

**Assistant Secretary Linda Thomas-Greenfield's Remarks
"Boko Haram and its Regional Impact"**

**The Capitol Visitor Center, U.S. House of Representatives, HVC 201AB
Tuesday, February 9, 2016, 8:00 AM**

INTRO

Good morning everyone. Thank you Representative Bass for that kind introduction. I'm not going to go through protocols. I see all of my Ambassadors here in the room. And they know that we are all working together on Africa policy, so I will just say all protocols observed. I am so pleased to have the opportunity to speak with all of you today. You really are the friends of Africa. You are the supporters of my efforts and all of our efforts to find a solution to many of the intractable problems we see on the continent of Africa. But more importantly, you are the cheerleaders for Africa's success, so being in the room with all of you really gives me a lot of energy and a lot of encouragement as we seek to find solutions to problems like Boko Haram. So today, I will discuss the impact of Boko Haram on the region, the U.S. strategy to counter Boko Haram, and additional steps that must be taken by all of us to help Nigeria and the region win this war.

BOKO HARAM'S IMPACT

Boko Haram's savagery – murder, rape, kidnapping, enslavement, extortion, destruction – seemingly has no bounds or limits. Boko Haram's members use children in attacks, bomb places of worship, both Muslim and Christian, and they bomb busy commercial centers and raid local communities. They are murderers - pure and simple murderers.

Boko Haram is having a devastating impact in Nigeria and the region. Just last week, Boko Haram attacked the Nigerian village of Dalori and killed more than 65 people. Hear me people – 65 people. There were reports of terrorists firebombing huts, resulting in children being burned alive. Yet sadly, this is not unique – every week over the last few months we hear of attacks by Boko Haram in the region that kill dozens of people. What's more, there are scores of violent raids that disrupt communities on a daily basis that we don't even hear about in the news.

So I want to take a moment to extend our deepest condolences of the U.S. government and all of us here in the room to the families and loved ones of the victims of all of those brutal attacks. I feel each one of those attacks every day. I feel them in my heart, and I feel them in my soul, because I know that when these children and these communities are being attacked, behind those numbers are real people – real mothers, real children, real fathers, real people who are suffering from Boko Haram.

Boko Haram started in Nigeria, but its impact has spread throughout the region. They also perpetrate their heinous crimes against the people of Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. There, as in Nigeria, civilians live in fear of the terror that Boko Haram has inflicted on their communities.

The conflict has created a major humanitarian crisis in the Lake Chad Basin, with some 2.4 million internally displaced people in the region and more than 180,000 Nigerians living as refugees in neighboring countries.

Boko Haram's connections to ISIL are tenuous: tenuous, but worrisome, and real. Boko Haram leaders declare their allegiance to ISIL. We will need to work together with all states in the region to prevent these ties from getting stronger and break the ties that do exist. This is a global fight – it is not just a Nigerian fight.

U.S. COUNTER BOKO HARAM STRATEGY

Defeating Boko Haram requires fighting this group on all levels – and that's what we are doing. The fight cannot be won just on the battlefield.

Our counter Boko Haram Strategy is an integrated, interagency effort to help Nigeria and its neighbors in their fight to degrade and ultimately to defeat Boko Haram. This strategy has several focuses, including enhancing the efforts of all of the affected countries to fight Boko Haram; weakening Boko Haram's capacity, financing, and cohesion; enhancing national, state, and local efforts to engage with civilians affected by Boko Haram; countering and preventing violent extremism; removing underlying drivers of insecurity; and addressing the humanitarian needs of civilians affected by Boko Haram.

On the battlefield, the situation remains challenging and attacks continue, but Boko Haram is being pushed back by the combined efforts and improved coordination among the Lake Chad Basin countries. As Boko Haram loses territory, however, they have turned increasingly to vicious, asymmetric attacks, including the use of children as purveyors of deadly bombs. A key part of our strategy is providing support to the Multinational Joint Task Force, which includes soldiers from Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Benin. We are providing advisors, intelligence, training, logistical support, and equipment.

Since President Buhari visited Washington in July last year, we have engaged his military leadership on a range of new and continued security assistance. We expect to inaugurate the first round of U.S. training for an infantry battalion later this month. We have stepped up information-sharing efforts. We are jointly evaluating new efforts to counter improvised explosive devices, developing better tools to assess harm to civilians, and assess the potential for U.S. advisory assistance.

We have sent 90 U.S. Armed Forces personnel to Cameroon, and we are anticipating sending a total of 300. These soldiers are supporting the governments of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria by providing airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance operations that help our African partners degrade and defeat Boko Haram.

But the fight against Boko Haram goes way beyond the battlefield, and the security assistance we are providing our partners cannot fill the gap. Equipment and training are only useful when employed by professional forces that respect human rights and earn the respect of the population. Our bilateral security discussions will continue to be paired with discussions regarding human rights.

Nigeria and Lake Chad Basin countries must address the drivers of extremism that gave rise to Boko Haram. These drivers include weak, ineffective governance, corruption, lack of education, and lack of economic opportunities and jobs for the burgeoning young population. If youth in the region are not offered opportunities to contribute to their countries, they become susceptible to terrorism.

Countries in the region must take individual and collective steps to back up their military successes with police and civil administration to maintain security, restore stability, provide much-needed basic services, establish rule of law and effective governance, and promote the economic development and job creation needed to break the cycle of violence.

The United States, primarily through the tireless efforts of our USAID colleagues, supports Nigeria in its development efforts and continues to help address the existing emergency needs. USAID activities in Nigeria and other parts of the region promote education by improving the quality of teaching and learning, increasing equitable access to education, and integrating peace building and safety into school communities.

And across the region, in 2015 and 2016, the United States is providing more than \$195 million in humanitarian assistance for Boko Haram-affected populations, including internally displaced persons and refugees. Among other things, this aid includes a \$20-million crisis education response that has already established nearly 300 informal learning centers for children of displaced families and their host communities.

In our interagency effort to help our African partners fight Boko Haram, we are also working closely with our international partners, including the UK, France, the European Union, as well as the African Union.

THE WAY FORWARD

So what is the way forward? The way forward, let me just say, is not going to be easy. You know that. We've been going through it for a long, long time. There are no overnight solutions. The challenge of defeating Boko Haram is going to require long-term dedication to this effort.

All of us here in this room have a role to play, and we need your help. We need members of Congress – and we have that, we know, through Congresswoman Bass, but many others, it is bipartisan – we need members of Congress from both sides of the aisle and both chambers to organize events like this one. And I want to thank you, Congresswoman Bass, for hosting this amazing group of people. And we need hearings to get a better understanding of the problem. And we've had those hearings, and I want those hearings to continue.

We need academics – thank you, Ambassador Brigety, for being in the room – we need academics to help us understand the underlying conditions that led to Boko Haram. We need think tanks to identify creative solutions. We need the business community to help bring investments in the region and to create jobs and spur greater economic development in the affected areas. We need our Ambassadors. We need our African Ambassadors based here in Washington to advocate for more resources in the fight against Boko Haram, and greater cooperation among the Lake Chad Basin countries. You need to report back to your governments that there is an intense interest here in Washington in helping them to find a solution to this incredible problem. We need the civil society community to push for improved governance and human rights in the region. We need journalists to report on the depravities of Boko Haram as well as progress the Nigerians and other governments of the region are making on human rights. And we'll need continued resources from our governments.

It's also important to note that Africa's people are central in this fight. I ask every day, *Do African lives matter?* There's rarely a protest when we hear that Africans have been killed on the continent of Africa. There's rarely a protest every single day when we hear that Boko Haram is killing people. We get protests in front of the State Department all the time – protesting all kinds of human rights violations. Protest people being killed on the continent by terrorists. We all need to hear the voices of the people. Ordinary men and women in Africa, the United States, and abroad need to raise their voices and send an unmistakable message that Boko Haram's violence is intolerable, and it's unacceptable. The outcry in Nigeria and internationally over the killings of the Chibok school girls was impressive – but it was slow. We waited to hear what people

would say. Those protests, once they started, helped greatly to raise awareness of Boko Haram's brutality. But they were only a start.

We must say something. We must stand up and say that we can no longer accept these monstrosities. Boko Haram does not represent the views of the Muslim populations in Africa. And they do not represent the voices of Africa. And it's important that we all stand up and say, 'African lives matter!'

Those are the tasks that confront the region, and those of us who are here must help in addressing these. This will be a long fight that requires perseverance, and it is going to require strong resources. We all know the stakes are high. We know what the stakes are. Last week's attack in Dalori was a clear reminder. But now is the time - now is the time for us to work together with our African partners to redouble our efforts to defeat Boko Haram and create the bright future - and it's a bright future that all of the people of Africa deserve. But I would say in this case, particularly, a bright future for the people of northern Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin. Thank you very much.