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# Burkina Faso's defences strained amid increasing threat of radical Islamism

Jessica Moody - IHS Jane's Terrorism & Insurgency Monitor

31 August 2017



A policeman guarding the Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou on 17 January 2016 after the site was attacked on 15 January. Source: Issouf Sanogo/Getty Images

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### Key Points

- A series of Islamist militant assaults in Burkina Faso since an Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Murabitoun attack in Ouagadougou in January 2016, including an additional attack in the capital in August 2017, have raised questions about the capacity of Burkinabe security forces to respond to the threat.
- Joint counter-terrorism operations in the north of Burkina Faso will reduce the militants' ability to conduct attacks in the country, but this will probably result in a refocusing of the insurgents' resources on high-profile assaults in the capital, rather than bringing attacks to a complete standstill.
- In the absence of long-term development initiatives in the north of Burkina Faso and a sustainable peace deal for northern Mali, Islamist militancy is almost certain to persist in the country for the foreseeable future.

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Jessica Moody assesses Burkina Faso's resilience in the face of radical Islamism and a growing threat from Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's regional expansion in West Africa and the Sahel.

Islamist militants have increasingly targeted Burkina Faso since 15 January 2016, when an assault by Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al-Murabitoun on the Cappuccino cafe and Splendid Hotel in Ouagadougou killed at least 28 people, as reported by Al-Jazeera and Reuters at the time. The violence shocked the country, which has long stood out in the Sahel for having avoided such attacks. However, a wave of further incidents has followed the attack in the capital including a subsequent attack by unidentified gunmen in Ouagadougou on 13 August 2017 at a restaurant opposite the Splendid Hotel. The violence killed at least 18 people and wounded eight others, according to CNN on 15 August.

That particular attack has yet to be claimed by any Islamist militant group, which is striking given that most such assaults are claimed almost immediately by regional insurgent groups.

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