

Rethinking the U.S. Approach to Boko Haram:

The Case for a Regional Strategy

Julia McQuaid and Patricio Asfura-Heim

With contributions from Daniella Mak and Alexander Powell

February 2015





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Jonathan Schroden, Director
Center for Stability and Development
Center for Strategic Studies

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Abstract

U.S. Naval Forces Africa asked CNA to recommend an approach for the United States government (USG) to counter Boko Haram. The USG has been working with the government of Nigeria (GoN) to defeat the group, but the two governments are taking divergent approaches and efforts to date have not been effective. The GoN is taking a narrow counterterrorism approach that relies heavily on the military, whereas a broader whole-of-government approach is required. Due to the political dynamics in Nigeria, the USG has few ways to change the GoN's approach to the conflict. We propose that the USG and other supporting partners focus on assisting Chad, Niger, and Cameroon to become increasingly able to prevent Boko Haram from taking root within their borders. While this would not dismantle Boko Haram in the near term, it could buy time for conditions in Nigeria to become more favorable to direct U.S. assistance.

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Executive Summary

United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) has responsibility for advancing U.S. national interests and promoting regional security and stability in Africa. Today, violent extremist organizations (VEOs) are among the greatest threats to the future of Africa and to U.S. interests on the continent. Over the past year, the Nigerian Islamist militant group Boko Haram has emerged as the most aggressive and virulent of all the African VEOs. In April 2014, it became a global household name after it kidnapped over 200 schoolgirls from the northern town of Chibok. Over the course of 2014, over 5,000 people were killed in Boko Haram related violence as the group demonstrated new, more deadly tactics in order to maximize casualties.

Nigeria is among the United States' top partners in Africa, and its continuing stability is critical to the future of U.S. interests on the continent. So far, the government of Nigeria (GoN) has failed to effectively address the conflict with Boko Haram. In recent years, through a variety of diplomatic, development, and security assistance efforts, the U.S. government (USG) has worked with the GoN in a supporting role to dismantle the group. Despite these efforts, however, a balanced assessment of the situation in northeast Nigeria reveals that the threat from Boko Haram is growing. There are now regular reports that Boko Haram has taken control of sizable territories where it forces its own brand of Islamic law on local communities. In addition, Boko Haram now conducts incursions across Nigerian borders into Cameroon, and Nigeria's other neighbors—Chad and Niger—are being increasingly affected by the mounting humanitarian crisis caused by the violence in northern Nigeria.

In 2014, U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF) was tasked to develop a supporting plan to U.S. Africa Command's (AFRICOM) Gulf of Guinea campaign plan. In this role, the command requested that CNA conduct a study and recommend a way forward for the USG in its efforts to counter Boko Haram. The results of the study are intended for AFRICOM and its subordinate commands, but are applicable to all USG entities that contribute resources to countering Boko Haram. Below are our major findings.

Summary of findings

Having conducted a rigorous conflict assessment, we conclude that Boko Haram is a locally based revolutionary insurgent group which utilizes subversion, guerilla tactics, and terrorism to achieve its goals. Its fundamental objective is to replace the

existing political order by overthrowing the secular Nigerian state and replacing it with an Islamic government. Our assessment ruled out the idea that Nigeria is currently in a state of civil war. It also invalidated the notion that Boko Haram is a Nigerian branch of another international terrorist organization, such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).

Because Boko Haram is an insurgent group which is sustained by localized grievances and conflict dynamics, we argue that a starting point for devising an effective response should follow the tenets of a counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy. To determine whether the GoN and the USG have been following such an approach, we identified eight “best COIN practices” and compared all their efforts to those best practices. The results of our analysis revealed that the GoN and the USG have been taking divergent approaches to the conflict: The GoN has followed a narrow counter-terrorism approach that relies heavily on the military to crush the group with intermittent attempts to negotiate an end to the conflict. The USG, in contrast, has pursued a whole-of-government approach that overlaps with many of the best practices for COIN.

To implement a comprehensive COIN strategy, the GoN would need to significantly alter its current approach. But, given current political, social, and economic conditions in Nigeria, to include endemic corruption, the GoN is unlikely to shift its approach. In an effort to convince Abuja to undertake a whole-of-government (or COIN) approach to the conflict in northeast Nigeria, the USG has used various levers to apply pressure on Abuja. This has not yielded significant results.

The USG could ramp up efforts to pressure the GoN, but this route is problematic for two reasons. First, the GoN is most likely resistant to the types of incentives and conditions the USG is willing to apply. Second, while the two governments have had disagreements concerning Boko Haram, the broader U.S.-Nigeria partnership is productive on multiple other fronts. Applying additional pressure could put successes in those areas at risk.

Since attempting to coerce/convince the current Nigerian government to change its approach to solving the Boko Haram conflict is unlikely to produce the result the USG is seeking, we put forth an alternative approach for the USG to consider—one that does not rely on the GoN alone. We recommend that instead of depending on the GoN to counter Boko Haram, the USG consider taking a coordinated, multinational approach that places Nigeria’s neighbors—Chad, Niger, and Cameroon—in a more central role. This effort would also be supported by other international partners, such as France, the African Union (AU), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In this approach, the USG and its partners would recognize the mounting threat from Boko Haram to the broader region and, in response, adopt a primary short-term objective of preventing the spread of Boko Haram. The USG would maintain the long-

term objective of dismantling the group but recognize that doing so would require the GoN to be a fully engaged, proactive partner—which it currently is not. As a result, the USG would continue to support Nigeria, but would limit its assistance to those areas that are most productive, eliminating those that are not having success. In terms of promoting a regional multinational force, the USG and its partners should include Nigeria in these efforts but remain realistic about whether Abuja will follow through on any promises it makes. In order for the GoN to genuinely follow through with a COIN-based approach to the conflict, conditions within Nigeria would need to change significantly. Our proposed containment strategy allows the USG to contribute to stopping the spread of the conflict in the short term, while buying time until the political conditions in Abuja shift in such a way that the GoN becomes a genuine partner in dismantling the group.

It is possible that after the 2015 elections, the GoN could change its approach to the conflict. If President Goodluck Jonathan were to win another term, he would no longer be focused on campaigning and might feel more secure taking the required steps to resolve the conflict. There is also a chance that if his opponent Muhammadu Buhari were to win, he would attempt to follow through on his promises to end the conflict – although how he would do so remains to be seen. Therefore, we recommend that the USG revisit its Boko Haram strategy six to 12 months after the elections, to determine whether the GoN is more willing to counter the group in a way that achieves results.

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methodology.....	4
An Assessment of the Boko Haram Conflict	6
Results of the conflict assessment	8
Divergent Approaches to Countering Boko Haram	11
Counterinsurgency best practices	11
Comparing current efforts to COIN best practices	13
Best practice 1: Devise a strategy that is built on an analytically derived conflict assessment	13
Best practice 2: Implement a coordinated whole-of-government approach....	14
Best practice 3: Bolster government legitimacy.....	17
Best practice 4: Protect the population	19
Best practice 5: Address the root causes of the conflict	22
Best practice 6: Attack the insurgent network.....	25
Best practice 7: Cut off support and eliminate sanctuaries.....	29
Best practice 8: Pursue opportunities to reach a settlement to the conflict ...	32
Conclusions	35
The GoN's narrow CT approach.....	35
The USG's whole-of-government approach	36
Changes the GoN would need to make in order to implement a COIN approach	37
Adjusting the USG Approach to Countering Boko Haram	39
The current USG approach.....	39
The same approach, but with new coercive measures.....	39
Change the approach: a containment strategy	44
Conclusions and recommendations	56
Specific recommendations for AFRICOM.....	58
Appendix A: Sources for Deriving COIN Best Practices	60

Appendix C: U.S. Military Assistance to the GoN	66
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List of Figures

Figure 1.	Boko Haram attacks, January 2010 – March 2014.....	2
Figure 2.	Kanuri areas in four border region: Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon	45

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List of Tables

Table 1.	COIN best practices	12
Table 2.	Proposed plan for how the USG could support capacity building for a regional preventative strategy to counter Boko Haram.....	49
Table 3.	Factors that obstruct GoN's success countering Boko Haram	61
Table 4.	U.S. military assistance to Nigeria for countering Boko Haram.....	66

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Glossary

ACOTA	Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance
AFRICOM	United States Africa Command
AMLEP	African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership
APS	Africa Partnership Station
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
ATA	Antiterrorism Assistance
AU	African Union
CBP	United States Customs and Border Patrol
CDS	Chief of Defense Staff
C-IED	Counter-improvised explosive device
CJTF	Civilian Joint Task Force
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CT	Counterterrorism
CVE	Countering violent extremism
DHS	United States Department of Homeland Security
DOD	United States Department of Defense
DOJ	United States Department of Justice
DOS	United States Department of State
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFCC	Economic and Financial Crimes Commission
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
GoG	Gulf of Guinea
GoN	Government of Nigeria
GSCF	Global Security Contingency Fund
HUMINT	Human intelligence
ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program
IDP	Internally displaced person
IED	Improvised explosive device
IMET	International Military Education and Training
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
ISR	Intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
JTF	Joint task force

MEND	Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta
MNJTF	Multinational Joint Task Force
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MRAP	Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected
NASOC	Nigerian Army Special Operations Command
NAVAF	United States Naval Forces Africa
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
NPF	Nigeria Police Force
NSA	National Security Adviser
OFDA	Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance
RIB	Rapid Intervention Brigade
RSI	Regional Strategic Initiative
SBS	Nigerian Special Boat Service
SGI	Security Governance Initiative
SOCFAF	United States Special Operations Command Africa
SOF	Special operations forces
SPMAGTF	Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force
SSS	Nigerian State Security Service
TSCTP	Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership
TTP	Tactics, techniques, and procedures
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VEO	Violent extremist organization

Introduction

Since 2009, the Nigerian militant Islamist group *Jama'a Ahl as-Sunna Li-da'wa wa-al Jihad*, commonly called Boko Haram, has embarked on a violent insurgent campaign in the northeastern part of Nigeria (see Figure 1). Its goal is to expel the political community from northern Nigeria, remove all Western influences, and eventually overthrow the national government and establish an Islamic state in its place.¹ Since 2010, this group has been responsible for more terrorist attacks in Nigeria than all other militant groups combined.² Its attacks have destroyed vital infrastructure and devastated the already weak economy in the northeast of the country. Attacks on the Christian community in the south also threaten to exacerbate pre-existing religious tensions, reversing some of the country's hard-won gains in building national unity. Boko Haram has clearly become the most serious physical threat to stability in Nigeria.

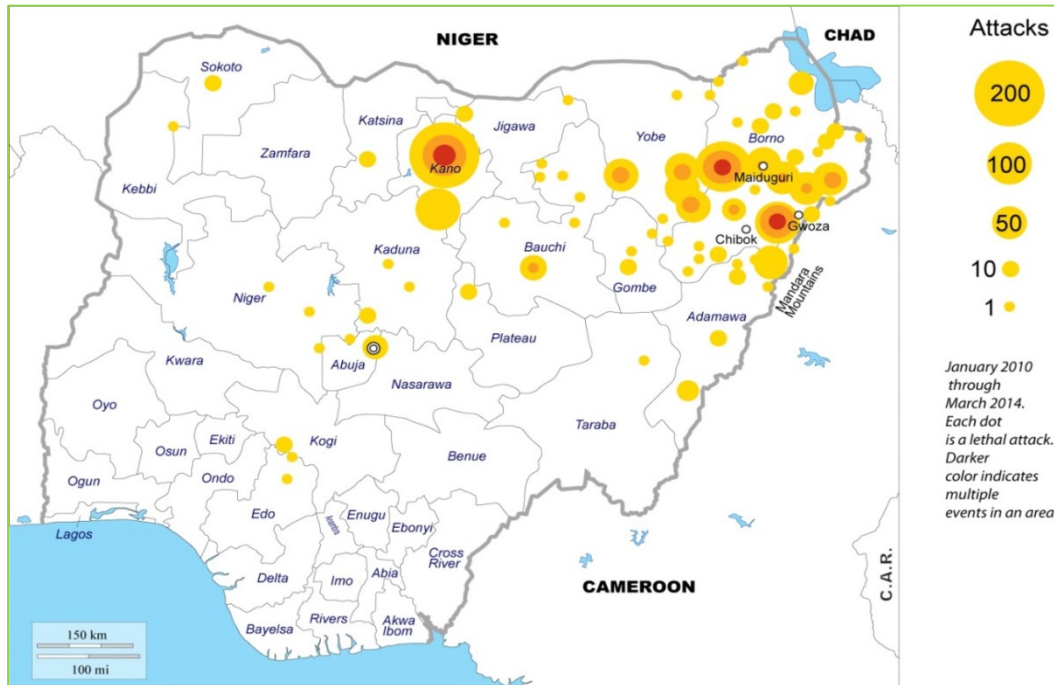
The Nigerian government's military-oriented response has failed to stem the violence. While the Nigerian military has occasionally been able to eliminate elements within Boko Haram's leadership and rank and file, the group has proven to be highly resilient. After declaring a state of emergency in the northeast, the government launched an offensive targeting Boko Haram's safe havens in May 2013. Despite an initial disruption of its activities, in 2014 Boko Haram grew increasingly active and brazen in its attacks against both civilians and government targets.³ Its tactics have also become increasingly more sophisticated. The failure of the government to contain the violence, the recent bombings in the south and in the Federal Territory of Abuja, and Boko Haram's threats to disrupt the 2015 presidential election have created a crisis of legitimacy for the Nigerian government.

¹ United States National Counterterrorism Center. *Terrorist Groups: Boko Haram*. Accessed July 31, 2014. http://www.nctc.gov/site/groups/boko_haram.html.

² James J.F. Forest. *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*. JSOU Report 12-5, Joint Special Operations University, May 2012.

³ Jacob Zenn. "Leadership Analysis of Boko Haram and Ansaru in Nigeria," *CTC Sentinel* 7, issue 2 (2014): 1-9. Accessed 20 June 2014. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/leadership-analysis-of-boko-haram-and-ansaru-in-nigeria>.

Figure 1. Boko Haram attacks, January 2010 – March 2014



Source: ACLED (Armed Conflict Location and Event Data). Derived from map prepared by Reuters and appearing in "Nigerian Islamists Kill 12 in Village Attack," Reuters, February 28, 2014. From: <http://in.reuters.com/article/2014/02/27/nigeria-bokoharam-idINDEEA1Q0GY20140227>.

In recent years, the United States has been working in partnership with the government of Nigeria to counter Boko Haram. The U.S. government (USG) sees Boko Haram as a threat to U.S. interests in Africa, and potentially to the U.S. homeland. In November 2013, the USG designated Boko Haram a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).⁴ The USG regards Nigeria as a key strategic partner—as "Africa's most populous nation, its largest democracy, a significant contributor to peacekeeping efforts across the continent, [and] a crucial partner for economic growth, trade and

⁴ The U.S. Department of State makes FTO designations. According to the Department of State website, an organization must meet three criteria in order to be designated an FTO: (1) it must be a foreign organization; (2) it must engage in terrorist activity, or retain the capability and intent to engage in terrorist activity or terrorism; and (3) its terrorist activity or terrorism must threaten the security of U.S. nationals or the national security (national defense, foreign relations, or the economic interests) of the United States.

direct investment with the United States.”⁵ As a senior USG official stated, “Peace and security in Nigeria is one of our highest foreign policy priorities in Africa.”⁶

U.S. assistance to Nigeria increased since May 2014, after Boko Haram kidnapped 270 schoolgirls from the northeastern town of Chibok. In response, President Obama directed the USG to “do everything it can to help the Nigerian government find and free the abducted girls.”⁷ Beyond the focus on the Chibok kidnappings, the president stated that the United States would work more broadly to combat Boko Haram “in partnership with Nigeria, its neighbors, and other allies.”⁸ The president made clear that U.S. support would come in multiple forms but that “the goal is singular: to dismantle this murderous group.”⁹

Over the past decade, the USG has had extensive experience acting in partnership with foreign governments to counter militant extremist organizations across the globe. For example, the United States supported Iraq and Afghanistan in taking on insurgencies that continue to shake the stability of both countries. The United States also continues to support the governments of Yemen, Pakistan, and the Philippines in their efforts to quell the violence and instability caused by terrorist groups in these countries. But this work has been difficult, taxing, and expensive—and it has not always paid off in ways the United States intends. Generally speaking, the USG’s track record in assisting other countries in their fights against militant and extremist group is mixed: there have been some successes (such as the cases of the Philippines and Colombia) but also real setbacks. The key determinant to success seems to be the quality of the counterinsurgent regime and its willingness to accept assistance in employing a whole-of-government approach to addressing the conflict.

This report is the final product of a multi-step research project focused on understanding Boko Haram in Nigeria and how best to counter the group. The overall project was sponsored by U.S. Naval Forces Africa (NAVAF). As requested by NAVAF, the results of the study are intended for its higher headquarters, U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), since AFRICOM is responsible for directing U.S. military activities in Africa, and coordinating them with the U.S. interagency. As a result, we

⁵ “US DC Clinton.” AP Archive. August 4, 2010. Accessed July 31, 2014. <http://www.aparchive.com>.

⁶ Testimony of Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights before the House Foreign Affairs Committee. Washington, D.C. May 21, 2014. Transcript: <http://www.state.gov/j/226424.htm>.

⁷ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Washington, D.C. “U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against Boko Haram.” October 14, 2014. <http://www.uspolicy.be/headline/white-house-facts-us-aid-nigeria-against-boko-haram>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

believe our findings have relevance for any USG entity contributing to countering Boko Haram.

Methodology

Our analysis involved five steps. First, we conducted an assessment of the Boko Haram conflict. A conflict assessment is an analytical process undertaken to identify and understand the dynamics of violence and instability, and to develop an independent, objective view of a conflict. This process allowed us to uncover the crucial elements of conflict in northeastern Nigeria and assess how they interact. We developed a conflict assessment framework by combining relevant elements of existing analytic frameworks designed by a range of USG agencies, including the Department of Defense, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and the Department of State. We also included elements of conflict assessments developed by scholars and academics by conducting a literature review on the various types of methodologies relevant to the situation in Nigeria (i.e., assessment frameworks dealing with internal conflict, counterinsurgency, and countering violent-extremism and terrorism). Also in this step, we analyzed systems thinking and dynamic causality theories to assist us in moving from a fragmented approach to a more comprehensive framework. Our conflict assessment included analysis of historical context, sources of tension and conflict drivers, institutional resilience, key actors, and likely conflict trajectories. Through this process, *we diagnosed the conflict in northeastern Nigeria as an insurgency.*

Second, since we diagnosed Boko Haram as an insurgency, we derived “best practices” for counterinsurgency (COIN) from contemporary government literature in order to identify the ideal types of measures that should be pursued to address the conflict in northeastern Nigeria effectively. Based on the United States’ and the broader international community’s successes, challenges, and failures in fighting insurgencies in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Philippines, and Colombia (as well as other insurgencies throughout history, such as those in Algeria and Vietnam), there is significant (but not complete) consensus across the USG, partner nations, academia, and the think tank community on how to effectively counter an insurgency. We recognize that these best practices are generic in nature and that each conflict requires a tailored approach with some elements (e.g., kinetic operations or negotiations) being more important than others.

To identify COIN best practices, we collected and distilled existing research and identified eight elements of a COIN strategy that many experts seem to agree are necessary for success. We translated these into “best practices” that any government seeking to counter an insurgency should strongly consider implementing. The eight best practices we present are generic and not conflict-specific. In subsequent stages of our analysis, we also considered critical political, economic, and social dynamics,

unique to Nigeria, that impact how the best practices could be implemented in that country. Appendix A lists the sources we used for this analysis.

We acknowledge that there is considerable debate within the COIN literature and community of experts regarding the efficacy of existing COIN approaches, and that not all scholars or practitioners will agree with the eight best practices we identified. However, resolving this debate was outside the scope of this study. Additionally, we recognize that the USG has taken a position in this debate, via the issuance of COIN doctrine (e.g., in the U.S. military's Joint Publication 3-24 or U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24). These doctrinal publications largely confirm the eight best practices that we identified. As such, while not ideologically satisfying to all scholars, we find it practically useful in this study to rely on best practices tacitly endorsed by elements of the USG when making recommendations to the U.S. government.

Third, we compared efforts by the USG and the government of Nigeria (GoN) to address Boko Haram, against the COIN best practices identified, in order to understand the degree to which each government has been implementing the best practices so far. For this analysis, we did an inventory of all GoN and USG efforts (programs, initiatives, activities, etc.) to counter Boko Haram since 2009.

Fourth, we identified steps that the GoN would need to take in order to implement a COIN approach as defined by the eight best practices.

Finally, as best practices can't be applied in a vacuum, we filtered the results of the fourth step through several key contextual realities (e.g., political, economic, and social) within Nigeria and the USG that have shaped the responses of each government.

Using the results of these five steps, we derived strategic-level conclusions and recommendations that the USG should consider in its efforts to work with the GoN, as a partner, to achieve U.S. objectives with regard to the conflict. At the request of our sponsor, we provide greater granularity on the military aspects of a Boko Haram COIN campaign. To be clear, at this time we are not suggesting that the USG should playing a lead role in conducting a COIN campaign in Nigeria. As the local government, the GoN should be in the lead of a COIN campaign with the USG and any other partners playing a supporting role.

An Assessment of the Boko Haram Conflict

The conflict in northeast Nigeria is complex, driven by a mix of historical, political, economic, and ethnic antagonisms. Resolving it will require a deep understanding of conflict dynamics, as well as the motivations and capabilities of various key actors. To date, few such comprehensive analyses of the Boko Haram conflict have been attempted. As a result, there is still some debate as to exactly what kind of conflict—insurgency, inter-ethnic warfare, opportunistic criminality, or revolutionary terrorism—is actually taking place in northeast Nigeria. In order to develop an effective response to the threat posed by Boko Haram, the Nigerian government and its international partners must properly diagnose the conflict and comprehend it as an evolving system that can be affected through targeted interventions.

In order to accurately diagnose the Boko Haram conflict, we conducted a conflict assessment, which is an analytical process undertaken to identify and understand the dynamics of violence and instability, in order to inform the development of an independent, balanced view of a conflict.¹⁰ It uncovers the crucial elements of an armed conflict and assesses how they interact, in order to assist planners in the development of programs that can most effectively support partner nations' efforts to manage conflict. Conflict assessments also help ensure that assistance programs are more "conflict sensitive"—that is, to make sure their impact is the intended one.¹¹

The conflict assessment framework we used was developed by combining relevant elements of existing analytical frameworks designed by various USG agencies and scholars within academia for use in dissecting and understanding internal conflicts, insurgency, and violent extremist organizations (VEOs). Our conflict assessment framework consisted of six elements:

¹⁰ Patricio Asfura-Heim and Julia McQuaid. *Diagnosing the Boko Haram Conflict: Grievances, Motivations, and Institutional Resilience in Northeast Nigeria*. CNA Occasional Paper DOP-2014-U-009272-Final. January 21, 2015. <https://www.cna.org/research/2015/diagnosing-boko-haram-conflict>.

¹¹ Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID. *Conflict Assessment Framework, Version 2.0*. June 2012.

1. **Context:** We mapped out longstanding conditions resistant to change in Nigeria, immutable facts on the ground, and historical narratives which frame the conflict. Specifically, we examined fault lines between ethno-religious communities, fundamentalist and secessionist tendencies in the north, the impact of economic transformation on northern communities, and structural factors such as the “political rules of the game.”
2. **Sources of tension and conflict drivers:** We identified the contemporary sources of tension which likely contributed to Boko Haram’s emergence and the conflict drivers which sustain the group today. Specifically, we examined issues such as the failure of national governance; political exclusion; institutionalized corruption; economic disenfranchisement; and persistent sectarian violence.
3. **Institutional resilience:** We assessed a number of institutions for resolving state and social disputes, which under normal conditions and in a functioning society, could help resolve conflict through non-violent means. Specifically, we examined official state rule of law institutions and the established religious leadership in the north.
4. **Key actors:** Key actors are people and organizations that have an impact on social patterns and institutional performance, are able to shape perceptions and mobilize people, and are able to provide means to support other key actors. We identified and assessed the various parties to the conflict, including the Boko Haram militant group, the national government, and important traditional leaders and civil society actors. Specifically, for each actor or group, we examined motivations and grievances, interests, means and resources (including funding and recruitment), relations with other key players, strategies and tactics, capacity, and levels of public support.
5. **Conflict diagnosis:** Based on our analysis of elements, and relying on accepted typologies from internal conflict, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism (CT) literature, we then diagnosed and categorized the nature of the conflict in northern Nigeria. Because conflicts generally evolve in stages, we also sought to identify the “time phase” in which the conflict currently resides.
6. **Trajectory of the conflict:** In order to develop effective assistance programs, it is crucial that planners and decision-makers not only understand the current state of the conflict but also have a sense of how the conflict is trending. Therefore, we developed several potential future scenarios.

Results of the conflict assessment

Our analysis concludes that *Boko Haram is a local, ethnic-based (Kanuri) revolutionary insurgent group* which utilizes subversion, classic guerilla tactics, and terrorism to achieve its goals.¹² Its fundamental objective is to replace the existing political order by overthrowing the secular Nigerian state and installing an Islamic government.¹³ It is a product of local context and conditions, and an extreme manifestation of local identity politics. It is motivated by a variety of social, political, and economic grievances and is organized around a fundamentalist / rejectionist ideology. It is sustained by the GoN's neglect and counterproductive security measures.¹⁴

In its current form, Boko Haram is a destabilizing force but it does not present an existential threat to the Nigerian government and its security services. Because of its extreme tactics, indiscriminant violence, and unpopular ideology, it currently lacks true grassroots support—although its grievances are shared by many northern Nigerians and its goals resonate with a large percentage of Nigerian Muslims.

There is little reporting to suggest that Boko Haram (unlike other insurgent groups, such as Afghanistan's Taliban) is attempting to carry out a politically organized insurgency—which, by definition, requires the development of complex political structures in tandem with military operations. Boko Haram does not employ any form of “shadow governance” to control territory; nor does it attempt the political mobilization of the population (though it has tried to impose order by administering Sharia law in the towns and villages it has occupies). Instead, Boko Haram relies exclusively on a military model to achieve its insurgent goals. It began in 2009 as an urban-cellular insurgency which relied primarily on terrorism, and has since morphed into a rural insurgency that has added guerilla tactics to its repertoire.¹⁵ This type of insurgency is what counterinsurgency scholar David Galula has termed

¹² The U.S. Department of Defense defines insurgency as “an organized movement aimed at the overthrow of a constituted government through use of subversion and armed conflict.”

¹³ Some analysts argue the conflict is merely a separatist insurgency that wishes to carve out an Islamic state in the north but does not in actuality have a national agenda. Others argue that the group is simply a terrorist organization and or a criminal syndicate. However, taken at face value, Boko Haram's communiques and propaganda suggest larger objectives which include the overthrow of the current regime.

¹⁴ Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, USAID. *Nigeria Cross-Sectoral Conflict Assessment*. August 2014.

¹⁵ Guerrilla tactics are intended not only to wear down the government's conventional forces, but also to provoke them into conducting reprisals against the general population, which they rightly or wrongly perceive as aiding the insurgents.

the Bourgeois-Nationalist, or “shortcut” pattern. It depends heavily on acts of terrorism, conducted in spectacular fashion, to get publicity for the movement and to attract latent supporters.¹⁶ Today, Boko Haram also uses “enforcement” terror to instill fear in wavering supporters and employs “agitation” terror against representatives of the government and those who support it.

At this stage in the conflict, it appears that Boko Haram’s operational objective is to subvert the northern elites and undermine the government’s legitimacy in order to separate them from the Muslim population. While its long-term strategy is difficult to discern, it is reasonable to assume that Boko Haram believes that its military successes and the resulting weakening and de-legitimization of the government will cause the Muslim population to rally to its cause.

The conflict is currently being driven by a number of factors. First and foremost is the continued desire of Boko Haram to achieve its objective of regime change, which stems from its aforementioned grievances relating to poor governance and north-south economic disparities. Underlying conditions—including large numbers of unemployed youth, strong Islamic fundamentalist/rejectionist currents in the northeast, ethno-religious tensions, and competition over political power—ensure that Boko Haram can recruit enough new members to stay viable.

It is important to note that the causes and drivers of the conflict have themselves been profoundly reshaped as the conflict has evolved. Today, the conflict is also being perpetuated by the Nigerian government itself, which has responded with a heavy-handed counterterrorism strategy that pays little attention to underlying contextual realities and root causes. The government’s approach has further alienated the already disaffected northeastern communities, which, for the most part, remain hesitant to cooperate with the security forces or provide them with the necessary intelligence required for pin-point, network-centric operations. Because the government is unable to conduct surgical strikes against the insurgents, its operations often result in indiscriminate killings—which expand the pool of potential insurgent recruits and solidify a sense that the government is an equally liable party to the violence. Moreover, despite an increased military presence in the north, the government has been unable to protect the population from Boko Haram attacks and retaliatory raids, and, as a result, has lost a great deal of credibility. Boko Haram retains considerable freedom of movement in the northeast and enjoys access to sanctuaries in the Kanuri-dominated areas of Chad, Niger, and Cameroon.

¹⁶ While this approach may save years of organizational and political work, it has a weakness: the terrorist group’s tactics may backfire by losing it any public support it could have hoped to gain. See: David Galula. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 1964.

Lastly, the conflict is being prolonged by the weakness of conflict mitigation institutions in the northeast, such as traditional leaders and civil society organizations that either have been contaminated by their relationships with the government or have been cowed by Boko Haram's murder and intimidation campaign. The lack of legitimacy of the Nigerian government, as well as the fractured nature of the Islamic community in the north, has had direct implications for the ability of Nigeria's non-governmental actors to counter Boko Haram's radical narrative.

While an increase of attacks and the government's inappropriate and ineffective response have resulted in a decrease in the GoN's legitimacy, Boko Haram has failed to capitalize on it. Because of the group's extreme tactics and the indiscriminate violence perpetuated by its new leadership, it has squandered the grassroots support it enjoyed prior to 2009. It has, at least temporarily, lost the backing of even the most fundamentalist segments of Nigeria's Muslim population, who ironically still largely share the group's rejectionist, anti-state sentiments. Importantly, Boko Haram has also struggled to garner substantial external support (moral, political, technical, financial, or military) from other jihadi groups or from a foreign government.

Finally, at this time it is unclear how the insurgency will be resolved. If a stalemate develops, over time Boko Haram could devolve into a criminal or terrorist organization with some factions negotiating truces with the government. Another plausible scenario involves an expansion of the conflict and the creation of a secessionist "Islamic Caliphate" if Boko Haram can moderate its extremist tactics (potentially brought about by a change in leadership or the creation of a political front) in order to tap into the vast reserves of anti-government sentiment and religious fundamentalism in the north. A more ominous—if less likely—outcome could be the "Somaliaization" of Nigeria, if Boko Haram can sufficiently accelerate Nigeria's centrifugal forces (ethno-religious divides, power politics, and economic grievances) to cause the state to collapse from within.

Divergent Approaches to Countering Boko Haram

Given our assessment that Boko Haram is an insurgent group, an effective response to the group should follow the tenets of a counterinsurgency approach. To understand whether the GoN and the USG have been following such an approach, we identified eight “best practices” for COIN and compared efforts by the USG and GoN to date with these best practices. In this chapter, we outline the eight COIN best practices, assess current and past GoN and USG efforts relative to these best practices, and compare the two governments’ approaches to each other.

Counterinsurgency best practices

To compare current and past approaches to an effective COIN approach, we derived eight generic COIN “best practices” that any government fighting an insurgency should consider implementing. In their COIN efforts, governments should distribute resources, programs, activities, and other efforts so that each of the eight best practices receives an appropriate level of support and attention, depending on the nature of the conflict. Insurgencies differ from country to country and through time. The internal political, economic, and social dynamics—all of which are at play in a conflict—greatly vary from one situation to another. As a result, the appropriate blend of best practices, and the degree of attention each receives relative to the others, will differ from conflict to conflict.

In Table 1, we identify the eight COIN best practices. For each, we briefly describe the specific steps that COIN governments and other stakeholders should take to support the best practice.

Table 1. COIN best practices

Best Practice	Description
1. Devise a strategy that is built on an analytically derived conflict assessment	Stakeholders should devise a strategy that is rooted in a balanced assessment of the conflict and identify programs, activities, and actions that address the drivers of the conflict.
2. Implement a coordinated whole-of-government approach	Pursue an integrated, multi-agency approach that draws from and coordinates resources, expertise, and programs from across the spectrum of government functions, to include military, diplomatic, and development. ¹⁷
3. Bolster government legitimacy	Focus on taking measures that will garner support within the population for the government as the legitimate authority in power, responsible for providing security and the protection of citizens; practice good governance; use legitimacy to discredit the insurgency.
4. Protect the population	Protect the population from the insurgent group; provide humanitarian support and employ local defense groups as appropriate.
5. Address the root causes of the conflict	Identify, assess, and take measures to ameliorate the political, economic, and social conditions that contributed to the rise of the insurgency (and its perpetuation).
6. Attack the insurgent network	Employ kinetic (military, law enforcement) and non-kinetic (intelligence, technological) assets to physically dismantle the insurgency group's infrastructure and target its leadership and membership.
7. Cut off support and eliminate sanctuaries	Cut off internal and external support to the insurgency group, which includes financial, logistical, ideological, and physical sanctuary.
8. Pursue opportunities to reach a settlement to the conflict	Identify and devise a political plan that is agreed upon by all stakeholders in the conflict to settle differences (includes negotiations, concessions, incentives, settlements, amnesty, and ceasefires).

¹⁷ Jim Garamone. "New National Strategy Takes 'Whole-of-Government' Approach." American Forces Press Service. May 10, 2010. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=59377>.

Comparing current efforts to COIN best practices

The GoN and the USG have both taken measures to counter Boko Haram. In this section, we compare efforts by the GoN and the USG to the COIN best practices in order to understand which have been implemented, and to what degree.

Best practice 1: Devise a strategy that is built on an analytically derived conflict assessment

To be successful, the COIN government needs to have an articulated strategy, based on an accurate diagnosis of the conflict. This ensures that all activities, programs, and resources are being directed at the same objectives for the conflict, on matching timelines. Otherwise, efforts risk being misdirected, inappropriate for the goals, overlapping, or unnecessary altogether. The same is true for supporting partners.

The GoN

The GoN's approach to the Boko Haram conflict has not been clearly articulated in an overarching or comprehensive strategy that states objectives and timelines. The approach to date has primarily consisted of reactive efforts, which have not been coordinated among the various government entities involved in the conflict. What little strategy one can detect in the GoN's response (mostly through government rhetoric) resembles a CT strategy more than a COIN strategy. The GoN propagates the notion that Boko Haram is a terrorist organization with links to global terrorist networks, operating in Nigeria. It does not publicly recognize that the conflict is the result of conditions and grievances in Nigeria. This at least in part accounts for the GoN's narrow CT approach that might be appropriate for countering an Al-Qaeda branch operating in Nigeria, for example, but not for a full-blown insurgency. In May 2014, the chief of defense staff (CDS), Air Chief Marshal Alex Badeh, declared that the GoN was "at war with the international terror organization, Al-Qaeda, in North and West Africa, and not Boko Haram."¹⁸ Similarly, a Maiduguri military base spokesman noted, "Here they call it Boko Haram, but Boko Haram is totally Al-Qaeda. The name does not matter. The characteristics are the same. All the terrorists are in

¹⁸ Gbade Ogunwale. "We are fighting Al-Qaeda, not Boko Haram, says CDS." *The Nation*. May 29, 2014. <http://thenationonlineng.net/new/fighting-al-qaeda-boko-haram-says-cds/>.

one group. They have one activity, one [way of] thinking. Al-Qaeda has no boundary. There are perfect links. It's exactly the same as Al-Qaeda."¹⁹

Some government officials depict Boko Haram as merely the most recent manifestation of a long history in Nigeria of militant groups, with anti-government agendas to emerge and “cause trouble.” This perspective downplays the threat, pointing to the fact that the violence has mostly stayed in the northeast, and has not touched most of the 180 million Nigerians in the country.

The USG

Because the USG is a supporting partner, its approach to Boko Haram has been pursued within the context of its broader relationship with Nigeria. As the Boko Haram conflict has intensified over time, the USG has responded and this is reflected in the broad range of activities the USG has implemented to address the conflict specifically. The USG strategy continues to evolve over time in a way that allows the USG to remain responsive to the conflict—and its potential threat to U.S. interests—while at the same time protecting our broader interests in Nigeria.

Best practice 2: Implement a coordinated whole-of-government approach

Insurgencies are brought about and perpetuated by a spectrum of complex political, social, and economic dynamics within a country. Therefore, in order to effectively counter an insurgency, the COIN government must devise a whole-of-government approach that draws from and coordinates the activities of a broad spectrum of government agencies to address the range of dynamics at play. These include the agencies responsible for the diplomatic, economic, development, intelligence, and law enforcement functions of government.

The GoN

The GoN has not pursued a whole-of-government approach to the conflict in the northeast. Rather, it has employed primarily the security, military, and law enforcement branches of the state over other branches of the government in a narrow CT approach. Nigeria, like many of its African neighbors, is a relatively young nation, where state institutions are still developing. When facing a challenge to its authority from an internal, armed group, the typical response of the GoN (and of many other young nations) has been to employ the instruments of state power to

¹⁹ Alex Perry. “Boko Haram: Terror’s Insidious New Face.” *Newsweek*. July 9, 2014. <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/07/18/boko-haram-terrors-insidious-new-face-257935.html>.

regain control and restore law and order through the use of force.²⁰ Historically, the Nigerian armed forces are at the forefront during periods when law and order have broken down: in past conflicts that were similar to the Boko Haram conflict, the GoN has sent in military forces to restore normalcy.²¹

What little government coordination has taken place exists mainly within the Joint Task Force (JTF), a model that the GoN uses to coordinate military and police activities in response to internal crises or conflicts. Specifically, it includes elements from “the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Police Force, the State Security Service, the Air Force and a host of security intelligence units.”²² While the JTF model has served as a coordinating mechanism (at least theoretically) again, it has only drawn from the military assets of the state. It has not integrated other government functions that are required in order to end the conflict.

In March 2014, there was a shift in the GoN’s rhetoric concerning how it would respond to the conflict. The national security adviser (NSA), Col. Sambo Dasuki, announced that the GoN would be pursuing a “soft approach strategy” to deal with the situation going forward. The “soft approach” is being touted as including far-reaching socio-economic programs such as improving education in the affected areas as well as activities to reduce the extreme poverty in the north. Finally, the NSA announced that it would also include a religious education element. As of the writing of this report, there is little evidence to show that the soft approach has been implemented by the GoN. While it marks a shift in the government’s rhetoric concerning an appropriate response to the conflict, the type of programming or coordination one would expect to implement the approach described by Col. Dasuki does not appear to have taken place.

Finally, the current administration of Goodluck Jonathan is heavily focused on winning the February 2015 election. Since taking office, President Jonathan has personally shown a generally tepid reaction towards the northeast (even in the aftermath of the Chibok kidnappings). In sending in the military while also trying to negotiate a deal with Boko Haram, he has directed national attention and resources

²⁰ Lt. Col. Ko Ukandu. “The Whole-of-Government Approach to Managing Internal Security Threat in Nigeria.” Directing Staff Department of Land Warfare, hosted on www.academia.edu. Accessed December 5, 2014. https://www.academia.edu/6239934/THE_WHOLE_OF_GOVERNMENT_Final_corrected_VERSION_2_

²¹ Ibid. In the 1990s, the GoN used a military approach to crush the Maitatsine Movement, an Islamist movement in Nigeria that is in some ways considered a precursor to Boko Haram. Its success may have left the erroneous impression that the government could use the same approach and achieve the same outcome with Boko Haram years later.

²² Victoria Ibezim-Ohaeri. “Opinion: Disbanding the JTF in the North-east was a grave mistake.” *YNaija*. February 2014. <http://ynaija.com/opinion-disbanding-the-jtf-in-the-north-east-was-a-grave-mistake/>.

in a way that seems to allow him to take credit for “something” while actually achieving little.

The USG

The USG has taken a whole-of-government approach to Boko Haram. As indicated by a senior State Department official, the U.S. response has entailed “broad multifaceted assistance.”²³ This remark is in line with President Barack Obama’s statement that “the war against Boko Haram....requires a holistic approach.”²⁴ In this vein, the USG has pursued the following lines of effort to counter Boko Haram:

- **Diplomacy:** The USG consistently sends the message that a whole-of-government approach to the Boko Haram conflict is required for success: “The fight against Boko Haram requires more than just military action; it requires a comprehensive approach to improving the lives of people in Northeast Nigeria.”²⁵
- **Military support:** While there are limitations, the USG has provided training, equipment, and advising to the Nigerian military in its fight against Boko Haram. It has also focused on professionalism and human rights practices.
- **Law enforcement:** The USG has provided support to the Nigerian police forces in the areas of investigation, forensics, and negotiations.
- **Intelligence:** The USG has provided training and advising, and has looked into ways it can share intelligence with the GoN.
- **Development:** The USG has long been investing in programs to improve education, health, gender issues, and other development issues in conflict-affected areas. The USG has also focused on improving governance in Nigeria.
- **Humanitarian:** The USG has provided humanitarian assistance to the populations in the northeast.

²³ USG Official. Africa Policy Breakfast on Instability in Northern Nigeria and the Ongoing Threat of Boko Haram. November 2014. Washington, D.C.

²⁴ Abiodun Oluwarotimi. “Nigeria: Obama - War Against Boko Haram Requires Holistic Approach.” *All Africa*. May 15, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201405151415.html>.

²⁵ Testimony of Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Washington, D.C. May 21, 2014. Transcript: <http://www.state.gov/j/226424.htm>.

- Countering violent extremism (CVE): The USG has worked to improve governance, worked with communities vulnerable to Boko Haram recruitment, and devised ways to counter radical narratives.²⁶

The level of U.S. involvement in the Boko Haram conflict spiked in the aftermath of the Chibok kidnappings in April 2014, when the GoN reached out to the United States for assistance. In response, the USG deployed a multi-agency team of experts. It also provided intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support, which included sharing specific intelligence relating to the kidnapped girls, training Nigerian security forces, augmenting U.S. embassy personnel, and deploying a team of 16 people from various USG agencies. The interagency team focused on supporting the Nigerian government in five areas: intelligence, law enforcement, support to the families of kidnapped girls and the girls who escaped, strategic communications, and preventing future kidnappings.²⁷

Best practice 3: Bolster government legitimacy

In any insurgency, the COIN government competes with the insurgency for the support of the local population. To prevail, the COIN government must foster a sense of trust that *it* is the legitimate authority in power—over the insurgent group. In broad terms, practicing good governance, adhering to the rule of law, remaining responsive to the needs of the people, and, in general, demonstrating that the state has the population's protection and interests at heart all contribute to government legitimacy. Government legitimacy can be bolstered through establishing trust that the COIN government is capable of defeating the insurgent group and restoring order in a way that does not result in greater misery and harm for the populations living in the areas affected by the conflict. Taking actions that fail to protect people—or worse, that cause them harm or death—erodes state legitimacy.

The GoN

Five years into the GoN's efforts to counter Boko Haram, the population is deeply suspicious of the state. The people do not trust its intentions or its ability to defeat Boko Haram. Through its actions, the GoN has failed to bolster its own legitimacy in the eyes of the local population, at any level of government. This failure has occurred

²⁶ U.S. Department of State. "Boko Haram and U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance to Nigeria." Washington, D.C. October 28, 2014. <http://www.humanrights.gov/fact-sheet-boko-haram-and-u.s.-counterterrorism-assistance-to-nigeria>.

²⁷ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. *FACT SHEET: U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against Boko Haram*. Washington, D.C. October 14, 2014. <http://www.uspolicy.be/headline/white-house-facts-us-aid-nigeria-against-boko-haram>.

even though Boko Haram does not enjoy popular support from the population. In fact, although the average person living in the northeast may find resonance with some of the group's grievances, overall the people in the affected areas revile the group due to its harsh, inhuman tactics.

Many of the GoN's actions not only have undermined its legitimacy but also have become a driver of the conflict (and have served as a useful tool for Boko Haram in its recruitment efforts). Many examples illustrate this dynamic, such as the Nigerian police's summary execution of the group's first leader, Muhammed Yusuf, while in police custody in 2009.²⁸ The military JTF, which is intended to be the GoN's primary asset in defeating Boko Haram, not only has failed to crush the group but also is responsible for sowing much of the mistrust and doubt that currently exist within the population. Locals accuse it of operating like an army of occupation. Unable to distinguish Boko Haram members from innocent civilians, JTF forces resort to arbitrary dragnet arrests, collective punishment, illegal detentions, and, in some instances, extra-judicial killings. Nigeria's endemic corruption has also eroded the population's confidence and trust in the political leadership at *any* level of government.

The USG

The COIN government is ultimately the only actor that can establish its own legitimacy in the eyes of its population. Legitimacy is linked to the decisions that the government makes and the actions it takes, particularly when competing with an insurgency. The USG, as a supporting partner, has assisted the GoN in ways that aim to improve governance and reform within Nigeria (elements that theoretically bolster state legitimacy in the eyes of the people). Whether this programming has a real effect, however, depends on the degree to which the GoN sincerely adopts it into practice.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) programs are aimed at fostering good governance in Nigeria, addressing corruption, and providing human rights training. According to USAID's Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Nigeria homepage:

USAID supports responsive governance at state and local levels, enhanced credibility for elections, and increased capacity for civic engagement. USAID builds capacity in key government agencies to strengthen fiscal responsibilities and improve transparency. In addition, USAID advances the rule of law by strengthening the

²⁸ Ibid.

capacity and transparency of the justice system and increasing judicial independence at the federal level.²⁹

In addition, the USG has used a variety of diplomatic channels to encourage reform and to improve governance across all levels of government. The U.S.-Regional Security Working Group of the Nigeria Binational Commission, launched in 2010, aims to support Nigeria's efforts to increase public confidence in the military and policy-makers to respond more effectively to the extremist threat.³⁰ The United States engages on an ongoing basis with the GoN regarding these assistance programs through its embassy in Abuja as well.

Best practice 4: Protect the population

Protecting the population from the violence perpetrated by insurgent groups is a key factor in an effective COIN approach. The state has the monopoly on force (at least in theory) and is therefore responsible for protecting the population. An inability to do so undermines the legitimacy of the state. Furthermore, the COIN government needs to respond to the humanitarian needs (shelter, food, medical care, etc.) of the population affected by the conflict. Beyond issues of morality, a failure to meet the basic needs of local populations puts them in a potentially desperate situation—one that could drive them into the hands of the insurgency. Furthermore, for similar reasons, it is critical that COIN governments use kinetic force carefully and discriminately in order to avoid killing or harming civilians.

The GoN

The Nigerian Army and security forces have not provided protection to the local population throughout the conflict. First, there is a constant state of public insecurity,³¹ due to the near-daily acts of violence perpetrated by Boko Haram that include attacks by gunmen, kidnappings for ransom, burning of public buildings, and bombings. The Nigerian security forces are also accused of executing men in front of their families, arresting and beating people who have not been charged, and burning

²⁹ USAID Website. "Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance Nigeria homepage." Accessed December 2, 2014. <http://www.usaid.gov/nigeria/democracy-human-rights-and-governance>.

³⁰ Lauren Ploch Blanchard. *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 10 June 2014. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>.

³¹ Al Chukwuma Okoli and Philip Iortyer. "Terrorism and Humanitarian Crisis in Nigeria: Insights from Boko Haram Insurgency." *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 14, Issue 1, Version 1.0, 2014. https://globaljournals.org/GJHSS_Volume14/6-Terrorism-and-Humanitarian-Crisis-in-Nigeria.pdf.

houses, shops, and cars.³² Second, economic activity and income-earning activities have slowed to a halt. The violent enforcement of curfews and restricted movement imposed as part of the state of emergency, and the sense of crippling fear that has driven people to leave or hide, have all disrupted “normal productive agricultural and commercial activities.”³³ Third, there are rampant, persistent human rights abuses on the part of Boko Haram and the Nigerian security forces and military. Fourth, as of October 2014, at least 3.3 million people were estimated to be displaced as a result of the conflict in northern Nigeria.³⁴ Finally, since July 2009, at least 11,000 people have died on all sides of the insurgency.³⁵ This number may actually be considerably higher since the data on casualties are not well reported and tracked.

In recent years, to make up for its inability to do so itself, the Nigerian Army has tried to improve the safety of civilians by leaning on civilian joint task forces (CJTFs), which are militias and self-help groups being mobilized for self-defense against Boko Haram. In Borno State, these groups are working with state security forces to protect their neighborhoods and villages and to reduce instances of collateral damage and civilian deaths during military operations.³⁶ Media reports suggest that the groups have had some success in improving security in the capital city of Maiduguri.

From a humanitarian perspective, conditions have severely deteriorated in the northeast since 2009—particularly in Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa states, which have been in a state of emergency since 2013. Aid organizations report that conflict has resulted in one of grimmest humanitarian crises in Nigerian history. Instead of remedying the humanitarian situation over the course of the conflict, the government of Nigeria has allowed the situation to continue to deteriorate.

The GoN began providing some limited humanitarian relief in mid May 2014 via the GoN National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA). Aid is primarily in the form of emergency relief items, medical supplies, food, and other assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs). NEMA has also taken the lead role in the humanitarian

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection. *Nigeria*. ECHO Factsheet. Accessed November 37, 2014. http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/nigeria_en.pdf.

³⁵ Nathaniel Allen, Peter M. Lewis, Hilary Matfess. “The Boko Haram Insurgency by the numbers.” *Washington Post*, The Monkey Cage Blog. October 6, 2014. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/10/06/the-boko-haram-insurgency-by-the-numbers/>.

³⁶ Lauren Ploch Blanchard. *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 10 June 2014. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>.

response in Chibok, providing medical support to the families and the girls who have escaped.³⁷ In addition, it has set up approximately 20 IDP camps across the three states.³⁸ The Borno State government has dedicated \$150 million for a rehabilitation program for individuals who have escaped from Boko Haram captivity.³⁹ In partnership with the USG, the state government set up programs to provide medical and psychiatric support to the most affected populations, with a focus on Maiduguri.⁴⁰ The ability of NEMA and international aid organizations has been hampered by the ongoing state of emergency declared in May 2013 in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states, where humanitarian needs are the greatest.

The USG

The USG, via USAID and its implementing partners, has been providing a wide range of humanitarian relief to the populations affected by the conflict. In fiscal year (FY) 2014, the USG provided more than \$10.7 million in humanitarian assistance “for vulnerable and conflict-affected households in Nigeria.”⁴¹ With this in mind, the State Department and USAID programs have aimed to increase education for women in northern Nigeria, provide food aid, deliver health services (including vaccinations), and offer support for IDPs and refugees in Cameroon.⁴² As of July 2014, U.S. humanitarian assistance had been distributed, broken down by percentage, into the following areas in the conflict-affected zone:⁴³

- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (17%)
- Economic Recovery & Market Systems (18%)

³⁷ UN OCHA. *Humanitarian Bulletin for Nigeria*. Accessed December 4, 2014. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HB%20Nigeria%20JUNE%20FINAL.pdf>.

³⁸ Michael Olugbode. “Nigeria: NEMA—We Have Registered 700,000 IDPs in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa.” *All Africa*. November 20, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201411200437.html>.

³⁹ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). *Humanitarian Bulletin for Nigeria*. Accessed December 4, 2014. <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/HB%20Nigeria%20JUNE%20FINAL.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ USAID. *Nigeria-Food Insecurity and Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #1*. July 14, 2014. Accessed December 4, 2014. <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/usun-rome/164264/PDF/NigeriaFS01.pdf>.

⁴² U.S. Department of State, *US Congressional Budget Justification, Foreign Operations, Appendix 3: Regional Perspectives, Nigeria, FY 2015*. Accessed December, 28, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/224070.pdf>.

⁴³ USAID. *Nigeria-Food Insecurity and Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #1*, July 14, 2014. Accessed December 4, 2014. <http://photos.state.gov/libraries/usun-rome/164264/PDF/NigeriaFS01.pdf>.

- Health (5%)
- Humanitarian Coordination & Information Management (11%)
- Logistics & Relief Commodities (18%)
- Agriculture & Food Security (5%)
- Protection (26%).

Best practice 5: Address the root causes of the conflict

Most insurgencies at least partly arise from (and are eventually fueled by) realities that place some portion of a population at a distinct disadvantage from others. Examples of such realities include political marginalization, unfair distribution of resources and infrastructure, and social (e.g., religious, ethnic) discrimination. In an insurgency, these conditions play into the hands of the insurgents. The insurgent group can attempt to supplant the government by addressing these conditions and pointing to the government's failure to do so; this can be used as a powerful tool for recruitment. In order for any COIN effort to be successful, such imbalances and perceived injustices must be addressed.

The GoN

The GoN has not addressed the multitude of well-known, proximate sources of tension and drivers of conflict which have directly contributed to the emergence and sustainment of extremist militant groups such as Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria. These contemporary tensions and drivers promote an environment in which extremist militant groups can more easily gain sympathy for their causes and recruit new members. Three of the most egregious sources of tension related to the conflict that the GoN has failed to address are as follows:

1. *The economic disparities between the north and the rest of the country are stark.* Seventy-two percent of northerners live in poverty, compared to 27 percent of southerners and 35 percent in the Niger Delta.⁴⁴ The north has roughly half the GDP per capita as the south.⁴⁵ The poverty and lack of services affecting the northern Muslim population have caused an intense

⁴⁴ Mohammed Aly Sergie, Online Writer/Editor, and Toni Johnson. *Boko Haram*. Backgrounders. Council on Foreign Relations. Updated: 7 October 2014, <http://www.cfr.org/nigeria/boko-haram/p25739>.

⁴⁵ James J.F. Forest. *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*. JSOU Report 12-5. Joint Special Operations University. May 2012.

resentment of the political status quo and have fueled extremist and rejectionist thinking.⁴⁶ Broad-based efforts to address the deep socio-economic disparities between the north and the south have not been implemented; nor have major projects that would meet the currently deficient infrastructure or social services needs of the local population.

2. *The endemic corruption among political and economic elites, and extensive poor governance.* Nigeria is consistently ranked as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.⁴⁷ This corruption touches aspects of Nigerian political and economic life across the country; however, it is particularly acute in the northeast, where legitimate, honest pathways to wealth are so few. Accusations of government officials' complicity in the conflict are rampant, with people claiming that individuals in positions of power accept payments from Boko Haram.⁴⁸ Local influential clerics in the north have also been fingered for taking bribes from the group, not only out of personal financial interests but also to avoid being attacked by the group or to guarantee a position of power in the event that Boko Haram comes to power in the region.⁴⁹ In 2002, Nigeria stood up the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to investigate financial crimes (to include those by the government), but it is frequently criticized and described as ineffective.
3. *The perceived deterioration of the "zone" power sharing arrangement.* The GoN has long struggled to govern a nation in which numerous ethno-religious factions compete for political power. Since the election of President Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999, there has been a power-sharing arrangement between the country's six ethno-regional zones. The death of Muslim president Umaru Yar'Adua in 2010, two years into his four-year term, and the ascension of his vice president Goodluck Jonathan, a Christian from southern Niger Delta, has

⁴⁶ Lauren Ploch. *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 15 November 2013; Akinola Olojo. *Nigeria's Troubled North: Interrogating the Drivers of Public Support for Boko Haram*. ICCT Research Paper. International Center for Counterterrorism-The Hague. October 2013.

⁴⁷ International Crisis Group. *Curbing violence in Nigeria (II): The Boko Haram Insurgency*. Africa Report No. 216. 3 April 2014. <http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/west-africa/nigeria/216-curbing-violence-in-nigeria-ii-the-boko-haram-insurgency>.

⁴⁸ Chantal Uwimana and Lead Wawro. "Corruption in Nigeria's Military and Security Forces: a Weapon in Boko Haram's Hands-Transparency International." *Sahara Reporter*. June 19, 2014. <http://saharareporters.com/2014/06/19/corruption-nigerias-military-and-security-forces-weapon-boko-haram%E2%80%99s-hands-transparency>.

⁴⁹ "Nigerian Muslim Clerics Recruiting, Gov't Officials Take Bribes from Boko Haram." *Talk of Naija*. April 26, 2014. <http://www.talkofnaija.com/local/nigerian-muslim-clerics-recruiting-gov-t-officials-take-bribes-from-boko-haram-us-military-report-details>.

raised questions about the future of the zone power-sharing arrangement. Today many northerners view the Jonathan administration as illegitimate, arguing that he ignored an informal power-rotation agreement that should have kept a Muslim as president this round.

The USG

The USG's interagency approach reflects an understanding of the complex social, economic, and political drivers of the conflict in the northeast. As such, State Department and USAID programs seek to improve civil society, governance, education, and economic development in Nigeria. In particular, USAID has focused heavily on increasing education in northern states. According to a recent testimony by the USAID assistant administrator for Africa, the organization has been implementing "education programs in the North [that have] increased access to basic education services for over 15,000 orphans and vulnerable children, strengthened the capacity of 24 education-related non-governmental organizations to responsibly manage their finances, and influenced Nigeria's Educational Research and Development Council to include reading as a part of the education curriculum."⁵⁰

Economic growth and poverty alleviation programs have also been a priority. State Department programs have targeted the agricultural, power, and petroleum sectors. Similarly, USAID has focused on "build[ing] the capacity of export firms, help[ing] medium-sized, small, and micro enterprises gain access to loans, and support[ing] the development of a new customs and excise management act to reform and modernize the Nigerian customs service."⁵¹

Addressing the conflict through civil society and governance issues is also an area of focus. The USAID conflict mitigation program has focused its efforts on northern Nigeria. It has "supported and trained conflict management and mitigation councils, in addition to carrying out interfaith dialogues."⁵² USAID has been working most actively in the northern states—specifically, Bauchi and Sokoto. Beyond education and poverty, USAID programs have focused on governance and transparency. For example, USAID "helped Sokoto and Bauchi State House of Assembly pass public procurement and fiscal responsibility laws, trained over 900 government officials in public procurement and financial management practices, and assisted with the

⁵⁰ Testimony of Earl Gast, Assistant Administrator for Africa before the Senate subcommittee on Africa. "*#BringBackOurGirls: Addressing the Growing Threat of Boko Haram*." USAID website. May 15, 2014. <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/congressional-testimony/may-15-2014-earl-gast-aa-africa-bringbackourgirls-nigeria-boko-haram>.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

passing of the federal freedom of information act and its adoption at the state levels.”⁵³

The USG has also invested in programs to counter violent extremism in Nigeria, which aim “to limit recruits to [Boko Haram] by reducing sympathy and support for its operations, through three primary objectives: (1) building resilience among communities most at risk of recruitment and radicalization to violence; (2) countering [Boko Haram] narratives and messaging; and (3) building the CVE capacity of government and civil society.”⁵⁴

Best practice 6: Attack the insurgent network

Attacking and dismantling the insurgent network is a necessary pillar of any COIN approach. The goal is to employ the military, security forces, and law enforcement to physically weaken, and ultimately destroy, the group’s ability to operate effectively. Attacking the network, however, must be done in a way that limits the consequences for the local civilian population and infrastructure. It must also be a single piece of a broader strategy that brings to bear the civilian elements of the state. There is an undeniably important role for the military, security forces, and law enforcement in COIN, and Nigeria is no different. However, the use of force should be precise and military operations should be effectively executed.

The GoN

The GoN has pursued a heavy-handed military, security, and police response to the Boko Haram conflict. Its efforts have emphasized kinetic tactics and have been narrowly focused on trying to eradicate the group through violence, arrests, detentions, interrogations, and other harsh tactics. On paper, with 200,000 troops and 300,000 paramilitary personnel, Nigeria’s military is large enough that it should be able to overwhelm Boko Haram.⁵⁵ Yet, despite the fact that the military has been deployed to the conflict zone for years, the numbers of Boko Haram’s attacks and

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ U.S. Department of State. *Boko Haram and U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance to Nigeria*. Washington, D.C. October 28, 2014. <http://www.humanrights.gov/fact-sheet-boko-haram-and-u.s.-counterterrorism-assistance-to-nigeria>.

⁵⁵ International Institute for Strategic Studies. *The Military Balance 2007*. Routledge, 2007, p. 286. <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/military-s-balance>. Quoted in Princeton University. “US Foreign Policy and Conflict Resolution: Fostering Regional Stability.” *Public Policy & International Affairs Fellowship Junior Summer Institute 2014 final Report*. <http://www.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/Fostering%20Regional%20Stability%20IR%20Final%20Report.pdf>

casualties have grown significantly over time—with an estimate of nearly 4,000 dead since January 2014 alone.⁵⁶ This is one of many indications that the group's operational capabilities have not been weakened.⁵⁷ Numerous factors contribute to the Nigerian Army's lack of success. These are listed below, and described more fully in Appendix B. Specifically, the Nigerian Army:

- Is not prepared (trained, equipped) for counterinsurgency
- Lacks human intelligence needed to execute successful operations against the group
- Lacks airlift capacity
- Suffers from very low morale
- Suffers from corruption in general, and specifically in the procurement of military equipment
- Suffers from deep mistrust among the population
- Engages in human rights abuses.

The overly militaristic approach of the GoN has many risks. In particular, if this approach is done poorly, it not only fails to weaken the insurgent group but also erodes any progress being made in pursuing other COIN areas (particularly those relating to protecting the local population, bolstering government legitimacy, and addressing the root causes of the insurgency). The GoN's heavy-handed approach is fueling recruitment, as well as passive support, for Boko Haram among civilians who are also the victims of state-perpetrated violence.

Despite its poor record defeating the group militarily, the GoN has taken several encouraging positive steps recently. For example, it has stated that it intends to work with its neighbors—Chad, Cameroon, and Niger—to confront the group through a regional security arrangement.

The USG

The USG has supported Nigeria's efforts to defeat Boko Haram militarily through a range of bilateral and multilateral activities that include security assistance, training

⁵⁶ According to U.S. Government official. October 2014.

⁵⁷ Erin Conway-Smith. "Since #BringBackOurGirls, Boko Haram Has Only Gotten Stronger." *Global Post*. November 10, 2014. <http://www.globalpost.com/dispatch/news/regions/africa/141110/despite-the-international-outrage-boko-haram-getting-stronger>.

and equipping, and exercises. U.S. security assistance to Nigeria is sizeable compared to that to other West African countries: it totaled almost \$20 million in FY12 State Department funding, and \$16 million in FY13.⁵⁸ USG security assistance programs have been focused on the following areas:

- Counterterrorism
- Military professionalism and human rights
- Border security
- Training
- Equipping
- Law enforcement
- Countering improvised explosive devices (IEDs)
- Promoting regional cooperation
- Intelligence and reconnaissance
- Strategic communications.

Appendix C provides detailed information on the programs that support these areas.

Following the Chibok kidnappings, the GoN requested assistance. In response, the United States deployed an interagency team to Nigeria, which in part focused on providing military and law enforcement assistance (as well as ISR support).⁵⁹ In addition, U.S. special operations forces (SOF) began to train a newly established 650-man ranger battalion in Nigeria. This differs from previous training in that it is intended to prepare the units to fight in Nigeria, against Boko Haram (as opposed to deploying to a peacekeeping mission in another country).⁶⁰ In addition, the U.S.

⁵⁸ Statement of Lauren Ploch Blanchard, Specialist in African Affairs, Congressional Research Service, Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, July 10, 2014. Transcript: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg88627/html/CHRG-113hhrg88627.htm>.

⁵⁹ Robert P. Jackson. "#BringBackOurGirls: Addressing the Growing Threat of Boko Haram." May 15, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2014/226221.htm>.

⁶⁰ Paul McLeary. "US Sending Team of Combat Trainers to Nigeria." *Defense News*. May 9, 2014. <http://www.defensenews.com/article/20140509/DEFREG04/305090021/US-Sending-Team-Combat-Trainers-Nigeria>.

embassy in Nigeria has been providing training in counterinsurgency and humanitarian assistance on an ongoing basis.⁶¹

The USG has provided assistance to multiple Nigerian security forces, including the Nigerian Army, the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the Nigerian Special Boat Service (SBS), and the Nigerian State Security Service (SSS). The USG has also worked with Nigerian law enforcement and border security forces. Additionally, Department of Defense and State funding for Nigeria is expected to expand under the proposed new Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF).⁶² The GSCF will support the USG's push to work with Nigeria's neighbors. Through the GSCF, the USG has committed \$40 million for Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to fight Boko Haram.⁶³ In addition, in August 2014, following the U.S.-Africa Summit in Washington, D.C., the White House announced that Nigeria would be part of the Security Governance Initiative (SGI), a program that entails the U.S. partnering with seven African countries to "offer a comprehensive approach to improving security sector governance and capacity to address threats."⁶⁴

Several factors have limited the scope and scale of U.S. military assistance to Nigeria to counter Boko Haram. First, there are documented human rights violations on the part of the Nigerian armed forces.⁶⁵ The USG does not want to be responsible for empowering units known for abuse. In order to prevent this from happening, there are two U.S. laws, referred to as the "Leahy Law," that require units in countries known to commit human rights abuses to be vetted through a DOD-DOS process before receiving U.S. training and equipment. Second, the Nigerian Army has a

⁶¹ House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations Subcommittee Hearing: The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram, June 11, 2014. <http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/hearing/subcommittee-hearing-ongoing-struggle-against-boko-haram>.

⁶² Hearing before the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations. July 11, 2014. Accessed December 4, 2014. <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg88627/html/CHRG-113hhrg88627.htm>.

⁶³ Siobhan O'Grady. "Is Goodluck Jonathan Trying to get re-elected by Blaming Uncle Sam for Boko Haram?" *Foreign Policy*. November 12, 2014. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/11/12/is-goodluck-jonathan-trying-to-get-re-elected-by-blaming-uncle-sam-for-boko-haram/>.

⁶⁴ The White House Office of the Press Secretary. "Security Governance Initiative." August 06, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-security-governance-initiative>.

⁶⁵ The Leahy Law (or Amendment) is a U.S. law that prohibits the USG from providing military training and equipping to foreign military forces that have committed human rights abuses. As part of the law, units must be vetted through a process and if found to be "clean," they are eligible for assistance: "[US] military assistance supports the professionalization of vetted military units and improves their ability to plan and implement appropriate steps to counter Boko Haram and ensure civilian security." The USG has been unable to work with Nigerian units in the past because they failed the vetting process.

history of struggling to maintain and operate equipment it has procured in the past. The USG does not want to provide the GoN with equipment it cannot operate or will use improperly. Third, the Nigerian armed forces have routinely had their equipment stolen by Boko Haram. The USG wants to avoid a situation where the equipment it provided ends up in the hands of the insurgent group.

The USG's hesitancy to provide security assistance has resulted in tensions between the two countries. Recently, for example, the Nigerian ambassador to the United States publicly castigated the USG for refusing to provide his country with the type of "lethal equipment that would have brought down the terrorists within a short time."⁶⁶ According to the USG, however, the only denial was the transfer of some Cobra attack helicopters "due to concerns about Nigeria's ability to use and maintain this type of helicopter in its effort against Boko Haram and ongoing concerns about the Nigerian military's protection of civilians when conducting military operations."⁶⁷ In early December 2014, the GoN requested that the USG cease the training it had been providing to the 143 Ranger Unit. The request came in response to U.S. attempts to organize the third planned round of training.⁶⁸

Best practice 7: Cut off support and eliminate sanctuaries

In order to defeat an insurgency, the COIN government must cut off support to the group as part of its broader effort. An insurgency typically receives support (either directly or indirectly) from other actors, such as criminal groups, corrupt government officials, foreign governments, and other insurgent or terrorist organizations, and from within the local population. Support can come in many forms, to include physical support (weapons, training, and materiel), ideological support, and financial support. Sanctuaries or safe havens (the group's ability to

⁶⁶ Michele Faul. "Nigerian ambassador blasts US refusal to sell arms." Associated Press. November 11, 2014. <http://www.aol.com/article/2014/11/11/nigerian-ambassador-blasts-us-refusal-to-sell-arms/20991767/>.

⁶⁷ "US Denies It Refused To Sell Military Equipment To Nigeria." *Sahara Reporters*. November 13, 2014. <http://saharareporters.com/2014/11/13/us-denies-it-refused-sell-military-equipment-nigeria>.

⁶⁸ Christopher Stein. "Nigerian Military Training Cancellation Baffles US Experts." *VOA News*, December 13, 2014. <http://www.voanews.com/content/nigeria-military-training-cancellation-baffles-us-experts/2544161.html>.

operate in a physical territory in an unfettered manner) also support the group since it can use these areas to train, recruit, store weapons, and plan.⁶⁹

The GoN

The GoN has taken limited steps to cut off support to Boko Haram. For example, the GoN declared a state of emergency in the three most affected states—Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa—in May 2013. By declaring a state of emergency, the GoN has been able to alter laws and functions of government in an effort to control the population. The GoN has imposed measures such as curfews, road blocks, mass arrests and detentions, and cordoning off of areas where suspected insurgents are operating. The president attempted to extend the state of emergency in November 2014; however, lawmakers voted against the extension, claiming that after 18 months, the state of emergency was not having positive effects on the conflict.⁷⁰ There is little to suggest that the state of emergency improved the situation. Indeed, “before the emergency, Boko Haram was operating mainly around Damaturu and Maiduguri...but since the emergency we have seen Boko Haram moving and occupying from 14 to 16 local governments in all the states.... Even the Chibok girls were abducted during the emergency rule.”⁷¹

There have also been limited (and fairly delayed) efforts to secure the borders between Nigeria and its neighbors in areas where Boko Haram operates. Furthermore, the Nigerian government has a severely limited capacity to monitor its northern borders, and for the past several years Boko Haram has been finding sanctuary in neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, and operating across the border.⁷² Until the May 2014 Paris Summit, Nigeria and Cameroon had not been coordinating to address the border problem.⁷³ Niger and Nigeria already have an agreement that allows troops to cross the border, and Nigeria is forging a similar agreement with the government of Chad.⁷⁴ At the Paris Summit, the regional governments agreed to “share

⁶⁹ Daniel L. Byman, Peter Chalk, Bruce Hoffman, William Rosenau, David Brannan. *Trends in outside support to insurgent movements*. The RAND Corporation. 2001. <http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/www/external/congress/terrorism/phase2/insurgent.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Asumpta Lattus. “Nigeria’s state of emergency ‘a failure.’” *DW*. November 21, 2014. <http://www.dw.de/nigerias-state-of-emergency-a-failure/a-18079380>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Center for International Policy. “Nigeria: What Could the New U.S. Border Control Program Include?” *Security Assistance Monitor*. Accessed December 7, 2014. <http://www.securityassistance.org/blog/nigeria-what-could-new-us-border-control-program-include>.

⁷³ John Irish, Bate Felix. “Paris summit to try to rally region against Nigeria’s Boko Haram.” *Reuters*. May 16, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/16/us-nigeria-girls-summit-idUSBREA4F0BQ20140516>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

information and coordinate their intelligence work, to keep joint watch over their borders and to develop the capacity to intervene swiftly in response to threats.”⁷⁵ They also each agreed to send 700 troops to the Lake Chad region (which has yet to occur).⁷⁶

The GoN has struggled to cut off financial support to Boko Haram. It is clear that Boko Haram has a fundraising system in place, but it is intricate and opaque.⁷⁷ Sources of income for the group include kidnapping for ransom, trafficking of illegal weapons, robberies, assassinations for hire, and the drug trade.⁷⁸ These are all difficult sources of funding to cut off, given that many of the transactions take place on the black market.

Finally, the GoN has struggled to cut off the flow of arms and ammunition to the group. Many of these items come across the border into Nigeria, illegally. Effective border security is a key element of cutting off this activity. However, Boko Haram also obtains weapons, ammunition, and other materiel from the Nigerian Army, usually after defeating government soldiers or by raiding barracks and outposts. Corrupt military officials also redirect what should go to the troops, to members of Boko Haram (in exchange for money).⁷⁹

The USG

The USG has taken multiple measures to cut off support to Boko Haram. Improving border security through multilateral fora has been a key focus area for the United States in the Sahel region—recently in Nigeria, and indeed over the past decade more broadly through the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP). Current TSCTP programming promotes border security between member states to stop the flow of people, weapons, and commercial activities that could support terrorist

⁷⁵ AFP Staff. “Cameroon soldiers desperate for help in Boko Haram fight.” Agence France Presse. December 2, 2014. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2858415/Cameroon-soldiers-desperate-help-Boko-Haram-fight.html>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Terrence McCoy. “Paying for terrorism: Where does Boko Haram gets its money from?” *The Independent*. June 6, 2014. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/paying-for-terrorism-where-does-boko-haram-gets-its-money-from-9503948.html>.

⁷⁸ Lauren Ploch Blanchard. *Nigeria’s Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 10 June 2014. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Terrence McCoy. “Paying for terrorism: Where does Boko Haram gets its money from?” Money Jihad Blog. June 6, 2014. <https://moneyjihad.wordpress.com/2014/06/17/how-islamist-nigerian-traitors-armed-boko-haram/>.

organizations, including Boko Haram, in the region.⁸⁰ More recently, the USG has been pressing for a more robust multinational effort among Nigeria, Chad, Cameroon, and Niger to address the cross-border issues related to Boko Haram. In September 2014, a U.S. official announced that the “U.S. is planning a ‘major’ new security program to help Nigeria battle Boko Haram terrorists.”⁸¹ (We elaborate on USG effort to support this approach in greater detail in the next section.)

The USG is also making efforts to cut off support to Boko Haram from within the population. Doing so requires a multi-pronged approach that includes development and humanitarian efforts, but there is also an important strategic communications aspect to COIN. For example, the USG is planning to launch a 24-hour TV channel in the northeast to broadcast messaging intended to counter the Boko Haram narrative.⁸²

On the financial front, the USG is struggling to have an impact. The U.S. Treasury Department has a range of sophisticated tools to track terrorist financing in the banking system; however, Boko Haram has largely been immune to U.S. efforts because the bulk of its financial activity takes place outside the banking system.⁸³ The group relies on criminal activity, kidnapping for ransom, and other transactions that are not traceable through formal financial systems and processes.

Best practice 8: Pursue opportunities to reach a settlement to the conflict

An insurgency can end in any of four ways: the COIN government wins, the insurgency wins, the conflict evolves into something else, or a negotiated settlement is reached.⁸⁴ While it is rare for a contemporary insurgency to see one side or the

⁸⁰ Lesley Anne Warner. *The Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership Building Partner Capacity to Counter Terrorism and Violent Extremism*. CNA Research Memorandum CRM-2014-U-007203-Final.pdf. March 2014.

⁸¹ Russell Berman. “U.S., Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger Team Up to Thwart Boko Haram.” *The Wire*. September 4, 2014. <http://www.govexec.com/defense/2014/09/us-nigeria-cameroon-chad-and-niger-team-thwart-boko-haram/93194/>.

⁸² David Storey. “U.S. Finances Nigeria’s Anti-Militant TV Channel to Counter Boko Haram.” Reuters. June 7, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/06/06/us-nigeria-usa-television-idUSKBN0EH2H320140606>.

⁸³ Phil Stewart. “Here’s How Boko Haram Is Outsmarting US Efforts To Choke The Terror Group’s Financing.” Reuters. July 2014. <http://www.businessinsider.com/how-boko-haram-is-outsmarting-us-efforts-to-choke-its-financing-2014-7>.

⁸⁴ US Marine Corps. “Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency.” U.S. Government. 2012. Accessed December 7, 2014. <http://www.mccdc.marines.mil/Portals/172/Docs/SWCIIWD/COIN/Doctrine/Guide.%20to%20the%20Analysis%20of%20Counterinsurgency.pdf>.

other emerge as the clear victor, a negotiated settlement can be an effective way to end violence, and should be pursued by the COIN government. To come to a negotiated settlement that all stakeholders agree to, conditions must be right. A key factor for success is that both parties (the government and the insurgency) must be at a point in the conflict where neither believes it can defeat the other militarily and neither wants to continue fighting indefinitely. In other words, a stalemate usually occurs before both parties are genuinely prepared to settle differences non-violently.⁸⁵

The GoN

The GoN has made many attempts to negotiate a settlement with Boko Haram, but all have failed. The current dynamic of the conflict in Nigeria is that as Boko Haram increases its attacks in number and lethality over time, the government reacts by notching up its military response. This creates a mutual mindset of escalation that produces little chance of real negotiations. Past efforts to negotiate with Boko Haram have failed for multiple reasons.⁸⁶ At times, once negotiations were taking place, Boko Haram backed out, pointing to a “lack of sincerity” on the part of the government.⁸⁷ Similar accusations have come from the GoN about the group. As recently as October 2014, the GoN announced that it was in talks with the group to reach a ceasefire agreement; however, those talks also fell through. The GoN has also attempted numerous amnesty and rehabilitation programs in order to reintegrate Boko Haram fighters, supporters, and family members back into society. These too have had minimal effect.

The GoN continues to seek a settlement to the conflict, probably because it sees that solution as an attractive option. First, it would be a quick, easy way to end the fighting, which politically would be viewed as a great accomplishment for President Jonathan—something he could point to in the lead up to elections. Second, if the right deal is reached, the GoN could potentially avoid having to do the “harder work” of addressing the root causes of the conflict, such as corruption. This will

⁸⁵ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*. November 2013. Accessed November 14, 2014. http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_24.pdf.

⁸⁶ For detailed information on the GoN’s attempts to negotiate with Boko Haram, please see: page 29, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, *Nigeria’s Interminable Insurgency? Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis*. Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs. September 2014. http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20140901BokoHaramPerousedeMontclos_0.pdf.

⁸⁷ For detailed information on the GoN’s attempts to negotiate with Boko Haram, please see: page 29, Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos, *Nigeria’s Interminable Insurgency? Addressing the Boko Haram Crisis*. Chatham House, The Royal Institute of International Affairs. September 2014. http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_document/20140901BokoHaramPerousedeMontclos_0.pdf.

particularly be the case if the GoN can rely on exchanging financial incentives for peace as it was able to do in 2009 with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and other militants after years of ongoing unrest and violence in the country's oil-rich Delta region.

To settle the Delta conflict, the government launched a \$500-million-per-year program that includes amnesty for militants and financial incentives ranging from direct payments (estimated at \$410 per month for ex-fighters), to job training and employment.⁸⁸ This program has mostly ended the violence, but it remains on shaky ground because the GoN has not addressed the underlying causes of the conflict. Essentially, the program is a pay-off. In addition, it comes with a high price tag, which may or may not be sustainable over the long term.⁸⁹

Pursuing a settlement program for the Boko Haram conflict that relies on financial incentives may be a waste of time for the GoN, since that conflict differs fundamentally from the Delta one. The groups in the Delta could directly impact (and essentially hold hostage) the country's primary source of income, oil. But oil does not exist in the north—thus, the GoN has no incentive to offer a settlement lucrative enough that Boko Haram would accept it (as it was able to do with the Delta groups). Furthermore, the groups in the Delta were motivated, at least initially, by the fact that the benefits of the oil wealth were not trickling down to the local populations—in fact, the oil was causing damage. Local communities in the Delta remained impoverished, and further suffered from the environmental degradation brought on by the oil industry operations.⁹⁰ Also, Boko Haram has “a popular, religious millenarian dimension” that was absent in the Delta. This makes it “immune to the accepted ways Nigerian politicians ‘settle’ their opponents; mostly by payoffs.”⁹¹

The USG

It appears that the USG has played a very limited role in forging a negotiated settlement between the GoN and Boko Haram to end the conflict. Given the group's 2013 FTO-declared status, “any form of support, including expert advice or

⁸⁸ Will Ross. “Has Nigeria's Niger Delta managed to buy peace?” BBC Africa. May 2013. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22357597>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ John Campbell. “Nigeria's Boko Haram and MEND Similar?” Council on Foreign Affairs, Africa in Transition Blog. October 4, 2013. Accessed November 29, 2014. <http://blogs.cfr.org/campbell/2012/10/04/nigerias-boko-haram-and-mend-similar/>.

⁹¹ Ibid.

assistance, to a group on the list is considered material support of terrorism.”⁹² It is therefore illegal for U.S. entities to be involved in any type of settlement or negotiation. Furthermore, given its ideology, Boko Haram is unlikely to take seriously any settlement deal that involves the United States. The USG could encourage regional partners, such as Chad, to continue to play a role in helping the government negotiate with Boko Haram.⁹³

Conclusions

The GoN's narrow CT approach

The GoN has not pursued an approach that supports the eight best practices for COIN. Rather, it has pursued primarily a CT approach, focusing on trying to defeat the group through military, security, and law enforcement means. The approach so far has been ineffective and counter-productive, with the conflict intensifying and the group growing stronger over time. The GoN has also pursued efforts to negotiate a deal that would incentivize the group to shut down its operations, but has not done so successfully.

While some recent efforts have been made to change this approach, the GoN has not worked effectively with its neighbors to cut off support to Boko Haram. It also has not taken the necessary steps to weaken the group's hold on the local population. It has failed to protect its civilian population from harm, and it has not effectively responded to the humanitarian needs of the people living in conflict-affected areas. Given the large (and increasing) number of casualties, kidnapping, and refugees/IDPs, it is clear that any efforts to protect the population and provide humanitarian relief to date have fallen short in significant ways.

The GoN's response reflects an analysis of the conflict that is historically based, simplistic, and inaccurate—but politically convenient for those in power. Were the GoN to change its mind and accept the conflict as an insurgency that requires a broad-based whole-of-government approach, it would mean having to pursue tangible change and real reform, beyond just rhetoric. At least two factors make this unlikely in the foreseeable future: systemic corruption, and the government's

⁹² Kay Guinane. “U.S. Law Limits Options for Nonviolent End to Nigerian Girls Nightmare.” *Huffington Post*. May 2014. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/kay-guinane/us-law-limits-options-for_b_5339013.html.

⁹³ Russell Berman. “U.S., Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger Team Up to Thwart Boko Haram.” *The Wire*. September 4, 2014. <http://www.govexec.com/defense/2014/09/us-nigeria-cameroon-chad-and-niger-team-thwart-boko-haram/93194/>.

proximate political priorities. We address these issues in the final chapter of this report.

The USG's whole-of-government approach

In stark contrast to the GoN, the U.S. government, as a supporting partner, has provided resources to Nigeria in a whole-of-government approach that more closely follows the eight best practices for COIN. USG efforts range from targeting the underlying root causes of the conflict, to addressing the military aspects of COIN, to responding to the humanitarian needs of the people in affected areas. That said, the U.S. approach has been executed in piecemeal fashion. To date, U.S. agencies have not been using a single strategy that coordinates activities and programs in a way that has all stakeholders working towards a shared goal, on common timelines.

The USG has provided only limited military equipment and training to defeat the group, which has left it open to criticism on the part of the GoN as well as within the USG itself. For example, there have been calls on Capitol Hill to grant exceptions to the Leahy Laws for Nigeria so that the United States can provide the GoN with more materiel and training to fight the group.⁹⁴ It is likely, however, that the United States will continue to make decisions concerning training and equipping the Nigerian Army contingent on those forces' human rights practices. Thus, until there is real progress on the part of the Nigerian Army, training and equipping will likely remain at current levels.

Given the difficulties it has had working with the Nigerian government on the military front, the USG has more recently been pursuing a multilateral approach to the Boko Haram conflict by increasing its efforts to involve Nigeria's neighbors. We see value in this approach because it may open doors for the USG that would not be opened by an exclusive focus on the GoN as the primary partner in dealing with the conflict. (We will elaborate on this idea later in the report.)

The USG is also addressing the humanitarian situation in a way that appears quite robust compared to the GoN's own response (particularly given that Nigeria is not a poor country). Given its oil wealth, the GoN should have the resources available to meet the humanitarian needs of the people in the northeast, but to date it has not done so.

⁹⁴ Melanie Hunter. "Royce Calls for Temporary Waiver of Leahy Law So US Can Help Nigeria Recover Kidnapped Girls." *CSN News*. May 21, 2014. <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/royce-calls-temporary-waiver-leahy-law-so-us-can-help-nigeria-recover>.

Changes the GoN would need to make in order to implement a COIN approach

To understand the tangible steps the GoN would need to take if it were to shift from its current approach to a more COIN-like approach, we identified specific gaps between what it is now doing and what it would need to be doing according to the best practices. Based on current gaps, the GoN would need to take the following steps (with corresponding best practice(s) in brackets):

- Devise a strategy grounded in a balanced view of the conflict as an insurgency. Reject and abandon the notions that Boko Haram (1) is merely a manifestation of an external global terrorist phenomenon and not the result of underlying, internal problems, and (2) is only the most recent in a long line of “trouble makers” that can be quickly crushed by the military or pacified with large sums of money. **[Devise a strategy that is built on an analytically derived conflict assessment.]**
- Identify and coordinate the activities of the appropriate range of inter-agency partners needed to implement an effective whole-of-government approach to address the insurgency. Reduce over-reliance on military forces to solve the problem. **[Implement a coordinated whole-of-government approach to insurgency.]**
- Improve governance through transparency and accountability. Reduce corruption. In the northeast, efforts would need to target complicit local political elites, religious leaders, military commanders, and law enforcement officers. Focus on stopping government forces’ illegal and extra-judicial practices; publicly hold accountable all those who are guilty of these practices. **[Bolster government legitimacy.]**
- Identify and address the underlying socio-economic causes of the conflict. In particular, these include the economic disparities between the north and the south, the unfair distribution of national wealth, and the perceived favorable treatment of one group (ethnicity, religion, etc.) over others. **[Bolster government legitimacy.]**
- Devise a strategic communications strategy that bolsters the government’s legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. It would need to include: (1) presenting a realistic and consistent depiction of the conflict, (2) articulating the government’s strategy for ending the conflict and improving security, (3) dispelling Boko Haram’s narrative against the government, and (4) stating how the GoN will address the immediate humanitarian needs of the affected populations. **[Bolster government legitimacy and protect the population in affected areas; provide humanitarian relief.]**

- Provide security and protection to people living in conflict-affected areas. Legitimate state security forces (the military and the police) would need to be in the lead—each having its own appropriate, and limited, role. **[Protect the population in affected areas; provide humanitarian relief.]**
- Significantly ramp up the humanitarian response in affected areas. In particular, focus would need to be on providing shelter, food, and medical care to the people who have been driven from their homes. **[Protect the population in affected areas; provide humanitarian relief.]**
- Consider increasing the role of vigilante groups such as the CJTF, given the current lack of capabilities and capacity on part of military. This idea would need to be pursued carefully, with a deliberate plan to demobilize the groups when they are no longer needed.⁹⁵ **[Protect the population in affected areas; provide humanitarian relief.]**
- Restructure the military response from a CT approach to a broader COIN approach. This change would run the gamut from posture and positioning, to training and equipping, to community relations. **[Attack the insurgent network.]**
- Cut off support to the group: Formalize a mechanism through which to work with regional partners that are also affected by the conflict—specifically, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. Efforts would need to focus on improving border security and eliminating sanctuary. Tackle its communications; focus on its social media and its ability to recruit and messages. **[Cut off support and eliminate sanctuaries.]**
- Continue to push for a negotiated settlement with Boko Haram that includes amnesty, rehabilitation, and de-radicalization programs. **[Pursue opportunities to reach a settlement to the conflict.]**

⁹⁵ Patricio Asfura-Heim. *Risky Business: The Future of Civil Defense Forces and Counterterrorism in an Era of Persistent Conflict*. CNA Research Memorandum CRM-2014-U-008881. October 20, 2014. <https://www.cna.org/research/2014/risky-business>.

Adjusting the USG Approach to Countering Boko Haram

The current USG approach

The USG's objective is to dismantle Boko Haram. To do so, the USG has pursued a partnership with the GoN wherein the USG provides the GoN with a range of assistance to address the conflict. Yet, instead of pursuing a comprehensive approach, the GoN is focusing on two areas—using the military and negotiating a deal—while largely paying lip service to the other aspects of COIN.

The fundamental imbalance in the two governments' approaches has resulted in a weak partnership that is not making tangible progress against Boko Haram. The USG has tried to pressure the GoN into being a better partner through a multitude of diplomatic efforts. It has also tried a conditions-based approach wherein it offers the GoN incentives to change its behavior. For example, the USG has made additional military assistance contingent on the Nigerian government's efforts to improve its record on human rights. The GoN, however, has taken only marginal steps to change thus far. As a result, it seems that some adjustment in the USG approach is warranted. There are numerous ways the USG could adjust its approach; we will explore two possibilities here.

The same approach, but with new coercive measures

One possible avenue for the USG as it pertains to the Boko Haram conflict is to continue to try to convince the GoN to change, perhaps by trying new areas of leverage or using stronger levers than it has to date. It could impose more conditions or offer new incentives, for example. The current administration in Nigeria (like that in any country) is motivated by certain goals for the nation and for its own political survival (the two can overlap); it makes decisions based on these motivations. Understanding these motivations can help the USG identify new, potentially promising, areas of leverage that have not yet been explored. The consensus among

Nigeria watchers is that the current administration in Nigeria is, at least in part, motivated by its desires to do the following (not prioritized):

- Stay in power.
- Realize financial gains for those in power.
- Bolster Nigeria's image as a leader in Africa (maintaining "anchor state" status).
- Bolster Nigeria's image as an important and influential player on the international stage.
- Continue Nigeria's relationship to the United States and other world powers while preventing perceived infringements on its sovereignty and independence.
- Maintain Nigeria's image as a strong military power.
- Bolster its status as a leader in health and medical advancement in Africa.
- Prevent widespread conflict/significant deterioration of internal security.
- Preserve internal political stability (i.e., avoid civil war).
- Secure its economic future, through Oil & Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

With these motivators in mind, below we describe some new levers the USG could potentially use to try to change the GoN's approach to Boko Haram. Each has risks, which we describe as well.

USG officials could alter the current USG strategic communications messages regarding Nigeria and the Boko Haram conflict to put more direct pressure on the GoN to change its approach. The USG could openly point out the GoN's failure to take the steps required to address the Boko Haram conflict. Nigeria has been an active participant in global efforts to counter terrorism. It is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum, a multinational effort that includes 29 other states, and has hosted multiple UN conferences on the topic.⁹⁶ Given its proactive role in these efforts, which suggests its desire to take a leadership role internationally, it should be expected to lead through example. Yet, it has not. It is home to one of the deadliest militant extremist organizations in Africa—one that continues to grow in power and influence and now threatens its neighbors. Stating this in explicit ways could have the effect of motivating Nigeria to carry through in

⁹⁶ U.S. Department of State website. Global Counterterrorism Forum page. Accessed December 20, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/gctf/>.

its effort to defeat Boko Haram in order to maintain its standing in the international community as a leader in global CT efforts.

Risk: If the USG were to implement this approach, it would be pointing out that the GoN has failed to address the conflict—which would be akin to publicly shaming the GoN. On the one hand, that could spark the GoN into making changes in order to “save face.” On the other hand, it could put the GoN on the defensive and alienate it from the USG (or even push it further into the hands of Nigeria’s other international partners, such as China and Russia).

The USG could make publicly known or place sanctions on government officials who are guilty of corruption, known to be complicit in human rights abuses, or known to be profiting from the Boko Haram conflict. These individuals, for example, could be placed on a list that is publicly available to U.S. companies doing business in Nigeria. This not only would tarnish Nigeria’s image as an attractive place for Foreign Direct Investment within the global community but also would give U.S. companies a tool with which to avoid doing business with bad actors.

Risk: This approach is bold and confrontational. It could backfire. Calling out Nigerian officials and leaders by name could alienate the GoN as a whole, resulting in a dramatic decline in the state of relations between the two countries.

The USG could cut elements of its foreign aid package if it does not see specific changes to the GoN’s approach to the conflict. The United States provides a broad range of development assistance to Nigeria, including aid to education, healthcare, agricultural development, and infrastructure programs. There are precedents for the United States to threaten to reduce aid if the GoN takes certain actions. For example, in early 2014, when the GoN adopted harsh laws against homosexuals, the United States threatened to reduce HIV/AIDS and malaria-related development assistance. The USG could take a similar approach regarding the GoN’s approach to Boko Haram. While Nigeria has significant natural resources and oil wealth, many Nigerians still live in poverty. The GoN does not meet many of the basic needs of its people, and remains dependent on outside assistance in many areas, including water, housing, healthcare, and education. Thus, a reduction of USG aid in any of these areas could have serious consequences for the GoN.

Risk: This approach could negatively impact the people who are suffering as a result of the conflict while having limited direct effect on those in power who make decisions about the GoN’s approach to the conflict. It would also potentially undermine the USG’s long-standing development goals in Nigeria.

The USG could adopt the position that given the conflict’s current trajectory, it is not safe for U.S. citizens to conduct business in Nigeria. Currently, the State Department’s Nigeria travel warning states that U.S. citizens should avoid travel to states currently in a state of emergency (Yobe, Borno, and Adamawa). Given the

recent uptick and spread (to include Abuja) in violence, the USG has a rationale for ratcheting up its travel warnings. Furthermore, the GoN's efforts have failed to stem the violence, making the situation potentially increasingly dangerous over time. This could impact U.S. businesses' willingness to operate in Nigeria and serve as a deterrent for future FDI.

Risk: For years, the USG has been promoting economic growth in Nigeria and has gone to great lengths to bolster economic ties between the two countries. Taking steps that would impact Nigeria's economic future could result in serious set-backs in the very areas the USG has historically been promoting.

The USG could reduce or eliminate those aspects of the bilateral relationship that deal directly with the conflict. For example, the USG could end the Boko Haram-related military assistance that it provides directly to Nigeria. In this scenario, the USG would state that if a change in the GoN's approach to the conflict did not occur, the military and security equipment and training intended for countering Boko Haram would no longer be provided to the GoN directly. Rather, it would be channeled to its neighbors or through multilateral organizations, such as the Lake Chad Basin Commission. Alternatively, the USG could reverse its decision to include Nigeria in the SGI. In August 2014, President Obama announced that Nigeria would be one of six African countries to be part of the SGI, an initiative that offers an "enhanced approach to security sector assistance." Nigeria, like the other five, made the list because it has "demonstrated partnership with the US and expressed a desire to strengthen its security sector."⁹⁷

Risk: The USG and GoN have fruitful bilateral relations in other areas. It may not be possible to target just one area of the relationship without having a negative impact on the others.

Assessment

These are only a sample of the options that the USG could pursue in order to increase leverage to entice or coerce the GoN to change its approach towards the conflict in northeastern Nigeria. In reality, however, neither pursuing the current approach nor bolstering it with more leverage is likely to change Abuja's approach to the conflict.

First, political, economic, and social dynamics within Nigeria contribute strongly to the GoN's intransigence concerning its approach to Boko Haram. A balanced

⁹⁷ The White House Office of the Press Secretary. "Security Governance Initiative." August 06, 2014. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/06/fact-sheet-security-governance-initiative>.

assessment of the conflict is not driving the GoN's decisions regarding the situation. If it were, the GoN would have recognized that the conflict cannot be solved easily through military might or a quick deal. The political leadership in Nigeria finds the current approach attractive because it allows for the protection of the status quo—a situation that serves the interests of those who make decisions regarding the conflict. The systemic corruption that exists in Nigerian politics is central to the maintenance of the status quo, acting as a powerful lubricant that keeps the gears of the current political machinery moving in a way that predominantly benefits those at the top. By contrast, the comprehensive approach that is required to effectively counter Boko Haram would require changing the status quo, since corruption in the government is one of the drivers of the conflict.

Second, long-standing tensions exist between the north and the south of the country and figure prominently in the calculus of Nigeria's political elites. The north has historically been disadvantaged economically, and development indicators suggest that the resources of the state are distributed such that the northeast receives less than its fair share. Political elites in conflict-affected areas may play a complicit role in the continuation of this arrangement. North-south tensions are currently high in advance of the 2015 presidential elections, which, depending on the outcome, could result in a breakdown of the power-sharing agreement that has been in place since 1999. The conflict in the north has been used by politicians on all sides to push their own agenda within the context of this delicate—and potentially vulnerable—political arrangement. For example, it has become commonplace for leaders of political parties to try to convince the electorate that Boko Haram has been created by their opponents (other political parties) to discredit them.⁹⁸ It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which either the current administration or opposition parties would agree to radically change their strategy towards the conflict so late in the game.

Third, the GoN has a long-standing and entrenched tendency to settle internal conflict through the use of force. In the past, heavy-handed military tactics have been successful at quashing internal uprisings, leading the current administration to believe that this approach can work today.

Finally, due to its vast oil wealth, the GoN can pursue assistance, hardware, and equipment from countries other than the United States (such as China and Russia), which undercuts the USG's ability to leverage the GoN. In addition, if the USG were to reduce or eliminate elements of its assistance package to Nigeria, it would potentially undercut important strategic interests such as economic development and improving health that the United States has been promoting and investing in for decades.

⁹⁸ Staff. "Nigeria: Boko Haram Threat Dangerously Exploited By Elites." *AllAfrica*. September 14, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201409152135.html>.

For these reasons, it seems likely that the current conditions-based approach is not going to yield the degree of change the USG wants to see in Nigeria on timelines it desires. Given the lack of progress with the current approach, and the fact that the prospects for ramping up that approach by applying more pressure are not good, it may be time for the USG to consider another approach.

Change the approach: a containment strategy

Because the GoN has not taken a COIN approach to the conflict, Boko Haram has been growing stronger over time and appears to be increasingly able to operate outside of Nigeria's borders. The group exploits the remote areas along the four-country border of Nigeria-Cameroon-Niger-Chad (see Figure 2) where it sets up bases, conducts training, and coordinates logistics.⁹⁹ In 2014, Boko Haram ramped up its activities across Nigeria's border with Cameroon, where it now regularly conducts attacks as well as high-profile kidnappings. Boko Haram has driven an estimated 90,000 Nigerians across the border into the Diffa region of Niger, where many now reside in make-shift refugee camps, without access to ample food, water, and medical care.¹⁰⁰ Chad is also seeing increasing numbers of refugees as people flee Boko Haram's violence.¹⁰¹ As these humanitarian conditions deteriorate, people could join Boko Haram out of desperation. There are already reports that people in Diffa have agreed to pay over \$3,000 to join Boko Haram.¹⁰²

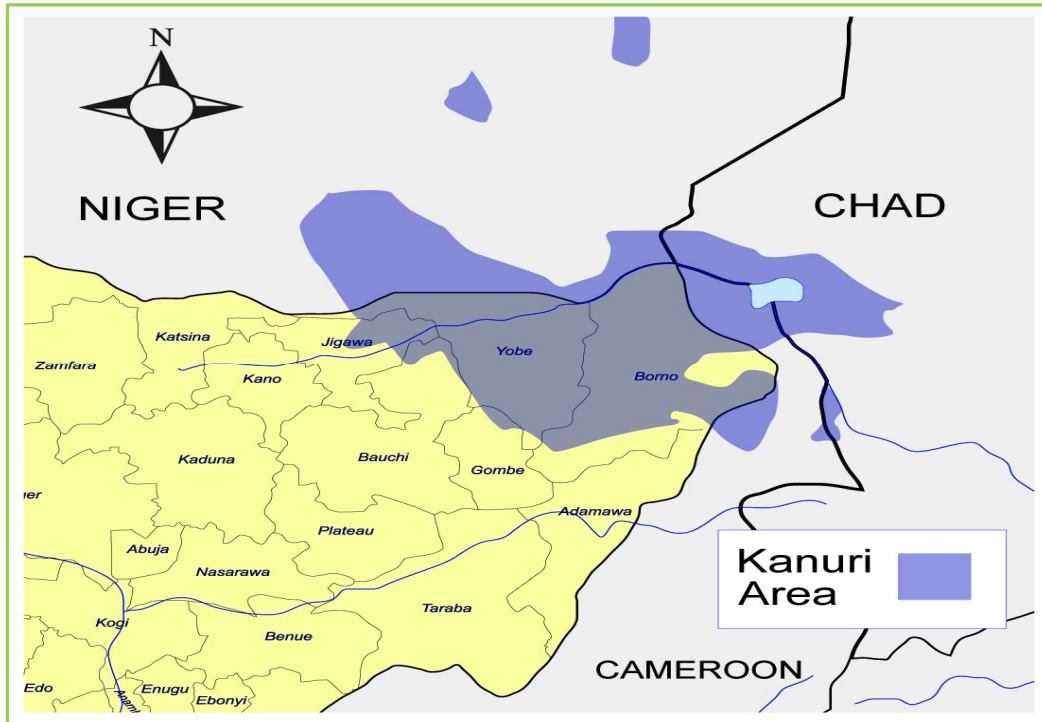
⁹⁹ Jacob Zenn. "Boko Haram: The Islamic State of West Africa?" Tony Blair Foundation website. September 23, 2014. Accessed December 15, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ IRIN News. "Nigeria: Boko Haram Fuels Displacement Crisis in Niger's Diffa Region." *AllAfrica (reprint)*. December 12, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201412121481.html>.

¹⁰¹ IRIN News. "Nigeria-Chad: Migrants fleeing Boko Haram violence await aid." IRINnews.com. March 6, 2012. <http://www.irinnews.org/report/95014/nigeria-chad-migrants-fleeing-boko-haram-violence-await-aid>.

¹⁰² Chris Agbambu and Seyi Gesinde. "How Boko Haram Recruits Niger Republic Youths with \$3,000." *Nigerian Tribune*. April 23, 2014. <http://www.tribune.com.ng/news/top-stories/item/3851-how-boko-haram-recruits-niger-republic-youths-with-3-000/3851-how-boko-haram-recruits-niger-republic-youths-with-3-000>. See also "Boko Haram Pays N500,000 to Niger Recruits — Gang Members." *Vanguard*. April 24, 2014.

Figure 2. Kanuri areas in four border region: Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon



Source: Michael Markowitz, CNA

The USG cites promoting peace and security in Africa as one of its top priorities for the continent. Boko Haram is posing a growing threat to three of Nigeria's neighbors: Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. All three are relatively stable African countries and friends to the United States. It would mark a considerable downturn for African security if one or more of these countries were faced with a mounting and ultimately destabilizing threat from Boko Haram. Unlike Nigeria, these three countries do not have significant national wealth and therefore could struggle to amass the means to counter a threat such as Boko Haram, were it to intensify. However, in recent years they have all shown the political will to work with the USG and other international partners in order to counter violent extremist groups. Chad and Niger have been important partners in the USG efforts to counter Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and other extremist groups in the Sahel region, and Cameroon has taken numerous

measures to counter violent extremism in general and Boko Haram specifically within its borders.¹⁰³

Boko Haram poses a growing threat to stability in Nigeria's neighboring countries. If even one of those neighbors were to succumb to the Boko Haram conflict, it would be a significant blow to African security. With that in mind, the USG could consider refocusing its efforts on preventing Boko Haram from spreading regionally in the short term, while maintaining the ultimate long-term goal of dismantling the group from within Nigeria. Arguably, a key step in putting the group in reverse is to stop it from expanding.

In this approach, the USG would support the establishment of a multinational effort that focuses on building capacity in countries directly impacted by Boko Haram, working together to prevent the spread of the threat. The USG and other international partners (such as France) would play a supporting role to the countries in the region. We see several potential benefits to this approach:

- It does not rely on the GoN as the centerpiece for success, thereby providing the USG with a potentially more productive pathway for countering Boko Haram. Nigeria's neighbors are strong U.S. partners and have a record of international cooperation on CT issues.
- By promoting Nigeria's neighbors' role in an international effort to counter Boko Haram, the USG and other international partners would implicitly send a message that Nigeria has been unable (or unwilling) to solve its own problems—without having to publically shame Nigeria by openly saying so. This may create pressure on the GoN to increase its efforts in order to not appear weak compared to its neighbors.
- It encourages the USG to revisit its current approach to the GoN. Arguably, there are promising areas for cooperation with Nigeria on Boko Haram that the USG can support through its bilateral relationship with Abuja. As the USG focuses on preventing Boko Haram from spreading into neighboring countries, it could adjust its bilateral programming in Nigeria to make sure it supports areas where it is more likely to have impact.
- It shares the burden of countering Boko Haram with other international partners. Given other competing global priorities, this approach allows the

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism. *Chapter 2. Country Reports: Africa Overview*. Country Reports on Terrorism 2013. Accessed December 15, 2014. <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224820.htm>.

USG to be involved, protecting its interests but in such a way that it does not shoulder all of the responsibility and resource burden.

- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, this approach sets up the USG to immediately address the real-time mounting threat of Boko Haram growing stronger and expanding as time passes. If Boko Haram's momentum is not reversed, it could have serious consequences for the future of the region, and ultimately one day potentially pose a direct threat to the United States and its interests. A regional containment approach can thus be seen as preventative, with the aim of avoiding a scenario in which Boko Haram directly targets the United States.

Implementing the regional approach

To implement an approach with the immediate goal of preventing Boko Haram from spreading, the USG would ramp up its support to Nigeria's neighbors. U.S. efforts would be directed at building Chad's, Niger's, and Cameroon's capacities and capabilities to stop Boko Haram from spreading and potentially taking root within their borders. This effort would include other international partners, including the United Nations, European countries, and other African organizations (in particular, the African Union, which we discuss below). These activities could be executed through the USG's bilateral assistance to Niger, Chad, and Cameroon and/or through a coordinated approach among regional countries, with support from international partners. The USG should also consider channeling support to existing multilateral mechanisms, such as the planned Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and/or the Lake Chad Basin Commission.

In this approach, the USG would not abandon its efforts to work with the GoN; it would modify them judiciously. In its partnership with the GoN, the USG would focus its resources on areas where it is most likely to have impact, in hopes of chipping away at Boko Haram's capabilities until the GoN decides to implement a broader, softer, whole-of-government approach.

Based on our understanding of how the Boko Haram operates and a study of its recent cross-border activities, we derived specific "areas" where Chad, Niger, and Cameroon would benefit from U.S. and other international assistance in order to prevent Boko Haram from spreading into their territories. That said, these areas are merely a starting point for further analysis. To arrive at an accurate strategy for countering the spread of Boko Haram within any of Nigeria's neighbors, an in-depth, analytically derived conflict assessment, similar to the one we did for Nigeria, would be required.

In order to begin thinking about implementing a containment strategy in the near term, we put forward the following starting elements. In **Error! Reference source not found.**, we also identify specific capabilities that regional partners are likely going to

need to develop in order to prevent Boko Haram from taking root within their territories and suggest how the USG interagency—and the military specifically—could support this strategy with specific programming and resources. Again, a complete assessment of Niger's, Chad's, and Cameroon's needs as well as a more granular understanding of Boko Haram cross-border operations is required in order to more accurately suggest areas for U.S. assistance.

Table 2. Proposed plan for how the USG could support capacity building for a regional preventative strategy to counter Boko Haram

Elements of a Regional Prevention Strategy	Relevant Areas for Capacity Building	Proposed USG Support to Capacity Building
Secure borders between Nigeria and its neighbors: Prevent movement of people, weapons, materiel, supplies, and vehicles, as well as criminal activities, etc., across the borders between Nigeria, Niger, Chad, and Cameroon.	Border security (checkpoints, border controls, patrols), information sharing (with border countries), customs	• AFRICOM/Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Customs & Border Patrol (CBP): Provide mentoring, training, and advising to improve border security and assist with data collection and sharing for all four countries. • DOD/DOS: Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF): In response to AFRICOM's request, GSCF programs support capacity building related to border security for Nigeria's neighbors. • AFRICOM/Special Operations Command Africa (SOCAF): Exercise Flintlock 2015 in Chad includes training for border security. Explore Cameroon as host to Exercise Flintlock 2015. • DOD/TSCTP: Ramp up border security training and equipping—particularly with Cameroon, where the number of Boko Haram attacks is rising rapidly.
Prevent Boko Haram from finding sanctuary outside Nigeria: Track movement of Boko Haram fighters; identify where existing camps are, and dismantle them; regularly patrol/monitor areas to deter Boko Haram from using territory.	Border security (checkpoints, border controls, patrols), information sharing (with border countries), intelligence gathering, satellite imagery	• AFRICOM: Through national technical means, AFRICOM ISR assets, or drones (based in Niger), provide satellite imagery or intelligence to help partner nations find established safe havens. • AFRICOM: Exercise Flintlock 2015 should emphasize training on tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) for detecting Boko Haram safe havens. • AFRICOM/SOCAF: Training for all three countries should focus on producing actionable intelligence that supports military operations to prevent Boko Haram from finding sanctuary. Support setting up regional intelligence fusion cell. • NAVAF: Determine whether maritime air capabilities can support ISR efforts in the four-border region. • NAVAF/Africa Partnership Station (APS): Building on past APS programs (which have emphasized sharing information on the maritime domain), provide lessons learned. Advise on effective measures of building capacity for information sharing among West African countries. • DOS/Embassies – Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI): Country teams should ensure that RSI funds go toward building capacity to prevent Boko Haram from establishing sanctuary in four-country border areas.

Elements of a Regional Prevention Strategy	Relevant Areas for Capacity Building	Proposed USG Support to Capacity Building
Prevent Boko Haram from being able to recruit in the four-country border region: Ramp up PVE programs; and identify and address pre-existing economic, social, and political grievances within local communities.	Public diplomacy, information operations, community programming, working with community leaders, etc.	• DOD/DOS – TSCTP: Direct TSCTP PVE (preventing violent extremism) efforts toward vulnerable populations in four-country border areas. • DOS/Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications: Focus current USG PVE activities on vulnerable populations, particularly in Niger and Cameroon. • DOS/USAID – CVE: Focus current USG PVE activities on vulnerable populations in four-border area.
Conduct military operations against Boko Haram within neighboring countries (Cameroon in particular) when necessary: Military, law enforcement, and security agencies in neighboring countries should be focused on conducting operations that range from patrols to raids and ambushes in order to prevent attacks and drive the group out.	COIN/CT operations (strikes, high-value targeting, raids, ambushes, etc.), intelligence sharing, C-IED efforts	• AFRICOM/SOCAF: Exercise Flintlock 2015 should focus on building capacity so that partner nations are better prepared to respond to the Boko Haram attacks. Over time, build partner capacity to deter the group from operating in neighboring countries. SOCAF should focus on engagement with Cameroon's Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR). • AFRICOM/Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF) Africa: Explore opportunities and authorities to deploy SPMAGTF to provide infantry training to appropriate units in Niger, Chad, and/or Cameroon. • AFRICOM/SPMAGTF Africa: Provide air lift (KC-130s or MV-22s) to proposed multinational units in order to conduct operations against Boko Haram sanctuaries. • AFRICOM/SOCAF: Given that Cameroon currently faces regular attacks from the group, provide training to the military and the BIR to build relevant CT capability to defeat Boko Haram and drive it out of Cameroon. • DOS/DOD TSCTP: Provide military training, assisting, and advising to the three countries' militaries to counter Boko Haram. • DOS/Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA): Provide training and assistance to Cameroon to build capability in the areas of defending its borders, responding to terrorist incidents, and protecting critical infrastructure. • AFRICOM/SOCAF: Support efforts to establish an intelligence fusion center so that regional partners are all working from the same intelligence picture.

Elements of a Regional Prevention Strategy	Relevant Areas for Capacity Building	Proposed USG Support to Capacity Building
Address pre-existing, economic, social, and political tensions within local communities which Boko Haram can exploit to recruit and build a following.	Economic development; political development and reform; job training; skills development; conflict resolution, human rights training, etc.	• DOS/USAID: Assess current development programs and adjust as needed to address development challenges that if not addressed, could play into the hands of Boko Haram; continue political and security reform efforts currently underway. • DOJ/International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP): Work with partners to build capacity with law enforcement—in particular, Cameroon, where Boko Haram operates on a regular basis. • NAVAF: Continue efforts to combat maritime criminal activities in the Gulf of Guinea region which contribute to corruption in Nigeria.

Elements of a Regional Prevention Strategy	Relevant Areas for Capacity Building	Proposed USG Support to Capacity Building
Provide security to population: Protect the local population from attacks; protect infrastructure, access to basic amenities; ensure that normal economic activities are not disrupted.	Law enforcement, military patrols, checkpoints, etc.	• AFRICOM – Flintlock: Bilateral training/assistance trains partner units for appropriate role in protecting population, including ensuring access for humanitarian response, and protecting potentially vulnerable infrastructure, borders, etc. • Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI): As part of its international bilateral training program, work with Niger's, Cameroon's, and Chad's law enforcement agencies in the four border areas to build capacity to protect the population. • Department of Justice/ International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP): Work with Cameroon to build capacity in law enforcement, ensuring that human rights are protected. • DOS/Africa Contingency Operations Training & Assistance (ACOTA): Provide U.S. and other trainers, advisors to building capacity efforts in Chad, Cameroon, and Niger in order to transfer expertise related to the principles of protecting populations learned from past peacekeeping missions, in areas affected by Boko Haram; incorporate ACOTA trainers in U.S. training and security assistance. • NAVAF – The African Maritime Law Enforcement Partnership (AMLEP): Take advisors/trainers from AMLEP program who know how to coordinate law enforcement efforts among multiple African partners, and incorporate them into the counter-Boko Haram effort. Can apply knowledge of issues in the maritime domain to land-based issues, such as criminal activities that overlap with Boko Haram.

Elements of a Regional Prevention Strategy	Relevant Areas for Capacity Building	Proposed USG Support to Capacity Building
Meet the humanitarian needs of Nigerian refugees (particularly in Cameroon and Niger): Immediately address the humanitarian needs of local populations (many of which are already threatened by food insecurity) ¹⁰⁴ and Nigerian refugees who have crossed into neighboring countries; they are potentially vulnerable to recruitment.	Humanitarian assistance, disaster relief	• USAID – Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA): Continue to respond to the food crisis in Chad/Niger; continue to assess the four-border region, as the situation may deteriorate and the numbers of refugees may rise; continue to ramp up response to increasing needs in the Diffa region.¹⁰⁵ • AFRICOM/Exercise Flintlock: Emphasize aspects of exercise that train partner militaries to support humanitarian response in Niger and Cameroon; also focus on role of military in gaining access to humanitarian situations.

¹⁰⁴ See USAID map for assessment of areas experiencing food distress in four-border region: *USAID, Map of Sahel*, http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/sahel_map_09-24-2014.pdf, (Accessed December 1, 2014).

¹⁰⁵ USAID. *Sahel-Food Insecurity and Complex Emergency Fact Sheet #2*. USAID website, September 24, 2014, http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/sahel_ce_fs02_09-29-2014.pdf.

Elements of a Regional Prevention Strategy	Relevant Areas for Capacity Building	Proposed USG Support to Capacity Building
Establish ongoing regional coordination and cooperation on Boko Haram-related activities: Nigeria's neighbors must work together, ideally in concert with Nigeria, to confront the Boko Haram threat.	Information and intelligence sharing; combined training and operations, forge appropriate agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs)	• AFRICOM: Build on successful past efforts to promote regional cooperation and coordination among participating countries; consider specific activities, such as hosting an event that includes senior military, law enforcement, intelligence, and humanitarian response officials to build on the Paris Summit commitments. • DOD/DOD TSCTP: Focus future TSCTP programs on supporting regional cooperation among the four border countries. • NAVAF/Africa Partnership Station: As a leading U.S. military program on promoting regional cooperation in Africa to address common threats among multiple partners, NAVAFA should be involved in the planning of Flintlock Express, and should provide lessons learned, and/or send advisors to that exercise and to other efforts that help promote and build regional cooperation to counter Boko Haram. Future APS deployments could also focus intelligence collection/fusion activities in a way that benefits all stakeholders in the effort to counter Boko Haram. • AFRICOM/SOCAF: Training for all three countries should focus on intelligence and information sharing. Support setting up regional intelligence fusion cell.

Other key partners in regional approach

Again, this approach should include international partners beyond the USG, Nigeria, and Nigeria's neighbors. As a start, we recommend that the following countries and organizations be included in such an effort:

- **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS):** ECOWAS, as the regional organization in West Africa, should play a role in this internationalized effort to counter Boko Haram, with USG and international support as needed. ECOWAS has extensive experience with security challenges in the region, and Nigeria is its most influential member. It also has expertise that it can contribute to this approach in the short term. For example, the organization has long worked to promote border security in West Africa and has adopted multiple agreements and resolutions on the topic. It has also adopted the ECOWAS Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, which aims to put in place control measures over the transfer of these arms within the region.
- **African Union (AU):** Given the rise of Boko Haram and its threat to security in other African countries, the AU should be involved in promoting coordination and cooperation at the continental level. The AU may also draw assets, capabilities, and/or knowledge from current/past peacekeeping missions that could be helpful. For example, peacekeeping units from other conflicts could be incorporated into training the multinational forces that will deploy to counter Boko Haram.
- **France:** The Boko Haram conflict has become a priority issue for France in Africa as reflected by recent statements on the part of the French government.¹⁰⁶ France in recent years has also become an important partner to the United States in the effort to counter violent extremist groups in Africa. It has been a productive partnership that draws from French units' cultural and linguistic knowledge of Africa and U.S. capabilities that France does not have. Building on this relationship, the United States and France should coordinate and cooperate to prevent the spread of Boko Haram, ideally through a regional multinational organization that both of those countries support.

An important caveat on the regional approach

In recent weeks, Nigeria's neighbors have ramped up efforts to respond to the growing threat from the Boko Haram conflict, notably to include conducting military

¹⁰⁶ John Irish. "France urges closer regional collaboration against Nigeria's Boko Haram." Reuters. December 15, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/15/us-france-bokoharam-idUSKBN0JT2GT20141215>.

operations against Boko Haram within Nigerian territory. For example, in early February 2015, the military of Chad crossed the border into the Nigerian town of Gamboru Ngala, where it conducted counter-Boko Haram operations. The government of Chad claims that its military killed 200 Boko Haram fighters during these operations.¹⁰⁷

The containment strategy we propose above does not include regional militaries conducting kinetic operations within Nigeria. We would argue that those activities go beyond what is necessary for a containment strategy that aims to prevent the spread of the group. Such operations, rather, represent regional militaries' direct intervention in the conflict.

Our overall analysis concludes that the Boko Haram conflict is an insurgency and that therefore the GoN and any third-party actors' (the United States, regional partners, and other international partners) contributions to the effort to counter the group should follow the principles of a broad-based, COIN approach that incorporates the best practices we recommend. Therefore, if regional partners decide to continue pursuing a strategy that ends up requiring them to regularly conduct military operations (or take other steps to counter the group) within Nigeria, they should do so in a way that adheres to our proposed best practices in order to avoid the missteps of the GoN and the resulting perpetuation of the conflict. For example, if the military of Chad conducts additional kinetic operations within Nigeria, it must do so in a way that avoids human rights abuses and civilian casualties.

Conclusions and recommendations

The insurgency in northern Nigeria shows few signs of ending. Rather, Boko Haram appears to be gaining strength, developing new capabilities, and expanding its operating territory over time. The USG has been taking a whole-of-government approach to the conflict, attempting to work in partnership with the government of Nigeria to end the conflict and dismantle Boko Haram. The government of Nigeria, however, has taken a different approach, relying primarily on military, law enforcement, and security forces to quash the group. It also regularly pursues a negotiated settlement with the group, but all attempts to do so have failed.

The USG wants Nigeria to undertake a more concerted effort to address the conflict through a broad-based whole-of-government approach. Given current political, social,

¹⁰⁷ Adam Nossiter, "Chad Retakes Nigerian Town From Militant Group Boko Haram." The New York Times, February 4, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/05/world/africa/boko-haram-pushed-from-nigerian-town-by-chad-military.html?_r=0.

and economic dynamics in Nigeria, combined with endemic corruption, the GoN is unlikely to shift its approach on a timeline that the USG will accept due to its own national security interests.

Because the GoN has failed to take a COIN approach to the conflict, it has intensified and in recent months, Boko Haram has demonstrated an increasing ability to impact Nigeria's neighbors Chad, Niger, and Cameroon. These three states are relatively stable, and it would be a significant downturn in African security if one (or more) were to succumb to the destabilizing effects of Boko Haram. Cameroon, to a certain extent, is already facing this challenge, with regular Boko Haram attacks in the north. Niger and Chad, both of which lack resources to deal with existing humanitarian challenges, are also trying to respond to the difficult spillover effects from the conflict.

With these realities in mind, and having conducted extensive research and analysis of the Boko Haram conflict, we conclude that the USG should reconsider its current approach, which largely relies on the GoN to be successful. While one alternate approach would be to ramp up efforts to pressure the GoN to change its approach, we find this path to be problematic for two reasons. First, the GoN is most likely resistant to the types of incentives and conditions the USG is willing to apply. Second, there are serious risks to other USG interests associated with putting additional pressure on the GoN. While there have been problems related to countering Boko Haram, the United States and Nigeria share a productive relationship on multiple other fronts and, at this point, solving the Boko Haram problem does not appear to be worth damaging that relationship.

Alternatively, the USG could shift its current approach from a focus on assisting the GoN in its efforts to counter Boko Haram, to focusing on a coordinated, multinational approach that places Nigeria's neighbors—Chad, Niger, and Cameroon—at the center. In this approach, the USG recognizes the mounting threat from Boko Haram to the region and adopts preventing the spread of Boko Haram as its primary short-term objective. The USG would maintain the objective of dismantling the group over the long term, but recognize that doing so requires the GoN to be a fully engaged, proactive partner—which it currently is not. As a result, the USG would continue to support Nigeria, but it would limit its assistance to those areas that are most productive and eliminate those that are not yielding results. In terms of promoting a regional multinational force, the USG and regional partners should include Nigeria in these efforts, but remain realistic about whether Abuja will follow through on any promises it makes.

We acknowledge that there will be challenges to forging a regional response to the Boko Haram conflict. Each country has its own interests to consider in deciding how, and in what ways, it will respond. Chad, for example, will likely be more willing to contribute hard military capabilities to the effort, whereas Niger may be more hesitant to do so. Furthermore, there will most certainly be sovereignty sensitivities

that arise, particularly on the part of Nigeria since foreign forces may seek to operate within Nigerian borders. Finally, we would caution that if not executed properly, drawing in regional partners could have the unintended consequence of widening the conflict. We would propose an in-depth assessment of Nigeria's neighbors similar to the one we conducted for Nigeria in order to identify an effective multinational strategy to defeat Boko Haram that minimizes the risks of escalating the conflict.

These, and other, challenges will need to be identified and resolved should this proposed strategy come to fruition. Given its experience building a similar coalition in the Middle East to confront ISIL, the United States has an opportunity to play a role in assisting regional countries work through these differences in ways that prevent such an effort from falling apart.

Finally, if the USG decides to pursue a regional preventative strategy, it should remain cognizant that the ultimate goal is to dismantle Boko Haram. As a result, the USG should remain cautiously optimistic that the GoN will one day evolve into a genuine partner in the Boko Haram fight. There may be an opening in the coming weeks and months, for example, depending on the results of the elections, which have been delayed until March 2015. If President Goodluck Jonathan were to win another term, he would no longer be focused on campaigning and might decide to focus his government on ending the conflict. There is also the chance that if his opponent, Muhammadu Buhari, were to win, he could bring a different perspective and implement a program to defeat the group as a top priority. As such, regardless of which approach the USG takes going forward, we recommend that it revisit its Boko Haram strategy in six to 12 months after the elections, to determine whether the GoN is more willing to counter the group in a way that achieves results.

Specific recommendations for AFRICOM

Given its roles and mission, AFRICOM would play a leading role in implementing a regional preventative approach to Boko Haram. It would build on existing relationships with Chad, Niger, and Cameroon to coordinate a focused response aimed at preventing Boko Haram from spreading. It would integrate relevant civilian agencies in supporting roles. Currently, by virtue of existing threats on the continent, AFRICOM is already pursuing many of the activities required to support this approach. For the most part, any change to AFRICOM's current approach would involve shifting existing current activities, exercises, and operations that involve Niger, Chad, and Cameroon, and tailoring them—to the extent possible—so that they directly support capacity-building efforts to prevent Boko Haram from taking hold. At the same time, AFRICOM would have to manage its existing relationship with Nigeria in order to pressure the GoN to contribute to this regional approach. It would also need to formally integrate France and any other willing international partners into its regional plan.

AFRICOM should also assess its “high-level” capabilities such as unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), satellite imagery, air lift, intelligence, and other systems and technologies in order to identify which ones it could share with Niger, Cameroon, and Chad in support of these efforts. This approach would not involve U.S. troops on the ground, except in a training/advising role. But the United States has other capabilities it can contribute, ones that the partner nations do not have. Together with the country teams, it would need to formalize the agreements required to share these capabilities.

Summary of conclusions

In conclusion, current approaches to defeating Boko Haram have not been successful. The group has shown the ability to adapt, expand, and develop new, more deadly capabilities over time in spite of the efforts made by the GoN and supporting partners, including the United States, to dismantle the group. Given the GoN’s reluctance to take a bolder, more effective approach to the conflict, the USG, in order to meet its own national security objectives, should consider shifting its approach to one that does not rely primarily on Abuja for success. We recommend that the USG consider focusing on strengthening regional partners’ abilities to counter Boko Haram so as to ensure that the group is not able to spread into and potentially destabilize Nigeria’s neighbors Chad, Cameroon, and Niger. This shift would set up the USG to be proactive in taking on the immediate threat of a growing Boko Haram, while continuing to work with Nigeria in hopes that the political leadership in that country shifts its perspective on the conflict in a way that leads to real results. At that point, there may be a greater opportunity for the USG to provide assistance and support to the GoN in ways that yield measurable results in dismantling Boko Haram. Until then, focusing on a regional, preventative strategy appears to be a potentially promising means of containing Boko Haram in the short term, while providing time and space for continued efforts to dismantle and ultimately defeat the group.

Appendix A: Sources for Deriving COIN Best Practices

1. Counterinsurgency Training Center – Afghanistan. *A Counterinsurgent's Guidebook: The Application of COIN Doctrine and Theory* (Version 2). November 2011.
2. Jones, Robert C. "Understanding Insurgency: The Condition behind the Conflict." *Small Wars Journal*. 1 October 2011.
3. Mockaitis, Thomas R. *Resolving Insurgencies*. U.S. Army Strategic Studies Institute. June 2011.
4. Paul, Christopher, Colin P. Clarke, Beth Grill, and Molly Dunigan. *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies*. Rand. 2013.
5. U.S. Department of the Army, Headquarters. FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, C1: *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*. 2 June 2014.
6. U.S. Department of State Bureau of Political-Military Affairs. *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*. 2009.
7. U.S. Government. *Guide to the Analysis of Insurgency*. 2012.
8. Watts, Stephen, Jason H. Campbell, Patrick B. Johnston, Sameer Lalwani, and Sarah H. Bana. *Countering Others Insurgencies: Understanding US Small Footprint Interventions in Local Context*. RAND. 2014.

Appendix B: Obstacles to Defeating Boko Haram

Table 3. Factors that obstruct GoN's success countering Boko Haram

Factor	Details
Army not prepared for counterinsurgency	The Nigerian Army lacks the appropriate equipment and training for the type of urban conflict that characterizes the fight with Boko Haram. Due to inefficiency, lack of trade training, and the theft of spare parts, soldiers often deploy without fundamental equipment, such as weaponry and ammunition. ¹⁰⁸ In addition, the bomb detection equipment used by Nigerian security forces is said to be rudimentary. ¹⁰⁹ The Nigerian armed forces have had little formal counterinsurgency training, and are slow to adapt to changes in the tactical environment. As a result, the military tends to rely on its size and firepower to provide an advantage in combat. This has been ineffective against an enemy that relies on predominantly asymmetrical tactics such as ambushes, IEDs, kidnappings, and school raids.
Lack of Human Intelligence (HUMINT)	In order to counter Boko Haram, the GoN needs reliable on-the-ground human intelligence. An example of the Nigerian government's intelligence shortfalls can be seen in the botched response to the Chibok kidnapping, when one of the firsthand witnesses— a girl who had managed to escape— was interviewed by civil society activists rather than by members of the security and intelligence services. ¹¹⁰ Nigerian security forces also need information that can be analyzed and acted upon more rapidly, a goal perhaps achievable through the establishment of a satellite counterterrorism intelligence center closer to the northeast, as proposed by the former U.S. ambassador to Nigeria. ¹¹¹ The government's heavy-handed techniques and inability to protect informants also discourage civilians from reporting Boko Haram activities.

¹⁰⁸ IHS. "Nigerian Army," in *Jane's World Armies, Nigeria - Army*. Accessed June 9, 2014.

¹⁰⁹ Testimony by Robin Renee Sanders, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, "The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram." June 11, 2014. transcript: <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=755526>.

¹¹⁰ Testimony by Emmanuel Ogebe, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, "The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram." June 11, 2014. Transcript: <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=755526>.

¹¹¹ Testimony by Robin Renee Sanders, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations, "The Ongoing Struggle Against Boko Haram." June 11, 2014. Transcript: <http://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=755526>.

Factor	Details
Lack of airlift capacity	Airlift is particularly important for Nigeria, as it must cover a vast territory in the northeast and to react to information in a timely fashion; ¹¹² however, it has been a problem for the Nigerian military. Nigeria's air force struggles due to inadequate training, funding, and poor technical competence. Much of the air force's inventory is at least 20 years old, and the force suffers from low morale due to the non-operational status of much of its equipment. ¹¹³ With fewer than five operational Mi-24 "Hind" attack helicopters, the Air Force is currently unable to provide much close air support in combat.
Low Morale	Among other complaints, Nigerian soldiers say that accommodations are rough, troop rotation is poor, few receive the leave to which they are entitled, ¹¹⁴ and the military has failed to provide the operational-duty allowance they had been promised. ¹¹⁵ In addition, troops live in constant fear of Boko Haram attacks, ¹¹⁶ claiming that the terrorist group is better armed, and citing shortages of communications and night vision equipment. ¹¹⁷ As a result, soldiers are said to be lobbying their senior commanders to be sent to the Niger Delta, and some deployed in the Niger Delta pay bribes to their commanders to avoid being transferred to the north, where there is high risk of death and injury from Boko Haram and no comparable financial incentive. ¹¹⁸ There are also incidents of mutiny within the military. Soldiers flee battles because, again, they are not armed, equipped, or trained to fight the more powerful, better armed Boko Haram.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ IHS. "Capabilities Briefing: Nigeria." *Jane's World Armies*. 21 February 2012.

¹¹⁴ Tim Cocks. "Boko Haram exploits Nigeria's slow military decline." Reuters. May 9, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/09/us-nigeria-military-insight-idUSBREA4809220140509>.

¹¹⁵ IHS. "Army mutiny in northeastern Nigeria emphasizes low military morale ahead of emergency rule extension." *Jane's Intelligence Weekly - Africa Section*. May 15, 2014.

¹¹⁶ Tim Cocks. "Boko Haram exploits Nigeria's slow military decline." Reuters. May 9, 2014. <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/05/09/us-nigeria-military-insight-idUSBREA4809220140509>.

¹¹⁷ IHS. "Army mutiny in northeastern Nigeria emphasizes low military morale ahead of emergency rule extension." *Jane's Intelligence Weekly - Africa Section*. May 15, 2014.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

Factor	Details
Corruption in procurement of military equipment	Security sector mismanagement and corruption is a major constraint in the ability of Nigerian security forces to counter Boko Haram. ¹¹⁹ The cause of this operational shortfall is believed to emanate from the current opaque method of procurement, which uses middlemen that open the process to corruption, leading to unnecessary delays and the purchase of inappropriate or defective equipment. ¹²⁰ The president's lack of a military background may explain this. He may be unaware that some of his commanders are involved in corrupt practices during the procurement of military equipment, or he may simply not know enough about the military to detect the indications of security sector mismanagement. An example of how corruption in the procurement process has affected Nigeria's operational capabilities is the fact that the military only just began to deploy Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles in May 2014. Up to that point, they had been using Toyota Hilux pickup trucks that were more vulnerable to ambushes, small arms fire, and IEDs. ¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Lauren Ploch Blanchard. Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 10 June 2014. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>.

¹²⁰ Patrick Atuanya. "Questionable Defense Contracts Undermine Nigeria's Security, Business Day." *Businessday Online*. June 4, 2014. http://businessdayonline.com/2014/06/questionable-defence-contracts-undermine-nigerias-security/?utm_source=June+4+2014+EN&utm_campaign=6/4/2014&utm_medium=email#.U48_SvldVrW.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Factor	Details
Human rights abuses	The Nigerian Army has a long history of reported human rights violations. ¹²² Human rights abuses not only have fed the insurgency, eroded the population's trust and confidence in the GoN, and, as a result, played into the hands of Boko Haram; they also have caused the United States—a potential close partner in the conflict—to limit the amount and type of training and equipment it will provide to the Nigerian forces. Among the practices the United States has pointed to as reasons for its refusal to provide unfettered military support are: extrajudicial executions; instances in which security forces have used firearms against civilians when there is no imminent threat of death or serious injury; ¹²³ harsh tactics that injured civilians and harmed property; and the disproportionate use of force, including dragnet arrests, detention, intimidation, and extortion. ¹²⁴ The JTF has also been accused of setting up roadblocks, shutting down markets, and flattening towns in which Boko Haram is suspected to be present. In its investigations, the JTF simply cordons off areas to conduct house-to-house searches, arrest young men, destroy property, assault women and children, and intimidate and humiliate the local population they have been sent to protect. ¹²⁵

¹²² Amnesty International. "Nigeria: Gruesome footage implicates military in war crimes." Amnesty International webpage. August 2014. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/nigeria-gruesome-footage-implicates-military-war-crimes-2014-08-05>.

¹²³ Amnesty International. "Nigeria: Deaths of hundreds of Boko Haram suspects in custody requires investigation." Amnesty International webpage. October 2014. <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/nigeria-deaths-hundreds-boko-haram-suspects-custody-requires-investigation-2013-10-15>; Amnesty International. "Nigeria: More than 1500 Killed in Armed Conflict in North-Eastern Nigeria in Early 2014." Amnesty International webpage. May 2014. https://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/nigeria_more_than_1500_killed_in_armed_conflict_0.pdf; Human Rights Watch. "Nigeria: Massive Destruction, Deaths from Military Raid." Human Rights Watch website. May 2014. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/05/01/nigeria-massive-destruction-deaths-military-raid>.

¹²⁴ Freedom Onuoha. "Boko Haram and the evolving Salafi Jihadist Threat." Chapter 8 in *Boko Haram: Islamism, politics, security and the state in Nigeria*. West African Politics and Society Series, Vol. 2. Page 176. Edited by Marc-Antoine Perouse de Montclos.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

Factor	Details
Mistrust among the population	One of the biggest obstacles for the Nigerian military is the lack of cooperation from the local population; Boko Haram members live among the community but people are either too scared or unwilling to inform on them. ¹²⁶ Furthermore, harassment from checkpoints has led to the alienation of the population of Maiduguri from the police. ¹²⁷

¹²⁶ Cited in James J.F. Forest. *Confronting the Terrorism of Boko Haram in Nigeria*. JSOU Report 12-5. May 2012. http://cco.dodlive.mil/files/2012/09/Boko_Haram_JSOU-Report-2012.pdf. Originally from Jonah Fisher. "Are Nigeria's Boko Haram getting foreign backing?" BBC, June 21, 2011. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13843967>.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Appendix C: U.S. Military Assistance to the GoN

Table 4. U.S. military assistance to Nigeria for countering Boko Haram

Area of Assistance	Description
Counterterrorism	The USG has focused on building critical CT capabilities among Nigeria's civilian and law enforcement agencies. ¹²⁸ The Defense Department has been working to build up the capability of Nigerian security forces through capacity-building programs such as Exercise Flintlock, which falls under the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP), ¹²⁹ a program aimed at defeating terrorist organizations across the Sahel region. AFRICOM also helped Nigeria set up the Nigerian Army Special Operation Command (NASOC) in 2014.
Military Professionalism & Human Rights	Nigerian military officers have regularly participated in the U.S. International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs, which emphasize teaching military professionalism to current and future military leadership in partner nations. The program also incorporates human rights training as part of the broader military professionalism curriculum.
Border Security	The United States has made improving border security a priority in its assistance to the GoN. In September 2014, the USG announced the launching of a major border security program. Nigerian law enforcement agencies also regularly receive training on (among other things) border security from the Antiterrorism Assistance Program (ATA) and RSI.

¹²⁸ Rhonda Shore. "Ten Things the United States Is Doing To Counter Boko Haram," *Dipnote, US Department of State (Blog)*, posted May 16, 2014. <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2014/05/16/ten-things-united-states-doing-counter-boko-haram>.

¹²⁹ Flintlock is an annual, regional exercise "designed to foster regional cooperation to enable our African partners to stabilize regions of North and West Africa, reducing sanctuary and support for violent extremist organizations. [It] provides increased interoperability, counterterrorism, and combat skills training while creating a venue for regional engagement among all TSCTP nations." U.S. Africa Command. "Flintlock." AFRICOM Exercises. <http://www.africom.mil/what-we-do/exercises/flintlock>.

Area of Assistance	Description
Training	Since summer 2014, U.S. Special Forces from the California Army National Guard have been in Nigeria, training the Nigerian Army's 650-man 143 rd Infantry Battalion, a newly formed unit stood up specifically to counter Boko Haram. ¹³⁰ U.S. troops are teaching "the fundamentals of patrolling, small-unit tactics, movement to contact, night operations and ambush tactics." ¹³¹ In addition, the 143 rd will receive training on "human rights, basic soldiering skills, advanced infantry skills, land navigation, marksmanship and troop-leading procedures." ¹³² The U.S. government has trained Nigerian soldiers through its African Contingency Operations Training and Equipping (ACOTA) program. Through NASOC, U.S. groups are providing training equipment, assistance, and counter-insurgency lessons for including AFRICOM, the Office of Security Operations from the United States Embassy, and Special Operations Command Africa. ¹³³
Equipping	USG equipment to the GoN has gone primarily to the Nigerian Navy and the Air Force in recent years, due to human rights concerns within the Nigerian Army; however, the USG has provided some non-lethal equipment to the GoN in its CT effort, including non-lethal transportation, communication, and force protection equipment. ¹³⁴

¹³⁰ John Shiklam and Senator Iroegbu. "Nigeria: Borno Govt - We Have No Facts On Abduction of Women and Children." *This Day*, reprinted on *AllAfrica*. June 6, 2014. <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406250850.html>.

¹³¹ "Cal Guard SF unit trains Nigerian army," U.S. Army Special Operations Command website. June 25, 2014. <http://www.soc.mil/UNS/Releases/2014/June/140625-01/140625-01.html>.

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ "Nigerian Army Partners With AFRICOM To Establish Special Operation Command." Originally reported in *Channels*, reprinted on *Stratrisks* website. January 13, 2014. <http://stratrisks.com/geostrat/17506>.

¹³⁴ "Nigeria Government Takes Delivery Of Special Military Equipment From US." *Naij.com*. June 2014, <http://www.naij.com/68797.html>.

Area of Assistance	Description
Law enforcement	Building the capacity of the law enforcement sector is also a critical component of USG involvement. The State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program "enhances Nigerian law enforcement's capability to prevent, detect, and investigate terrorism threats; secure Nigeria's borders; and manage responses to terrorist incidents in a rule-of-law framework." ¹³⁵ Since June 2013, the State Department's Rewards for Justice program has advertised a reward offer of up to USD 7 million for information leading to the location of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau. ¹³⁶ The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) has also been offering direct support "assist[ing] in specific incident investigations." ¹³⁷ These efforts to build the capacity of the law enforcement sector and anti-terrorism capabilities are essential because, as a recent Congressional Research Service (CRS) report notes, there is a "lack of sufficient training for prosecutors and judges to implement anti-terrorism laws." ¹³⁸
Counter-IED	Through the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program, the USG provides assistance to the GoN on "identifying, diffusing, and the safe disposal of improvised explosives devices (IEDs). ATA curriculum has been integrated into NPF [Nigerian Police Force] training curriculum, supporting its ability to respond to IED attacks in Abuja and to deploy to the northeast part of the country where Boko Haram attacks are the most frequent." ¹³⁹
Promoting Regional Cooperation	The USG recently announced that under the Global Security Contingency Fund, there will be a \$40 million pilot program for Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria to counter Boko Haram. "The program will provide technical expertise, training, and equipment to the four countries to develop institutional and tactical capabilities to enhance their respective efforts to counter Boko Haram, and to lay the groundwork for increased cross-border cooperation to counter Boko Haram." ¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵ Rhonda Shore. "Ten Things the United States Is Doing To Counter Boko Haram." Dipnote, US Department of State (Blog), posted May 16, 2014. <https://blogs.state.gov/stories/2014/05/16/ten-things-united-states-doing-counter-boko-haram>.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Lauren Ploch Blanchard. *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*. CRS Report for Congress. Congressional Research Service. 10 June 2014. <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/R43558.pdf>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ U.S. Department of State. "Boko Haram and U.S. Counterterrorism Assistance to Nigeria." Washington, D.C., October 28, 2014, <http://www.humanrights.gov/fact-sheet-boko-haram-and-u.s.-counterterrorism-assistance-to-nigeria>.

¹⁴⁰ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. *FACT SHEET: U.S. Efforts to Assist the Nigerian Government in its Fight against Boko Haram*. Washington, D.C., October 14, 2014. <http://www.uspolicy.be/headline/white-house-facts-us-aid-nigeria-against-boko-haram>.

Area of Assistance	Description
Intelligence and reconnaissance	After Chibok kidnappings, the USG began fixed-wing flights to gather intelligence. ¹⁴¹ Assistance has already been provided to the Nigerians in the form of helping them coordinate their own intelligence information, giving them advice based on U.S. experience in dealing with counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan. ¹⁴²
Strategic Communications	The USG via the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications has worked with the GON to provide assistance on developing a communications strategy for the Boko Haram conflict.

¹⁴¹ Army Sgt. 1st Class Tyrone C. Marshall Jr. “DOD Assists Nigerian Kidnapping Search With Fixed-wing Aircraft.” American Foreign Press Service. Department of Defense website. May 14, 2014. <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122243>.

¹⁴² Interview with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield. “‘Slow progress’ for U.S. on addressing terror insurgencies in Africa.” PBS Newshour. May 8, 2014. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/slow-progress-u-s-addressing-terror-insurgencies-africa/>.

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