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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
“Counterterrorism Efforts in Africa”
December 7, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

“Today we are gathered to examine U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Africa. This committee has long advocated for strong, sustained relations between the United States and countries in Africa. From the *Electrify Africa Act* and the reauthorization of the *African Growth and Opportunity Act* to the *END Wildlife Trafficking Act*, we’ve worked on a bipartisan basis to provide the tools for greater engagement with a continent that’s home to some of the world’s fastest growing economies, but also major security challenges.

As I said in our May hearing on 'U.S. Interests in Africa,' for our efforts on the continent to succeed, we must help our partners confront the threat of radical Islamist terrorism. From al-Shabaab in Somalia to Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria to al-Qaeda and ISIS in Libya and their affiliates across the Sahel, terrorists seek to destabilize governments by threatening vulnerable communities – often by exploiting local grievances. This committee, and Congress as a whole, has supported our uniformed men and women in this fight, including by voting last year to require a strategy to defeat Boko Haram.

The death of four U.S. soldiers in Niger in early October and a Navy Seal in Somalia last May are stark reminders of the danger inherent in these efforts. This is why the War Powers Resolution requires notification to Congress when forces equipped for combat are deployed abroad.

AFRICOM is working with the FBI and other agencies on an investigation into what happened in Niger, which military officials expect to be completed in January. After the grieving families are briefed on the findings, Congress will be eager to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to lessen future risks to our forces. This hearing will take a broader look at U.S. counterterrorism efforts across Africa.

While the Department of Defense often plays the most visible role in these efforts, the State Department is charged with developing the overall strategy. State also plays a significant role in security assistance, providing countries like Niger with armored vehicles and other equipment they need to confidently take the fight to the enemy.

In recent years, DoD funding for security assistance in Africa has surpassed that provided by State. However, thanks to a bipartisan effort by this committee, most of these authorities now require State Department concurrence, as well as joint development, planning and implementation. Many also require efforts to bolster democratic values of partner forces –

including civilian control of the military. Combating terrorism and building stability is as much a political as a military challenge, so the State Department must lead.

It's important for members to understand that – while successive administrations have used the 2001 AUMF to conduct strikes in Somalia and Libya – the majority of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Africa are carried out under other authorities that Congress has provided. Together these 'intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance,' 'train and equip,' and 'advise and assist' missions build the capabilities of our partner forces while helping them to take on current threats.

Of course, military efforts alone cannot defeat radical ideology. Severe poverty, lack of education, local grievances and weak governance provide the ideal context for this hateful ideology to take hold. As AFRICOM's first commander told the committee in May, 'It is in our best interests to focus on "sustained development engagement" just as we focused on sustained security engagement.' That's a long-term commitment, but one in our security interest. I look forward to hearing how both departments are working to support the development of strong, resilient African governments that deny terrorist groups room to grow."