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U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

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BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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U.S. COUNTERTERRORISM PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES IN AFRICA

Tuesday, December 17, 2019

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
Washington, D.C.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:29 p.m., in room 2157, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Stephen F. Lynch (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Lynch, Welch, Hice, Gosar, Cloud, and Higgins.

Mr. LYNCH. The subcommittee will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the committee at any time.

This hearing is entitled U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Challenges in Africa. I now recognize myself for five minutes to give an opening statement.

Today we will examine how various terrorist organizations across the African continent continue to threaten U.S. national security interests as well as exploring efficacy of U.S. and international counterterrorism efforts to contain, degrade, and ultimately defeat these terrorist threats.

On October 4, 2017, four U.S. Special Ops soldiers, Sergeant First Class Jeremiah Johnson, Staff Sergeant Bryan Black, Staff Sergeant Dustin Wright, and Sergeant La David Johnson were tragically killed in an ambush in the western part of Niger. At the time, many Americans did not know that U.S. forces were deployed in that part of Africa, and the tragedy generated significant interest in the U.S. counterterrorism mission there.

Since then, the security and situation in many parts of Africa, especially the Sahel, has continued to deteriorate. In early 2017, three militant organizations, including Al Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb or AQIM, merged to create Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin or JNIM, which the State Department has designated as a foreign terrorist organization in September 2018.

Meanwhile, ISIS Greater Sahara, an affiliate of ISIS core in Iraq and Syria, remain active and continues to target local military and police forces in Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, as well as U.S. French and U.N. peacekeeping forces. Just last week, militants killed 71 soldiers in an Army camp in western Niger, about 115 miles from where the assault on U.S. forces took place in October 2017.

In the Lake Chad basin region, Boko Haram, which in local dialect means western education is forbidden, has carried out hundreds of deadly attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon, Niger, and Chad. In 2016, ISIS West Africa broke away from Boko Haram and created a splinter group which continues to wage guerilla war across northeastern Nigeria. According to the International Crisis Group, and I quote, ″has cultivated a level of support among local civilians that Boko Haram has never enjoyed and has turned neglected communities into the area and islands in Lake Chad into a source of economic support,″ closed quote.

In Somalia, Al-Shabaab is fighting to replace the Somali Government with a strict interpretation of Sharia law but also carries out attacks in neighboring countries, including Kenya and Uganda, and maintains a close relationship with al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, ISIS maintains affiliates in the Sinai, Libya, and—why don't I yield to you for five minutes?

Mr. HICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I welcome our panelists who are here today. You know, there's nothing partisan about eradicating terrorism from every part of our globe, and this is just another example as to how this subcommittee can work together for the American people. This hearing is important to draw attention to not only what is occurring in the Sahel region of Africa but also the rest of the continent.

To date, there are more than four major active terrorist organizations fighting to gain a stronghold in the fragile states throughout Africa. One militant Islamic terrorist group, Boko Haram, has horrifically killed over 20,000 people and displaced more than 2 million during their reign of terror throughout Nigeria and West Africa.

The U.S. has played an important role in supporting partners and allies in the region to combat Islamic terrorist organizations. Despite these efforts, the number of terrorist attacks in the region, like the Sahel, nearly doubled in 2018, and attacks in the Sub-Saharan area have also increased dramatically.

By historical standards, the U.S., under the Trump administration, is providing a record high number of counterterrorism resources to African countries. U.S. counterterrorism efforts in the region include things like foreign assistance, public diplomacy efforts, military assistance, and intelligence programs.

The U.S. Department of Defense and State Department are actively engaged in these counterterrorism efforts. The State Department provides nearly $280 million of funding for Africa counterterrorism efforts each year. Additionally, the Department of Defense spends at least $500 million a year for counterterrorism efforts in the area.

And the U.S. taxpayer is not the only ones involved. The U.S. has deployed thousands of brave American servicemen and women to Africa for a variety of important missions. At the end of 2018, it has been reported that nearly 7,200 Department of Defense personnel were assigned to U.S. Africa Command. Additionally, Special Operation forces in Africa had over a thousand of our finest troops operating in 12 African countries. Their mission is, quote, ″advise local forces battling a variety of terrorist groups,″ unquote. It is a great mission.

With that, let's never forget people like Sergeant First Class Jeremiah Johnson, Staff Sergeant Bryan Black, Staff Sergeant Dustin Wright, and Sergeant La David Johnson. These, on October 4, 2017, gave their life, and there were others who were severely injured during that ambush in the area of Niger near the Mali border.

I will conclude my remarks by saying this: The Trump administration prioritized developing a plan for U.S. security assistance to Africa because, and I quote, ″we understand that lasting stability, prosperity, independence, and security on the African continent are in the national security interests of the United States,″ unquote.

There is a lot of work to be done on this topic. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you on this serious issue of combating terrorism in Africa.

I further look forward to hearing from each of our panelists, and again, I welcome you and thank you for being a part of this hearing today.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. The gentleman yields. I am going to reclaim my time.

ISIS maintains affiliates in the Sinai, Libya, and there is a small but troubling ISIS-linked cell growing now in Mozambique. The nonpartisan Africa Center for Strategic Study reports that overall, in 2018, witnessed a, quote, ″record level of activity as terrorism on the continent continues its steady upward trend.″

Over the past decade, violent events in Africa increased tenfold from 288 attacks linked to militant groups in 2009 to 3,050 in 2018. The center also estimates that there are currently two dozen active militant groups operating in Africa, more than double the number from 2010.

U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Africa to date have focused on enhancing the military and security capabilities of regional partners through training, equipment support, and operational support and bilateral assistance. I have personally led several bipartisan congressional delegations to examine key aspects of capacity building and security activities in the region, including a visit to Nigeria to review operations conducted by the Multinational Joint Task Force consisting of military units from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, and other nations.

The U.S.-backed MJTF seeks to counter the threat of Boko Haram and ISIS West Africa. We have also visited Camp Lemmonier, a forward operating base in Djibouti, where more than 4,000 U.S. military and civilian personnel are deployed in support of regional stabilization, security cooperation, antipiracy, and crisis response operations in the Horn of Africa.

Most recently, we visited Algeria to examine the progress of trans Sahara counterterrorism partnership, a multinational program that is led by the State Department to prevent the spread of violent extremism in west and north Africa and reviewed the allocation of $1.3 million in U.S. bilateral aid that Algeria recently received for military education and training.

Following the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, our national counterterrorism strategy has prioritized the degradation of terrorist threats originating and operating in the Middle East. How-

ever, U.S. national security demands that we also maintain sustained pressure on terrorist networks in Africa. As noted by Grant Harris, the former Senior Director for African Affairs at the National Security Council under President Obama, the misconception that Africa is optional or irrelevant to U.S. national security is, quote, ″dangerous given the boon to terrorist recruitment and operations generated by unstable, weak, and failed governments.″

African Nations currently occupy 17 of the top 25 slots on the fragile states index issued by the independent Fund for Peace earlier this year. Moreover, it is critical for the U.S. to develop a comprehensive counterterrorism approach in the region that optimizes American military support, security cooperation, and assistance while advancing diplomatic solutions, civil society reforms, and economic initiatives to promote regional stability in the long term.

In his 2019 posture statement to Congress, General Thomas Waldhauser, Commander of U.S. Africa Command, stated that, quote, ″very few, if any, of America—of Africa's—challenges can be resolved using only military force,″ closed quote. But to the detriment of enduring regional stability, President Trump has consistently proposed massive cuts to international development funding, including a Fiscal Year 2020 budget proposal that recommends a 24 percent or $40 billion cut of the State Department and U.S. agencies for international development.

The current administration has also been slow to fill the Africa policy vacancies, and according to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, quote, ″shows no signs of mounting a vigorous, civilian-oriented strategy to address the challenges that do exist,″ closed quote.

Continued oversight of U.S. counterterrorist efforts in Africa will be critical to addressing threats to U.S. national security emanating from the region. To this end, I look forward to discussing these issues with today's witnesses, and I will now introduce our witnesses.

Mr. Judd Devermont, Director of the African Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies. Mr. Adotei Akwei, Deputy Director for Advocacy and Government Relations for Amnesty International. Ms. Alexis Arieff, Specialist in African Affairs for the congressional Research Service. Mr. Joshua Meservey, Senior Policy Analyst, Africa and Middle East with The Heritage Foundation.

Also, in addition to the witnesses we have today, the subcommittee also invited Dr. Joseph Siegle, Director of Research at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, to testify during today's hearings. Unfortunately, despite our repeated requests, the Department of Defense never responded to confirm Dr. Siegle's ability to attend. And I know that he expressed some interest in attending, but we did not get the approval from the Defense Department to allow that to happen which is unfortunate.

So, with that, and with our witnesses in attendance, would you all please rise and raise your right hand.

Do you swear or affirm that the testimony you're about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

Let the record show that all the witnesses have answered in the affirmative. Thank you, and please be seated.

The microphones are sensitive, so please hold them close and speak directly into them. Without objection, your written statements will be made part of the record, and with that, Mr. Devermont, you are now recognized to give an oral presentation of your testimony for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF JUDD DEVERMONT, DIRECTOR, AFRICA PROGRAM, CENTER FOR STRATEGIC & INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Mr. DEVERMONT. Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Hice, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify on this important topic.

Today I will discuss the current extremist and security landscape across Sub Saharan Africa, explain why ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other extremist groups pose a significant threat to U.S. strategic and foreign policy interests, and present some recommendations to counter violent extremism in the region.

Sub Saharan Africa has experienced a rise in terrorism over the past two decades. The threat has become more sophisticated, lethal, and geographically dispersed. While Africa's homegrown extremist groups have local objectives and disproportionately target regional governments and civilians, their affiliation with global terrorist networks have contributed to more efficient operations, slicker media propaganda, and in some cases, increased financial resources. The terrorist networks, their affiliates, and other extremist groups now operate in west, east, central, and southern Africa, having conducted operations in approximately 17 Sub Saharan African countries.

I believe that terrorism in Sub Saharan Africa endangers U.S. citizens and economic interests abroad, entangles the United States in expensive peacekeeping and humanitarian relief efforts, and weakens U.S. standing in strategic alliances around the world while our foreign adversaries grow in strength and influence.

While it's unwise to fully discount an attack on the homeland, there has been limited open source reporting to indicate the possibility of such a high impact scenario. Indeed, it has been almost a decade to the day since the Nigerian attempted to detonate explosives on a flight to Detroit on Christmas Day 2009.

Let me discuss these threats in greater detail. First, ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other extremist groups have targeted U.S. persons and U.S. facilities. There have been plots to attack U.S. embassies, and this year a car bomb was detonated at the gates of Baledogle Air Force where U.S. troops train Somali soldiers. These groups have also attacked soft targets where expatriates congregate, including the Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2013 and the Radisson Blu Hotel in Bamako, Mali, in 2015.

Two. The U.S. funds peacekeeping and humanitarian relief efforts to respond to the devastation wrought by extremism. The U.N. mission in Mali has an annual budget of $1.18 billion, and USAID provided more than $130 million in humanitarian assistance to Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger in the Fiscal Year 2019.

And third. The persistence of terrorism, coupled with the perception that the United States is reducing its terrorism engagement, threatens to undercut U.S. leadership. Our European and African

partners have expressed fears about Washington's wavering commitment. Our adversaries, especially Russia, have exploited this perceived vacuum, signing defense agreements with Sahelian countries to assist in counterterrorism operations.

I think the key study of Mozambique really illustrates the threats posed by extremism and the implications for U.S. national security interests. In October 2017, armed men attacked three police stations in the oil rich Cabo Delgado region. From that first attack to August 2019, there was more than 178 attacks leaving over 150 people dead, including a contractor who worked for a U.S. oil company.

These terrorism activities threaten U.S. investments in what is described as one of the largest LNG finds in the world. In June 2019, ISIS claimed this group as an affiliate and part of its central African province. The Mozambican Government, increasingly alarmed by the threat, appealed to Moscow for assistance, precipitating the brief entrance of Russian private military contractors. The Mozambique case study in sum shows how local extremist groups leverage local grievances, forge ties with global extremist networks to sow violence and threaten U.S. economic interests. It also demonstrates how U.S. adversaries exploit these developments, proffering security assistance as an alternative to U.S. engagement.

In my view, we need to rethink our investments, interventions, and partnerships. While it's dangerous to withdraw and disengage, it's also ill advised to continue as we have for the past two decades. Failure to remain active and to innovate will provide space for extremist groups to plan and execute attacks.

I just have a couple of recommendations. First, we need to invest in defense institution building. Many African militaries need capacity but training, but they also need to create a larger national security infrastructure. We have some initiatives such as the security governance initiative that was a step in the right direction, but I believe there's more that we can do.

I also think it's critical that we invest in police. Currently, according to the security systems monitor, police receive less than two percent of U.S. funding allocated for Sub Saharan African security forces.

Two, we need to make state fragility and politics a priority. There's a consensus that preventative measures that address underlying drivers of extremism are more effective and less expensive than a counterterrorism only approach. It's also important that we address the political obstacles to having a domestic response to terrorism. This is particularly relevant in Nigeria and Mali.

Third, we need to stand up for human rights and democracy. This isn't just a feel good policy. It's about an effective counterstrategy, counterterrorism strategy. If a government is guilty of gross human rights violations, it's in the U.S. interests to first withhold assistance and then take all necessary measures to resume engagement.

Finally, we need to broaden our international and domestic coalition. The United States is neither capable nor suited to be all response to every extremist and security challenge in the region.

We should recruit more foreign partners, more domestic partners to contribute to this counterterrorism effort, including Africa media, legislators, judges, and civil society stakeholders to do burden sharing but also to increase local ownership.

Thank you.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

Mr. Akwei, you are now recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF ADOTEI AKWEI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR ADVOCACY AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Mr. AKWEI. Thank you, chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Hice, for this opportunity to testify in front of you. My comments will focus on the impact of counterterrorism efforts on the respect and protection of human rights. As my colleague has just noted, this is not just about feeling good or doing the right thing. It's actually in the United States' best interests. I am going to focus on the initiatives in the Sahel and in Somalia.

I think the first thing to say is U.S. counterterrorism efforts and those of their allies are resulting in grave human rights violations that may constitute war crimes and are arguably having a negative impact on counterterrorism efforts. Congress can and must play a role in the strategic rebalancing and rethinking of the counterterrorism strategy, first, by ending the false argument that to ensure security, it is necessary to sacrifice human rights. The two are linked and are dependent on each other.

Congress must press for the prioritization of human rights in future national counterterrorism strategies. It must also press for the rebalancing of a highly militaristic focused strategy at the moment which has only created a bigger battlefield and dependency on arms that has been shown to be unsustainable in other regions of the world.

There must also be more comprehensive holistic approaches such as those that are espoused in the Global Fragility Act of 2019 as well as the Women Encountering Violent Extremism Act of 2019, all of which focus on building the capacity of civil society, in particular, of women, and also of taking—looking at the drivers of fragility which Mr. Devermont has also mentioned.

Another area must be accountability for U.S. partnerships and for U.S. partners. This includes credible, transparent investigations into rights violations and ensuring that those responsible for those violations are held accountable.

I'd like to acknowledge Congress' leadership already in this area in this year's NDAA where there are provisions on the State Department making—mandating it to do a better job receiving reports on civilian casualties of air strikes and also on creating a fund for victims and survivors of inadvertent military strikes.

Finally, I would say that the U.S.—that Congress must press the executive branch to work with African partner governments and civil society to review and reform problematic antiterrorism legislation and policies that violate international and regional human rights standards. For example, the practice of using military courts to try civilians, something that should never happen.

I'm going to look at two particular areas, the role of antiterrorism legislation and the erosion of the rule of law and abuses by security forces that are partners to the United States. There are numerous African countries that have passed antiterrorism or prevention acts that have vague definitions of terrorism. I would add that that term has not actually been defined under international law and that many of these laws greatly expand police powers and the role and the ability of the military to create lists of suspected terrorists, to freeze bank accounts of organizations, to shut down media houses, and to harass and arrest members of the media. This includes Kenya. It includes Ethiopia. It includes Nigeria. These laws are also combined with others that reduce political space and civil space and also create a repressive environment.

The impact of Nigeria's laws, for example, has resulted in the case of over 20 journalists and media operations being attacked verbally as well as facing arbitrary arrest and detention. Similar type legislation has been used in Tanzania—in Cameroon to great, great effect. The Cameroonian legislation actually allows military courts exclusive jurisdiction to try civilians and the Minister of Defense to appoint and assign military judges. This raises serious concerns about due process and independence of the judicial process.

We at Amnesty gained firsthand knowledge of the lengths to which the Cameroonian Government would use this antiterrorism law when we began working on the case of Ivo Feh in 2014, a 27-year-old student who was jailed for 20 years for sending a text to his friends where he joked that getting a job in Cameroon was harder—was so hard that it was probably easier to get into the armed group Boko Haram. His message was read by a teacher. His two friends were arrested, and he, along with them, were charged with trying to organize a rebellion against the state. He remains in jail.

The security force abuses that Amnesty has documented since 2015 are alarming. They include mass killings, torture, arbitrary detention, and malnutrition, denial of food. This directly contributes to recruitment opportunities for armed extremist organizations, and it should be of alarm to almost anyone trying to stop those kinds of organizations.

This is not only against the people that the military considers to be threats. It's, unfortunately, also against victims of Boko Haram attacks.

Amnesty is working with a group of 2,000 women who survived years of kidnapping by Boko Haram only to face sexual violence and rape by the Nigerian military guards in exchange for food and water and even healthcare. Thousands have died. These women have bravely gone on to make a list of their husbands and sons who were separated from them when they were liberated and have not been seen since.

I'll end, I know I'm over my time, by saying again that these are the kinds of abuses that do not help counterterrorism efforts. They're not in the national interest of the United States, and of course, they also tend to alienate the populations of the impacted communities. We now need a more balanced approach which is holistic and advice-oriented. I'll stop there.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you. The gentleman yields.
Ms. Arieff, you are now recognized for five minutes.

STATEMENT OF ALEXIS ARIEFF, SPECIALIST IN AFRICAN AFFAIRS, CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE

Ms. ARIEFF. Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Hice, members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting the congressional Research Service to testify today. I will focus particular attention on current trends in west Africa's Sahel region which falls within my area of specialization at CRS, along with U.S. responses and considerations for congressional oversight. My testimony draws on the input of CRS colleagues who cover other parts of the continent and related issues.

Islamist militants are part of a conflict ecosystem in the Sahel that also involves ethnic separatists, communal defense militias, and criminal actors. Mali, and increasingly Burkina Faso, are epicenters. As is the case in other parts of Africa, Islamists armed groups in the Sahel do employ terrorist tactics and several have pledged allegiance to al-Qaeda or the Islamic State. In some cases, their attacks have targeted and killed western nationals including several American civilians and military personnel as you mentioned. Most, however, operate primarily as local insurgent movements that seek to undermine and attack state presence and control.

In several areas of the Sahel, Islamist armed groups reportedly perform parallel state functions, including as security providers, tax authorities, and justice and mediation figures. To be clear, local civilians and local security forces have endured the overwhelming brunt of fatalities attributed to these groups, as well as the devastating humanitarian impact of conflicts involving them.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have been displaced. Millions are facing food insecurity. Nonetheless, some local communities may appreciate some of the services these groups provide, particularly in the context of an absent or predatory state.

As I describe in further detail in my written testimony, the conflicts involving Islamist armed groups in the Sahel exemplify several attributes that pose particular challenges to U.S. and other international response efforts. I'd like to highlight four of them here.

First, Islamist militancy in the Sahel is locally led and resilient. These groups appear to rely primarily on local sources of funding, including criminal activities which can pose challenges to sanctions enforcement and effectiveness.

Second, western and African-led military interventions can curtail armed groups' territorial control, but they have not translated into durable security gains on the ground.

Third, affected governments face competing policy and security priorities which may not align with those of the United States.

Finally, abuses by state security forces and state-backed militias appear to be driving recruitment in some areas.

I'd like to close by identifying a key challenge and related consideration for congressional oversight efforts. Notwithstanding ongoing U.S. direct counterterrorism strikes in Libya and Somalia, successive U.S. administrations have stated the desire to maintain a

light U.S. military footprint in Africa. Capacity building efforts and cooperation with local partners, what DOD officials refer to as working by, with, and through, are thus at the forefront of the U.S. counterterrorism tool kit in Africa along with development assistance aimed at addressing the drivers of violent extremism. Yet almost by definition, the partners whose capacities the United States seeks to develop are likely to be weak and/or problematic for other reasons.

If local political conditions, abuses by state actors, and perceived impunity play a key role in driving Islamist extremists mobilization in Africa as multiple studies suggest, then additional security assistance and/or development aid, for that matter, may not effectively reverse negative trends absent significant changes and approach on the part of local authorities.

Such changes might include, for example, putting an end to militias that engage in torture and extrajudicial killings, punishing abusive or corrupt soldiers, officials, and judges, and making concessions to minority communities that may be politically painful.

From an oversight perspective, it is not always possible for Congress to obtain a comprehensive view of all U.S. financial, operational, and personnel commitments to counterterrorism efforts in Africa. There are some fair reasons for this, including the difficulty of untangling funding and personnel dedicated to broader security governance or stabilization aims.

At the same time, regarding security assistance specifically, Congress has imposed varying notification and reporting requirements on different types of U.S. counterterrorism aid that are provided to African countries. For example, the notification and reporting requirements that Congress has attached to State Department security assistance accounts are not nearly as detailed as for DOD's global train and equip program.

Insofar as a lack of precision in the information provided to Congress can obscure the country and unit recipients of U.S. security assistance such as training and equipment, this renders oversight related to human rights and other policy concerns more challenging. It can also impede efforts to measure and gauge the effectiveness of U.S. counterterrorism aid and the ability of partner countries to absorb it.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you.

Mr. Meservey, you're now recognized for five minutes.

JOSHUA MESERVEY, SENIOR POLICY ANALYST, AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST, THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Mr. MESERVEY. Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Hice, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Joshua Meservey. I'm the Senior Policy Analyst for Africa and the Middle East at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and do not necessarily represent the official position of The Heritage Foundation.

The current African terrorism landscape is grim. Islamist terrorist groups have proliferated in the Sahel region, and many operate at a high tempo. There are now at least 10 Islamist terrorist

groups active in that region. Traditionally, only al-Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb was active there.

Groups in regions we do not usually associate with Islamist terrorism have emerged and are among the most brutal of all African terrorist organizations. Al-Shabaab in northern Mozambique, a group distinct from Somalia's Al-Shabaab, is capable enough to have recently killed a number of Russian mercenaries.

The ISIS linked allied democratic forces that operates primarily in the Democratic Republic of Congo razes villages and executes civilians in appalling fashion. Even relative success stories are showing warring sides, Al-Shabaab in Somalia lost most of its major strongholds years ago, but it maintains its operational capacity, controls significant territory, and benefits from stalemates into which the conflict there has descended.

Boko Haram in northeast Nigeria is resurgent after losing most of its territory five years ago, and its splinter group, Islamic State West Africa Province or ISWAP, conquered hundreds of square miles of territory earlier this year alone and frequently overruns Nigerian military bases.

The Nigeria and Somalia examples in particular highlight the importance of good governance for achieving any sustainable successes against African terrorist groups. In Somalia, politicians spend too much time and energy struggling for political power rather than delivering security and justice sufficient to give their citizens reason to resist Al-Shabaab.

In Nigeria, corruption enervates the security services, and the government has failed to address the environment in the northeast that makes groups like Boko Haram and ISWAP appealing to some. This enabling environment, characterized by people within it feeling a sense of marginalization and injustice, is one pillar of the terrorist phenomenon in Africa.

The U.S. can help address this element of the problem, though African partners have to lead the way. Military operations are a part of the right approach as judicious military action can degrade terrorist groups enough to provide governments time and space to address the enabling environments. The U.S. can also increase its support for civil society organizations which are critical to the development and maintenance of responsive and honest government.

The other pillar of the Islamist terrorist problem is the fundamentalist literalist interpretation of Islam that motivates the hard core of these groups. This problem is more difficult for the U.S. to address as it is a battle that has to be won by the many Muslims who interpret their faith in a tolerant way. The U.S. can ask Muslim countries and organizations that are proactively battling the extremist ideology what help it can give them.

Progress in the fight against African terrorism will require committed, wise, and persistent action in concert with like-minded Nation. Specifically, here are some steps the U.S. can take. Lead the diplomatic efforts in Libya. Libyan instability fuels terrorism in North Africa and the Sahel. Getting the many states involved in Libya working together to stabilize the country will be hard, but the U.S. is the only power with sufficient diplomatic heft to have a chance of success.

Advocate for reforming MINUSMA, the U.N. peacekeeping operation in Mali. MINUSMA is currently inefficient and terribly dangerous to serve in, and its mandate does not reflect the reality that it is fighting a war. MINUSMA's non-war fighting element should be stripped away, and its mission must be integrated into a broader regional strategy.

Pressure countries that export extremist ideologies. It is incumbent upon countries to stop any remaining exports of radical Islamist ideologies such as Salafism. They must also actively undertake the long and difficult work of undoing the damage proselytizing Salafism has done across the world, including in Africa.

Work with affected countries to create a strategy for managing returning foreign fighters. Many of the thousands of captured ISIS fighters will likely be repatriated to their home countries, including to African countries that do not have sufficient capacity for rehabilitating or prosecuting them as appropriate. Other terrorists who avoided capture will, as some already have returned spontaneously as well.

Thank you again for allowing me to present my thoughts today and for your interest in a difficult problem that hurts American interests.

I look forward to any questions you may have.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you very much. I now yield myself five minutes for questions.

Just the landscape across Africa, I mean, it's such a huge place. It's been very difficult for us, even with a considerable level of resources, to really move the needle at all in terms of strengthening the rule of law, establishing independent judiciaries, and creating conditions where some of the other more traditional or more military sponsored programs can actually succeed.

Given the fact that we have a limit on resources that we can dedicate to this, you know, and I acknowledge that, you know, the current administration may be frustrated with certain allocations and doesn't see the progress that we've been—in the programs that we've been funding thus far.

Where are the areas where you think we could plus up, you know, our appropriations and target areas that have a greater chance of success and more meaningful success? Not just trying to eliminate existing terrorist organizations, but also creating conditions that would give us some resilience in these countries like Mali, like Burkina Faso, that would prevent those organizations from reemerging once we defeat them?

Ms. ARIEFF.

Ms. ARIEFF. Far be it from me or CRS to advise Congress on appropriations. What I can say——

Mr. LYNCH. Well, how about where would we be best in focusing and trying to make a difference?

Ms. ARIEFF. What I can say is that it's—U.S. support to rule of law programming and judicial sector support, there are programs like this in Africa, including in places like Mali and Burkina Faso where those programs may show more success. There seems to be greater political will on the ground among local authorities to make

structural changes and to hold their own judicial actors and security forces accountable.

So, there is sometimes a disconnect between the areas where there is clearly greatest need for change and the areas where there's the greatest willingness to change, and thus, where U.S. assistance may find a willing partner.

Mr. LYNCH. I see.

Mr. Akwei, anything further on that?

Mr. AKWEI. Yes. I think there are two different channels, I think, that should be focused on. One, of course, is what you mentioned at the beginning of your statement which was increasing the international affairs budget and protecting that because that's where the investment in civil society as well as national institutions will happen. Those kinds of programs can't just be flatlined which is still progress. They need to be increased because that shows where the United States considers its priorities to be.

The other is that, while I do agree with Alexis about finding the areas where reform is most likely to be well received, there are a couple—there are two countries, I think, that cannot be allowed to fail, and that's Nigeria and Cameroon because they're so large. Victory or, shall I say, the failure of the counterterrorism efforts against Boko Haram in both of those countries will have irreparable effect on the region. Those are the most problematic in terms of the security forces, in terms of the ability of the judiciary to hold anyone accountable, and unfortunately, in Cameroon, political willingness to even engage in a dialog about what they're doing on counterterrorism.

But those would be the two countries that I would say there needs to be hard-nosed, U.S. high level diplomacy about changing tactics and direction.

Mr. LYNCH. Great.

Mr. DEVERMONT.

Mr. DEVERMONT. Thank you. I want to reinforce something that my colleagues on the panel have said in terms of that in countries where the security problems are viewed as urgent and existential where you have civil society, the political opposition putting pressure on the Federal Government or the government to react, I think we see better outcomes. So, I would make a couple of suggestions around that.

First, that we tend to as a U.S. Government spend a lot of time on critiquing governments that aren't doing well and not enough on the countries that are doing well and creating some sort of demonstrative effect over highlighting countries or individual actors who are taking these problems seriously.

Two, I think that the media is under-resourced, over-stretched, sometimes politicized, but in African countries when there's media pressure on their governments, when they shed light on abuses, I think that that's probably the most effective anecdote to the problem set than necessarily the international community wagging their finger.

And third, all of this, I think, comes down to community policing and local governance, and it is historically not where we have put our resources in into African police, and it's not where African governments put their resources in. I'd like to see more policing efforts

that are successful, that have leased the community, that can provide law and order so they don't create openings for extremists to enter in.

Mr. LYNCH. My time has expired.

I now yield five minutes to the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Hice, the ranking member.

Mr. HICE. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Meservey, is it accurate to say that Islamic-linked violent acts and fatalities and so forth have doubled each year since 2016?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies has—there was a recent paper that made that claim, and I think it's correct based on the data we have.

Mr. HICE. So, how many terror groups are we talking about that are operating in West Africa?

Mr. MESERVEY. It depends how you count a little bit, but it's around 10 discrete organizations.

Mr. HICE. Okay. Has that increased since 2016?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. I think there's been a few new ones. It's—they split and merge and morph——

Mr. HICE. Right.

Mr. MESERVEY [continuing]. So, it's—it is difficult sometimes to track.

Mr. HICE. Does that contribute to the increase that there's—obviously, I would think it would—with the increase in terror groups? But doubling every year since 2016, that's an alarming number. Has international intervention in the region helped to curb any of the violence?

Mr. MESERVEY. So, the primary international intervention in that region are the French forces who have been there for some years. My assessment of that initiative is that they are very good at taking out high level targets. They've had some successes in killing a number of leaders which is important, but it's not part of a holistic solution, and they're overstretched. I think they have about 2,500 personnel there in a vast area, so there's some local initiatives and regional initiatives, primarily G5 Sahel. That's nascent. It's made up of five Sahelan countries, and early returns have not been very positive on their effectiveness.

Mr. HICE. Ms. Arieff, you're nodding. You obviously agree with that. You alluded to it in your opening statement as well.

Ms. ARIEFF. Yes.

Mr. HICE. You do. Okay.

Ms. ARIEFF. I agree with the statement that the early returns on G5 Sahel initiatives have not been promising.

Mr. HICE. Okay. So, what are the—I'll come back, Mr. Meservey. What are the economies like in these regions?

Mr. MESERVEY. Well, these are—some of these countries are desperately poor, frankly. Niger is one of the poorest countries on earth. If you look at the U.N. human development index, none of them would be even middle income. These are all very underresourced economies.

Mr. HICE. So, are young people joining these groups because it, in itself, is an opportunity, an economic opportunity? Does the economy drive some of the growth of the terror groups?

Mr. MESERVEY. Some of it. So, people join terrorist organizations for a whole host of reasons. Some are truly ideological in that they believe—they subscribe to this radical Islamist ideology that says we must kill infidels——

Mr. HICE. Right.

Mr. MESERVEY [continuing]. Which are primarily Muslims who don't agree with them, but some, yes, join for tribal reasons, for instance, for a paycheck.

Mr. HICE. So, I want to focus on the economic side. Ms. Arieff, would you—do you agree that—or what's your position on the role of the economy in some of these poor areas?

Ms. ARIEFF. Poverty and a sense of desperation, no doubt, help explain why people might be motivated to join an insurgency, but it doesn't seem to be enough. What seems to really be the trigger is a coherent political narrative that says you're poor because your community has been excluded from the fruits of the economy or the fruits of political participation in this country or sector.

Mr. HICE. Right. So, I mean, I understand that there's multiple factors involved, all right. We can't solve all of it. But just from an economic perspective, if the economy were improved, the things, avenues that we could take in the United States to help improve the economies of some of these countries that would potentially at least to some degree help with the growth of terrorist organizations?

Mr. Meservey?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. I think that's true. I think the biggest factor is for people to have hope and to feel like they have some sort of say in the political process, for instance, and some sort of autonomy in deciding their own fates.

So yes, absolutely having a job as a young person, for instance, can ameliorate that sense of hopelessness and marginalization and injustice, as Alexis was saying, contributes or appears to be the trigger for radicalization in a lot of these places.

Mr. HICE. Okay. One other question along these lines. What has been more successful, the presence of military presence or providing financial aid to countries? What is most effective?

Mr. MESERVEY. In countering terrorism?

Mr. HICE. In countering terrorism.

Mr. MESERVEY. It's really hard to measure. Military operations are easier to measure in the sense that you can count dead bodies, more or less, in the sense of terrorists you've killed.

I think humanitarian development aid, as it's currently structured, has never proven to be effective in alleviating poverty. It's good in crisis situations sometimes, things like that, but sustainable poverty alleviation has to be based on a free market intervention and a free market model which goes back to the governance issue. You need a requisite level of competent governance in order to create an environment where people can enjoy the benefits of a free market, and then that will help alleviate that poverty.

Mr. HICE. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

Mr. LYNCH. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Gosar, for five minutes.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Meservey, I'm going to go along that same line in regard to economics, and you made some important assertions.

So, let's talk about China. You know, China's One Belt, One Road initiative is undermining a lot of the economies within Africa. Not only do they take an extorsive repayment by utilizing that resource, but they use their own labor. So, the host countries actually see this actually being done, that they're actually being stolen from in a manner of aspects, and then they see that they don't even get to reap a job out of that to create this infrastructure.

So, what kind of implications do you see with the involvement and the continuation of the One Belt, One Road initiative with China's complicity to undermining these stable governments?

Mr. MESERVEY. I think One Belt, One Road is clearly a challenge for U.S. national interests around the world including in Africa. I think it's an attempt to replace the U.S.-led international order with a Chinese centric one. And specific to infrastructure in Africa, it's a mixed bag, actually, Chinese-provided infrastructure. I think some of these infrastructure projects are white elephants, essentially, but others actually could provide some sort of economic benefit.

The problem is that there's opacity around virtually all of these transactions, so we're not even sure what the terms of the contracts state, for instance, so we don't know what the interest rate is. We don't know the terms of repayment, things of that nature.

I think there's a lot of corruption involved in the signing of these contracts where the Chinese have a clear model of engaging at the most senior possible levels and lavishing those people with various blandishments, including outright bribery, and then that facilities landing these sorts of contracts.

Then, of course, there's this tide loan model where they will offer financing on the condition that a Chinese company execute the project. So, you can have an African government take on $4 billion of debt, and none of that money actually ever passes through that government's treasury, for instance.

So, as I say, I have deep concerns about One Belt, One Road. Some of the infrastructure I actually think is helpful in Africa. Some, I think, is again, a white elephant and essentially an excuse for leadership of an African company to line its own pockets and the Chinese company to make a fat profit.

Mr. GOSAR. So, you know, going back to the one the speaker talked about, we don't do enough about the nations that are doing good, so you're isolating this problem. That's kind of where I'm focusing on: that is how do we involve ourselves in that dichotomy? Because if there's no economic—as you said, if you give foreign aid, it's got a mixed bag. It doesn't really help. But if you empower people to have a job, to be involved in the upright building of their country, you get a lot of extra benefits because of that. So, what—how do we handle that, and on the vast expanses of Africa?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes. I—to be clear, I do think there are some uses for foreign aid. I don't think it's all negative, of course, but vis-a-vis how do you develop or help countries to develop these sorts of environments where entrepreneurs can flourish. I think incentivizing U.S. businesses to get more involved in Africa is part of this equation. Africa remains a bit of a scary word for some

American companies, but trying to educate them on the opportunities there is just part of it.

I think working with government—identifying governments that we have a chance to have an impact with. Honestly, I think some African governments, the problems are so entrenched that the U.S. isn't going to make much headway, but others we do have an opportunity to work with them on improving their governance.

So, you know, we've talked about civil society here. I think that's a critical part. We can be creative around anticorruption measures which, again, is a critical part of good governance. Technology gives us all sorts of possible not solutions but tools to attack this problem.

So, I think—I actually think Prosper Africa, the Trump administration's—the pillar of its Africa strategy, has the right idea where, you know, focusing on the economic aspect, focusing on trade, things of that nature. But fundamentally, these governments themselves have to reform and do better, and the U.S. is limited in the sorts of tools we can bring to bear.

So, we can provide an example. We can make the case for rule of law. We can incentivize our companies and encourage them to get involved, but fundamentally, the African governments themselves have to decide that this is the route they want to go.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you.

I yield back.

The Chairman. The gentleman yields. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Higgins for five minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Meservey, by historical standards, the United States is providing record levels of counterterrorism resources to African countries. Despite this investment of American treasure and resources, the number of terrorist attacks has greatly increased as some terrorist organizations—several—fight to gain influence across the continent.

You have stated you believe that the U.S. needs to coordinate closely with our European allies to curb the violence perpetrated by terrorists. Is that correct, you stated that?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. And what exactly do you believe—explain to the American people what you believe the international community must do to help in this effort.

Mr. MESERVEY. I think there is a host of things. One is coordinate with one another. So, there is a variety of countries working on——

Mr. HIGGINS. For instance, France is greatly involved. Perhaps make an example of the French and American effort and investment of treasure and assets in the African continent to fight terrorism. And what would our other European allies need to contribute?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, they would need to contribute some of the same. So, different—one specific area I will talk about is paramilitary police. I think Judd talked a bit about police. But the U.S. doesn't actually have a paramilitary police force; that is not our model. There are countries—France, for instance, or the Italians or the Carabinieri—who do. And that sort of force is really useful in

a counterterrorism operation because they provide the civil policing but they can also carry out essentially military operations.

So, that is one area where you can have a division of labor. And that requires coordination, where the U.S. needs to be talking with the French or the Italians or other countries that can provide that sort of support and say, "Look, we are handling ISR, we are handling lift, we are handling other types of logistics and training. You can provide paramilitary police training, for instance, and we can facilitate that in, you know, various ways." So, that sort of coordination I think is the start.

And, more generally, you know, when I say "coordination," what I really mean, I guess, is a larger strategy, where all the involved countries—and there are many of them—sit down and talk to one another and decide, "This is the way forward for this collective effort." Because the Sahel problem, alone, is far too difficult and too large for any one country, including the United States, to handle.

Mr. HIGGINS. You described it as a collective effort. Recently, our administration, at the executive level, has encouraged our NATO allies to shoulder a greater burden with the expense and the overall endeavor of the NATO mission. Would you equate this as parallel? And why would our other European allies not be invested in Africa?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, I think the Europeans actually have greater interests in the Sahel region than the United States does, because it produces so many of the immigrants that they are worried about——

Mr. HIGGINS. So, do you agree that greater pressure should be brought to bear upon our European allies to highlight their obligation to join in the struggle against terrorist activities in Africa and to share the burden of treasure invested and assets invested?

Mr. MESERVEY. It depends which ally we are talking about. So, the French are doing a lot, for instance. They lose soldiers and that sort of thing. But, yes, I think other European countries need to be encouraged to look at their own interests.

I would include Middle Eastern countries is this as well. So, the Saudis, for instance, have pledged money to this effort, but they haven't actually delivered, so that——

Mr. HIGGINS. Yes, sir.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Let me ask you, what positive outcomes—let's just try and close on a positive note here. What positive outcomes have you seen? And, ultimately, why do you believe the United States must remain engaged in fighting terrorist organizations in Africa?

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes, I think the greater lesson of 9/11 was that, if you allow these groups to have a safe haven even halfway across the world, they will eventually turn their attention to the United States. I think in Africa most of the groups are locally focused, absolutely, but they still have a hardcore who subscribe to this transnational ideology that believes the United States is one of its absolute primary enemies.

And beyond that, beyond that potential threat to the homeland, is the attacks on American interests in those regions, the large-scale humanitarian disasters that result from attacks, the movement of people, the unmanaged movement of people across borders

and up into Europe and elsewhere. These are all problems for the United States that needs to focus our attention.

And I think, unfortunately, African terrorism has gotten a bit of short shrift because of the problems in the Middle East, but all the trends are in the wrong direction in Africa—oh, you asked for something positive. Sorry.

You know, I have said that Somalia is of concern, and it is, but I will say, Al Shabaab has not been able to retake significant amounts of its territory that it lost five or six years ago. Boko Haram is making a comeback, but it still doesn't control nearly as much territory as it once did——

Mr. HIGGINS. I thank you for your clarification.

Mr. MESERVEY. Yes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Mr. Chairman, I would like to say that your leadership in holding this hearing is a positive sign. It heightens the awareness that the children of God in Africa face and our commitment as a Nation to join the world's forces to stand against the oppression that the people there face every day. So, thank you for holding this hearing.

Mr. LYNCH. I thank the gentleman.

Let me ask—I certainly support this whole-of-government counterterrorism approach, right? But, as the gentleman from Louisiana points out, you have situations where—let's use Nigeria as an example—where you have a huge population, great growth there, a lot of natural resources. They have oil. They have a lot of the elements that you would need to have a stable and productive country.

Then you have other areas, I would say in western Niger, maybe some areas of Mali, that are so remote they have really become lawless regions, where there is no government capacity there that we can support, right? It is just a lawless region.

How do we strike the right balance? You know, that is what I am struggling with, Mr. Devermont, in terms of getting the right balance to, you know, recognizing that—you know, on this committee, we generally visit countries that are not doing well. That is the nature of our job, right? And the common denominator is usually a lack of an independent judiciary and a weak rule-of-law regime. That is, like, the recipe for a failed state. We have grappled with our ability to create that. It is great when you have something to work with, you have maybe a couple of strong leaders and, you know, a recognition for individual rights and respect, you know, for basic rights, basic human rights. But, in other cases, we have nothing to work with.

You know, we have budgetary restraints here. We can't fund every single thing we would like to fund. We have to spend our money wisely. You know, if we are going to invest the taxpayers' money, we have to make sure that we have a reasonable opportunity for success, and we have a duty to make sure that we invest that money wisely.

What is the balance, you know, in terms of, should we look at places like Nigeria and try to help them take that next step? Or, you know, do we look at, sort of, the military solution that we are confronted with in some of these lawless spaces? How do you, you know, strike the right balance?

Mr. DEVERMONT. Thank you for that question, sir.

I think that you have to look at will, capacity, and what are the stakes. And I think that you provided two very good examples to show that.

So, my argument would be, in Nigeria, this is largely an issue of will. I just returned from the region on Saturday, and what is happening in the northeast, where Boko Haram and ISWAP operate, is not on the front pages of the newspaper. It is not a part of the political discourse. There is a general checking out of this conflict. I think, unfortunately, the stakes are too high for both us and the Nigerians to do that.

Our investments in Nigeria should not be around capacity, at least at first. It should be about creating some political will to address these problems seriously. Then we can talk about building capacity so they use those resources in an appropriate way and so that we can be accountable to our taxpayers.

Niger is a different story, because I believe that government has significant will to address this problem and very little capacity. Even when in periods over the last couple years where they have, I think, dipped in probably the wrong approach, in terms of supporting ethnic militias, they then course-correct.

And given the recent attack that left 71 of their soldiers dead, you can see that they both feel the urgency of this problem set and are looking to do better. So, I would be focused, in the Niger case, on capacity-building.

That is how I would break it down when I look across the continent: Who has the will and not the capacity? Who has the will and the capacity? And who has neither?

Mr. LYNCH. Mr. Akwei, do you want to add anything to that?

Mr. AKWEI. I think I agree with Judd. The only thing I would add would be that—I think my colleague from The Heritage Foundation said the key thing, that for sustainable, successful CT, this has got to be owned by African governments but not just African governments. It has to be the general population. That has to drive this political will.

I think one of the things that is really disappointing is just what Judd said about the lack of intensity about what is going on in the north and the erosion of the whole nation-state in the northwest and northeastern provinces in Nigeria.

The other thing I would also argue is that the messaging from the United States can be much stronger about the importance of good governance—and that has taken a big hit—in terms of respect for rule of law and respect for rights. Because the closing space is shutting down the voices that would amplify that our troops have to do the right thing, that our military, that our police have to respect the—and that there is actually a justice system that people can trust.

It is not a question of not having resources. It is a question of justice——

Mr. LYNCH. Right.

Mr. AKWEI [continuing]. And hope, and that they are going to be treated fairly. That is where we are losing this battle, on the ideas and the values.

Mr. LYNCH. Very good.

I am now going to yield to the gentleman from Louisiana, Mr. Higgins, for five minutes.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Akwei, I would like to ask you, because of your background and your service to Amnesty International—and we thank you for that. All of us in this body support individual rights and freedoms and protections across the globe. It should be in our nature, and I believe it is.

But you have stated, I believe, that you oppose what you refer to as the militarization of U.S. policy in Africa. So, I would just ask you to clarify for us, how shall we accomplish stability across the densities of population in Africa? How can we help these communities stand up and embrace economic prosperity, religious freedoms, protections, even basic access to clean water and healthy food, decent education, improved infrastructure, control over their own destiny?

If they cannot be safe, which—if you have an opposing military presence, then we must have a supportive military presence, a defensive military presence. That is my opinion. So, how would you clarify your own posture regarding the United States' policy there, sir?

Mr. AKWEI. Sir, I completely—I want to clarify, Amnesty is not a pacifist organization. We fully understand and respect that there is an urgent threat and that there is an urgent need. So, we are not talking about throwing away all of the support and assistance that the United States provides.

What we are saying is that there is an imbalance and that the investments that need to happen in terms of improving governance for all of the things that you listed are being shortchanged and that those are the only things that are going to make a sustainable type of response to CT.

Mr. HIGGINS. I think that is an intelligent clarification, and I thank you for that. Let me interject at that point in your statement. Is that lack of balance being driven by United States mandated policy, or is that imbalance, as you call it, being driven by requests from the nation-states and the officials thereof, based upon what they are asking for?

Mr. AKWEI. I think it is being driven by both. I certainly would say that the difference between what the nation-state governments are asking for is not always the same thing as all of the people in the country.

Mr. HIGGINS. Ah, so there we go to my point. How do we determine this, good sir? As an American policy driven by the best of intentions, how do we determine what is actually and truthfully righteous and in the best service of the citizens——

Mr. AKWEI. Sir, I think that——

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. Of Africa that are suffering?

Mr. AKWEI. And that is really the result of a dialog that is inclusive coming from these African countries. Our problem has been that we have been listening to only one voice, and that makes sense because it is government talking to government. But, unfortunately, in many of these countries, it is not representative government that you are talking to.

Mr. HIGGINS. What about the voice of nongovernment organizations? Because they certainly have a voice that is heard——

Mr. AKWEI. But not in those countries.

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. On Capitol Hill. They have a constant presence in my office. I don't know about the chairman's.

Mr. AKWEI. No, no, sir. Here in the United States, absolutely, you are giving us this great honor of having a dialog with us. My colleagues in African countries don't get that kind of dialog.

Mr. HIGGINS. Ah.

Mr. AKWEI. So, this is where this silence and this lack of engagement then feeds this potential pool of recruitment for these organizations.

Mr. HIGGINS. Do you believe that our European allies can help us to bridge that lack of access to communications?

Mr. AKWEI. I don't think we have a choice. They have to be involved. I think my colleague from The Heritage Foundation said that, that this is not the job of one country. It is not the job of even a group of countries. It is basically a holistic—it is inclusive. This is going to need real a hearts-and-minds type of approach where everybody benefits from and owns the response.

Mr. HIGGINS. All right. Thank you, sir, for your answers.

Mr. Chairman, we have a rather historic moment here where Amnesty International and The Heritage Foundation are on the same page for the betterment of mankind.

I yield.

Mr. LYNCH. I duly note the gentleman's observation. I agree.

Look, I would like to thank the gentleman. I would like to thank our witnesses for their testimony today.

Without objection, all members will have five legislative days within which to submit additional written questions for the witnesses to the chair, which will be forwarded to the witnesses for response. I ask our witnesses to please respond as promptly as you are able.

Mr. LYNCH. Again, I want to thank you for your thoughtful observations. We are still searching for a way, how best to address this issue, and I think that your comments today were instructive and very thoughtful and helpful. So, I thank you for your attendance here today.

This hearing is now adjourned. Thank you.

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