor state capacity in the north. The Associated Press reported that experts saw the strikes as providing "crucial help" for Nigeria's security forces which are "overstretched" and "outgunned".<sup>[1]</sup>

## Aftermath

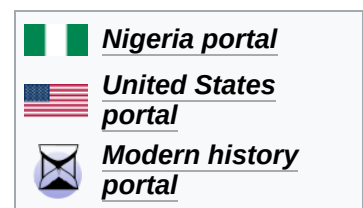
---

On February 3, 2026 an advance team of US soldiers were sent to train and advise the Nigerian military as they continue to fight Islamic terrorist groups operating in their nation. It has been reported that these forces will not take a direct military role, and will be under the Command of the Nigeria military. Later, on 16 February 2026, the United States sent an additional 100 troops, and it is expected that the force will reach it's maximum deployment strength with a further 100 forces by the end of the month. This will bring the total deployment to 200 military personnel.<sup>[32][33][34]</sup>

## See also

---

- 2020 Nigeria hostage rescue
- December 2025 Palmyra attack
- March–May 2025 United States attacks in Yemen
- Operation Hawkeye Strike
- Persecution of Christians by the Islamic State
- United States strikes on Iranian nuclear sites



## References

---

1. Asadu, Chinedu. "What to know about the militants targeted by US airstrikes in northwest Nigeria" (<https://apnews.com/article/trump-nigeria-military-strikes-sokoto-lakurawa-1fd77ce78e5d72ca776b788a762866fa>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
2. "US strikes targeted IS militants, Lakurawa jihadists, Nigeria says" (<https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20251227-us-strikes-targeted-is-militants-lakurawa-jihadists-nigeria-says>). *France 24*. 27 December 2025. Retrieved 27 December 2025.
3. Khan, Sana (26 December 2025). "Nigeria Averts Unilateral U.S. Action Through Joint Airstrikes" (<https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2025/12/26/nigeria-averts-unilateral-u-s-action-through-joint-airstrikes/>). *Modern Diplomacy*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
4. "Did the US military strikes in Nigeria hit the right target?" (<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2026/01/12/us-military-strike-nigeria-target>). *The New Humanitarian*. 12 January 2026. Retrieved 5 February 2026.
5. "MSN" (<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/world/us-strikes-isis-in-nigeria-on-christmas-day-california-battles-flooding/ar-AA1T4RCu?ocid=BingNewsSerp>). *www.msn.com*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
6. Svirnovskiy, Gregory (25 December 2025). "US forces launch Christmas strike on ISIS in Nigeria, Trump says" (<https://www.politico.com/news/2025/12/25/trump-nigeria-christmas-strike-00706646>). *POLITICO*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
7. Lukiv, Jaroslav; Okafor, Makuochi (25 December 2025). "US launches strikes against Islamic State in Nigeria" (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cj69j8l918do>). *BBC News*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
8. Cooper, Helene; Jammeh, Saikou; Schmitt, Eric (25 December 2025). "U.S. Strikes ISIS in Nigeria After Trump Warned of Attacks on Christians" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/25/us/politics/trump-isis-nigeria-strike.html>). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 28 December 2025.
9. Cooper, Helene (5 November 2025). "U.S. Military Draws Up Nigeria Plans, With Limited Options to Quell Violence" (<https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/05/us/politics/nigeria-us-military.html>). *The New York Times*. Retrieved 30 December 2025.
10. "Why schoolchildren are often abducted in Nigeria and who the usual kidnappers are" (<https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-school-abductions-bandits-boko-haram-527d72882b7692de8c806d784661590e>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
11. Adetayo, Ope; Shibayan, Dyepkazah. "Gunmen abduct 25 girls from a high school in northwestern Nigeria" (<https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-girls-abducted-school-9d288758bf1a57f3390c962f0a68596b>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
12. Asadu, Chinedu. "Trump says Christians are being persecuted in Nigeria. The reality is more complicated" (<https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-christian-muslim-killings-kidnapping-trump-af57834a1ce47488397bf07931b5cf51>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
13. Arnsdorf, Isaac; Copp, Tara; Chason, Rachel; Vinall, Frances (25 December 2025). "U.S. strikes ISIS in Nigeria after Trump warnings on Christian killings" (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/25/trump-bombing-nigeria-isis/>). *The Washington Post*. ISSN 0190-8286 (<https://search.worldcat.org/issn/0190-8286>). Retrieved 26 December 2025.
14. Habib, Gift (26 December 2025). "US airstrikes hit terrorist staging bases in Sokoto, says FG" (<https://punchng.com/us-airstrikes-hit-terrorist-staging-bases-in-sokoto-says-fg/>). *The Punch*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
15. Egbejule, Eromo (25 December 2025). "US carries out strikes on Nigeria targeting Islamic State militants, Trump says" (<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/dec/25/us-carries-out-airstrikes-against-islamic-state-terrorist-scum-in-nigeria-trump-says>). *The Guardian*. Retrieved 27 December 2025.

16. Nwachukwu, John Owen (26 December 2025). "US Dept of War shares video of air strikes in Nigeria" (<https://dailypost.ng/2025/12/26/us-dept-of-war-shares-video-of-air-strikes-in-nigeria/>). *Daily Post*. Lagos, Nigeria. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
17. Allison, George (26 December 2025). "American warship launches missiles at targets in Africa" (<https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/american-warship-launches-missiles-at-targets-in-africa/>). *UK Defence Journal*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
18. Allison, George (26 December 2025). "American warship launches missiles at targets in Africa" (<https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/american-warship-launches-missiles-at-targets-in-africa/>). Retrieved 26 February 2026.
19. "Unexploded missiles, witnesses undercut Trump account of Nigeria strike" (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2026/01/10/nigeria-strikes-islamist-militants-isis/>). *The Washington Post*. 10 January 2026. ISSN 0190-8286 (<https://search.worldcat.org/issn/0190-8286>). Retrieved 12 January 2026.
20. Lawal, Shola. "US bombs target ISIL in Nigeria: What's really going on?" (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/12/26/us-bombs-target-isil-in-nigeria-whats-really-going-on>). *Al Jazeera*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
21. Sanusi, Abiodun (26 December 2025). "Sokoto: Anglican Communion, PFN hail U.S. bombing of ISWAP terrorists as MURIC alleges civilian casualties" (<https://gazettengr.com/sokoto-anglican-communication-pfn-hail-u-s-bombing-of-iswap-terrorists-as-muric-alleges-civilian-casualties/>). *Peoples Gazette*. Abuja, Nigeria. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
22. "Wetin we know about di US airstrike wey hit Kwara State" (<https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/articles/cjrjwq59x49o>). *BBC News* (in Nigerian Pidgin). 26 December 2025. Retrieved 4 January 2026.
23. Stoddart, Michelle. "Trump says US launched strike on ISIS terrorists in Nigeria" (<https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-us-launched-strike-isis-terrorists-nigeria/story?id=128697246>). *ABC News*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
24. Wexler, Alexandra; Bariyo, Nicholas; Akingbule, Gbenga (26 December 2025). "Nigeria Says Strikes Were Aimed at Protecting All Religions, Not Just Christians" (<https://www.wsj.com/world/africa/nigeria-says-strikes-were-aimed-at-protecting-all-religions-not-just-christians-1b3676cf>). *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
25. Ibrahim, Mansur (26 December 2025). "US bombs ISIS terrorists in Nigeria" (<https://www.thecable.ng/breaking-us-conducts-air-strike-against-isis-terrorists-in-nigeria/>). *TheCable*.
26. "US launch air strikes against Islamic State for Nigeria" (<https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/articles/c8e9z690g3do>). *BBC News Pidgin* (in Nigerian Pidgin). 26 December 2025.
27. Dada, Adekunle (26 December 2025). "Breaking: Nigerian Military Breaks Silence After US Launched Airstrikes Against Terrorists" (<https://www.legit.ng/world/africa/1689894-breaking-nigerian-military-reacts-launched-airstrikes-terrorists/>). *Legit.ng*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.
28. "Did the US military strikes in Nigeria hit the right target?" (<https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2026/01/12/us-military-strike-nigeria-target>). *www.thenewhumanitarian.org*. 12 January 2026. Retrieved 26 February 2026.
29. Madueke, Onyedikachi (28 December 2025). "US strikes on IS targets in Nigeria may only fan the flames of insurgent violence" (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2025/dec/28/us-strikes-nigeria-donald-trump-crusader-terrorism-is-targets>). *The Guardian*. ISSN 0261-3077 (<https://search.worldcat.org/issn/0261-3077>). Retrieved 26 February 2026.
30. Caleb Weiss (26 December 2025). "US strikes Islamic State in Nigeria" (<https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2025/12/us-strikes-islamic-state-in-nigeria.php>). *FDD's Long War Journal*. Retrieved 27 December 2025.
31. Finley, Ben; Adetayo, Ope; Metz, Sam. "US signals broader efforts to protect Nigeria's Christians following Trump's military threat" (<https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-christians-killings-trump-military-575ef1b843680e0b053afc0fbc472f95>). *Associated Press*. Retrieved 26 December 2025.

32. Adetayo, Ope (3 February 2026). "US announces military team sent to Nigeria after recent attacks" (<https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-us-troops-b415141ca6ed27978ba52f081ca05405>). *The Associated Press*. Retrieved 17 February 2026.
  33. "US to send 200 troops to Nigeria to train African nation's military" (<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/us-send-200-troops-nigeria-train-african-nations-military-2026-02-10/>). *Reuters*. 11 February 2026. Retrieved 17 February 2026.
  34. "US deploys 100 soldiers to Nigeria as attacks by armed groups surge" (<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/2/16/us-deploys-100-soldiers-to-nigeria-for-training-mission-nigerian-military>). *Al Jazeera Media Network*. 16 February 2026. Retrieved 17 February 2026.
- 

Retrieved from "[https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2025\\_United\\_States\\_strikes\\_in\\_Nigeria&oldid=1346533414](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=2025_United_States_strikes_in_Nigeria&oldid=1346533414)"