Congressional Research Service
Informing the legislative debate since 1914

Terrorism and Violent Extremism in Africa

July 14, 2016

Congressional Research Service
https://crsreports.congress.gov
R44563

CRS REPORT
Prepared for Members and
Committees of Congress

Summary

The pace of high-profile terrorist attacks in Sub-Saharan Africa has intensified in recent years, and the death toll now rivals that of other regions where violent Islamist extremist groups are active. This report provides context for these trends, including a summary of sub-regional dynamics, factors affecting radicalization, and U.S. responses. It focuses primarily on Sunni Islamist terrorism, given the ideological underpinnings of the African groups currently designated by the U.S. State Department as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. Select issues for Congress are also explored. Information on the major Africa-based groups is provided in an **Appendix**.

Over the past two decades, Congress has appropriated increasing funding to counter terrorism in Africa and has demonstrated interest in the nature of terrorist threats and efforts to counter them. Members have raised questions regarding

- the threat violent extremist groups in Africa may pose to U.S. citizens and U.S. interests;
- the counterterrorism capacities of African countries and the impact of U.S. efforts to bolster them;
- the role of the U.S. military in countering violent extremist groups in Africa;
- the level of U.S. funding and personnel dedicated to these efforts; and
- the extent to which U.S. programs are successful in seeking to prevent or mitigate radicalization, recruitment, and support for violent extremist groups.

Some Africa-based groups have affiliated with Al Qaeda or the self-proclaimed Islamic State, but many seem to operate autonomously. While many extremists on the continent appear to be driven primarily by local political and socioeconomic dynamics, some African groups have sought to attack Western interests in Africa, and some, like Somalia's Al Shabaab, apparently seek to inspire or carry out attacks in the United States and elsewhere. The spillover effects from areas where terrorist groups operate—most notably Libya, Mali, northeast Nigeria, and Somalia—are of increasing concern to neighboring states and the broader region.

Several emerging trends in violent Islamist extremist activity on the continent are impacting how governments in the region, local communities, and international actors respond:

Proliferation of African-Led Groups. Al Qaeda's first avowed African affiliate, Algerian-led Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), was long assumed to have limited appeal among West African Muslims, and its interest in criminal activities often seemed to eclipse its ideological commitment. However, the rise of relatively potent, locally led violent Islamist groups in Somalia, Nigeria, and Mali over the past decade challenges past assumptions about the limited prospects for Islamist terrorism on the continent. Africa also appears to have become an arena for competition between Al Qaeda affiliates and the Islamic State over recruits, affiliates, and perceived legitimacy.

The Push and Pull of North Africa. State collapse in Libya and political transitions in Tunisia and Egypt have provided new opportunities for armed groups to establish safe havens for training, expand their geographic reach, recruit followers, and equip themselves. Protecting and sustaining Tunisia's nascent democratic government has become a focus for U.S. policymakers in light of these trends. Contrary to some hopes, however, increased political openness has not inoculated Tunisia against domestic radicalization and recruitment. Conflict in Libya has spilled over its borders, generating new flows of arms and combatants into Tunisia and West Africa's Sahel region. Instability in North Africa has also drawn African recruits seeking to join groups

based in Libya, or seeking to transit through North Africa en route to other global hotspots. Mutual distrust among North and Sub-Saharan African governments has inhibited counterterrorism cooperation, as have bureaucratic divisions within some donor governments.

From Holding Territory to Asymmetric Attacks. Years before the "Islamic State" announced its caliphate in Iraq and Syria in 2014, Islamist extremist groups in Africa sought to hold, and in some cases govern, territory. Al Shabaab began to assert territorial control in Somalia in the mid-2000s, as did AQIM and two local affiliates in Mali in 2012, followed by Boko Haram in Nigeria and Islamic State-linked groups in Libya in 2014. Military offensives by regional forces (in Somalia, Nigeria, and Libya) and French forces (in Mali) have reversed this trend, but gains are fragile. In response, extremists have reverted to asymmetric tactics and expanded the scope of their targets.

Attacks on Urban "Soft Targets" by a Resurgent AQIM. For much of the past decade, AQIM focused primarily on lucrative kidnap-for-ransom operations, attacks on local military and police posts, and insurgent operations in remote areas. As of 2013, the group appeared to have been weakened by internal divisions and by French military operations in Mali that killed or captured several key figures. However, three recent AQIM-linked attacks on hotels and restaurants popular with Western expatriates—in Mali (November 2015), Burkina Faso (January 2016), and Côte d'Ivoire (March 2016)—were among the group's deadliest ever, killing dozens of Western civilians and placing AQIM back at the center of regional terrorism dynamics. AQIM and its former rival splinter movement Al Murabitoun jointly claimed responsibility, signaling their apparent renewed merger. These attacks also appeared to signal a shift in tactics, piquing concerns about the vulnerability of cosmopolitan cities with large expatriate communities, such as Dakar, Accra, and Abidjan. As a result, local governments and donors, including the United States, are considering new programs to bolster West African urban crisis response capabilities, in addition to ongoing military train-and-equip counterterrorism programs.

Challenges. African-led responses to terrorist threats have been constrained by limited resources and capacity, institutional weaknesses, conflicting political agendas, corruption, sensitivities over domestic sovereignty, regional rivalries, and uneven engagement among affected states. These challenges have also undermined the effectiveness of efforts by concerned international actors and donors—including the United States—to respond. U.S. policymakers face a number of dilemmas, including how to prioritize U.S. counterterrorism activities in Africa (both within the continent and compared to other regions); how to define a threshold for the use of U.S. military force against terrorist groups on the continent; whether and how to balance a large infusion of military aid to affected African countries with investments in law enforcement, development, and governance; and how to measure and assess the impact of U.S. efforts. The question of how and when to partner with authoritarian states for counterterrorism purposes—and what consequences this may have on long-term regional stability and the pursuit of other U.S. policy objectives—is particularly thorny.

Further CRS Reading: CRS In Focus IF10172, *Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Al Murabitoun*; CRS In Focus IF10170, *Al Shabaab*; CRS Report R43558, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*; CRS Report RL33142, *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*; CRS In Focus IF10116, *Mali: Transition from Conflict?*; CRS In Focus IF10155, *Somalia*; CRS Report RL33964, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*; CRS Report R42967, *U.S.-Kenya Relations: Current Political and Security Issues*; CRS Report R43612, *The Islamic State and U.S. Policy*; and CRS Report R44313, *What Is "Building Partner Capacity?" Issues for Congress*.

Contents

Introduction: Violent Extremism in Africa 1
Context 3
Sub-Regional Dynamics 6
East Africa: Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab 6
North-West Africa: Group Proliferation and Fragmentation 7
Drivers of Violent Islamist Extremism in Africa 9
Socioeconomic Factors 10
Cultural and Political Factors 11
The International Response 11
The U.S. Response 13
Efforts to Build Regional Partners' Military Capability 13
Military Operations 15
Countering Violent Extremist Recruitment and Ideology 16
Countering Terrorist Financing and Mobility 17
Issues for Congress 18
A Balanced Approach to Resource Allocation? 18
Direct Intervention vs. Building Partner Capacity 19
Coordination and Oversight Challenges 20
Human Rights Considerations 21
Democracy and Fragility Trends among African CT Partners 22
Outlook 23

Figures

Figure 1. Terrorist Activity by Violent Islamist Groups in Africa, 2011-present 4
Figure 2. State Fragility and Population Displacement in Africa 5

Tables

Table A-1. Africa-Based Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) 24

Appendixes

Appendix A. Foreign Terrorist Organizations in Africa 24
Appendix B. Terrorist Group Profiles 25

Contacts

Author Information 27

Introduction: Violent Extremism in Africa

Increased terrorist activity by groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria has raised the international profile of African-based Islamist terrorist groups, but violent extremism is not a new phenomenon on the continent.[1] In the 19th century, local insurgent leaders fought to establish Islamic states in areas that are now in Nigeria, Guinea/Mali, and Sudan. In the 1990s, Algeria fought a decade-long war against Islamist insurgents after the military canceled election results favoring an Islamist political movement, resulting in as many as 200,000 deaths. Also in the 1990s, Sudan hosted foreign extremists, including Osama bin Laden, after an Islamist regime came to power there in a coup. Al Qaeda's bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 and subsequent attacks demonstrated the group's reach and ability to recruit from Muslim communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. Extremist groups in Algeria and Somalia later affiliated with Al Qaeda. Religiously inspired terrorism in Africa is not limited to Sunni Islamist groups. One of Africa's oldest active terrorist groups is the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Central Africa—unlike many of the violent extremist groups operating on the continent today, it originated out of a messianic, localized interpretation of Christianity and traditional beliefs.[2]

Foreign fighter flows from the continent, primarily from North Africa—first to Afghanistan and the Balkans, then to Iraq, and now to Syria, Iraq, and Libya—have long been of international concern. While a majority of these fighters have come from the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, and Mauritania), smaller numbers have come from Somalia, Sudan, and Kenya, among other countries. Foreign fighter flows to Somalia, including from the United States and other Western countries, have reportedly decreased since 2012 but remain a security challenge. U.S. federal prosecutors have brought several U.S. citizens to trial for seeking to join the Somali Al Qaeda-linked group Al Shabaab.

The pace of high-profile extremist attacks on the continent has intensified in recent years. Terrorist incidents have ranged from mass casualty bombings, deadly sieges, and attacks on international facilities, to kidnappings, assassinations, and public executions.[3] Most of the victims have been African, but several U.S. citizens have also been killed in such attacks. Assaults on prominent soft targets such as the Westgate Mall in Kenya and hotels and restaurants frequented by foreigners appear to be on the rise, heightening concerns among foreign governments about the security of their citizens traveling or working in Africa. Suicide bombings have become an increasingly common tactic, most notably for Boko Haram, which frequently uses women and children as attackers. A Somali-American man became the first known American suicide bomber in 2008, in Somalia for Al Shabaab. (Several other U.S. citizens who joined Al Shabaab have also reportedly died in Somalia.) In February 2016, Al Shabaab demonstrated its ability to conceal a bomb in a laptop computer that was detonated by a suicide bomber onboard a Somali airliner. (It detonated before the plane reached cruising altitude and thus did not destroy the aircraft.)

[1] For more background, see, e.g., Jakkie Cilliers, "Violent Islamist Extremism and Terror in Africa," Institute for Security Studies (ISS; South Africa), October 2015.

[2] The African Union formally designated the LRA a terrorist group in 2011. The State Department does not designate the LRA as a Foreign Terrorist Organization but has included it on the Terrorist Exclusion List (which blocks entry into the United States) since 2001 and has designated its leader a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT).

[3] High-profile incidents include mass casualty bombings in Uganda, Somalia, Nigeria and neighboring countries; attacks on U.S. facilities in Benghazi and Tunis and on U.N. facilities in Algeria, Nigeria, and Somalia; deadly sieges at Algeria's In Amenas gas plant, Kenya's Westgate Mall and Garissa University, Tunisian tourist sites, and several West African hotels; kidnappings such as the abduction of schoolgirls in Nigeria; and the executions of Christians in Libya.

In 2015, U.S. Director of National Intelligence (DNI) James Clapper reported to Congress that "Sunni violent extremists are gaining momentum and the number of Sunni violent extremist groups, members, and safe havens is greater than at any other point in history."[4] He reiterated that message in 2016.[5] U.S. officials warn of growing fragmentation within the "terrorism landscape," made up of an increasingly diverse array of groups in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.[6] Africa, described by Clapper in 2014 as "a hothouse for the emergence of extremist and rebel groups," has drawn increasing attention as groups in Nigeria and Somalia have expanded their reach and lethality, and as new North African groups have emerged. Some Africa-based extremists have affiliated with Al Qaeda or the Islamic State (IS, aka ISIS or ISIL), but many appear to operate autonomously. Transnational groups appear to see opportunity in Africa—the cover of *Dabiq*, the Islamic State's English-language magazine, proclaimed in 2015: "Shari'a Will Rule Africa."

In the 2015 assessment of the DNI , most Sunni violent extremist groups "place a higher priority on local concerns than on attacking the so-called far enemy—the United States and the West." Nevertheless, some African groups have attacked Western interests in Africa, and U.S. officials view some groups, like Al Shabaab, as potentially capable of inspiring or carrying out attacks in the United States, despite a primarily regional focus.[7]

Definitions

Terrorism is defined in 22 U.S.C. 2656f(d) as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents." Other governments, nongovernmental organizations, and academics define the term in different ways. While the terms terrorism and violent extremism are sometimes used interchangeably, they are distinct, but overlapping concepts.

The term **violent extremism** is not defined in U.S. law. The U.N. Secretary-General has described it as a "diverse phenomenon, without clear definition," that is "neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief."[8] The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) broadly describes violent extremism as "advocating, engaging in, preparing or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic or political objectives."[9] **Violent Islamist extremism** is a subset of this broader concept, in which an individual or group employs violence to advance an agenda seeking the application of Islamic principles or practices in politics. Other terms, such as **Salafist Jihadism**, refer to the ideology espoused by Al Qaeda, its adherents, and offshoots like the Islamic State, and are more selective.[10] The violent extremism phenomenon is not limited to religious goals; violent extremists may also or alternatively be driven by other ideological, social, racial, or political goals.

Terrorism is an act of violence, carried out (at least ostensibly) in pursuit of a political/ideological goal, whereas violent extremism generally refers to the set of ideas or beliefs that an individual or group may use to justify violence. Although terrorism is generally defined as actions committed by non-state actors, the analyst Paul Williams notes in *War & Conflict in Africa* that, "if terrorism is about the use of indiscriminate violence to intimidate populations in pursuit of political aims, then it is clear that in large parts of Africa, governments, not non-state actors, have been the principal perpetrators."[11] This report focuses on the actions of non-state violent Islamist extremist actors; other CRS products cover state violence against civilians in various African countries.

[4] Testimony of DNI James R. Clapper, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, hearing, February 26, 2015.

[5] Testimony of DNI Clapper, Senate Armed Services Committee, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, hearing, February 9, 2016.

[6] Testimony of National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas J. Rasmussen, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Current Terrorist Threat to the United States*, hearing, February 12, 2015.

[7] See, e.g., "Homeland security chief worried about Al Shabaab mall threat," Reuters, February 22, 2015.

[8] U.N. General Assembly, *Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism*, A/70/674, December 24, 2015.

[9] USAID, *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency*, September 2011.

[10] For more discussion of these terms, see, e.g., Alex P. Schmid, "Violent and Non-Violent Extremism: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" International Center for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, May 2014.

[11] Paul D. Williams, *War & Conflict in Africa*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), p. 61.

There has been comparatively greater international focus on violent Islamist extremism occurring in, and emanating from, the Middle East, South Asia, and North Africa, but in recent years the death toll from violent Islamist terrorist attacks in Sub-Saharan Africa has rivaled that of other regions. This report seeks to provide some context for current terrorism trends in Sub-Saharan Africa and a discussion of some key issues for Congress.

Context

Conflicts proliferated in Africa in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. In the early 2000s, conflict and political instability appeared to be easing, with a landmark peace agreement in Sudan and the end of long-running conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, and Angola. However, in recent years political violence has again been on the rise in Africa, and violent Islamist extremist groups are among its most deadly perpetrators. Eleven groups based on the continent are now designated by the State Department as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs); nine have been listed since 2013 (see **Appendix A**, and see **Figure 1** for the areas in which they are active).

Some Africa-based groups sought to rebrand themselves as part of the Islamic State organization in 2015, while others remain independent or are affiliated with Al Qaeda. (**Appendix B** provides brief group overviews.) Al Qaeda affiliates, including Al Shabaab and the Algerian-led Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, may view the Islamic State as a rival for recruits and resources, or may differ with its ideology or tactics. By some accounts, the Islamic State's audacious tactics may have spurred rival groups to conduct a recent spate of high-profile attacks in West Africa.[12]

The *Global Terrorism Index 2015* (GTI), compiled by a nongovernmental organization, illustrates that violence by non-state actors, although concentrated in a small number of countries, is spreading and becoming more deadly.[13] Nigeria's Boko Haram was identified as the world's deadliest terrorist group for civilians in 2014, outpacing the Islamic State, to which it pledged allegiance in 2015.[14] Together, the two groups were responsible for half of the GTI-recorded global deaths from terrorist acts in 2014. That year, GTI reports that Nigeria witnessed the largest year-to-year increase in terrorist deaths ever documented in any country.[15] Somalia has also faced a significant uptick in attacks since 2011; 2014 was its deadliest year for terrorist incidents. Most attacks were claimed by Al Shabaab, which ranks among the five deadliest terrorist groups.

---

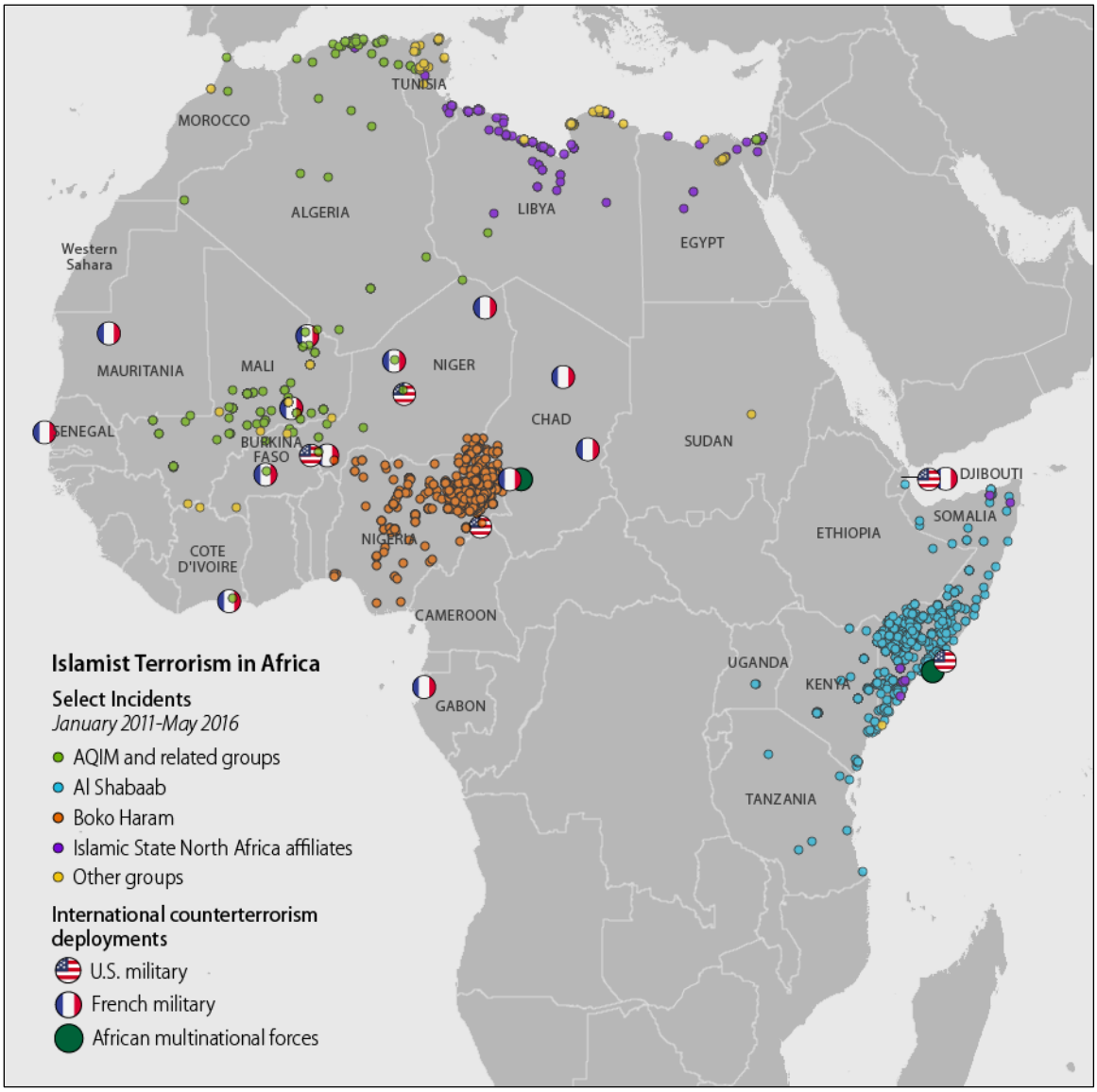
[12] Alexander Meleagrou-Hitchens, "Terrorist Tug-of-War," *Foreign Affairs*, October 8, 2015 and Simon Allison, "Côte d'Ivoire Attack: Resurgent al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb flexes its muscles," *Daily Maverick*, March 14, 2016.

[13] The GTI is based on information from the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. It defines terrorism as "the threatened or actual use of illegal force and violence by a non-state actor to attain a political, economic, religious, or social goal through fear, coercion, or intimidation." Per the GTI, the largest year-on-year increase in deaths from terrorism worldwide occurred in 2014, with five countries (including Nigeria) accounting for 78% of deaths. Eleven countries (including Somalia, the Central African Republic, South Sudan, and Cameroon) each had over 500 deaths from "terrorist" acts, and 93 countries experienced terrorist incidents. Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2015*, November 2015.

[14] The GTI attributed 6,644 deaths to Boko Haram in 2014 and 6,073 deaths to IS. The GTI counts civilian deaths from terrorist attacks in its characterization of Boko Haram as "the world's deadliest terrorist group"—when battle-related deaths are also considered, the Islamic State was the deadliest group, followed by the Taliban and Al Shabaab, with Boko Haram ranking fifth. GTD data for 2015, as referenced in the State Department's 2015 Country Reports on Terrorism, attributes an estimated 5,450 deaths to Boko Haram, another database estimates its 2015 death toll at 6,500. This discrepancy likely reflects challenges in verifying fatality information—the GTD uses conservative estimates.

[15] The GTI definition of terrorism is not limited to Islamist terrorism, though this major deterioration in Nigeria was largely attributable (81% of deaths) to Boko Haram. GTI data for Nigeria also includes attacks by ethnic Fulani militants, who are not viewed by regional experts as a cohesive group. (The Fulani are a large group spanning several West African countries, and while predominately Muslim, do not espouse a common political or religious agenda.)

Figure 1. Terrorist Activity by Violent Islamist Groups in Africa, 2011-present



Source: CRS graphic by Amber Wilhelm and Gabriel Nelson, using data from the nongovernment Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). French military deployments based on information provided on the French Ministry of Defense website; U.S. deployments based on War Powers notifications and other official announcements.

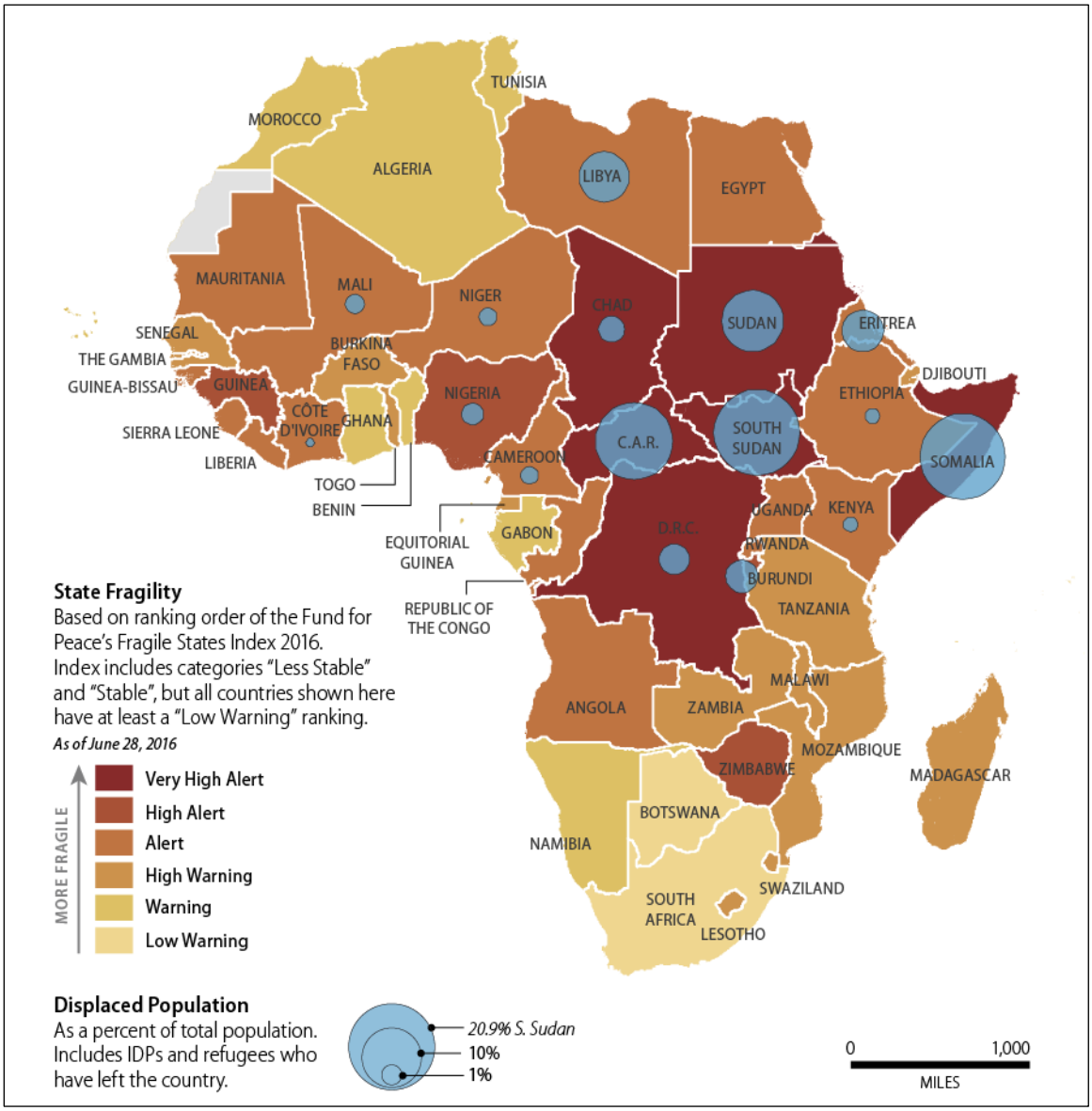
Notes: Incidents depicted above are drawn from ACLED's armed conflict database, which has been filtered by CRS to focus on incidents linked to U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations and related groups. The incident markers represent various types of events including terror attacks, shootouts, abductions, arrests, and internal developments within terror networks. Group affiliations are reported by ACLED and in some cases modified by CRS on an incident-by-incident basis.

The rise in Islamist extremist violence coincides with an increase in the lethality of political violence generally on the continent. Overall conflict fatalities have risen since 2011, and 2014 was the deadliest year for violence in Africa since 1999.[16] Such violence has driven mass

[16] Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), available at http://www.acleddata.com.

displacement—almost 17 million people, many fleeing conflict, are currently displaced in Africa, either internally or as refugees (see **Figure 2** below).[17] While violence levels in Africa are still below post-Cold War highs, with instability increasingly limited to a small number of countries, conflict-related fatalities in those countries are surging.[18]

Figure 2. State Fragility and Population Displacement in Africa



Source: CRS graphic produced by Amber Wilhelm; map generated by Hannah Fischer using data from Department of State (2015) and Fund for Peace (2015). Displacement data draws from United Nations (U.N.) agencies as reported in the Assessment Capacities Project, *Global Emergency Overview April 2016*, April 19, 2016.

[17] Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program, *Overview of UNHCR's Operations in Africa*, February 26, 2016.

[18] Jakkie Cilliers, "Conflict trends in Africa: a turn for the better in 2015?" ISS, November 2015.

Civil war still plagues parts of Africa, notably Sudan, the home of the continent's largest displaced population, and South Sudan, where by some estimates more than 50,000 people have been killed since December 2013. Political protests in Africa periodically turn violent, sometimes marked by repressive responses from state security forces. Across the Sahel region, contests over resources and political representation fuel intercommunal conflict, including between herding and farming communities, notably in Nigeria and Sudan, but also in Mali and Côte d'Ivoire.

Despite notable economic progress in some countries and a popular narrative in recent years of "Africa rising," African countries continue to dominate the Fund for Peace's *Fragile States Index*—only 6 of the top 25 most fragile states in the 2016 Index are not in Africa.[19] The four most fragile states—Somalia, South Sudan, the Central African Republic (CAR), and Sudan—have been plagued by conflict and instability for decades. More than half of the countries in Africa have seen worsening state fragility indicators in the past decade. The *Global Peace Index* ranks South Sudan, Somalia, CAR, Sudan, and Libya among the top 10 least peaceful countries (the Democratic Republic of Congo or DRC ranks 12th and Nigeria 15th).[20]

Religious extremism sometimes overlaps with other forms of political violence, and in some cases, armed Islamists have leveraged local insurgencies to expand their influence and establish safe havens. DNI Clapper has argued that:

> No single paradigm explains how terrorists become involved in insurgencies. Some groups like ISIL in Syria and al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) in Mali have worked with local militants to incite insurgencies. Others, like Boko Haram, are the sole instigators and represent the primary threat to their respective homeland's security. Still others, including al-Shabaab, are the primary beneficiaries of an insurgency started by others. Finally, other groups, such as core al-Qa'ida, have taken advantage of the relative safe haven in areas controlled by insurgent groups to build capabilities and alliances without taking on a primary leadership role in the local conflict.[21]

Sub-Regional Dynamics

East Africa: Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab

Al Qaeda operatives and other violent Islamist extremist groups have had a presence in East Africa for two decades, although the extent of their operations has varied over time. Al Shabaab emerged in predominately Sunni Muslim Somalia in the early 2000s amid a proliferation of Islamist and clan-based militias that flourished in the absence of central government authority. Al Shabaab drew support across clans, promoting a vision of uniting ethnic Somali-inhabited areas of Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Somalia under an Islamic caliphate. Some of its founding members reportedly trained and fought with Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and known Al Qaeda operatives in the region were associated with the group in its formative years.

Al Shabaab held significant territory in south-central Somalia, including the capital Mogadishu, in the late 2000s, until a U.S.-backed African Union (AU) military force gained momentum against the insurgency in 2011-2012. Additional troop contributions have since allowed troops from the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the nascent Somali government to reclaim further territory, though their forces remain stretched. Al Shabaab continues to wage a violent campaign against the Somali government, the AU mission, and international targets in Somalia; it

[19] Fund for Peace, *Fragile States Index 2015*, June 17, 2015.

[20] Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Peace Index 2016*, June 2016.

[21] DNI James R. Clapper, *Worldwide Threat Assessment*, February 9, 2016, op. cit.

has taken advantage of security gaps to reinfiltrate rural areas that AMISOM has been unable to hold. It has also threatened the countries participating in AMISOM and conducted deadly attacks in Djibouti, Kenya, and Uganda. Al Shabaab activity in Kenya has increased significantly in recent years; the group has killed hundreds of Kenyans in attacks since 2012.

Al Shabaab's ability to recruit abroad and the presence in Somalia of foreign fighters, among them U.S. citizens, have been of significant concern to U.S. policymakers. Its ties with other terrorist groups, most notably Al Qaeda and its Yemen-based affiliate, and its threats against international targets also elevate its profile among extremist groups on the continent and have made it a target of direct counterterrorism operations by the United States and other Western countries. In confirming the U.S. strike that killed Al Shabaab's leader, Ahmed Godane, in September 2014, Obama Administration officials cited his oversight of "plots targeting Westerners, including U.S. persons in East Africa," and suggested that the strike responded to an "imminent threat" to U.S. interests in the region.[22] The tempo of U.S. air strikes in Somalia, sometimes premised on protecting U.S. military advisors in the region, increased in 2015-2016.

North-West Africa: Group Proliferation and Fragmentation

Armed Islamist groups have proliferated in North and West Africa since 2011, amid political upheaval in the Arab world, governance and security crises in Libya and Mali, and an Islamist insurgency in northern Nigeria. Many of these groups appear primarily focused on a domestic or regional agenda, but some have targeted U.S. or other foreign interests in the region and some may aspire to more international aims. North Africa is also a prominent source of foreign fighters for Al Qaeda-linked groups and the Islamic State organization in Iraq, Syria, and Libya.[23]

The oldest continuously active transnational Islamist terrorist group in the region is AQIM, which grew out of Algeria's 1990s civil conflict and began to carry out attacks in West Africa's Sahel region in the early 2000s (prior to its affiliation with Al Qaeda in 2006-2007). More recently, it has sought ties with extremist groups in Tunisia and Libya. The group, which has long exhibited internal tensions, has spawned a number of offshoots and splinter movements in recent years. These include Al Murabitoun, led by longtime AQIM cell commander Mokhtar Bel Mokhtar (who is Algerian), along with several Malian- and Mauritanian-led groups.

The countries of the Sahel are among the world's poorest and face complex security challenges, including ethnic conflict and separatism, banditry, and organized crime. They also have a history of poor governance and military intervention in politics. While violent Islamist ideology does not appear to have been embraced by most Sahel residents, it likely resonates with certain marginalized populations, as do the financial resources wielded by AQIM and other groups.

In North Africa, numerous reports suggest that Libya has become a hub for regional terrorist actors, and Tunisia has faced increasingly large-scale attacks by individuals who reportedly trained there. Political institutions in Algeria and Morocco have remained comparatively stable, but both countries have claimed to have broken up domestic and transnational terrorist cells and regularly express concern about spillover. Libya and Algeria are home to groups whose pledges of allegiance to the Islamic State have been publicly accepted by IS leadership.

[22] White House, Statement by the Press Secretary on the Death of Ahmed Godane, September 5, 2014.

[23] Recent analysis of IS "personnel records" for foreign fighters documented the presence of 559 Tunisians, 240 Moroccans, 87 Libyans, and 39 Algerians – among the highest numbers for any country and per population size. Brian Dodwell et al., *The Caliphate's Global Workforce*, Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point, April 2016.

Nigeria and the Lake Chad Basin[24]

Particular conditions in northeast Nigeria gave rise to Boko Haram, which is responsible for a far higher level of deadly violence than any other violent Islamist group in Africa. Key factors include a legacy of overlapping intercommunal and Muslim-Christian tensions in Nigeria; perceived disparities in the application of laws and access to development, jobs, and investment in the north; and popular frustration with elite corruption and other state abuses. Nigerian forces' at times heavy-handed response to Boko Haram since 2009 has reportedly fueled recruitment in some areas. The reported erosion of traditional leaders' perceived legitimacy among local populations in northeast Nigeria and northern Cameroon may also have contributed to the group's ascendance. The shrinking of Lake Chad, once one of Africa's largest lakes and now described by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization as an "ecological catastrophe," has exacerbated tensions among communities in the area that Boko Haram has reportedly sought to exploit.

Boko Haram's ideology encompasses a worldview that combines an exclusivist interpretation of Sunni Islam—one that rejects not only Western influence but also democracy, constitutionalism, and more moderate forms of Islam—with "politics of victimhood" that resonate in parts of Nigeria's underdeveloped north.[25] Some of Boko Haram's fighters have reportedly been drawn into the group by financial incentive or under threat.[26] The State Department has identified various dynamics limiting the Nigerian government's response to Boko Haram, including a lack of coordination and cooperation between Nigerian security agencies, security sector corruption, misallocation of resources, limited requisite databases, the slow pace of the judicial system, and lack of sufficient training for prosecutors and judges to implement anti-terrorism laws.[27]

Boko Haram has expanded its operations beyond Nigeria's borders in recent years, in part due to increased military pressure within Nigeria. Lake Chad's islands and waterways, Nigeria's vast Sambisa Forest, and the remote Mandara Mountains along the Nigeria-Cameroon border have proven effective safe havens for Boko Haram fighters. The group has drawn some of its membership from neighboring countries, though there are no reliable public estimates of the number of non-Nigerian nationals in the group. Boko Haram has operated in northern Cameroon since at least 2013, and it began a series of cross-border attacks into Chad and Niger in early 2015 when those countries deployed troops into Nigeria in an effort to roll back its territorial gains. The election of Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari in 2015 helped ease tensions among the neighboring countries affected by Boko Haram, and donors have sought to support an integrated regional force to counter the group. Nevertheless, lingering mutual distrust, a lack of military interoperability in the region, and, possibly, an emphasis on military rather than civilian governance initiatives continue to constrain the response.

[24] For more information, see CRS Report R43558, *Nigeria's Boko Haram: Frequently Asked Questions*, by Lauren Ploch Blanchard, and CRS Report RL33964, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*, by Lauren Ploch Blanchard and Tomas F. Husted. See also Virginia Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency* (London: Hurst, 2015).

[25] Alex Thurston, *'The disease is unbelief': Boko Haram's religious and political worldview*, Brookings Institution, January 2016.

[26] Mercy Corps, *"Motivations and Empty Promises" Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth*, February 2015.

[27] State Department, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, June 2, 2016.

Libya[28]

The presence and strengthening of IS supporters in Libya have become matters of deep concern to regional and international security officials. By some estimates, the conflict in Syria has attracted thousands of young Libyans since 2012, and some observers link the rise of IS-affiliated groups in Libya to the return of some of those Libyan fighters in 2014.[29] U.S. military officials estimated that the Islamic State had approximately 3,500 fighters in Libya in late 2015, but in mid-2016, senior U.S. officials estimated that figure had grown to as many as 5,000 to 8,000, among a much larger community of Libyan Salafi-jihadist activists and militia members.[30] Reports suggest that Sub-Saharan Africans are among IS-Libya's fighters. Some have allegedly been lured by financial incentives, while others may be driven by ideological or personal motives.[31] In February 2016, CIA Director John Brennan told the Select Senate Committee on Intelligence that Libya was "the most important theater for ISIL outside of the Syria-Iraq theater, they have several thousand members there, they have absorbed some of the groups inside of Libya, including Ansar al Sharia that was very active prior to ISIL's rise."[32] Military operations against the Islamic State by Libyan militia forces had succeeded in reversing some of the group's gains as of mid-2016. Nevertheless, unresolved political disputes among Libyans and some Libyans' hostility to foreign military intervention limit options available to the United States and other concerned outsiders.

Drivers of Violent Islamist Extremism in Africa

Paths toward radicalization among Muslim communities in Africa vary. Many studies on the roots of radicalization focus on the interplay of socioeconomic factors with others, such as patterns of state and social bias, state security responses to minority groups, concerted extremist recruitment efforts, and individual psychological characteristics.[33] The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which has commissioned various studies on factors affecting conflict and violent extremism, has identified both structural "push" factors and "pull" factors in individual radicalization and recruitment, along with "enabling" environmental factors, such as weak governance.[34] Studies furthermore point to the importance of "individual level" messaging, social networks, and person-to-person contacts.[35] Insofar as violent Islamist extremism is a form of armed conflict, USAID posits that conflict

[28] See CRS Report RL33142, *Libya: Transition and U.S. Policy*, by Christopher M. Blanchard. CRS analyst Christopher Blanchard contributed to this section.

[29] Frederic Wehrey and Ala' Alrababa'h, "Rising Out of Chaos: The Islamic State in Libya," Carnegie Endowment, March 5, 2015.

[30] Testimony of Special Presidential Envoy on the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL Brett McGurk, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Global Efforts to Defeat ISIS*, hearing, June 28, 2016.

[31] "ISIL recruiting migrant 'army of the poor' with $1,000 sign-up bonuses," *The Telegraph*, February 1, 2016.

[32] Testimony of CIA Director John Brennan, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Worldwide Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community*, hearing, February 9, 2016.

[33] For further reading, see, e.g., Harriet Allan et al., *Drivers of Violent Extremism: Hypotheses and Literature Review*, Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), October 16, 2015; Alex P. Schmid, *Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review*, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, March 2013 and Schmid, *The Routledge Handbook on Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[34] See Guilain Denoeux with Lynn Carter, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, USAID, February 2009; USAID, *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice*, September 2011.

[35] UNDP, "*Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach*," 2015.

> is driven by key actors in society… who actively mobilize people and resources to engage in acts of violence on the basis of grievance, such as a group's perception that it has been excluded from political and economic life. […] Illegitimate and ineffective institutions can drive dysfunctional patterns of fragility and stress.[36]

The State Department's top Africa official has testified before Congress that violent extremist groups are "focusing their recruitment efforts where there is a lack of economic opportunity, political and social alienation, poor governance, corruption of elites, and lack of accountability for abuses by security forces," and are exploiting such weaknesses in their propaganda.[37] If these dynamics are significant factors in extremist recruitment in Africa, they may highlight a need for more inclusive, responsive, effective, and accountable governance by local authorities, particularly those with whom international actors seek to partner to counter extremist groups.

Socioeconomic Factors

Poverty alone is not a sufficient explanation of individual recruitment or group prowess in a given location; indeed, "structural" explanations of terrorism may underestimate the power of individual decisionmaking and ideology.[38] Extremist groups, however, often seek to exploit perceptions of disproportionate economic hardship or exclusion due to religious or ethnic identity. Groups like Al Shabaab, Boko Haram, and Mali's Ansar al Dine have successfully used victimization narratives to recruit and elicit support, manipulating perceptions of societal discrimination against Muslims or specific ethnic or regional communities.[39] Such narratives sometimes seek to highlight disparities in access to jobs or government investments (in services and infrastructure) in areas where aggrieved communities reside. Recruits may be motivated by both grievances and the prospect of material/financial benefits from extremist group membership. Feelings of marginalization, relative deprivation, and frustrated expectations stemming from a lack of job opportunities in many African countries may make some youth more susceptible to extremist recruitment, in addition to boredom, idleness, and thrill-seeking impulses.

At the macro level, impoverished countries rarely have sufficient state revenues for effective policing and border control, which may allow non-state actors to flourish. A lack of means can undermine social services and create incentives for corruption, which armed groups—including extremists but also other insurgents—can exploit as a grievance and as a means to subvert law enforcement. For example, extremist groups as well as separatists have flourished in Somalia and Mali in areas where the state has been unable or unwilling to provide security or access to justice.[40] A lack of state services may foster a vicious cycle, fueling violence in areas that thereby become uninhabitable for government officials, deepening the local sense of isolation and deprivation. Across the continent, corruption and impunity are seen by a majority of Africans as

[36] USAID, C*onflict Assessment Framework: Version 2.0,* June 2012.

[37] Testimony of Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Addressing Instability in Sub-Saharan Africa,* hearing, May 10, 2016.

[38] USAID, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, op. cit. See also Mercy Corps, "Injustice, Not Unemployment, A Key Driver of Youth Participation in Violence," February 17, 2015.

[39] See, e.g., *CTC Sentinel*, "Understanding Drivers of Violent Extremism: The case of Al-Shabab and Somali Youth," August 23, 2012.

[40] Denoeux and Carter, *Development Assistance and Counter-Extremism: A Guide to Programming,* USAID, October 2009.

increasing.[41] Some extremist groups, such as Al Shabaab, deliver social services and provide justice in areas where they operate, enabling them to build support and legitimacy among locals.

Cultural and Political Factors

As elsewhere, Muslims in Africa have been increasingly exposed to extremist religious ideologies, and the concept that the West is attacking Islam may push some toward extremism. Al Qaeda and Islamic State messages play to this perception, comparing Western or Western-supported interventions in Muslim countries like Somalia and Iraq to the military campaigns of Christian crusaders in the Middle Ages or to brutal colonization campaigns in Africa by European powers in the 19th century. Al Shabaab's narrative of fighting against America and its purported Christian "proxies" in East Africa on behalf of Islam resonates among some in the region.[42] Some East African Muslims also perceive domestic counterterrorism efforts to be part of a Western conspiracy against Muslims. In North and West Africa, AQIM and Al Murabitoun propaganda often centers on anti-French messaging, playing to post-colonial sensitivities. France's deployment since 2013 of thousands of troops in counterterrorism operations in the region may provide fodder for the Islamist critique.

Some analysts suggest that political factors, such as repression, gross human rights violations by state security forces, and public perceptions of government corruption and impunity, may fuel grievances that provide motivation to support or participate in violence. According to the USAID *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, "governments that engage in gross human rights violations are particularly prone to pushing individuals into terrorist groups." Abuses by Nigerian security forces in the northeast may have played a role in driving some recruitment and initial acceptance of Boko Haram by certain local communities.[43] Similarly, Al Shabaab has sought to foment a domestic insurgency among Kenyan Muslims against a backdrop of that community's historic grievances and a domestic anti-terrorism campaign fraught with serious human rights abuses that some describe as "collective punishment."[44] In a survey of 95 Kenyans associated with Al Shabaab, 65% identified the Kenyan government's counterterrorism strategy as the most important factor that drove them to join the group.[45] In some cases, including in Kenya, violent extremist groups may in fact seek to provoke violent responses from the government in order to fuel support from targeted communities. The extent to which the United States is seen by local communities as an "enabler" of government actions—potentially due to its relationship (real or perceived) with state security forces—may complicate U.S. counter-extremism efforts.

The International Response

In addition to various country-specific responses to terrorist threats on the continent, African countries have established several multinational mechanisms to address certain regional extremist

[41] Transparency International and Afrobarometer, *People and Corruption: Africa Survey 2015*, December 1, 2015.

[42] See, e.g., Anneli Botha and Mahdi Abdile, *Radicalisation and al-Shabaab recruitment in Somalia*, Institute for Security Studies Paper 266, September 2014 and Anneli Botha, *Radicalisation in Kenya: Recruitment to al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council*, ISS Paper 265, September 2014.

[43] See, e.g., Mercy Corps, *"Motivations and Empty Promises": Voices of Former Boko Haram Combatants and Nigerian Youth*, April 2016 and See also Comolli, *Boko Haram: Nigeria's Islamist Insurgency*, op. cit.

[44] See, e.g., Open Society Justice Initiative and Muslims for Human Rights (MUHURI), *We're Tired of Taking You to the Court: Human Rights Abuses by Kenya's Anti-Terrorism Police Unit*, November 2013; Human Rights Watch, *Killings, Disappearances by Anti-Terror Police*, August 2014 and *"You Are All Terrorists": Kenyan Police Abuse of Refugees in Nairobi*, May 29, 2013; "The Trap of Insecurity – Extrajudicial Killings" Al Jazeera, December 8, 2014.

[45] Anneli Botha, *Radicalisation in Kenya: Recruitment to al-Shabaab and the Mombasa Republican Council*, op. cit.

threats, including AMISOM, the Regional Cooperation Initiative for the Elimination of the Lord's Resistance Army (RCI-LRA), an AU-led military intervention in Mali in late 2012 (subsequently re-hatted as a U.N. operation), a multinational joint operations center in southern Algeria known as the CEMOC, the Lake Chad Basin Commission's Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) to counter Boko Haram, and a separate, nascent effort to create a joint military force among five West African countries known as the "G-5 Sahel." Eleven countries participate in the AU-backed Nouakchott Process on the Enhancement of Security Cooperation and the Operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in the Sahelo-Saharan Region. The AU's African Center for the Study and Research on Terrorism (ACSRT) in Algiers, which is led by an AU Special Representative for Counterterrorism Coordination, provides a forum for centralizing information on terrorist activity and supporting African counterterrorism strategies. These initiatives reflect recognition of the need for greater cooperation among affected states, although participating countries' capacities vary, sometimes significantly, as does the degree of political will for increased coordination.

Overall, African-led responses to terrorist threats remain constrained by limited resources, institutional weaknesses, conflicting political agendas, corruption, sensitivities over domestic sovereignty, regional rivalries, and uneven engagement among affected states. These challenges have undermined various continental efforts, including the AU's Protocol on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, which did not enter into force until 2014, a decade after its adoption (several key countries, including Kenya, Nigeria, and Somalia, have yet to ratify it).[46] Also in 2014, the African Union's Peace and Security Council issued a framework for preventing and combating terrorism and violent extremism in Africa, building on previous decisions taken by the AU to enhance cooperation and coordination against these threats and calling for a range of specific actions by AU member states and the AU Commission.[47] As of January 2016, only nine countries had signed the AU's 2014 Convention on Cross Border Cooperation, and only one—Niger—had ratified it. Other AU efforts include a Model Anti-Terrorism Law, which provides a blueprint for domestic legislation in line with AU policy. According to the Africa-based Institute for Security Studies, only roughly one-third of African countries have counterterrorism legislation that comports with the AU recommendations, however, raising questions about the extent to which some governments rank the threat a high priority.[48]

Various donor initiatives, including multi-donor trust funds and regional or bilateral assistance, aim to address African resource and capacity constraints. The European Union's African Peace Facility (APF), for example, provides funding for AMISOM salaries and certain operational costs. The EU has also provided support for regional security responses in Mali and against the LRA. (The EU has provided more than €2 billion for such initiatives through the APF since 2004, including roughly $300 million in 2015.)[49] The EU also fields military and police training missions in Mali, Niger, and Somalia.

Some countries, including the United Kingdom (UK), France, the United States, Turkey, Morocco, and Algeria, provide training and equipment bilaterally to African partners to support

[46] For more on challenges to AU counterterrorism efforts, see, e.g., Simon Allison, "Good talk, not enough action," Institute for Security Studies Policy Brief 66, March 2015 and "26th AU Summit: Why isn't the AU's counter-terrorism strategy working?" ISS Today Blog, January 26, 2016.

[47] AU Peace and Security Council, Communique, PSC/AHG, COMM.(CDLV), September 2, 2014. For more on AU counterterrorism deliberations, see "The African Union Counter Terrorism Framework" on the AU's website: http://www.peaceau.org/en/page64-counter-terrorism-ct, last updated November 2015, and for information on African counterterrorism legislation, see, e.g., "Counterterrorism Africa" on ISS's website: http://www.issafrica.org/ctafrica.

[48] Simon Allison, "26th AU Summit: Why isn't the AU's counter-terrorism strategy working?" op. cit.

[49] European Commission, *2015 Annual Report of the African Peace Facility*, June 27, 2016.

counterterrorism efforts. The UK, for example, announced its intention in December 2015 to deploy up to 300 military personnel to build Nigeria's capacity to counter Boko Haram, augmenting its existing intelligence, training, and advisory support to the country. Turkey, a key donor to Somalia, has signaled its intention to establish a military training center there. And France, which launched Operation Serval in Mali in 2013, deploying more than 4,000 French forces to repulse Islamist insurgents, transitioned to a new operation, Barkhane, in mid-2014, under which some 3,500 French forces work with African counterparts to address jihadist threats across the Sahel region (see **Figure 1**).

The African Union, the United Nations, and various donors are engaged in discussions to enhance the sustainability of African-led peace support operations, including those with a potential counterterrorism component. (The U.N. Support Office in Somalia is unique in its mandate to provide support to a regional operation; to date, the Security Council has been reluctant to consider support through assessed U.N. contributions for other African-led missions.) AU Member States have notionally committed to gradually covering 25% of the AU peace and security budget (largely funded by donors) by 2020, but financing details remain unclear. Donor deliberations on U.N. support for future Security Council-authorized AU missions continue.

The U.S. Response

The United States engages in a range of efforts, both military and civilian, to prevent and deter terrorism and to strengthen security and stability in Africa.[50] The Obama Administration's 2015 National Security Strategy identifies "violent extremists fighting governments in Somalia, Nigeria, and across the Sahel"—along with other ongoing conflicts in Africa—as "threats to innocent civilians, regional stability, and our national security." Consistent with the Administration's *National Strategy for Counterterrorism*, its *Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa* (issued in 2012) indicates a goal of "disrupting, dismantling, and eventually defeating Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents in Africa," in part by strengthening the capacity of "civilian bodies to provide security for their citizens and counter violent extremism through more effective governance, development, and law enforcement efforts." Deepening security partnerships and building African military capacities is a separate, related aim under the same objective of advancing peace and security. As the President described in his 2014 foreign policy speech at West Point, while "not eliminat[ing] the need to take direct action when necessary to protect ourselves," building partner capacity has been a growing key theme in his Administration's counterterrorism strategy. In its FY2017 budget request, the Administration indicates that its regional counterterrorism partnership efforts in Africa seek to deny terrorists safe havens, operational bases, and recruitment opportunities.

Efforts to Build Regional Partners' Military Capability

Current U.S.-led regional counterterrorism efforts include two multi-faceted interagency efforts: the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP) in North-West Africa and the Partnership for Regional East Africa Counterterrorism (PREACT).[51] TSCTP includes military and police train-and-equip programs and border security initiatives, justice sector support, counter-radicalization programs, and public diplomacy efforts. It is led by the State Department's Africa

[50] The White House, *Fact Sheet: U.S. Support for Peace, Security, and Countering Violent Extremism in Africa*, July 27, 2016.

[51] TSCTP partner countries are Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, and Tunisia. PREACT partner countries are Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Bureau, with USAID and the Department of Defense (DOD) implementing components and playing a role in strategic guidance. PREACT, modeled on TSCTP, is a smaller initiative that is part of a broader array of counterterrorism-related assistance efforts in East Africa, many of them bilateral. Some TSCTP and PREACT programs seek to encourage regional cooperation through multinational training events, while other TSCTP and PREACT assistance is provided to individual countries. DOD, for its part, conducts regional operations in which U.S. military personnel work with their local counterparts to improve intelligence, regional coordination, logistics, border control, and targeting (see below). Other U.S. regional security initiatives, such as the State Department Bureau of Counterterrorism's Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), overlap with these programs and seek to cover some gaps, including in the Lake Chad Basin area.

A large portion of all U.S. security assistance to Africa seeks to help counter terrorism. The largest share in the past decade has supported African forces fighting Al Shabaab in Somalia. Cumulative U.S. funding for AMISOM (which has both counterterrorism and stabilization aims) has totaled almost $2 billion.[52] More recently, the United States has allocated more than $400 million in security assistance (most of it since 2014) to the Lake Chad Basin countries to counter Boko Haram.[53] The Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) account is the primary State Department vehicle for counterterrorism assistance for African militaries, provided under the bilateral budget for Somalia and through regional programs such as TSCTP and PREACT (respectively about $20 million and $10 million annually in PKO funding), as well as others. Training and related support for African law enforcement entities is provided through the State Department's Anti-Terrorism Assistance (ATA) program, funded under the NADR (Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs) account, and through the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE) account, among others. Some African partners, North African countries in particular, have also sought to enhance their counterterrorism capabilities through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, and several have received U.S. excess defense articles (EDA).

Congress has also granted DOD a number of authorities to conduct security cooperation activities with foreign forces. As overall DOD counterterrorism assistance spending has grown, DOD funding for security assistance in Africa surpassed that provided by the State Department for the first time in FY2014 and has continued to rise.[54] In the past decade, DOD has notified Congress of over $1.7 billion in planned counterterrorism training and equipment for African counties, of which Kenya, Uganda, Niger, and Tunisia have been the top cumulative recipients.[55] The Administration's new Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF), authorized in the FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 113-291), is contributing to a significant expansion of AFRICOM's counterterrorism capacity-building programs. In addition to almost $235 million in regular "2282" (i.e., 10 U.S.C. 2282, global train-and-equip for counterterrorism purposes) funding for AFRICOM's programs, DOD allocated almost $80 million in CTPF-funded train-and-equip assistance under 2282 in FY2015 to support efforts in the Sahel-Maghreb, Lake Chad Basin, and East Africa regions.[56] Planned CTPF funding for Africa in FY2016 totals $375 million and the Administration has requested $450 million for FY2017. Additional DOD counterterrorism funds are likely be allocated to African countries under 10 U.S.C. 2282 and other authorities.

[52] CRS calculation based on State Department and DOD congressional notifications of security assistance, and State Department responses to CRS queries.

[53] CRS calculation based on State Department and DOD congressional notifications of security assistance.

[54] CRS calculation based on State Department and DOD budget documents and congressional notifications.

[55] CRS calculation based on DOD congressional notifications.

[56] DOD notified almost $265 million in CTPF funds for AFRICOM programs in FY2015, but $143 million of that was rolled over into FY2016 and $42 million was not approved by the relevant committees.

U.S. program officers and policymakers have faced challenges in seeking to implement both State Department and DOD "partner capacity-building" programs in Africa, such as when host-government preferences for certain types of assistance do not match U.S. assessments of what is needed. Postcolonial sensitivities over sovereignty and access may inhibit the extent of host government interest in receiving U.S. training—as in Algeria and Nigeria. Many areas of Africa where extremist groups operate are marked by the absence of effective host-government counterparts with whom to partner, and in many countries political elites may be more concerned about other security threats (e.g., ethnic separatism) than violent Islamism. In some countries—such as Libya and Somalia—even central government authority is contested.

The House Armed Services Committee has expressed concern (in H.Rept. 114-537) with the ability of some African countries to absorb, sustain, and responsibly manage the equipment provided through these train-and-equip programs. The committee has urged DOD to invest some CTPF resources in programs to build the institutional capacity of such partner forces. Such efforts could complement or be part of the Administration's new Security Governance Initiative (SGI), which also is aimed at building the capacities and addressing the shortcomings of security sector institutions and related government oversight mechanisms. Each of the six SGI partner countries (Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, and Tunisia) faces terrorism threats, to varying degrees.

The Administration's new African Peacekeeping Rapid Response Partnership (APRRP), which seeks to build rapid deployment capabilities in six key African peacekeeping troop contributors to respond to crises (with an annual budget request of $110 million), is not specifically focused on counterterrorism but could enhance the contributions of several top African counterterrorism partners, notably Uganda and Ethiopia, to stability operations in Somalia or elsewhere.

Military Operations

U.S. Africa Command's Theater Campaign Plan for FY2016-FY2020 identifies five key lines of effort for the U.S. military in Africa: (1) neutralize Al Shabaab and transition the mandate of the AMISOM to the Somali government; (2) degrade violent extremist organizations in the Sahel-Maghreb and contain instability in Libya; (3) contain Boko Haram; (4) interdict illicit activity in the Gulf of Guinea and Central Africa; and (5) build African peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and disaster response capacities.[57] Protecting U.S. personnel and facilities and securing U.S. access is characterized as an "enduring task" in the plan. The approach of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), as outlined in the plan and in the command's 2016 Posture Statement, emphasizes counterterrorism cooperation with African "partners" and international allies (e.g., France and the United Kingdom), as well as with U.S. civilian agencies.

The U.S. military has periodically taken direct action against terrorist threats in Africa, primarily in Somalia but also more recently in Libya, and has interdicted several suspected terrorists and extremist group interlocutors.[58] The Administration broadened its justification for direct U.S. military action in Somalia in 2015, indicating in a notification to Congress consistent with the War Powers Resolution that its operations in Somalia were carried out not only "to counter Al Qaeda and associated elements of Al Shabaab" (as previously reported), but also "in support of

[57] Testimony of AFRICOM Commander Gen. David M. Rodriguez, Senate Armed Services Committee, *AFRICOM 2016 Posture Statement*, hearing, March 8, 2016.

[58] In 2011, for example, a Somali national was captured in the Gulf of Aden and later charged in a U.S. court with providing material support to Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP). Justice officials described his interrogation as "an intelligence watershed," calling him "a critical link" between the two groups.

Somali forces, AMISOM forces, and U.S. forces in Somalia."[59] The United States has not deployed combat troops to Somalia, but it does have U.S. military advisors in the country providing support to African partners. The United States has also provided logistical and intelligence support to French military counterterrorism operations in the Sahel since 2013.[60]

More often, U.S. military personnel play an indirect role in regional counterterrorism efforts, providing training, equipment, logistical support, intelligence, and in some cases, advisory support to partners on the continent. DOD describes "building partner capacity" (BPC) among African states to counter terrorist threats as a critical component of its strategy in the region.[61]

A long-running contingency operation, Operation Enduring Freedom-Trans-Sahara (OEF-TS; funded annually at over $80 million), which supports TSCTP, does not limit its focus to counterterrorism, according to DOD's FY2017 budget request.[62] Rather, it focuses on "overall security and cooperation" by "forming relationships of peace, security, and cooperation" among countries in the region. In East Africa, Operation Enduring Freedom-Horn of Africa (OEF-HOA) has a different scope, supporting activities at the U.S. military's only permanent base in Africa, in Djibouti; Special Operations Command operations in the Horn of Africa (and Afghanistan); and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) operations in the region. Other ongoing operations include the deployment, since 2013, of up to 350 U.S. military personnel and surveillance assets to Niger and, since October 2015, of up to 300 U.S. military personnel and surveillance aircraft to Cameroon, to conduct ISR operations within Niger and throughout the Lake Chad Basin region, respectively.[63] DOD has also provided logistics and advisory support to African forces, primarily from Uganda, to counter the Lord's Resistance Army in Central Africa since 2011. DOD may provide support (up to $85 million globally) to African forces (including irregular forces or non-state groups) supporting counterterrorism operations in which U.S. special operations forces are engaged via Section 1208 of the FY2005 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 108-375), as amended. Recipients and funding levels are classified.

Countering Violent Extremist Recruitment and Ideology

While the bulk of U.S. development aid to Africa aims broadly to contribute to increased peace and security, good governance, and improved social and economic development, a subset of programs have a specific counter-extremism component intended to prevent radicalization and undermine the attraction of extremist ideologies and organizations. The focus of these programs ranges from building awareness among affected communities of drivers and indicators of radicalization or countering extremist narratives to promoting community-led interventions. USAID's *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism* emphasizes the importance of distinguishing among drivers that contribute to recruitment into violent extremist organizations, to community

[59] The White House, *Letter from the President to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President Pro Tempore of the Senate Regarding the War Powers Resolution*, December 11, 2015.

[60] Between 2013 and 2015, U.S. logistical support was provided under the President's Special Drawdown authority, i.e., Section 506(a)(1) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended. The FY2016 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 114-92, Section 1207) authorizes the Secretary of Defense, in coordination with the Secretary of State, to provide, on a nonreimbursable basis, logistic support, supplies, and services to the national military forces of an allied country conducting counterterrorism operations in Africa.

[61] See, e.g., AFRICOM Director of Strategy, Plans and Programs (J5) Maj. Gen. Charles Hooper, "Going Farther by Going Together: Building Partner Capacity in Africa," AFRICOM.mil, November 16, 2012.

[62] Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 President's Budget: Justification for Base Funded Contingency Operations and the overseas Contingency Operation Transfer Fund (OCOTF)*, February 2016.

[63] The White House, "Letter from the President – Concerning Niger [War Powers]," February 22, 2013; and "Letter from the President – War Powers Resolution Regarding Cameroon," October 14, 2015.

support for or tolerance of their activities, or to an enabling environment conducive to their operations. Many studies stress that counter-extremism programs should be designed with an understanding of country and community-specific contexts in which radicalization occurs.

Some relevant programs are aimed at fostering opportunities among at-risk Muslim youth for employment and positive social interaction, while others are focused on the political and economic inclusion of minorities and marginalized populations. Others aim to spread "tolerant" religious interpretation by working with imams or other community leaders. Some programs have a geographic focus (e.g., northern Nigeria or the Kenyan coast). USAID guidance stresses the need for community involvement, when possible, in identifying and implementing projects, taking into account a potential mistrust of outsiders' intentions. The State Department also seeks to encourage African governments' participation in countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts—including through a series of CVE summits, two of which have been hosted by Kenya and Mauritania—and has supported programs that aim to strengthen African law enforcement capacity to counter extremism, including in prisons.

The State Department and USAID both oversee CVE programs in Africa, including those funded through TSCTP and PREACT. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) also implements CVE-related programming in Niger and Nigeria (having completed CVE-related programs in Tunisia and Mali) and recently launched a new Somalia program. In 2015, the White House announced its intent to provide at least $40 million in FY2015 for CVE in East Africa alone. The FY2017 State-USAID budget request includes more than $43 million for CVE efforts specifically located in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than one-quarter of which would focus on Nigeria. Africa may also benefit from some portion of the $75 million in CVE funds that the State Department has requested to be managed by its functional bureaus on a global basis.

Some U.S. public diplomacy and messaging initiatives also seek to counter violent extremist organizations' recruitment and financing efforts by countering extremist narratives. Such efforts aim to undermine terrorist groups' credibility among local populations, targeting a variety of audiences, including both "key influencers" such as community and religious leaders, and vulnerable populations. They may sometimes be implemented discreetly or indirectly, aiming to counter victimization narratives and communicate U.S. or host-government respect for Islam and indigenous customs. Voice of America's Hausa, Somali, Swahili, and French-to-Africa Services provide news programming to areas affected by terrorist groups and broadcast discussions with Muslim scholars and experts. In early 2016, the Obama Administration created a new Global Engagement Center, based in the State Department's Public Diplomacy Bureau, to coordinate all U.S. government communications activities directed at foreign audiences to counter terrorist messaging and influence.

Countering Terrorist Financing and Mobility

The Treasury Department leads U.S. efforts to detect, track, and prosecute those involved in terrorist financing, coordinating with international partners, including those in Africa. A number of Africa-based groups and individuals are designated for financial sanctions under Executive Order 13224, pertaining to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The State Department coordinates U.S. assistance efforts to strengthen the ability of foreign partners to detect, investigate, and combat terrorist financing through its Counter-terrorism Financing (CTF) program and related initiatives. Such efforts are often conducted by or in collaboration with other federal agencies. The CTF program has supported the establishment of financial intelligence units (FIUs) across Africa. Resident Legal Advisors (RLAs) posted at several U.S. embassies in Africa provide training to prosecutors and other technical expertise to countries in the region. In congressional testimony in May 2016, State Department officials highlighted their intent to

significantly increase capacity-building for law enforcement, judicial, and other criminal justice sector institutions in Africa through FY2016 CTPF funding.[64]

The U.S. government maintains a range of watch lists, including the Terrorist Screening Database and the No Fly List, to limit terrorist mobility. The State Department also provides assistance to improve foreign governments' watch listing capabilities through the Terrorist Interdiction Program (TIP), a global initiative created in the aftermath of the 1998 East Africa embassy bombings to provide countries with a system for identifying and apprehending suspects who might attempt to flee after a terrorist attack. Under this program, the U.S. government provides select partner nations with a computer system known as PISCES (Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System) to facilitate immigration processing and to exchange information with State Department officials on suspected terrorists attempting to travel through their countries. The PISCES system is operational at seaports and airports throughout the region.

Issues for Congress

A Balanced Approach to Resource Allocation?

As this report describes, as the level of activity by terrorist groups in Africa has increased in recent years, U.S. security assistance for counterterrorism purposes has grown significantly. Despite some increases in U.S. funding to build police and law enforcement capacity in Africa, the overall increase in security assistance has been overwhelmingly channeled through military train-and-equip programs. In examining these trends, Members of Congress may wish to examine whether the relative allocation of resources for military, law enforcement, and justice sector assistance matches the nature of the threats and gaps on the continent. With terrorist attacks on soft targets increasing, are African police, investigators, and prosecutors sufficiently trained and equipped to respond? Questions may also be raised about the balance between security and development or good governance spending in countries vulnerable to violent extremist recruitment—particularly given that terrorist groups seem to flourish in countries with serious governance shortfalls. Some critics contend that the current U.S. counterterrorism approach in Africa is "lopsided," potentially over-focusing resources on security responses that could, in some cases, further destabilize some countries and exacerbate regional instability.[65]

Members may also weigh the allocation of resources to other lines of effort in Africa, such as the enforcement of travel and financial sanctions against terrorist actors and the allocation of military intelligence-collection assets. A number of Africa-based groups and individuals are designated under U.S. and multilateral sanctions regimes, but public indications of enforcement actions are few compared to terrorist actors in other regions (who may well be more vested in the global financial system). With regard to intelligence collection, successive commanders of AFRICOM have testified to Congress that intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets allocated to the command remain insufficient to carry out its mission.[66]

[64] Assistant Secretary Thomas-Greenfield and Acting Coordinator for Counterterrorism Justin Siberell, testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "Addressing Instability in Sub-Saharan Africa," May 10, 2016.

[65] Cheryl Strauss Einhorn and Andrea Walther, "Are U.S. Efforts Successfully Countering Terrorism in Africa?," Africa in Transition Blog, June 29, 2016.

[66] See, e.g., testimony of Lt. Gen. Thomas D. Waldhauser, Senate Armed Services Committee, June 21, 2016.

Direct Intervention vs. Building Partner Capacity

Interagency actors have reportedly disagreed at various times over whether to approach Africa-based extremist groups through direct military interdiction and targeting, or through a strategy of building African partner countries' security capacity (in the near or longer term).[67] In select cases, the United States has applied both approaches. The Administration has described Al Qaeda's affiliates in Yemen and Syria as its "most capable" branches and the Islamic State as the "preeminent global terrorist threat"—suggesting that groups based primarily in Africa present a comparatively lower degree of threat.[68] Still, the Administration has publicly announced the deployment of U.S. military forces to several African countries, including to the Lake Chad Basin countries to help counter Boko Haram and to Somalia as advisors.

To date, the United States has acknowledged carrying out direct strikes targeting terrorist actors in Somalia and Libya, but not elsewhere on the continent. Given the U.S. military's overwhelming capacity and the existence of various obstacles to sharing intelligence with partner states, direct strikes are arguably the most dependable method of targeting specific terrorist leaders. However, they require significant resources, raise potential legal questions about the use of military force overseas, and have the potential to spark backlash among local populations. Moreover, while strikes may be successful at degrading a group's capabilities or disrupting its decisionmaking, strikes without follow-up efforts on the ground to clear and hold territory may have only a short-term impact. Some observers contend that such strikes also potentially make U.S. citizens a greater target for terrorist groups. Calculations about the threat level as well as the legal and political environment in a given country may all play out in decisionmaking on where and when to conduct strikes.

Partner capacity-building activities, meanwhile, aim to empower other governments to counter terrorism with a lower expenditure of U.S. resources and risk, but they also provide less control over operations and may not be effective in the short run (or at all, in some cases). Their relative success depends on many variables, not least of which is whether U.S. and partner government interests align. In some cases, such interests may diverge over time—recent statements from Ugandan officials suggesting that they may end their involvement in the counter-LRA mission and AMISOM, for example, highlight the limits of the United States' ability to rely on partners for success. (Ugandan forces are widely viewed as the most capable in the counter-LRA effort, and they are the largest troop contributor in Somalia.) Additionally, some analyses of counterterrorism partnerships in Somalia suggest that while the United States and its partners in AMISOM may share a common foe, the objectives and actions of Somalia's neighbors (all of which are AMISOM troop contributors) may, in some cases, undermine other U.S. aims and create risks for the country's long-term stability.[69] Various other factors can affect the impact of capacity-building efforts, including partners' domestic political situations or resource constraints.

U.S. train-and-equip programs, which often involve the presence of U.S. uniformed military personnel within the host country, are also not devoid of political sensitivity or backlash potential. Further, when partner forces' counterterrorism efforts result in civilian casualties or abuses, local perceptions of state authorities may turn negative, undercutting efforts to delegitimize the extremists' cause. This may be the case in Somalia, where negative local perceptions of

[67] See, e.g., *The Washington Post*, "U.S. Chose Not to Kill Mali Terror Leader in 2003," February 4, 2013.

[68] DNI James R. Clapper, *Worldwide Threat Assessment*, February 9, 2016, op. cit.

[69] Sunil Suri, *"Barbed wire on our heads": Lessons from counter-terror, stabilisation and statebuilding in Somalia*, Saferworld, January 2016.

AMISOM have anecdotally increased in recent years, in part due to reports of misconduct and civilian casualties, but also apparently based on perceptions by some Somalis that neighboring countries are using AMISOM to further their own objectives.[70]

The Administration does not recognize any geographic limitations on its legal authority to use force in counterterrorism operations against what it considers to be Al Qaeda-linked groups, nor in its ability to deploy U.S. military forces to "work closely with host governments to help them combat extremism within their own country."[71] Debate about the legality of U.S. counterterrorism strikes against targets not clearly linked to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, nevertheless persists, and the Administration's recent justifications of strikes in Somalia for "self-defense" and "in defense of" African partner forces contribute to the debate.[72] As the U.S. military increasingly deploys personnel as trainers and advisors to counterterrorism partner forces on the continent, questions surrounding the legal authority for strikes "in self-defense" absent explicit congressional authorization may become increasingly relevant. Congress may further seek to engage the executive branch on its determinations about the relationship between African groups nominally allied to either Al Qaeda or the Islamic State, which the Obama Administration has also interpreted as a legal target for U.S. military action under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF, P.L. 107-40).

Coordination and Oversight Challenges

The range of legal authorities under which counterterrorism funding is appropriated and the many programs through which such funding is obligated may create particular challenges for both interagency coordination and congressional oversight. With regard to TSCTP, for example, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that shortcomings in interagency coordination may limit the program's effectiveness.[73] In addition, country-specific spending figures are not routinely reported to Congress for regional security assistance programs, including TSCTP, PREACT, and some DOD BPC activities, and such spending is generally not reflected on a country-specific basis in State Department and DOD congressional budget justifications.

Funding and responsibilities for CVE programs are also spread among multiple offices, including the State Department's Counterterrorism (CT) and Africa Bureaus and USAID, as are efforts to counter terrorist messaging. The Administration has reportedly taken steps to improve monitoring and evaluation of these efforts, but mechanisms for coordination among these offices may not be uniform. A new Department of State and USAID *Joint Strategy on Countering Violent Extremism*, released in May 2016, seeks to build on a pledge made in the Administration's 2015 *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (QDDR) to enhance preventative efforts. The strategy identifies coordination points within the State Department and USAID, though the respective roles of the various implementing offices remain to be seen, at least publicly.

The lack of country-specific funding data may inhibit congressional oversight of the scale, scope, and balance of U.S. engagement and assistance on the continent. It may also inhibit efforts to

[70] See Paul Williams and Abdirashid Hashi, "Exit Strategy Challenges for the African Union Mission in Somalia," Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, February 2016.

[71] White House daily press briefing, April 26, 2016.

[72] See Department of Defense, "U.S. Conducts Airstrike against Terrorist Camp in Somalia," March 7, 2016 ; Charlie Savage, "Is the U.S. Now at War with the Shabab? Not exactly," *New York Times*, March 14, 2016; and Erica Gaston, "Do the strikes on al Shabaab stretch the AUMF or the Unit Self-Defense doctrine?" Lawfare Blog, March 18, 2016.

[73] GAO, *Actions Needed to Enhance Implementation of Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership*, July 31, 2008; and a 2012 review accessed at http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-08-860.

examine whether U.S. efforts to counter terrorism and extremism in Africa strike the appropriate balance between support to African militaries and law enforcement or justice sectors, between government-to-government programs and community engagement, or between programs that seek to prevent radicalization versus those that seek to contain its impact. Limited access to funding data may also obscure U.S. policy dilemmas. For example, in response to Burundi's political crisis,[74] during which state security forces have been implicated in grave human rights abuses, the Administration has announced the suspension of some in-country security assistance programs, but Burundian military forces continue to receive U.S. equipment and logistical support as part of their deployment to AMISOM in Somalia. Funding for the latter is not reflected in the Burundi bilateral aid budget, yet many experts assert that the military's continued participation in AMISOM (which notably provides troops with increased salaries) may be the preeminent source of U.S. policy leverage vis-à-vis the Burundian government.[75]

In recent years, Congress has required the Administration to submit various reports and strategy documents related to efforts to combat terrorist groups, including in Africa. The FY2015 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA, P.L. 113-291) required the Secretary of Defense to submit to congressional committees "a strategy to counter the growing threat posed by radical Islamist terrorist groups in North Africa, West Africa, and the Sahel." The FY2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act (P.L. 114-113) required a report "on United States counterterrorism strategy to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat the Islamic State, al-Qa'ida, and their affiliated groups, associated groups, and adherents." The House version of the FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 4909, Subtitle E, §1249) would require the Secretary of Defense to submit a "strategy for United States defense interests in Africa." The House Armed Services Committee report on H.R. 4909 requests DOD to respond to a series of "concerns" with regard to BPC programs, including "the capacity of nations to absorb and sustain assistance"—specifically referencing U.S. support to Somali armed forces. Successive NDAAs also specify substantive requirements for executive branch congressional notifications for DOD-administered counterterrorism aid, such as global train-and-equip programs.

The Senate version of the FY2017 NDAA, S. 2943, seeks to streamline DOD's "patchwork" of security cooperation authorities and improve transparency and congressional oversight of those efforts. It does not, however, address the various authorities vested in the State Department that are used to support counterterrorism efforts, nor the relationship (and relative balance of funding) between State Department and DOD-funded programs.

Human Rights Considerations

Several top U.S. counterterrorism partners in Africa rank "Not Free" on Freedom House's "Freedom in the World" Index, including Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mauritania, and Uganda. The State Department's own annual human rights reports regularly raise concerns with security force abuses in many African countries considered security cooperation "partners." Further, local militaries reportedly continue to play significant roles in politics and governance in several top U.S. security partner countries, including Ethiopia, Mauritania, and Uganda.

The United States has taken measures to limit the potential for U.S. security assistance to be associated with abusive foreign governments and security forces through policy determinations and legal restrictions on aid. However, such restrictions are sometimes criticized by those who

[74] CRS Report R44018, *Burundi's Political Crisis*, by Emily Renard and Alexis Arieff.

[75] See, e.g., International Crisis Group, "Burundi: Time for Tough Messages," February 24, 2016.

argue that continued engagement is more likely to positively influence behavior.[76] Alternately, some argue (though not often publicly) that the overarching goals of such assistance—for example, counterterrorism, or the extension of state authority in ungoverned spaces—may in some cases outweigh certain human rights concerns. In countries where security force abuses have been identified as a possible push factor for radicalization, this debate becomes more complicated, particularly if the United States prioritizes maintaining counterterrorism cooperation based on U.S. national security concerns.

Among the legal restrictions enacted by Congress are the so-called "Leahy laws," which prohibit the provision of U.S. security assistance to foreign security force units that have been credibly implicated in gross violations of human rights.[77] Through provisions in annual appropriations measures and other legislation, Congress has also prohibited foreign assistance to governments that overthrow elected governments through military coups d'état, and has enacted various other country-specific legal provisions related to security assistance and human rights concerns. The Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA, P.L. 110-457), as amended, for example, restricts military assistance for certain purposes, and the licensing of Excess Defense Articles (EDA) and Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), to countries implicated in the use of child soldiers. Five of the eight countries currently implicated in the use of child soldiers are in Africa.[78]

Democracy and Fragility Trends among African CT Partners

U.S. policymakers and observers continue to debate the relationship between U.S. security assistance, state fragility, and democracy in Africa. Democratic trends in Africa have raised concerns as U.S. security cooperation on the continent has grown. From Burkina Faso to Burundi, a number of incumbent African leaders have taken steps to extend their terms in office, often prompting mass protests and, in some cases, violent responses from security forces. Executive branch officials often justify the provision of security assistance by arguing that U.S. military professionalization programs have a positive impact on democracy and human rights. Measuring this impact is challenging, however. Moreover, such a premise may be questioned, given democratic backsliding in several top African recipients of U.S. security assistance, such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Policymakers and observers regularly debate the extent to which security assistance should be wielded as a source of policy leverage—that is, whether to suspend assistance in an effort to force a change in behavior on the part of undemocratic regimes. Whether or not the withholding of U.S. assistance creates a compelling incentive for political change, however, is also debatable and may be highly case specific.

In cases where U.S. security assistance is provided to Africa's fragile states, governments may face difficulties in absorbing and sustaining it. A recent RAND study suggests that U.S. officials face a major policy dilemma in Africa, where "the countries that are most in need of assistance are usually the ones least able to make positive use of it."[79] That study, which assessed

[76] See, e.g., Eric Schmitt, "Military says law barring U.S. aid to rights violators hurts training mission," *New York Times*, June 20, 2013.

[77] See CRS Report R43361, *"Leahy Law" Human Rights Provisions and Security Assistance: Issue Overview*, coordinated by Nina M. Serafino.

[78] State Department, *2015 Trafficking in Persons Report*, July 27, 2015, "Child Soldiers Prevention Act List." For FY2016, similar to past years, the Administration has waived the application of the restriction, in whole or in part, with respect to DRC, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan; only in Sudan is the full restriction applied. Office of the President, "Determination with Respect to the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008," October 16, 2015.

[79] Stephen Watts, *Identifying and Mitigating Risks in Security Sector Assistance for Africa's Fragile States,* RAND, 2015.

quantitative and qualitative research on the impact of security assistance in fragile states, found significant overlap between "countries of concern" in Africa (i.e., countries with low scores on indicators of state reach) and the United States' key counterterrorism partners (TSCTP and PREACT partner countries). In these countries, U.S. policymakers may face a dilemma as they seek to prioritize both near- and longer-term objectives, and may weigh whether approaches to addressing near-term goals like countering terrorism might inadvertently have a negative impact on longer-term goals like stability and development, or limit attention and resources to addressing other drivers of conflict.

Outlook

Given current trends, congressional attention to violent Islamist extremism in Africa appears likely to continue, along with debate over the best way to confront the phenomenon. Congress may weigh the relative merits of various tools through which it can help shape U.S. counterterrorism policies and efforts in Africa, such as the appropriation of foreign aid resources, including for programs to build security capacities, to counter violent extremist propaganda and financing, to stabilize and rebuild liberated areas, or to promote more accountable and inclusive governance. Congress may also seek to prioritize through legislation certain activities over others and may examine benchmarks or metrics for success in counterterrorism efforts, including through the possible enactment of new or altered reporting requirements or through other oversight activities. Consideration of geographic or temporal limits on or expansions of the legal authority to use military force may also factor into future congressional deliberations.

Appendix A. Foreign Terrorist Organizations in Africa

Table A-1. Africa-Based Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs)

Designated by the U.S. Department of State per Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act

Group	Date of Designation	Location/Area of Operation
Gama'a al-Islamiyya (Islamic Group) (IG)	10/8/1997	Egypt (no known attacks in recent years)
Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)	3/27/2002	Algeria; Maghreb and Sahel
Al Shabaab	3/18/2008	Somalia and East Africa
Ansar al Dine (AAD)	3/22/2013	Mali and Libya
Jama'atu Ahlus Sunnah Lidda'Awati Wal Jihad (Boko Haram; IS West Africa Province)	11/14/2013	Nigeria and Lake Chad Basin countries
Jama'atu Ansarul Muslimina Fi Biladis Sudan (Ansaru)	11/14/2013	Nigeria and Lake Chad Basin countries
Al Mulathamun Battalion (Al Murabitoun)	12/19/2013	Algeria; Maghreb and Sahel
Ansar al Sharia in Benghazi	1/13/2014	Libya
Ansar al Sharia in Darnah	1/13/2014	Libya
Ansar al Sharia in Tunisia	1/13/2014	Tunisia and Libya
IS Sinai Province (formerly Ansar Bayt al Maqdis)	4/10/2014	Egypt

Notes: Three other Africa-based groups— the Armed Islamic Group (GIA) in Algeria, the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)—have been delisted.

Appendix B. Terrorist Group Profiles

Al Shabaab

Al Shabaab (aka *Harakat Shabaab al Mujahidin*, or Mujahidin Youth Movement) is an insurgent and terrorist group that evolved out of a militant wing of Somalia's Council of Islamic Courts in the mid-2000s. Beyond Somalia, it has conducted attacks across East Africa since 2010 in countries contributing to the AU Mission in Somalia, which is mandated with countering the group and helping to stabilize the country. While Al Shabaab has lost significant territory in the past five years, it has also proven resilient and adaptable, and by some accounts acts as a "shadow government" in Somalia. It operates primarily in Somalia, but also conducts regular attacks in Kenya, where it has an active recruitment network. Al Shabaab has exacted a heavy toll on AU forces in the past year with deadly attacks on its forward operating bases.

Al Shabaab and Al Qaeda, which had been linked for years, announced their formal alliance in 2012. The Obama Administration describes Al Shabaab as the largest AQ affiliate in Africa and states that it considers elements of the group to be "associated with" Al Qaeda and thus legal targets for U.S. military action under the 2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force (AUMF, P.L. 107-40). Al Shabaab's leadership have rejected calls from some factions to align with the Islamic State and in late 2015 launched a deadly crackdown against IS supporters within the group.

Areas of operation: Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Uganda

Attacks against U.S. Interests: Al Shabaab leaders have repeatedly threatened attacks in the United States and against U.S. citizens and targets in the region. At least five U.S. citizens have been killed in attacks in East Africa (most in Somalia). More than 50 U.S. citizens were in Nairobi's Westgate Mall when Al Shabaab attacked it; 6 were injured.

Size: The State Department estimates Al Shabaab to have "several thousand" members, including foreign fighters.

AQIM, Offshoots, and Allies

AQIM is an Algerian-led regional network active in North-West Africa that formally affiliated with Al Qaeda in 2006-2007. Allied groups and splinter movements include Al Murabitoun, which the State Department described in 2015 as "one of the greatest near-term threats to U.S. and international interests in the Sahel";[80] the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (aka MUJAO, its French acronym); Ansar al Dine and the Macina Liberation Front in Mali; and the Okba Ibn Nafaa Brigade in Tunisia. These groups have conducted bombings against local state targets and security forces; kidnappings for ransom, often of Westerners; and, since 2013, deadly hostage-taking attacks targeting foreigners in Algeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire. AQIM has also reportedly provided support to other extremist groups. U.S. officials have publicly assessed these groups to be primarily focused on local and Western targets within North and West Africa, including U.S. interests and personnel.

In 2012, AQIM, MUJAO, and Ansar al Dine claimed control over parts of northern Mali amid a domestic political crisis and civil conflict—the first time these groups had explicitly sought to govern territory. French operations in Mali and neighboring states have driven group leaders underground and killed or captured several key commanders.[81] The top leaders remain at large. The groups continue to commit asymmetric attacks and since 2015, have expanded their operations into central/southern Mali and neighboring countries to the south. Reported coordination among AQIM, Al Murabitoun, and smaller groups on recent deadly attacks on hotels popular with Westerners may reflect a shift toward greater collaboration in the face of regional competition from IS.[82] Al Murabitoun's founder, Mokhtar Bel Mokhtar, split from AQIM in 2013, but the two groups announced they were merging back together in late 2015.

***Areas of Operation*:** Algeria, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Tunisia

***Attacks Against U.S. Interests*:** Six U.S. citizens killed: one in Mauritania in 2009, three in Algeria in 2013, one in Mali in 2015, and one in Burkina Faso in 2016.

[80] State Department, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2014*, June 2015, "Foreign Terrorist Organizations" ("Al-Mulathamun Battalion"). This description was not repeated in the 2015 edition of the report, issued in June 2016.

[81] France launched a military intervention in Mali in early 2013 and later expanded it into a regional counterterrorism operation known as Operation Barkhane. The U.S. military has provided logistical and intelligence support.

[82] Andrew Lebovich, "The Hotel Attacks and Militant Realignment in the Sahara-Sahel," *CTC Sentinel*, January 2016.

Size: The State Department estimates AQIM to have several hundred fighters in Algeria and the Sahel; the size of AQIM offshoots and allies such as Al Murabitoun and Ansar al Dine is unknown.[83]

Boko Haram (The Islamic State's West Africa Province; ISWAP)

Boko Haram, which emerged in the early 2000s as a small Sunni sect advocating a strict interpretation of Islamic law for Nigeria, has grown since 2010 into one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups. Civilians in Nigeria's impoverished, predominately Muslim northeast have borne the brunt of its violence. Boko Haram (a local nickname for the group) has called for an uprising against secular authority, a war against Christianity, and the creation of an Islamic state. The 2011 bombing of the U.N. building in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, was its first lethal attack against an international target. After attracting international headlines with the kidnapping of schoolgirls in April 2014, Boko Haram commenced a territorial offensive that Nigerian forces were unable to halt until neighboring countries launched operations in Nigeria in early 2015. Press reports suggest the group may have nominally held an area the size of Belgium before regional forces reversed its advance. Boko Haram has since reverted to asymmetric attacks, largely against soft targets in northeast Nigeria and northern Cameroon, and it maintains the ability to move and conduct attacks in an area that stretches from southern Niger's Diffa region down into northern Cameroon. There has been a significant increase in the past two years in the use of suicide bombers, most of them women and children.

In March 2015, Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau released a statement pledging loyalty to IS leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. An IS spokesman welcomed the pledge, urging followers to travel to West Africa and support the group. The extent of their relationship is unclear—some Boko Haram fighters have been reportedly sighted in IS camps in Libya, and in April 2016 Chad claimed to intercept a weapons convoy apparently bound from Libya for Boko Haram. The status of a splinter faction, Ansaru, which emerged in 2012, is also unclear—some of its members reportedly reintegrated into Boko Haram; others may work with AQIM or other extremist groups in the region.

Area of Operation: Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger (the countries of the Lake Chad Basin)

Impact: Boko Haram-related violence has displaced more than 2.4 million people in the Lake Chad Basin region and significantly exacerbated food insecurity in the region. Casualty counts, which are based on press reports, suggest that more than 15,000 people have been killed by the group since 2009—including more than 6,500 in 2015 alone.[84]

Attacks Against U.S. Interests: Boko Haram has issued threats against the United States, but to date no American citizens are known to have been kidnapped or killed by the group.

Size: The State Department estimates Boko Haram to have "several thousand" fighters.

[83] *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, op. cit.

[84] For fatality data, see, e.g., the Council on Foreign Relations' *Nigeria Security Tracker* at http://www.cfr.org.

The Islamic State (IS) and Other Armed Islamist Groups in Libya

IS supporters have announced three affiliated *wilayah* (provinces) corresponding to Libya's three historic regions—*Wilayat Tripolitania* in the west, *Wilayat Barqa* in the east, and *Wilayat Fezzan* in the southwest. Beginning in 2014, IS supporters grappled with western and eastern Libyan forces in attempts to seize territory and took control of Muammar al Qadhafi's hometown—the central coastal city of Sirte. Clashes with eastern groups have damaged vital national oil infrastructure, and IS attacks in western Libya have killed dozens of civilians and security personnel. As in other countries, IS supporters in Libya have clashed with local armed groups—including Islamists—that do not share their beliefs or recognize the authority of IS leader and self-styled caliph Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Overall, IS supporters continue to face a backlash from hostile tribal groups, local militia, and other Islamists, suggesting that the group, like its secular rivals, may struggle to achieve nation-wide dominance in Libya's fractured political scene.

The relationship between supporters of the Islamic State and members of Ansar al Sharia and other North Africa-based Salafist-jihadist groups once seen as aligned with Al Qaeda is unclear, with some observers suggesting that the Islamic State could seek to recruit from Islamist militias that are defeated by other rivals or excluded from national security arrangements under a proposed Government of National Accord. In southwestern Libya, Islamist extremist operatives (including from AQIM and allied/offshoot groups) reportedly are active, and may be using remote areas to serve as safe havens or transit areas for operations in neighboring Niger and Algeria.

***Areas of Operation*:** Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Niger

***Attacks Against U.S. Interests*:** Four U.S. citizens killed in Benghazi in 2012 (Ansar al Sharia in Benghazi). Ansar al Sharia in Tunisia, whose members are reportedly active in Libya, attacked the U.S. Embassy and American school in Tunis in 2012; no U.S. citizens were harmed.

***Size*:** In June 2016, U.S. officials estimated IS numbers at 5,000-8,000 in Libya, while according to the State Department, the strength of Ansar al Sharia groups in Benghazi, Darnah, and Tunisia is "unknown."[85]

Author Information

Lauren Ploch Blanchard
Specialist in African Affairs

Alexis Arieff
Specialist in African Affairs

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

[85] Special Presidential Envoy on the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL Brett McGurk, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, *Global Efforts to Defeat ISIS*, hearing, June 28, 2016. *Country Reports on Terrorism 2015*, op. cit.