

STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

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**“LRA, BOKO HARAM, AL-SHABAAB, AQIM,
AND OTHER SOURCES OF INSTABILITY IN AFRICA”**

HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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9:30 am

Madam Chairman and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing. I join my colleagues Ambassador Yamamoto and Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Dory in welcoming the opportunity to discuss terrorism in Africa. Our views are closely aligned within State, and with the Department of Defense, on both the threat posed by terrorism in Africa, and the U.S. response to address terrorism and other threats to regional stability.

Regional Threats

A number of different factors have converged in recent years to create new and worrisome openings for terrorist organizations, particularly in the Sahel, West Africa and the Horn of Africa. Among these, the turmoil associated with the ousting of the former Libyan regime has reverberated across borders and profoundly impacted parts of West and East Africa. Loose Libyan weapons and the return of refugees and mercenaries to their countries of origin across the Sahel, greatly increased the internal pressures faced by these countries. The current Tuareg rebellion and subsequent coup in Mali were spurred by these events, and have created a vacuum in the north of that country that has provided al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) with greater freedom of movement. That group has also benefited from an increased ability to raise funds, which has boosted its ability to exploit the current situation.

In Nigeria, long-standing grievances in the north led to the re-emergence of Boko Haram – and in Somalia, al-Shabaab, while weakened, continues to frustrate

efforts to establish a legitimate government and to threaten countries in East Africa. Across the Continent, the porous borders and limited resources to control them provide the opportunity for terrorist groups to expand their communication and training and to export their terrorist tactics, further increasing regional instability. The U.S. government is committed to helping the countries of the region turn the tide and lead the fight to eliminate this threat by strengthening their capacity to prevent recruitment, reduce terrorist safe havens, impede terrorist freedom of movement, and prevent additional attacks. Success in this effort will require long term engagement and work to build the capacity of partners to counter terrorists and other destabilizing factors, while maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law. We recognize that military measures alone will not halt the terrorist threat in the region and that we must assist these countries in strengthening their civilian institutions, promoting the rule of law, and addressing the underlying conditions that fuel terrorism and violent extremism.

In Africa, where the appetite for al-Qa'ida's (AQ) brand of terrorism is limited, we have an opportunity to increase the group's isolation by identifying and responding to specific, localized conditions and factors that terrorists exploit as drivers of recruitment, radicalization, and mobilization to violence. We strive to address these threats comprehensively, to work together to support regionally-led efforts, and to tackle the challenge in a broad manner. Through attention to all of these measures, we will help our African partners counter both current and emerging terrorist threats and prevent the spread of extremism and future terrorist threats over more than just the short term.

In recent years, as the AQ core has gotten weaker, we have seen the rise of affiliated groups around the world. In his testimony, my colleague Ambassador Yamamoto provides a detailed overview of the threats in Africa. We share the same views, but I would like to highlight several key points regarding the threats in Africa.

In the Sahel, AQIM has carried out a number of kidnappings for ransom and filled its coffers. These resources together with its efforts to take advantage of the recent instability in Libya and Mali have raised concerns about this group's trajectory.

The Libyan Revolution has profoundly affected countries in the Sahel, home to some of the poorest nations on earth. The resultant dispersal of arms, refugees, and the return of previously exiled fighters, has significantly changed the situation in Mali and also raised concerns in Algeria, Chad, Mauritania, and Niger. The Movement for the National Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA), made up of

returned Tuareg fighters from Libya, has rebelled against the Government of Mali. Regional governments remain concerned that this rebellion could spread to the larger Tuareg communities in all the countries, but it does not appear that this will occur -- at least in the short term.

The MNLA, in a relatively short amount of time, was able to overrun most of northern Mali including the major cities of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu. A splinter faction from the MNLA, Ansar al- Din was assisted in combat operations by AQIM. As a result, AQIM has greater freedom of movement and access to resources than ever before. For the first time, AQIM has established a significant presence in major cities. We believe this will be temporary and that AQIM will return to their desert stronghold in the Targhar Mountains of northern Mali.

AQIM has long held questionable regional aspirations. Its leaders hope to benefit from the current instability in northwest Africa, but what remains unclear is how they would actually capitalize on recent developments. Instability in Mali has temporarily provided them greater freedom of movement within the country. However, the historical rejection of AQIM's extremist ideology by the Sufi-dominated population in Mali and elsewhere in region will likely continue to frustrate their goal of establishing an Islamic Caliphate in West Africa. Nevertheless, it is clear that AQIM poses a threat in Mali and across the region. The Administration takes this threat seriously and continues its efforts to counter it.

In Nigeria, elements of the group known as Boko Haram (BH) have launched attacks in northern and central parts of the country, including one in August against the United Nations headquarters in Abuja, signaling their ambition and capability to attack non-Nigerian targets. Despite BH's threats of additional attacks on "Western interests" there have been no further attacks of this sort since the UN bombing. Boko Haram is not a formal AQ affiliate, but is rather a loosely organized collection of criminals, and militants, and terrorists. BH has historically focused on local Nigerian issues and exploits long-standing political and socio-economic grievances in the north. We remain concerned by reported communications, training, and weapons links between AQIM, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, and al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula, which may have strengthened Boko Haram's capacity to conduct terrorist attacks. Through border security and other assistance efforts, we are working to disrupt the ability of these groups to share information and training.

Long-standing and still neglected political and socio-economic grievances are some of the drivers feeding the violence in the North. Eliminating this threat

requires us to address these issues. U.S. counterterrorism strategy is closely linked to the broader strategy of support for the Nigerian government's reform efforts, and increased respect for human rights. Through high-level engagement, including through the established U.S.- Nigeria Bi-national Commission, we are working to strengthen the Nigerian government's resolve and capacity to address the broader issues and to press for a change to its heavy-handed approach to the security threats in the north. We are also providing limited law enforcement training assistance to the Nigerian government under the auspices of the Trans Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, which I will discuss in greater detail below. The goal of this training is to increase the professionalization, enhance interagency communication and expand the capacity of the police to more effectively prevent and respond to terrorist attacks.

In East Africa, al-Shabaab remains a primary driver of instability. Earlier this year, in February, al-Shabaab's emir in Somalia, and AQ's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, released a joint video to formally announce a merger of the two organizations. While it has demonstrated a willingness and ability to conduct attacks elsewhere in the region with the 2010 bombing in Uganda, and threats against Kenya, Burundi and elsewhere, al Shabaab's attacks have primarily focused on targets inside of Somalia. With the assistance of both the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and Somalia's neighbors, the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has made significant gains in degrading al-Shabaab capability and liberating areas from al-Shabaab administration over the last year. Yet much work remains to be done in this region to further reduce the threat of terrorism while working to safely provide humanitarian assistance, including to those in al-Shabaab-controlled territories who are denied access to outside aid.

Despite the AQ merger, al-Shabaab's leaders prioritize the creation of an Islamic state in Somalia, rather than an AQ-focus on external attacks. It remains unclear whether the February announcement of al-Shabaab's merger with AQ will provide any tangible benefits for al-Shabaab. Fractures within al-Shabaab, the deaths of key leaders, and the organization's unpopularity, due to its failure to address the basic needs of people living in their territory, have weakened the group, but it continues to pose a threat to civilians, humanitarian workers, the AMISOM, and the TFG.

Our counterterrorism support for Somalia is embedded in our support of political, economic, and social reforms to address the underlying sources of violence and to strengthen national and regional stability. Our policies recognize that resolving conflicts, reducing humanitarian emergencies, and improving governance also

further advance counterterrorism and national security goals. Achieving political stability, including a Somali government that demonstrates to the broader Somali population it is a viable alternative to al-Shabaab, is the best long-term way to counter al-Shabaab.

In Central and East Africa, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has been active since 1986, making it one of Africa's oldest, most violent, and longest lived armed groups. The LRA was founded in northern Uganda to fight against the government, and operated there from 1986 to 2006. At the height of the conflict, nearly two million people in northern Uganda were displaced. The Government of Uganda successfully pushed the LRA out of Uganda by 2006, and the LRA moved west into the border region of the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and what would become South Sudan. The LRA has continued to operate in this tri-border region to date.

U.S. military advisors have a clear goal – to enhance the capacity of local forces to succeed in their mission to end the threat posed by the LRA. At the same time, the United States does not believe there is a purely military solution in dealing with the LRA threat. Our military support is part of a broader strategy and complemented by civilian efforts to increase the protection of civilians, facilitate defections from the LRA, and help affected communities.

Addressing the Threats

All of our work goes on in the context of vigorous diplomatic engagement. We have formal bilateral counterterrorism consultations with numerous countries; these consultations have strengthened our counterterrorism partnerships so we can complement one another's efforts in pursuit of a comprehensive approach to our common challenges. Working bilaterally with our international partners allows us to promote a common understanding of the terrorist threat, improve coordination and cooperation, promote burden-sharing, build capacity, share best practices and support implementation of the UN counterterrorism framework.

The Department of State has a number of Africa programs to address the various emerging threats presented by these terrorist groups and other drivers of instability. These programs are about building the capacity of our partners to counter terrorist threats themselves, while maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law. This involves helping countries develop their law enforcement and legal institutions to do a better job tracking, apprehending, arresting, prosecuting, and incarcerating terrorists. Our work to degrade these drivers of instability involves

regional cooperation and significant efforts by our regional African partners to detect, deter, investigate, and counter terrorism within their borders.

TSCTP

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is an interagency effort to provide a platform of assistance to strengthen the capacity of regional governments to combat the terrorist threat and to stem the flow of new recruits to terrorist organizations. Through its programs – both civilian and military – TSCTP provides positive alternatives to those most vulnerable to terrorist messaging. In this politically restive region, a long term approach is the only one likely to work. We believe we are making progress with select partners. Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger have achieved real results against AQIM in the last year, namely, the defeat of AQIM twice in the Ouagadou Forest on the border of Mauritania and Mali, the defeat of AQIM at the Mauritanian town of Bessikinou, and the capture of arms convoys transiting from Libya by joint Algeria/Niger operations.

Despite Mali's recent coup d'état, Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger, retain a strong political will to fight terrorism. We believe that the best strategy for dealing with AQIM remains working with regional governments to increase their capability, foster regional cooperation, and counter violent extremism. TSCTP countries include Chad, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Senegal, in the Sahel; and Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia in the Maghreb.

PREACT

PREACT, formerly known as the East Africa Regional Strategic Initiative (EARSI), is the East Africa counterpart to the TSCTP. This whole-of-government strategy takes into account the entire East African region through the Partnership for Regional East African Counterterrorism (PREACT). First established in 2009, PREACT is a U.S. funded and implemented multi-year, multi-faceted program designed to build the counterterrorism capacity and capability of member countries to thwart short-term terrorist threats and address longer-term vulnerabilities. It uses law enforcement, military, and development resources to achieve its strategic objectives, including reducing the operational capacity of terrorist networks, expanding border security, enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation among the region's security and intelligence organizations, improving democratic governance, and discrediting terrorist ideology. PREACT member countries include Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

PREACT programming addresses existing and potential challenges directly and indirectly threatening U.S. interests in East Africa. PREACT provides the U.S. government with a flexible and well-coordinated plan to assist member countries' efforts to counter both current and emerging terrorist threats and prevent the spread of extremism and future terrorist threats over the medium and long-terms. The strategy reflects recognition that the predominate threat to the region and western interests is Somalia's chronic instability. Its goals complement ongoing stabilization efforts, while building regional capacities to address the terrorist threat in Somalia.

CT successes under PREACT have included the training and equipping of CT units in various East African countries, including a technical intelligence platoon in Kenya to conduct CT operations; as well as the provision of intermediate level maintenance training and spare parts for the Kenya Army 50th Air Cavalry Battalion fleet of helicopters, which further enhances the country's ability to effectively monitor border security and threats emanating from Somalia. In Djibouti, we have seen improvements in maritime security through the provision of training and equipment to the Djiboutian Republican National Guard on combat weapons and night equipment; as well as the provision of one defender class boat and trailer and four smaller boats and accompanying training to Djibouti for maritime CT operations.

The Antiterrorism Assistance Program

The Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program (ATA) provides training, mentoring, advising, and equipment to African counterterrorism focused law-enforcement agencies with TSCTP and PREACT partner nations to help build effective law enforcement capacity, fair and impartial justice and the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

In conjunction with TSCTP, ATA enhances border security and investigative capacity for all partner nations in West Africa to better enable them to confront the trans-national movement of terrorist groups such as AQIM and Boko Haram. ATA also works to promote the institutionalization of ATA training in Senegal by supporting the country as a regional law enforcement training hub. A key ATA project initiative involves building Nigeria's counter incident countermeasures capacity as the level of terrorism and political violence at the hands of Boko Haram increases.

ATA is also working on the expansion of successful border security initiatives in East African Preact partner nations, as a result of successful U.S. Customs and Border Patrol rural border patrol unit training this past year, which works to better secure vulnerable remote border regions and illegal crossings. ATA has started conducting leadership and management training for senior law enforcement officials from Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and will continue future courses with law enforcement officials from throughout Somalia in future training.

The Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF)

In Fiscal Year 2011, Counterterrorism Engagement program (CTE) funds were used to support a key initiative on the continent, the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF) and its Africa-focused working groups. Launched in September, the Forum is a multilateral counterterrorism platform designed to tackle 21st century terrorism and violent extremism. It brings together counterterrorism coordinators, prosecutors, judges, police, border control, and prison officials from our traditional allies, emerging powers, and Muslim-majority countries (29 countries plus the EU) to identify threats and weaknesses, devise solutions, mobilize resources, and share expertise.

In the GCTF Horn of Africa Region Capacity-Building Working Group we are working with western partners and countries in the region, as well as key multilateral bodies such as the African Union and Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), to build on Preact and enhance counterterrorism cooperation and capacities. In early February, Tanzania hosted the inaugural meeting of the group, which the EU and Turkey are co-chairing. The group is identifying civilian-focused capacity-building priorities and mobilizing the resources and expertise for projects to address them. Follow-on initiatives will include bringing together the region's relevant counterterrorism practitioners, including prosecutors for training on the use of the GCTF's Rabat Good Practices for Effective Counterterrorism in the Criminal Justice Sector.

Through the GCTF's Sahel Region Capacity Building Working Group we are working with western partners and countries in the Sahel to build on the TSCTP. Algiers hosted the inaugural meeting of the group last November; both Algeria and Morocco, as well as Sahel countries like Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, gathered to discuss how to strengthen CT cooperation and capacities in the region. Next, the group will bring together the region's relevant border security practitioners in Niamey in mid-May, to formulate further action. The objectives of the Niamey

workshop include: 1) to bring regional technical experts together (both from within and outside the region) to foster greater collaboration and reinforce the emerging network of border security practitioners in the region; and 2) to develop a set of good practices for border security that regional states can apply and that GCTF members and other extra-regional partners, including the United Nations and AU, can support with targeted capacity-building activities.

Countering Violent Extremism

Our Bureau has spent a great deal of time and effort to ensure that new and innovative Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) work is a focus for the U.S. interagency and our allies and partners overseas. Kenya is one of our priority CVE countries. In collaboration with our Embassy in Nairobi, we are working to assess the underlying factors that drive radicalization in specific Kenyan localities. The interagency will support this effort with the necessary expertise and program resources.

Through CVE activities in both PRACT and TSCTP, the U.S. government, working with non-governmental partners, forges partnerships in Africa to counter violent extremism and empower beneficiaries to resist the drivers of extremism at the individual and community levels. Projects related to countering violent extremism have provided for integrated community development activities and regional peace building activities, while focusing on providing tangible benefits to youth at risk for recruitment. Key programs for youth focus on employment, outreach, community development, and media activities. In addition to delivering tangible benefits, such as vocational skills training, programs aim to gather beneficiaries from different communities, ethnic groups, and countries to further support regional cooperation.

We also support UN efforts to build in-depth knowledge and promote implementation of the UN Global CT Strategy. The UN Global CT Strategy takes a comprehensive approach to CT, and the first of its four pillars – “measures to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism” – is CVE-related. In FY10, we funded a series of five workshops – three of which were in Africa – through the UN Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force to raise awareness and promote implementation of the Strategy.

Counterterrorist Finance Program

The Counterterrorist Finance Program (CTF) is working with the interagency to develop and employ innovative programs. CTF provides a multitude of tools to build the capacity of regional governments to counter terrorist financing. In particular, we are working with our international partners to develop awareness of kidnapping for ransom as a source of terrorist financing and seeking the means to counter it.

Our Bureau's CTF program has a long standing relationship with the Government of Nigeria on anti-money laundering and counterterrorist finance (AML/CTF) matters. The State CTF program works with the interagency to provide the Government of Nigeria with an array of training to include Bulk Cash Smuggling, Terrorist Finance Investigations, Financial Intelligence Unit Analytical Training, as well as soft skill development targeting the financial regulatory system. Pending adoption of AML/CTF legislation that meets international standards, Nigeria may be one of the best equipped nations in West Africa to address the threat of money laundering and terrorist finance.

In an effort to build regional cooperation toward stopping the flow of illicit funds and illegal goods and substances through West Africa to Europe, from the Western Hemisphere, State will partner with the Department of Homeland Security in July 2012 to deliver a new program in partnership with both the Senegalese and Nigerian governments. The venue will serve as a platform for dialogue for each country to discuss common challenges presented by organizations such as Boko Haram and Hizballah.

Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP)/Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES)

The Counterterrorism Bureau, through its Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), is providing assistance to numerous African countries. TIP seeks to constrain terrorist mobility globally by providing participating countries with a computerized stop-list system known as PISCES (Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System). TIP installs PISCES hardware and software at selected ports of entry in consultation with the host government, usually including international airports and major border crossings. The system enables host nations to register and screen travelers upon entry and exit and to identify suspect travelers against a current stop-list. TIP trains host nation personnel to administer, operate and manage their PISCES systems.

PISCES systems currently in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda (and Yemen) strengthen the capacities of those countries to screen, in particular, for suspect travelers associated with Al-Shabaab, AQIM, AQAP, AQ, and in the case of Uganda, the LRA. The PISCES stop-lists are originated and managed by the host nations. In West Africa, PISCES systems are in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire. Offers of PISCES assistance have been made to the governments of Niger and Nigeria; we remain in diplomatic contact while these offers are under consideration. The potential for PISCES systems in Maghreb and other African countries is under consideration, as well.

Conclusion

In reviewing the various terrorist threats across the East and West of Africa, the challenge can appear daunting. But the reality is much more hopeful. The vast expanses of desert, porous borders and under-resourced governments create an environment conducive to terrorist groups. But the lack of resonance of the AQ ideology within most communities, and the commitment of the regional governments to join forces to counter the terrorist threat, have helped to contain it and – if continued – will ultimately lead to its marginalization. Regional cooperation, through joint capacity-building efforts in TSCTP and PRACT, consistent activities to counter the growth of violent extremism, and collaborative efforts with like-minded allies and regional governments through multilateral fora are having an impact. Joint operations between the Mauritians and Malians to root out AQIM elements from the Ouagadougou Forest border region would have been unheard of several years ago. The same can be said for the Somali National Security Force's ability, with the help of AMISOM, to force al-Shabaab to flee Mogadishu. This is progress that we must recognize and work to repeat through our continued commitment to support the efforts of the regional governments working to eliminate terrorism from their continent.