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Lauren Ploch is a Specialist in African Affairs with the Congressional Research Service (CRS), where she provides nonpartisan analysis on African political, military and diplomatic affairs, and on U.S. policy in the region, to Members of Congress, congressional committees, and congressional staff. She has written extensively on security issues and U.S. military engagement on the continent. She speaks regularly at academic institutions and international policy fora in the United States and abroad and has testified before Congress on U.S. security interests and military efforts in Africa.

Lauren has conducted training in various countries, including Cameroon, Kenya, Liberia, and South Africa for African parliamentarians and other government officials on the policymaking role of the United States Congress and on the role of parliamentary research institutions like CRS. She has also served as an international election observer in several African countries. Prior to joining CRS, she managed democracy support initiatives in East and Southern Africa, where she coordinated governance programs funded by USAID, the State Department, and the National Endowment for Democracy. During that time, she supervised and conducted training on political party and coalition strengthening, parliamentary support, civil society capacity building, women's leadership development, and public opinion research. She also consulted on constitutional reform efforts in Kenya and the development of democratic institutions in Southern Sudan. Previously, Lauren served as Legislative Assistant in the United States Senate.