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Prepared Statement of

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before the

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

on

"The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram"

Wednesday, June 11, 2014,
2:00 p.m.
Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2172
Washington, D.C.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Bass, Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

I would like to thank you not only for the specific opportunity to testify before you today on the subject of the ongoing struggle against Boko Haram, but for the sustained attention which the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, and other members of the United States House of Representatives have given to this challenge. In its oversight capacity, the House has, on this issue, been very much ahead of the curve, convening—through the Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism—the very first congressional hearing on Boko Haram in 2011, which I also had the privilege of testifying at. At that time, Boko Haram was considered so obscure that the all the participants at the event, held in conjunction with the release of a bipartisan report spearheaded by Representatives Patrick

Meehan and Jackie Speier on the threat posed by the militant group, could have convened in the proverbial broom closet. Sadly, our analysis proved prescient and, rather than fading away, Boko Haram today poses an even greater menace to Nigeria and its people, their neighbors, and, indeed, the international community as a whole.

The Evolving Threat of Boko Haram

However, before addressing the current struggle against Boko Haram, I think it is incumbent upon us to recall the group's evolution.[1] This context is especially important if we are to understand its likely trajectory and how best to formulate a response that will be relevant, realistic, sustainable, and, perhaps most importantly, strategic in the fullest sense of that term, rather than token, ineffectual, and, at worst, downright counterproductive to the achievement of overall objectives which I would like to believe are shared by everyone appearing before the Subcommittee today and, indeed, the millions of people worldwide who have joined through social media to condemn the outrages perpetrated by this extremist group, especially abduction of the nearly 300 schoolgirls from Chibok almost two months ago.

The emergence of the militant sect cannot be understood without reference to the social, religious, economic, and political milieu of northern Nigeria. While it is murky, some accounts link the group's origins back to the *Maitatsine*[2] uprisings of the early 1980s which left thousands dead and cut a path of destruction across five northern Nigerian states. Certainly there are comparisons to be drawn between Boko Haram and the earlier movement in terms of ideology, objectives, and *modus operandi*.

Both Yan Tatsine and Boko Haram can be described as fanatical sects whose beliefs are not held by the majority of Nigerian Muslims. In their denunciation of Western civilization, both also came to reject the legitimacy of the secular Nigerian state, invariably described as *dagut* ("evil") and unworthy of allegiance and ended up waging war against it in an effort to replace it with a "purified" Islamic regime. In both cases, police were unable to quell the outbreak of violence and military forces had to be deployed. The passage of time between the two

[1] See J. Peter Pham, *Boko Haram's Evolving Threat*, African Security Brief 20 (Washington: Africa Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense University, 2012).

[2] The Maitatsine movement took its name from a religious preacher, Muhammadu Marwa, who moved from his native Cameroon to northern Nigeria around 1945. His polemical sermons, ostensibly based on the Quran and aimed at both religious and political authorities, earned Marwa the sobriquet by which he was generally known, "Maitatsine" (in the Hausa *lingua franca* of northern Nigeria, "he who curses"), as well as the ire of the British colonial authorities who had him deported. Maitatsine eventually returned to Nigeria sometime after its independence and, by the early 1970s, had gathered a large and increasingly militant following, the "Yan Tatsine" ("followers of Maitatsine"), drawing heavily from youth, unemployed migrants, and others who felt that the official Islamic hierarchy was unresponsive to their needs. Maitatsine proclaimed himself a prophet and became increasingly anti-government in his pronouncements. He was killed by security forces during a December 1980 insurrection in Kano, but his followers rose up again in 1982, 1984, and 1985. See Elizabeth Isichei, "The Maitatsine Risings in Nigeria 1980-1985: A Revolted of the Disinherited," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 17, no. 5 (October 1987): 194-208.

movements has been marked by persistent corruption and relatively few improvements in the socioeconomic conditions of northern Nigeria, leaving many communities in the North with the perception that they are falling further behind their counterparts in the (mostly Christian) South.[3] This has given Boko Haram's message calling for a radical transformation of Nigerian society a wide resonance across the region, even if the tactics the group has adopted are repugnant to the overwhelming majority of Nigerians irrespective of their ethnic identification or religious affiliation.

According to most accounts, the name *Boko Haram* is itself derived from the combination of the Hausa word for "book" (as in "book learning"), *boko*, and the Arabic term *haram*, which designates those things which are ungodly or sinful.[4] Thus "Boko Haram" is not only the group's common name,[5] but also its slogan to the effect that "Western education (and such product that arises from it) is sacrilege."[6] The group's founder, Mohammed Yusuf, once described the cosmological view that resulted from such an ideology in a 2009 interview with the BBC: "Western-style education is mixed with issues that run contrary to our beliefs in Islam. Like rain. We believe it is a creation of God rather than an evaporation caused by the sun that condenses and becomes rain. Like saying the world is a sphere. If it runs contrary to the teachings of Allah, we reject it. We also reject the theory of Darwinism. " [7]

Notwithstanding these rather eccentric beliefs, the group proved a useful instrument for the ambitions of certain politicians in northeastern Nigeria, including Ali Modu Sheriff, who availed himself of the support of the group's leaders and their organization in his successful 2003 bid for the governorship of Borno State and subsequently appointed a prominent Boko Haram member, Alhaji Buji Foi, to his cabinet as state commissioner of religious affairs during his first term, thus giving the sect access to not inconsiderable public resources. During this period, Mohammed Yusuf was even able to establish a mosque—tellingly named for the thirteenth-century forefather of contemporary Salafism Ibn Taymiyyah—and school in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno State.

As the group's relations with state and local authorities soured after 2007, what little regard it had for Nigeria's traditional Muslim hierarchy also declined. The introduction of Islamic law (*shari'a*) in the twelve northern Nigerian states since 1999 was deemed insufficient by

[3] See John Campbell, *Nigeria: Dancing on the Brink* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

[4] This interpretation is disputed in a learned paper by Paul Newman, emeritus professor at Indiana University, who posits that a more nuanced understanding would translate the word *boko* as "inauthenticity or fraud," a term which was only later applied pejoratively to British colonial policy of imposing secular schools on northern Nigeria in the early twentieth century. See Paul Newman, "The Etymology of Hausa *Boko*" (unpublished paper, Mega-Chad Research Network, School of Oriental and African Studies, 2013).

[5] The group's formal name is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal-Jihad* ("Congregation of the People of the Tradition [of the Prophet] for Proselytism and Jihad"); see Freedom C. Onuoha, "The Islamist Challenge: Nigeria's Boko Haram Crisis Explained," *African Security Review* 19, no. 1 (2010): 54-67.

[6] Abimbola Adesoji, "The Boko Haram Uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria," *African Spectrum* 45, no. 2 (2010): 100.

[7] Joe Boyle, "Nigeria's 'Taliban' Enigma," BBC, July 31, 2009.

Mohammed Yusuf and his followers, who argued that the country's ruling class as a whole was marred by corruption and even Muslim northern leaders were irredeemably tainted by "Western-style" ambitions. They envisaged a "pure" *shari'a* state would ostensibly be both more transparent and just than the existing order.

Nevertheless, an uneasy truce—punctured by occasional skirmishes with police and other local authorities with which Boko Haram was increasingly at odds—prevailed until June 2009, when an altercation during a funeral procession quickly escalated into a full-fledge riot during which security forces opened fire and more than a dozen people were injured. A month later, a police raid on a Boko Haram safe house in neighboring Bauchi State led to reprisal attacks on police and five days of subsequent rioting which spread across Bauchi, Kano, Yobe, and Borno. In response, security forces besieged and stormed the group's mosque compound in Maiduguri. The violence finally petered out after Mohammed Yusuf was captured, beaten, interrogated, and finally shot—supposedly while attempting to escape—but not before more than 700 people were killed and numerous public buildings, including government offices, police stations, schools, and churches were destroyed. With most of its leaders as well as several prominent backers, including Buji Foi, the former Borno State religious affairs commissioners, dead, the group receded from public attention and a number of analysts even argued that it was hopelessly fractured, if not altogether finished.

Far from being dead, however, the group underwent a dramatic transformation, emerging in what might be described as its "version 2.0," "version 1.0" being the period up to the death of Muhammad Yusuf and Boko Haram's ostensible suppression. In retrospect, the first sign of this was a June 2010 Al Jazeera interview with Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud, a.k.a. Abdelmalek Droukdel, the emir of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The head of al Qaeda's North African franchise stated that his group would provide Boko Haram with weapons, training, and other support in order to expand its own reach into Sub-Saharan Africa in order not only to gain "strategic depth," but also to "defend Muslims in Nigeria and stop the advance of a minority of Crusaders."[8] At the time, this claim was widely dismissed, both because Droukdel was known for outsized ambitions and because he was having difficulties with the more dynamic southern commanders within AQIM.[9]

Shortly afterward, Mohammed Yusuf's former deputy, Abubakar bin Muhammad Shekau, who was thought to have been killed during the 2009 uprising, surfaced in a video that might be described as "classic al Qaeda." Wearing a headdress and framed by an AK-47 and a stack of religious books, Shekau proclaimed himself the new head of Boko Haram and promised vengeance: "Do not think jihad is over. Rather jihad has just begun."[10] Significantly, he threatened attacks not only against the Nigerian state, but also against "outposts of Western

[8] "Al Qaida Makes Move on Troubled Nigeria," UPI, June 17, 2010.

[9] J. Peter Pham, "Foreign Influences and Shifting Horizons: The Ongoing Evolution of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," *Orbis* 55, no. 2 (Spring 2011). See also J. Peter Pham, "The Dangerous 'Pragmatism' of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 2, no. 1 (January-June 2011).

[10] Nick Tattersall and William Maclean, "Nigerian Sect Leader Praises al Qaeda, Warns U.S.," Reuters, July 13, 2010.

culture." In a published manifesto, Shekau linked the jihad being fought by Boko Haram with the jihadist efforts globally, especially that of "the soldiers of Allah in the Islamic State of Iraq."

Two months later, in September 2010, Boko Haram fighters dramatically broke into a federal prison in Bauchi State and freed more than one hundred of their fellow members who had been awaiting trial since the previous year's uprising. In the process of the assault, involving bombs and automatic weapons, the militants also let out more than 750 other prisoners and scattered leaflets warning of further violence.

The latter was not long delayed. On Christmas Eve 2010, the group set off a string of seven improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Jos, Plateau State. The bombings, which targeted the town's Christian communities, left 80 dead and scores of others wounded. The group subsequently carried out a number of other attacks—mainly small IEDs thrown from moving vehicles or planted near targets in Maiduguri and Bauchi—aimed primarily at candidates in the 2011 elections it had denounced.

The elections, considered by Islamist hardliners to be a forbidden "innovation" (*bid'ah*) imposed by the West, were already contentious in that a significant number of Muslims, especially in the Northeast, deeply resented the candidacy of President Goodluck Jonathan, a southern Christian who had succeeded President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, a northern Muslim, after the latter's unexpected death in 2010. The decision by Jonathan to seek a full term in his own right upset the informal compact within the ruling People's Democratic Party whereby the presidency alternated every eight years between Christians, who dominate the southern part of the country, and Muslims who dominate the North.

Meanwhile, Boko Haram continued to target Muslim figures who opposed it, the mounting toll of victims including the brother of the Shehu of Borno, the traditional ruler of the Kanuri people of northeastern Nigeria, southeastern Niger, western Chad, and northern Cameroon; Ibrahim Ahmad Abdullahi Bolori, a prominent Maiduguri cleric who had criticized Boko Haram; and Ibrahim Birkuti, a cleric in southern Borno State who was also well-known for his criticisms of the sect.

On June 16, 2011, Boko Haram demonstrated a very significant and ominous tactical and operational upgrade in its capabilities when it launched a suicide attack using a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED). Believed to be the first suicide attack in Nigeria ever, the operation targeted the Inspector-General of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), whose convoy the terrorist followed into the NPF headquarters compound in the federal capital of Abuja. Security was able to detain the suspect vehicle, but the explosion nevertheless killed two bystanders and was large enough to destroy several dozen police vehicles parked nearby. In fact, the incident showed that far from being a spent force, Boko Haram had adopted one of the deadliest instruments in the jihadist arsenal. Moreover, it also demonstrated that the militant group was capable of carrying out attacks far from its usual areas of operation.

Interestingly, just two days before the attack in Abuja, Boko Haram had issued a statement in which it boasted ominously for the first time of ties to jihadists in Somalia: "Very soon, we will wage jihad... our jihadists have arrived in Nigeria from Somalia where they received real training on warfare from our brethren who made that country ungovernable."[11]

Two months later, on August 26—after having spent the interim carrying out more than a half dozen smaller attacks on government officials, establishments that serve alcohol, and churches—Boko Haram carried out another major attack, sending a suicide bomber with an explosives-laden car into the UN offices in Abuja. Twenty-five people were killed and at least 80 were wounded. This attack, the first by the group against an international target, as well as the video it subsequently released of the bomber offering praise to slain al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden and referring to the UN as a "forum of all global evil,"[12] put it squarely in the ranks of terrorists who have specifically targeted UN agencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Algeria.

After the attack on the UN, there was little let up in the violence, which has included a number of complex operations, including the November 4, 2011, assault on Damaturu, capital of Yobe State, which involved suicide attacks on various police stations followed by the massacre in the Christian quarter of the city which left 150 people dead; the 2011 Christmas morning bombing outside the Catholic church in Madalla, near Abuja, which killed at least 32 people as they exited Mass, and the four other explosions that went off that day across Nigeria; and the coordinated January 20, 2012, attacks in Kano, Nigeria's second-largest metropolis and the Muslim North's economic, political, and cultural hub, which left more than 185 people dead. The attacks in Damaturu and Madalla are consistent with the ultimatum the group has issued demanding that Christians leave northern Nigeria.

The year 2012 proved to be another significant milestone in Boko Haram's evolution. While foreign links were a critical part of Boko Haram's ideological and operational shift from "version 1.0" to the far more lethal "version 2.0",[13] the takeover of northern Mali by various AQIM-linked Islamist militant groups at the end of March 2012 provided a whole new set of opportunities.

In fact, evidence has emerged that during the nearly ten months in which AQIM and its various allies—including Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO)—

[11] "Nigerian Islamists Vow 'Fiercer' Attacks," AFP, June 15, 2011.

[12] "Nigeria UN Bomb: Video of "Boko Haram Bomber" Released," BBC, September 18, 2011.

[13] In addition to the previously mentioned links between Boko Haram and AQIM, there is the case of the Chadian-born Mamman Nur, at one time the third highest-ranking figure in Boko Haram's leadership behind Mohammed Yusuf and Abubakar Shekau, who, after Boko Haram members dispersed in the aftermath of the government crackdown in 2009, is believed to have gone to Somalia, where he and a small group of followers are thought to have received training in camps in territory controlled at that time by al-Shabaab and, presumably, forged links with various transnational jihadist networks before returning to Nigeria in early 2011. A January 2012 report by the United Nations noted that Boko Haram members had also received training in Mali the previous summer and that seven others were arrested in Niger with names and contact details of AQIM militants. See Adam Nossiter, "In Nigeria: A Deadly Group's Rage Has Local Roots," *New York Times*, February 26, 2012.

held sway over northern Mali,[14] Boko Haram was able to set up a number of bases in the territory where hundreds of its recruits received ideological instruction, weapons and other training that subsequently raised the tactical sophistication and operational tempo of Boko Haram's attacks in Nigeria, elevating the group to the level of a full-fledged insurgency. Following the French-led Operation Serval intervention in Mali, the Nigerian militants, possibly accompanied by a few foreign nationals they met during their sojourn there, returned to northern Nigeria not only with training and some combat experience in desert warfare, but also vehicles and heavy weapons, including shoulder-fired missiles. Within weeks, Boko Haram fighters were raiding military barracks for even more weapons, staging increasingly bold prison breaks, destroying numerous schools, hospitals, and other government buildings, engaging the Nigerian military in pitched open battles, and, in some cases, totally overrunning border towns. By the middle of 2013, the militants had effectively evicted Nigerian government troops and officials from at least ten local government areas along the borders of Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and set themselves up as the *de facto* authority in the region, replacing Nigerian flags with their own banner, taxing and otherwise ordering citizens about, and creating a large area within which they could operate with even greater impunity.[15]

The influence of foreign elements, especially AQIM, has also been witnessed in the proliferation of kidnappings-for-ransom in Nigeria—the abductions being almost a signature of AQIM over the years. The catalogue of kidnapping victims now have now come to include not only the schoolgirls from Chibok, but, previously, a French family of seven,[16] subsequently freed after the payment of a ransom reported to be $3 million and the release from Cameroonian prisons of some sixteen Boko Haram members[17]; a French priest, two Italian priests, and a Canadian nun, all of whom have likewise been freed; and, more recently, ten Chinese citizens abducted from a worksite in northern Cameroon last month and still missing.[18]

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[14] The Islamist forces were driven out—at least of the cities, towns, and other populated areas—by a French-led military beginning in January 2013.

[15] See Yusuf Alli, "Tension as Boko Haram Grounds 10 LGs in Borno," *The Nation*, April 20, 2013. The ten local government areas overrun at the time of this report--Marte, Magumeri, Mobbar, Gubio, Guzamala, Abadam, Kukawa, Kaga, Nganzai, and Monguno—have a combined area of nearly 33,500 square kilometers, slightly larger than that of the state of Maryland, and a population of some 1.5 million people. More than one year later, the militants still maintain sway over the territory.

[16] It is worth noting that, in a video released one month after the abduction of the French family, Abubakar Shekau justified the kidnapping by saying, "We are holding them hostage because the leaders of Cameroon and Nigeria detained our women and children under inhumane conditions"; see Hamza Idris, "Why We Abducted French Nationals—Shekau," *Daily Trust*, March 19, 2013. That Nigerian federal authorities subsequently released women and children it had detained, purportedly members of militants' families, showed that the claim was not without basis; see Chuks Okocha, Yemi Akinsuyi, Michael Olugbode, and Aminu Mohammed, "Boko Haram Amnesty…Women, Children Detainees to be Released First, Says FG," *This Day*, May 23, 2013.

[17] "Nigeria's Boko Haram 'got $3m ransom' to free hostages," BBC, April 26, 2013.

[18] Another favorite AQIM tactic—one which the North African group's *kata'ib* have used to deadly effect for years in Nigeria—is to dress up in stolen or purchased military uniforms and slaughter civilians. Boko Haram militants apparently used the tactic in several attacks on in the Gwoza district of Borno State last week which resulted in a death toll as high as 400 to 500 people.

Kidnapping for ransom—not only of higher-profile foreign nationals, but of hundreds, if not thousands, of Nigerians whose families have had to offer more modest payments, with most being reported to be in the order of $10,000 to $20,000, although more than $250,000 has been paid for more prominent abductees[19]—represent only a part of the funding stream for Boko Haram that appears to be rather diversified. As previously noted, the group enjoyed a partnership with state and local politicians as recently as six or seven years ago and, thanks to well-placed members, appears to have benefited from public resources. There is reason to believe that even after the uprising and suppression of the group in 2009, some political actors funneled resources to it, albeit for a slightly different calculus than the earlier politicians with which Mohammed Yusuf partnered. Some cells have also been accused of carrying out bank robberies and other such, although the extent to which these crimes were committed by and for the benefit of Boko Haram as opposed to being criminal acts blamed on the group is the subject of some debate. The two key aspects to bear in mind are that Boko Haram has developed a very diversified and resilient model of supporting itself and that, as it increasingly takes on more and more of the character of an insurgency, it can essentially "live off the land" with very modest additional resources required—both factors rendering efforts to cut off its funding challenging. On the other hand, in a region where more than two-thirds of the population lives on less than one U.S. dollar a day, the funding, no matter how modest, can go very far. For example, it is widely known that Boko Haram leaders pay *al-majiri* youth[20] literally pennies a day to track and report on troop movements as well as to transport weapons and other supplies for the militants.

Thus emerged the Boko Haram that Nigeria, its neighbors, and the international community confront today, what might be termed "version 3.0." In short:

(1) Boko Haram has grown increasingly virulent since 2009, reflecting significant transformations in capacity, tactics, and ideology.

(2) The group has expanded its links with al-Qaeda affiliates—although, *pace* some alarmists, Boko Haram is not so much an al-Qaeda affiliate as a "friend of a friend"—and possibly other violent non-state actors.

[19] In May 2013, approximately $320,000 was reportedly paid by the Borno State government to secure the release of onetime Nigerian oil minister Shettima Ali Monguno, an octogenarian who was kidnapped following prayers at his local mosque; see Ndahi Marama, "Kidnapped Monguno Regains Freedom after Payment of Ransom," *Vanguard*, May 7, 2013. Monguno's abduction was exceptional insofar as it broke with the generalized pattern whereby "virtually all the kidnapping victims were mid-level officials, or their relatives, who were not wealthy enough to have security details, but could afford modest ransoms"; see Jacob Zenn,"Boko Haram's Evolving Tactics and Alliances in Nigeria," *CTC Sentinel* 6, no. 6 (June 2013): 11.

[20] Derived from the Arabic for "migrants," the term refers millions of boys in northern Nigeria who beg alms for their Islamic teachers in return for shelter and Quranic lessons.

(3) The impact of Boko Haram's violence has burgeoned in recent years to the extent that it is now estimated that it has displaced more than 300,000 people and affected millions of others.

(4) In contrast to earlier periods, the group now appears not only capable, but willing to exercise control over not insignificant swathes of territory, metastasizing in the process into some closer to a classic guerrilla insurgency, in geopolitical effect if not in tactics or doctrine.

(5) Support for Boko Haram—whether proactive, or tacit and based on a lack enthusiasm for the government[21]—among some of Nigeria's marginalized Muslim communities suggests that security measures alone will be insufficient to overcome what has become a regional challenge.

Confronting Boko Haram

A comprehensive strategy is required to respond to the burgeoning threat posed by Boko Haram, some elements of which would include:

Invest in better information and analysis. Despite the importance of Nigeria and the significance of the challenge it faces, what is actually known and reported is still amazingly limited. Some of the analysis in recent years could, at best, be described as wishful thinking (such as the frequently reported, but never confirmed, divisions within Boko Haram between those followers of the slain Mohammed Yusuf who want to focus on the transformation of Nigeria into their version of a *shari'a*-compliant state and those who believe that the state must first be brought down) or exaggerated (such as the fissure between Boko Haram and the *Jama'atu Ansaril Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan* splinter group, better known as "Ansaru"). And these differences in judgment reflect the opinion of only a handful of agencies and analysts, since very few bothered, until very recently, to even examine the group.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to again raise the issue of the lack of any American diplomatic presence in Nigeria north of Abuja, despite the fact that idea of a consular post in Kano has been kicked around for years. As former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria John Campbell and I argued earlier this year, beefed up diplomatic capabilities would enable the United States to make friends and build networks precisely in case more robust future engagement in the region becomes necessary.[22]

[21] In fact, research by some human rights organizations seems to indicate that the heavy-handed tactics of Nigerian security forces—including extrajudicial killings of suspected militants or even ordinary citizens in communities attacked by Boko Haram, arbitrary and mass arrests followed by mistreatment of detainees held for long stretches without trial, and other abuses—have actually fueled Boko Haram's campaign of violence. See, for example, the October 11, 2012, report by Human Rights Watch, *Spiraling Violence: Boko Haram Attacks and Security Force Violence in Nigeria*.

[22] J. Peter Pham and John Campbell, *Does Washington Have a Stake in the Sahel?*, Council on Foreign Relations

Moreover, the Nigerian federal and state governments need to do more to build relationships with one another and with the local communities in and around which Boko Haram operates if they are to acquire the type of actionable intelligence needed to prevent future attacks—and the first step in forging those relationships is, as in any counterinsurgency, providing basic security to the civilian population. It should be noted, as the evidence from the Chibok kidnapping seems to sadly indicate, that the problem is not only lack of intelligence, although this is admittedly a significant challenge. There must also be a willingness to act on the information received. In Chibok, there seems to have been forewarning of the attack, if not necessarily all the information on the specific objectives of the assault, but state and local officials, for whatever reasons, failed to take appropriate measures to protect the town in general and the school in particular.

Encourage the Nigerian government to deal forthrightly with the threat. Over the years the somewhat lackadaisical attitude that senior Nigerian officials have taken toward Boko Haram has been perplexing given that the group has made no secret of its goal, however unrealistic, of bringing down the Nigerian state itself. Yet the late President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua left for a state visit to Brazil right in the middle of the 2009 uprising and, only upon his return, set up a commission of inquiry. There are troubling indications—including Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan's failure nearly two months after the kidnapping of the girls to yet visit the scene of the crime and this past week's half-hour-long interview with Stephen Sackur on BBC's "Hard Talk" by tin-eared presidential senior advisor Oyin Okupe—that lack of engagement is still a problem.

It should also be noted that not only has the Nigerian military been largely ineffectual in its efforts to contain—much less, crush—the burgeoning insurgency, the very military unit now spearheading the fight against Boko Haram after the much-criticized Joint Task Force was disbanded last year, the Nigerian army's 7th Division, is so dysfunctional that just last month its soldiers opened fire on their commanding general.[23] Consequently the officer in question was removed and the division got its fourth commander since the beginning of the year—a turnover rate that hardly conducive to strategic and operational continuity.

Worse still have been instances of actual complicity with the militants. President Jonathan has even acknowledged that the militants have sympathizers or enablers throughout the government, "some of them are in the executive arm of government, some of them are in the parliamentary/legislative arm of government, while some of them are even in the judiciary."[24]

Expert Brief, January 14, 2014.

[23] In just one incident involving the 7th Division, an attempt in March 2014 by Boko Haram to free prisoners being kept by the military unit at the Giwa Barracks in Maiduguri, resulted in more than five hundred people, including attackers, detainees (Boko Haram and otherwise), and innocent bystanders being killed by soldiers. See Amnesty International, *Nigeria: More than 1,500 Killed in Armed Conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria in Early 2014*, March 31, 2014/

[24] "Nigeria's Goodluck Jonathan: Officials Back Boko Haram," BBC, January 8, 2012.

The motivations behind this complicity are, undoubtedly, complex and run the gamut from political opportunism and/or cynicism to corruption to social, ethnic, and perhaps even familial ties to the militants to, perhaps most concerning of all, ideological sympathy with Boko Haram's extremist agenda.

While one is encouraged by reports in recent days that some fifteen senior Nigerian military officers, including ten generals, were under arrest for allegedly helping Boko Haram by giving information on troop movements, allowing soldiers under their command to fight with the militants, and even supplying arms to the extremists, that such officers may exist at all is unsettling.[25]

In any event, if the escalating scale of the attacks failed to shake the Nigerian government out of its seeming complacency, the global social-media phenomenon of the #BringBackOurGirls campaign may have done the trick, not only raising awareness of the plight of the schoolgirls, but in focusing much-needed attention on the burgeoning threat posed by the Islamist group and shaming authorities in Nigeria into asking for the help they have long needed. Of course, it remains to be seen whether this attitude reverts to the previous "default position" once the news cycle shifts anew.

Address Legitimate Grievances. At the same time, confronting Boko Haram will require that the government carefully measure its response. Ham-fisted security operations like the "Operation Flush" security sweeps in the northern part of the country have succeeded in little except to further inflame public opinion against the government. The government must also better address the many legitimate grievances which have rendered meaningful segments of the population in the North amenable to the militant group's message about overturning the status quo in Nigeria. Frustrations with living conditions are particularly keenly felt in northern Nigeria, where the proportion of the population living below the poverty level is between two and three times the rate in the South. Dramatic action is needed to end corruption, build a more inclusive government, alleviate poverty and lack of access to healthcare, expand access to education, and create a transportation, utilities, and communications infrastructure capable of sustaining economic growth for Nigeria's nearly 180 million people.

Promote specialized training for Nigerian security forces. Undoubtedly the Nigerian security forces, both military and police, could use some assistance in the fight against Boko Haram. However, the need is less a matter of personnel and equipment than training, especially in intelligence and investigations. With a defense budget of approximately $6 billion, Nigeria does not want for material resources, although corruption and lack of maintenance both take their toll: one of the reasons the United States recently had to deploy an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to Chad to overfly northern Nigeria looking for the schoolgirls is because none of the Aerostar tactical drones the West African country purchased for millions of dollars from Israel

[25] Robert Marquand, "Nigeria Has Arrested 10 Generals for Aiding Boko Haram," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 4, 2014.

several years ago are currently operational for want of basic upkeep.[26]

Due caution should be exercised to maintain the lightest possible international footprint lest this support itself become an issue that militants can exploit—to say nothing of other risks, legal and strategic, in foreign partners being themselves tainted by, if not altogether rendered complicit in, the rather poor human rights record of the large segments of the Nigerian military. The State Department's human rights report for Nigeria last year, to cite just one document, while acknowledging that "the most serious human rights abuses during the year were those committed by Boko Haram, also makes note of a number of "arbitrary or unlawful killings" by Nigerian security forces and is quite critical of what it describes as "summary executions, assaults, torture, and other abuses" which have characterized their operations against Boko Haram. It should be noted that, despite persistent and well-documented reports of human rights violations over the last few years, the Nigerian authorities have yet to muster the political will to seriously investigate the allegations, much less bring perpetrators to justice.

That being said, tailored efforts that meet current vetting requirements can help Nigerian forces strengthen their civil-military affairs capabilities to facilitate interactions between military forces and civilians, especially in the North. We know how to carefully vet potential military personnel for training even under the most difficult of circumstances, as my Atlantic Council Africa Center colleague Sean McFate both demonstrated in the security-sector reform of Liberia a decade ago in the wake of a civil war that took the lives of nearly a tenth of the population and recounted in his study last year for the U.S. Army War College.[27] The question is whether we have the strategic vision, patience, and commitment to do so. One presumes that the new 650-man Ranger Battalion that U.S. Army Africa (USARAF) has begun training meets the requisite standards and hopes that its record over time will reflect the benefits not only of the tactical and operation training, but the ethos which America's men and women in uniform bring to their calling.

Strengthen regional cooperation and the capacity of neighboring countries. Boko Haram has used Nigeria's porous borders and the limited capacities of neighboring countries to its advantage. Regional efforts, such as the United States' sponsored Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) that supports small mobile training teams, civil-military engagements, and development programming should be specifically adapted to the challenges posed by shifting Boko Haram operations. Greater cooperation and intelligence sharing between states in the region need to be encouraged and facilitated by international partners. In this regard, the regional summit in Paris last month is a step in the right direction.

It should also be borne in mind that threat of Boko Haram is both heightened by and, in turn, magnifies the significance of other jihadist activities in the Sahel, including the situation in northern Mali, which has worsened in recent weeks, and the resurgence of Mokhtar

[26] "Nigeria's Neglected Israeli Drones Can't Help Find Missing Girls," *Ha'aretz*, May 20, 2014.

[27] Sean McFate, *Building Better Armies: An Insider's Account of Liberia* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, 2013).

Belmokhtar's AQIM splinter group and its merger with MUJAO as *al-Murabitun* ("the sentinels") and the new group's activities in some of Nigeria's West African neighbors, many of whom have exceptionally limited military and law enforcement capability to secure their borders or respond to extremist threats, even if their leaders do not necessary labor under the dysfunctional politics bedeviling their Nigerian counterparts. In point of fact, some neighbors—I would single out Niger[28]—have demonstrated not only strong political will to battle militants, but also to forthrightly confront internal conditions which would otherwise be exploited by them. The United States has worked with several of these partners through programs such as the TSCTP and should continue to do so, expanding it as need arises and circumstances permit (as was the case with Cameroon's joining earlier this year).

Conclusion

Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Bass, Distinguished Members of the Subcommittee:

With all this in mind, permit me to conclude by citing the prudent norm embraced by President Obama in the 2012 *U.S. Strategy toward Sub-Saharan Africa*: "Addressing the opportunities and challenges in Africa requires a comprehensive U.S. policy that is proactive, forward-looking, and that balances our long-term interests with near-term imperatives."

In the current situation, the desire to bring as fast as possible the trauma of the kidnapped girls to a happy end and, if possible, their abductors to justice, is understandable. However, we should be forthright in acknowledging that current strategic and budgetary constraints limit U.S. resources available for commitments abroad in general and Africa in particular, and policymakers consequently need to carefully husband resources, prioritize engagements, and rely on complicated (and often messy) compromises in order to resolve conflicts and secure outcomes America can live with. While up to now there is no conflict between the "action" demanded by social-media campaigners and other activists and the broader regional interests of the United States, the virtues of prudent statecraft are inherently in tension with the black-and-white, awareness-raising ethos of impassioned advocacy. The measured response of the administration, especially the steps taken by components of the Department of Defense acting under the National Command Authority, has so far been appropriate to the strategic and operational realities on the ground. But what next?

While nothing justifies the outrageous kidnapping of the Nigerian schoolgirls and every realistic effort should be expended to secure their freedom, there is no denying that a complex web of legitimate political, economic, and social grievances have rendered significant segments of the population in northern Nigeria amenable to Boko Haram's radical message, if not the militants'

[28] See J. Peter Pham, "Niger Needs More than Drones," *New Atlanticist*, February 25, 2013. Over the years, Niger has arrest a number of Boko Haram militants who crossed over its border, leading to a June 2013 prison break by the group to free its members. As recently as early May, a Nigerien military unit was ambushed Boko Haram militants near the southeastern city of Diffa, not far from where the U.S.-led "Flintlock 2014" regional military exercise was conducted less than two months early.

methods. Until the profound pathologies which beset the body politic and institutions of Africa's most populous and wealthiest country are addressed, it is well-nigh inevitable that the tragedy of the Chibok schoolgirls will, sadly, be repeated many times over.[29]

Consequently, as the strategy document noted, we must balance our near-term objectives with a policy approach that is sustainable over the long term and that requires not only resolve and patience, but also a commitment to be comprehensive of all the factors involved and to embrace all the values—legal and ethical, American and universal—which are at stake in this struggle.

[29] Just two days ago, suspected Boko Haram militants kidnapped twenty women from a nomadic settlement at Garkin Fulani, not far from Chibok, forcing the women to get into trucks that took them to an unknown location. See Haruna Umar, "Boko Haram Suspected as 20 Women Abducted in Northeastern Nigeria," Associated Press, June 9, 2014.