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EMBASSY STATEMENT

For immediate publication

*Abuja, Nigeria
May 9th, 2013*

The United States values the strong partnership it has with Nigeria and respects the role Nigeria plays on the world stage. We remain deeply concerned about increasing insecurity in Northern Nigeria and the potential threat it poses to stability in both Nigeria and the region. The rising cycle of violence is affecting Nigerian citizens the most, with the number of civilian casualties increasing.

The April attacks in Baga, with reports indicating civilians indiscriminately killed and homes and businesses wantonly burned, demonstrate the extent to which the Nigerian people continue to suffer from this violence. Counterterrorism and counterinsurgency campaigns are complex and difficult. As a partner, we seek to find ways to help Nigeria build its capacity to address multiple threats to its security.

As they did this week in Bama, Boko Haram has terrorized the people of Northern Nigeria, killing thousands over the past three years with bombings, shootings, kidnappings, and coordinated attacks on security forces facilities. The United States condemns Boko Haram's campaign of terror in the strongest terms and has worked to help Nigeria address the threat of terrorism. Those members of Boko Haram responsible for the violence must be held accountable in accordance with the rule of law.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned by ongoing reports of excessive use of force by Nigerian security forces in the name of combating Boko Haram, including extrajudicial killings, prolonged detention, and disappearances. We are concerned that such an indiscriminate, force-based approach to counterterrorism is increasing extremism and decreasing confidence in the federal government. These tactics tarnish Nigeria's reputation as an emerging leader and a stable democratic government.

The tragedy at Baga underscores the need for the Government of Nigeria to put civilian protection at the forefront of its counterinsurgency campaign. The government now has the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to the rule of law and the well being of all Nigerians by, first, adopting tactics in the North that are effective and protect civilians, and, second, ensuring that the National Human Rights Commission carries out an independent and transparent investigation. Reports from that investigation must be made public and those who committed or ordered these crimes, regardless of position, must be held accountable.

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Other relevant information about U.S. policies and programs in Nigeria can be found on our website:
<http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>.

