



**Atlantic Council**

AFRICA CENTER

Prepared Statement of

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before the

**United States House of Representatives**

**Committee on Homeland Security**

**Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence**

on

**“Terrorism in Africa:  
The Imminent Threat to the United States”**

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**Cannon House Office Building, Room 311**

**Washington, D.C.**

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

I would like to begin by thanking you not only for the specific opportunity to testify before you today on the subject of terrorism in Africa, but also for the sustained attention the United States House of Representatives has, in general, given to this challenge. In its oversight capacity, the House has been very much ahead of the curve over the course of the last decade and half and it has been my singular privilege to have contributed, however modestly, to the effort.

It was at a 2005 briefing organized by the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation of the then-Committee on International Relations, that al-Shabaab was first

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mentioned as a threat not only to the security of Somalia, but also to the wider East Africa region and, indeed, the United States.

The following spring, a joint hearing of the same Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation and the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights, and International Operations first raised the alarm about the expanding crisis in the Horn of Africa occasioned by the takeover of Somalia by Islamist forces, including al-Shabaab.

And, of course, it was this esteemed Subcommittee on Intelligence and Counterterrorism of the Committee on Homeland Security that, in 2011, convened the very first congressional hearing on Boko Haram in 2011, at which I also had the privilege of testifying. 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 as some dismissively suggested that it would, Boko Haram went on to pose an even greater menace, not only to Nigeria and its people, but to their neighbors in West Africa as well as to international security writ large.

In each of these cases and, indeed, others that could be cited, there is a recurring trope that emerges time and again: terrorism in Africa generally gets short shrift and, when attention is focused on specific groups or situations that appear to be emerging challenges, the threat is either dismissed entirely or minimized—until tragedy strikes. Thus the Congress and the American people were assured ten years ago by the “conventional wisdom” of experts, both inside and outside government, that the Union of Islamic Courts, of which al-Shabaab was the armed wing, was a “law-and-order” group; similarly, five years ago the same analysts were virtually unanimous in their conviction that al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) was more of a criminal racket than a “real” terrorist organization; and, in this very room less than four years ago, this panel was told by some witnesses that Boko Haram was some sort of misunderstood social-justice movement that should not be put on the foreign terrorist organization list.

### **Background on Terrorism in Africa**

It is worth recalling that Africa had been a theater for terrorist operations, including those directed against the United States, long before the attacks of September 11, 2001, on the homeland focused attention on what had hitherto been regions seemingly peripheral to the strategic landscape, at least as most American policymakers and analysts perceived it. In 1973, Palestine Liberation Organization terrorists acting on orders from Yasir Arafat murdered U.S. Ambassador to Sudan Cleo A. Noel, Jr., and his deputy, George Curtis Moore, as well as the Belgian chargé d’affaires and two Saudi diplomats. In 1998, there were the coordinated bombings of the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and Nairobi, Kenya, which killed 224 people—including 12 Americans—and wounded some 5,000 others. And these were just

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the more notorious acts of *international* terrorism. If one takes as a definition of terrorism the broadly accepted description offered by the United Nations General Assembly one year after the East Africa bombings—“criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes”—terrorism can be said to be widespread in Africa, although it has largely been a *domestic*, rather than transnational, affair. However, just because the majority of actors and the incidents they are responsible for are domestic to African countries does not mean that they cannot and do not evolve into international threats when, in fact, that is the trajectory many, if not most, aspire to and which quite a few have indeed succeeded in achieving.

The first post-9/11 iteration of the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, released a year after the attacks on the American homeland, raised the specter that “weak states...can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions, and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders” (The White House 2002).<sup>1</sup> Extremism, however, requires opportunity if it is to translate radical intentionality into terrorist effect. A decade ago, one leading African security analyst succinctly summarized the situation in the following manner:

The opportunity targets presented by peacekeepers, aid and humanitarian workers, donors and Western NGOs active in the continent are lucrative targets of subnational terrorism and international terrorism. Africa is also replete with potentially much higher value targets ranging from the massive oil investments (often by U.S. companies) in the Gulf of Guinea to the burgeoning tourist industry in South Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Thus there is a very real terrorist risk to U.S. persons and interests—a risk that is increasing with time if one looks at its three constituent elements: threat, the frequency or likelihood of adverse events; vulnerability, the likelihood of success of a particular threat category against a particular target; and cost, the total impact of a particular threat experienced by a vulnerable target, including both the “hard costs” of actual damages and the “soft costs” to production, the markets, etc. In short, the combination of these three factors—threat, vulnerability, and cost—raises considerably the overall risk assessment in Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent iteration of the *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, released February 6, 2015, couched the country’s strategic objectives in Africa largely in terms of broader development goals, rather than traditional security concerns which were emphasized in earlier documents: “Africa is rising. Many countries in Africa are making steady progress in growing their economies, improving democratic governance and rule of law, and supporting human rights and basic freedoms. Urbanization and a burgeoning youth population are changing the region’s demographics, and young people are increasingly making their voices heard. But there are still many countries where the transition to democracy is uneven and slow with some leaders clinging to power. Corruption is endemic and public health systems are broken in too many places. And too many governments are responding to the expansion of civil society and free press by passing laws and adopting policies that erode that progress. Ongoing conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the Central African Republic, as well as violent extremists fighting governments in Somalia, Nigeria, and across the Sahel all pose threats to innocent civilians, regional stability, and our national security.”

<sup>2</sup> Jakkie Cilliers, “Terrorism and Africa,” *African Security Review* 12, no. 4 (2003): 100.

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And this point is not lost upon those who wish us harm. Dating back to at least the period when Osama bin Laden himself found refuge in Sudan, the leading strategists of Islamist terrorism have speculated about the potential opportunities to establish cells, recruit members, obtain financing, and find safe haven offered by the weak governance capacities and other vulnerabilities of African states. In fact, it has been noted that al-Qaeda's first act against the United States came several years before the embassy bombings when it attempted to insert itself in the fight against the American-led humanitarian mission in Somalia. Moreover, one of the most systematic expositions of the particular allure of the continent to terrorists came from al-Qaeda's online magazine, *Sada al-Jihad* ("Echo of Jihad"). The June 2006 issue of that publication featured an article by one Abu Azzam al-Ansari entitled "Al-Qaeda is Moving to Africa," in which the author asserted:

There is no doubt that al-Qaeda and the holy warriors appreciate the significance of the African regions for the military campaigns against the Crusaders. Many people sense that this continent has not yet found its proper and expected role and the next stages of the conflict will see Africa as the battlefield.

With a certain analytical rigor, Abu Azzam then proceeded to enumerate and evaluate what he perceived to be significant advantages to al-Qaeda shifting terrorist operations to Africa, including: the fact that jihadist doctrines have already been spread within the Muslim communities of many African countries; the political and military weakness of African governments; the wide availability of weapons; the geographical position of Africa vis-à-vis international trade routes; the proximity to old conflicts against "Jews and Crusaders" in the Middle East as well as new ones like Darfur, where the author almost gleefully welcomed the possibility of Western intervention; the poverty of Africa which "will enable the holy warriors to provide some finance and welfare, thus, posting there some of their influential operatives"; the technical and scientific skills that potential African recruits would bring to the jihadist cause; the presence of large Muslim communities, including ones already embroiled conflict with Christians or adherents of traditional African religions; the links to Europe through North Africa "which facilitates the move from there to carry out attacks"; and the fact that Africa has a wealth of natural resources, including hydrocarbons and other raw materials, which are "very useful for the holy warriors in the intermediate and long term." Abu Azzam concluded his assessment by sounding an ominous note:

In general, this continent has an immense significance. Whoever looks at Africa can see that it does not enjoy the interest, efforts, and activity it deserves in the war against the Crusaders. This is a continent with many potential advantages and exploiting this potential will greatly advance the jihad. It will promote achieving the expected targets of Jihad. Africa is a fertile soil for the advance of jihad and the *jihadi* cause.

In retrospect, it was clearly a mistake for many to have dismissed Abu Azzam's analysis as devoid of operational effect. Shortly before the publication of the article, the Islamic Courts Union, an Islamist movement whose leaders included a number of figures linked to al-Qaeda,

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seized control of the sometime Somali capital of Mogadishu and subsequently overran most of the country. While intervention by neighboring Ethiopia in late December 2006 dislodged the Islamists, Somalia’s internationally-recognized but otherwise ineffective “Transitional Federal Government” failed to make much headway in the face of a burgeoning insurgency spearheaded by al-Shabaab, which started out as an armed wing of the Islamic Courts. Until very recently, al-Shabaab dominated wide swathes of Somali territory and operated more or less freely in other areas not under their *de facto* control—with the exception of the autonomous Somaliland and Puntland regions in the north. And despite the setbacks that it has suffered in more recent times in terms of territorial losses to the internationally-backed African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and leaders eliminated by U.S. airstrikes or Special Operations Forces, al-Shabaab nonetheless was formally accepted by Osama bin Laden’s successor Ayman al-Zawahiri as an affiliate of al-Qaeda in 2012 and, as the horrific attack on Garissa University College in Kenya earlier this month reminded us, is still very much a lethal force to be reckoned with.

Another al-Qaeda “franchise” has sought to reignite conflict in Algeria and spread it to the Sahel, the critical boundary region where Sub-Saharan Africa meets North Africa and where vast empty spaces and highly permeable borders are readily exploitable by local and international militants alike both as a base for recruitment and training and as a conduit for the movement of personnel and materiel. In 2006, after years of decline during which they had been squeezed by intense pressure from the outside while beset by defections from within, members of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (known by its French acronym, GSPC) formally pledged allegiance to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda and began identifying themselves in communiqués as “Al-Qaeda Organization in the Islamic Maghreb” (AQIM). Following its “rebranding” as an affiliate of al-Qaeda in 2006, AQIM expanded southward from Algeria, using the prestige of its new association to recruit “a considerable number of Mauritians, Libyans, Moroccans, Tunisians, Malians, and Nigerians,” as its emir bragged in a 2008 interview he gave to the *New York Times*. AQIM’s shift beyond the limits of its Algerian origins proved not just a geographical move, but also an operational transformation, with the group acquiring both new tactics and new allies to implement them. Evidence subsequently emerged of AQIM’s increasing involvement in the burgeoning drug traffic transiting the group’s new operational areas in the Sahel, in addition to its well-honed kidnappings for ransoms.

The potential for the Sahel region being the setting for an explosive mix of Islamist terrorism, secular grievances, and criminality was underscored in early 2012 in Mali. What started as a rebellion by the disaffected Tuareg population led to the overthrow of state authority in the country’s three northernmost provinces with a combined territory the size of France and, following the marginalization of the ethnic separatists by their erstwhile Islamist partners, the entire area falling under the sway of AQIM and several allied groups. Only a timely French-led military intervention in early 2013 forestalled the total collapse of the Malian state, although again, the situation remains fragile as the suicide attack just ten days ago on United Nations peacekeepers, which left at least a dozen people dead, underscored.

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And while transnational terrorist challenges have been the preoccupation of America’s policymakers, intelligence analysts, and military planners, most African governments are more concerned with the threat of “domestic terrorism,” cases which rarely receive much attention in the Western media.<sup>3</sup> The emphasis is less on transnational phenomena and more on acts confined within national boundaries and involving neither targets abroad nor foreign agents. Consequently, lack of both government capacity and social and economic opportunity, on top of political, ethnic, and religious tensions, makes many in Africa potential candidates for radicalization.

### **Current Terrorist Threats**

At present, there are four geographical areas of particular concern in Africa with respect to terrorist groups and their activities: North Africa, the Sahel, Nigeria, and East Africa. Having already discussed the first two areas, I will concentrate primarily on the second two as well as mention some emerging concerns.

**North Africa.** The Maghreb is home to some of the longest-running terrorist campaigns on the African continent. More recently, however, the mix has become all the more combustible with the emergence of three “provinces” aligned with the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) amid the disintegration of Libya, alongside preexisting groups like AQIM and others like *Ansar al-Sharia* (“Partisans of Islamic Law”) which emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Muammar Gaddafi regime and took part in the September 2012 attack on the U.S. diplomatic compound in Benghazi, Libya, that killed U.S. Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other American diplomatic and intelligence officials. The brutal murder in February of twenty Coptic Christians from Egypt along with a Christian from Ghana by ISIL’s Libyan cohorts as well as the execution this month of approximately thirty Ethiopian Christians highlights the malevolence of the witch’s brew that has been allowed to simmer in the region. In addition, the videography of the slaughter of the Christians on the very shores of the Mediterranean Sea only emphasizes—as, no doubt, the terrorists intended—the threat posed not only to the vital, but narrow, sea lanes, but the proximity of the violence to Europe itself.

Fortunately, commensurate with the challenges in this region, the international community also has solid allies with which to work on not just combatting terrorism, but countering its extremist roots. Notable among these partners is Morocco, whose aggressive, multipronged

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<sup>3</sup> Most African states are parties to the former Organization of African Unity’s 1999 Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism which defines “terrorism” as: “Any act which is a violation of the criminal laws of a State Party and which may endanger the life, physical integrity or freedom of, or cause serious injury or death to, any person, any number of group of persons or causes or may cause damage to public or private property, natural resources, environmental or cultural heritage and is calculated to: (i) intimidate, put in fear, force, coerce or induce any government, body, institution, the general public or any segment thereof, to do or to abstain from doing any act, or to adopt or abandon a particular standpoint, or to act according to certain principles; or (ii) disrupt any public service, the delivery of any essential service to the public or to create a public emergency; or (iii) create a general insurrection in a State” (art. 1 §3 a).

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approach has much to commend it as does the kingdom’s efforts to assist other countries in North and West Africa to fight radicalization. The signing during last year’s U.S.-Africa Leaders Summit of a U.S.-Morocco Framework for Cooperation aimed at developing Moroccan training experts as well as jointly training civilian security and counterterrorism forces with other partners in the Maghreb and the Sahel recognizes the potential of this “triangular” approach.

**The Sahel.** In many respects, the belt connecting North Africa and West Africa, stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea and straddling ancient trade and migration routes, is an ideal environment for extremist groups with transnational ambitions. The region is strategically important for several reasons, including its role as a bridge between the Arab Maghreb and black Sub-Saharan Africa as well as its important natural resources, both renewable and nonrenewable. Moreover, the Sahel touches several countries—including Algeria, Nigeria, and Sudan—with serious security challenges of their own that could easily spill over their borders. In fact, some scholars have argued that the Sahara and the Sahel form “a single space of movement” which, for purposes of the geography of terrorism, “should be considered as a continuum, something that the territorial approach of states and geopolitics prevents us from understanding”<sup>4</sup>—a point which policymakers and analysts would do well to take to heart.

In point of fact, not only has the Sahel been the conduit for arms, fighters, and ideologies flowing back and forth across the Sahara, but it has emerged as a battlespace in its own right with the takeover of northern Mali in 2012 and the ongoing fight against Islamist militants there as well as in Mauritania, Niger, and back into southern Libya. A number of international figures, not least United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, have underscored that that “the rise of instability and insecurity in and around the Sahel” and the risk of “spillover” from the fighting in Mali could turn some of the region’s “frozen conflicts” like the dispute over the Western Sahara into a “ticking time bomb.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, crossovers between groups like the separatist Polisario Front and terrorist groups have already been witnessed during recent conflicts in the region, such as in the instances of the former providing AQIM’s allies in northern Mali with both fighters and, in one notorious case, an Italian and two Spanish hostages to trade for ransom. Moreover, at the end of 2013, the U.S. State Department was declaring that the merger of Mokhtar Belmokhtar’s AQIM splinter group, the *al-Mulathamun* (“those who sign in blood”) Battalion, with MUJAO to form a new group, *al-Murabitoun* (“people of the garrison”), constituted “the greatest near-term threat to U.S. and Western interests”<sup>6</sup> in the region.

**Nigeria.** While the West African giant has demonstrated over the decades an almost legendary capacity to absorb violence, the reemergence in 2010 of the militant group *Boko Haram* (“Western education is forbidden”) and its increasing virulence—reflecting major

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<sup>4</sup> Olivier Walther and Denis Retaille, *Sahara or Sahel? The Fuzzy Geography of Terrorism in West Africa* (Luxembourg: CEPS/INSTEAD, 2010), 11.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, quoted in Tim Witcher, “Ban says Western Sahara Risks being Drawn into Mali War,” Agence France-Presse, April 9, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of State, Office of the Spokesperson, Terrorist Designation of the al-Mulathamun Battalion, December 18, 2013.

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transformations in capacity, tactics, and ideology—has nonetheless been a cause for concern, not least because its attacks last year alone left more than 10,000 people dead across northern and central Nigeria and displaced at least 1.5 million others. Nevertheless, in that short period of just under five years, Boko Haram has gone from a small militant group focused on localized concerns and using relatively low levels of violence to a significant terrorist organization with a clearer jihadist ideology to a major insurgency seizing and holding large swathes of territory. More recently, it even started what might well be another shift with its pledge of allegiance to the so-called Islamic State, although the result of this latest evolution is not altogether clear given the success to date of the ongoing military campaign launched in early 2015 against the group by the Nigerian armed forces and their regional partners.

Boko Haram’s merger with the so-called Islamic State does not appear have much immediate impact on the battlefield. The different social and political contexts in which each operates and the vast geographical distance separating the two groups means that each will have to face its foes with little more than moral support from each other, notwithstanding some evidence of collaboration in cyberspace and in terms of media production. And, in fact, in the two weeks after it was accepted into the Islamic State’s fold, Boko Haram, or *Wilāyat al Sūdān al Gharbī* (“[Islamic State] Province in the Land of the Blacks”) or the “Islamic State West Africa Province” (ISWAP) as it started to style itself, lost control of most of the towns and other areas that it was holding, with Gwoza, the headquarters of Abubakar Shekau’s aspiring Islamic state, being retaken by Nigerian troops on the very eve of the country’s national elections.

Of course, Boko Haram’s affiliation with ISIL could lead to the internationalization of a threat that has up to now largely been confined geographically. There is the risk that fighters from North Africa and other areas finding it harder to migrate to the self-proclaimed caliphate’s territory in the Levant, may well choose to move to the Boko Haram emirate instead. ISIL spokesman Abu Mohammad al-Adnani, in his communiqué accepting the Nigerian group’s allegiance on behalf of his leader, said as much, telling Muslims who could not get to Syria or Iraq that “a new door for you to migrate to the land of Islam and fight” had opened in Africa. In fact, the international support recently pouring in for the multinational African anti-Boko Haram force from the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and others may render the Nigerian militants’ fight all the more attractive to these aspiring foreign jihadists. On the other hand, Boko Haram’s success as a movement has largely been the result of its denunciations of the Nigerian political elites resonating with many ordinary citizens as well as its ethnic appeal to the Kanuri population in particular, both of which advantages could be lost if it becomes merely another “province” of a far-flung “Islamic State” focused on a broader jihadist agenda.

Another possible course of evolution for Boko Haram is also hinted at by ISIL’s *Dabiq* publication in its special issue, published just this month, heralding the allegiance of the Nigerian group. In the issue, whose cover was emblazoned with the headline “Shari’ah Alone Will Rule Africa,” the announcement of the tidings contained multiple references to “Christians” being “terrorized” and “captured and enslaved” by Boko Haram and allegations that Nigeria’s “large population of hostile crusaders” had “not shied away from massacring the



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Muslims of West Africa”—rhetoric aimed at stoking conflict along sectarian lines. It certainly points to a possible new operational emphasis for a militarily weakened militant group.

**East Africa.** East Africa has been not only a region which hosted Osama bin Laden and the then still-nascent al-Qaeda in the early 1990s, but also the setting for the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi as well as of an Israeli-owned hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, and, simultaneously, a near-miss attack on an Israeli commercial airliner in 2002—all carried out by the terrorist network. But it is Somalia’s al-Shabaab which has been the primary terrorist threat in the region. Founded in large part due to the efforts of Aden Hashi Ayro, a militant who had trained with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan in the 1990s, al-Shabaab began its existence as one of several armed wings of an Islamist movement, the Islamic Courts Union, which gradually gained control over most of southern and central Somalia in early 2006. Following the rout of the Islamic Courts Union by an Ethiopian military intervention in early 2007, al-Shabaab emerged as the spearhead of the internationally-supported Transitional Federal Government (TFG), which was then installed in Mogadishu for the first time.

Benefiting from the TFG’s lack of legitimacy and general incompetence and corruption, al-Shabaab eventually managed to seize control of large sections of southern and central Somalia, including parts of Mogadishu, where it installed a brutal Islamist regime that, to the horror of many Somalis, carried out a number of harsh punishments on alleged malefactors even as it set up multi-million dollar rackets. Over time, the group has shifted its emphasis from a purely local focus on driving out foreign forces—first the Ethiopians and, subsequently, the AMISOM force propping up the TFG—to an increasingly transnational agenda, as evidenced both by its rhetoric and by a twin bombing in Kampala, Uganda, in July 2010, during the FIFA World Cup final match, which left 74 people dead and scores injured.

The adoption of an effective counterinsurgency strategy by more recent commanders of the African Union force as well as al-Shabaab’s own blunders have, since the beginning of 2011, led to the group being gradually pushed out of Mogadishu, Kismayo, and other urban centers it long held. Consequently, al-Shabaab shifted its focus, with its longstanding formal proclamations of its adherence to al-Qaeda being accepted by bin Laden’s successor, who enrolled it as a formal affiliate in early 2012. With the Kenyan military intervention in Somalia in late 2011—itself a response to cross-border raids by Somali militants—and increasing ethnic and religious tensions within the former country between the ethnic Somalis and other largely Muslim minorities and larger, predominantly Christian, population groups, there is increasing risk of al-Shabaab capitalizing on the disaffection to gain greater entrée than it already enjoys. In fact, the attack on the Westgate shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in September 2013, which killed 67 people and wounded nearly 200 others, and the attack at the beginning of this month on Garissa University College, which left 148 victims dead and 79 wounded, were just the most notorious assaults by al-Shabaab. Between the two attacks, the terrorists have been responsible for at least sixty attacks in just Kenya alone.

Thus, while the group has suffered significant setbacks as a military force as well as lost a

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number of its leaders to U.S. strikes—including its emir, Ahmed Abdi Godane, a.k.a. Muhktar Abu Zubair, last September, and its head of clandestine operations outside Somalia, Adnan Garaar, who was thought responsible for the Westgate attack, just a few weeks ago—it remains very much a serious threat to regional and international security, and perhaps, ironically, even more so since it is rapidly transforming into a full-fledged terrorist organization. This last point is especially troublesome for two reasons. First, after Somalis from Somalia and ethnic Somalis from outside Somalia, the two largest demographic groups within al-Shabaab are Kenyans who are not ethnically Somali and Tanzanians—thus highlighting the threat to the East Africa region. Second, if al-Shabaab is transmogrifying into a “generic” global jihadist organization, rather than an extremist group focused on Somalia, it does so with an advantage that other such groups do not have: a proven network (however small and minority within the larger community) of supporters in Europe and North America, as evidenced by the number of prosecutions and convictions obtained by federal authorities of those found to be providing it with material support from this country—as well as by the incitement of current al-Shabaab leader Ahmed Umar, a.k.a. Abu Ubaidah, to attack the Mall of Americas and other shopping centers.

***Emerging Challenges.*** The better-known terrorist threats mentioned so far are not the only ones out of Africa that should be of concern; in fact, as past experience has shown, emergent challenges call out for perhaps even greater attention precisely because they are so poorly known, much less understood, but nevertheless can, as has been seen, evolve very quickly.

One example of such a group is the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), which has operated in the borderlands between Uganda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo since the 1990s and shown remarkable resilience despite repeated efforts to stamp it out not only by the Ugandan and Congolese governments, but also the United Nations peacekeeping force deployed in the Congo. The movement’s leader, Jamil Mukulu, was trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where he associated with al-Qaeda, before returning to East Africa to launch the ADF with support from a number of foreign jihadist groups and the witting or unwitting help of several Islamic charities. The key to the group’s survival has been its successful embedding in local and regional economic and commercial networks. Recently, there have been worrisome indicators that the group is becoming more active, killing more than several hundred people in recent months, including five who were beheaded in North Kivu just two weeks ago. And it can hardly be a coincidence that this very area is where East Africa’s largest new discoveries of hydrocarbon reserves are located with production expected to begin in 2017, with much destined for domestic consumption. Time alone will tell whether the ADF evolves into the sort of threat that Boko Haram or al-Shabaab have posed or whether it degenerates into something more like the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a designated foreign terrorist group which, while brutish, does not actually represent the strategic threat to the United States and its allies posed by others so listed.

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### **The U.S. Response**

This broad survey permits the drawing of several conclusions about the U.S. response to terrorism in Africa and the possible threats posed to U.S. persons and interests abroad as well as the American homeland.

First, time and again, the mistake has been made to underestimate—if not to discount entirely—the threat faced. Part of this is attributable to an analytical bias to limit future possibilities to extrapolations from the past, a hermeneutical choice which ignores the dynamic potential which many terrorist organizations have exhibited. Another part of the explanation is even more basic: the sheer lack of resources for Africa-related intelligence and analysis across the whole of the U.S. government. Given the geopolitical, economic, and security stakes, the failure to invest more in institutions, personnel, training, and strategic focus is incredibly shortsighted.

Second, with the exception of the Department of Defense with the U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM), across the U.S. government there is an artificial division of the continent that, quite frankly, is rejected not only by Africans, but is also unhelpful. If one looks, for example, at the North African states which are usually grouped with the Middle East, there are few compelling geopolitical, economic, or strategic reasons to do so except for Egypt. In point of fact, the overwhelming majority of the regional political, security, and commercial links extending to and from the other four countries of the Maghreb go north-south across the Sahara, not east-west towards the Levant. While ad hoc arrangements such as the State Department’s designation of Ambassador Dan Mozena to coordinate diplomatic efforts across the Sahel are helpful, longer-term solutions would be preferable.

Third, USAFRICOM, the geographic command responsible for implementing whatever military operations, including counterterrorism operations, are eventually deemed necessary on the African continent, whether by assisting African partners or taking direct action, has since its establishment been hampered by less than adequate resources—and this was before sequestration kicked in and fiscal austerity became *de rigueur*—to carry out its ordinary assigned mission, to say nothing of extraordinary challenges which have arisen in recent years within its area of responsibility. While the three successive commanders of USAFRICOM have managed as well as they could, often adroitly juggling resources and priorities, clearly a more sustainable approach is required.

Fourth, closely related to terrorism is the danger posed by lack of effective sovereignty that bedevils many African governments. Often the challenge first manifests itself in criminality, whether in the form of piracy and other brigandage or in that of trafficking, human or material. While the Somali piracy threat—which, at its height, had several linkages to the extremists of al-Shabaab—has been generally diminished, attacks on commercial shipping have been on the uptick in the Gulf of Guinea. Moreover, West Africa has seen an explosion in drug trafficking, both as transshipments towards Europe and other destinations and, even more worrisome, for local consumption. Similarly, in the ever-creative pursuit of funding for their violence, both

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insurgents and terrorists have also turned to poaching. Studies have exhaustively documented how armed groups ranging from rebels in Mozambique to al-Shabaab in Somalia to fugitive Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony and the remaining fighters in his Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) to Séléka militiamen in the Central African Republic, among all-too-many others, have systematically exploited weak governance and porous borders to carry out their grisly trade, increasingly in partnership with organized criminal networks. For the United States, all this means that increasing vigilance against terrorism in Africa also requires greater investments in law enforcement capabilities focused on the continent, including enhanced analytical resources at home, more liaison personnel posted abroad, and stepping up efforts to build the capacity of our partners on the continent.

Fifth, as America's relationships—diplomatic, security, economic, and cultural—with Africa as a whole and the individual countries on the continent expand and deepen—a positive development to be sure—an unfortunate downside is that the potential risk to U.S. persons and interests as well as to the homeland necessarily increases. Quite simply, the threats are there and, by its very nature, more engagement also increases exposure and vulnerability. The answer is not to curtail engagement since there are clear strategic imperatives for seeking to build these links, but to ensure that adequate resources are mustered to cope with the meet the rising demand across a whole range of sectors from civil aviation to ports to customs and immigration, etc., for intelligence about and security against threats originating in Africa.

Sixth, the challenge of terrorism in Africa and any derivative threat to the United States cannot be addressed except in an integrated fashion, with solutions that embrace a broader notion of human security writ large—encompassing social, economic, and political development—which, often enough, also must transcend national and other artificial boundaries. This obviously is not a task for the United States alone, but is one which it is in America's strategic interest to embrace and to lead.

### **Conclusion**

The administration's 2012 *U.S. Strategy Toward Sub-Saharan Africa* rightly characterized Africa as "more important than ever to the security and prosperity of the international community, and to the United States in particular." The administration and the Congress deserve credit for efforts over the last few years to shift the narrative on Africa towards a greater focus on the extraordinary opportunities on the continent. However, if this momentum is to be maintained and those opportunities grasped, the United States needs to redouble its own efforts and also work closely with its African partners to manage the challenges and overcome terrorism and other the threats to security which stand in the way to an incredibly promising future.