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PRESS RELEASE

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U.S. Congressman Reviews Security in Nigeria in Wake of Boko Haram Attacks

Congressman Stephen F. Lynch (D-MA) is currently in Nigeria meeting with United States security and counterterrorism personnel, as well as Nigerian leaders, to review Embassy security following the recent bombings in Maiduguri, Nigeria and the pledge by Boko Haram to join forces with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

Congressman Lynch is the ranking Democrat on the National Security Subcommittee and had been traveling as part of a Congressional Delegation led by Oversight Committee Chairman Jason Chaffetz (R-UT) and including Congressman Steve Russell (R-OK) to South Africa, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe. The Delegation is continuing the Committee's nearly three year investigation of Embassy and diplomatic security at high-risk overseas U.S. State Department facilities in the wake of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. Consulate and Classified Annex in Benghazi, Libya in September of 2012.

Lynch was en route to Nigeria before the latest bombings occurred. Lynch's visit to Nigeria was originally to focus on Embassy security and the plight of over 275 school girls who were kidnapped by Boko Haram almost one year ago.

"This is a critical time for Nigeria and this region," Lynch said. "Nigeria's national elections are scheduled in just over two weeks, while Boko Haram controls an area in the north about the size of New Jersey. The bombings and other Boko Haram activities are sure to further destabilize some areas in the run up to the election. It's a precarious situation."

The U.S. has committed \$40 million over three years for equipment and training assistance to Nigeria, Chad, and other African nations in their efforts to combat Boko Haram. U.S. Special Forces are also training African counterterrorism troops. "The situation can change quickly and we have to continue to find ways to collaborate with our African partners as they battle against regional terrorist organizations," said Lynch.

Earlier, the Congressional Delegation visited Embassies and Consulate General offices in Johannesburg, South Africa, Maputo, Mozambique, and Harare, Zimbabwe in an effort to strengthen U.S. capacity to prevent and withstand potential attacks against foreign service operations.

“Many of our Embassies and Consulates were established in the 1950s and 1960s, when the security profile was vastly different than it is now. Today, these facilities are targets and we need to adjust to the new reality and provide a more secure environment for our State Department employees,” added Lynch.

In Nigeria, Congressman Lynch is accompanied by House staffer Bruce Fernandez and military escort, Navy Lt. Alex P. Smith, of Pleasant Valley, CT.

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