The Moscow Times
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Russian Arms to Aid Cameroon's Fight Against Boko Haram

By The Moscow Times

January 20, 2015



Russia will train Cameroonian soldiers on the use of the new hardware, the ambassador said.

Russia will provide advanced military hardware to Cameroon to help in its fight against militant islamist group Boko Haram, according to an agreement signed between Moscow's ambassador and Cameroon's President, Paul Biya.

"Military assistance will probably come by the end of the year," Russia's Ambassador to Cameroon, Nikolai Ratsiborinsky, was quoted on Cameroon's presidential administration's web page as saying late last week.

Russia will also send humanitarian and civilian aid to Cameroon, which has been devastated by recurring attacks from the Nigeria-based Boko Haram. Boko Haram, whose name means "Western education is forbidden," has killed thousands of civilians in the region in its attempt to impose an islamic state in Nigeria.

According to Ratsiborinsky, military assistance will include "very sophisticated military equipment, the latest versions of heavy artillery, including missiles, aerial protection, equipment, anti-aircraft missile systems, canons, armored vehicles and several other military equipment and armaments."

Russia will train Cameroonian soldiers on the use of the new hardware, the ambassador said. It is hoped that Russian assistance will bolster the struggle to contain and neutralize Boko Haram's six-year islamist insurgency, which has spilled over the Nigerian border into Cameroon.

British newspaper The Telegraph on Monday reported that Cameroon's army — a force of around 12,500 men tasked with defending a plot of land twice the size of Britain — has deployed over 7,000 of its troops to the central African nation's northern flank, where Boko Haram has made its incursions.

Cameroon has been actively courting outside help in dealing with Boko Haram. In addition to Russian material assistance, a task force comprised of troops from neighboring Chad, Nigeria and Niger is being formed with Cameroon to combat the radical islamist group.

The United Nations Security Council on Tuesday issued a statement urging the task force to speed up its deployment.

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