



## **Exposing and Defeating Boko Haram**

### **Why the West must unite to help Nigeria defeat terrorism**

#### **Summary**

- Boko Haram operates as al-Qaeda's representative in Nigeria and must be challenged on a domestic, regional and international level
- The US government's delay in designating Boko Haram a Foreign Terrorist Organisation (FTO) initially hampered international attempts to combat the terror group's overseas financial transactions—there have been over 3,000 deaths this year alone in Nigeria and Cameroon
- The US State Department should clarify the standards used to make the terror designation and explain why Boko Haram did not receive the label under the leadership of former Secretary of State and Presidential hopeful, Hilary Clinton, despite traceable evidence linking Boko Haram to Osama bin Laden
- There are concerns in the international community and Nigeria that the U.S. Democratic Party or its advisers may be associating themselves with northern Nigerian politicians who are reportedly connected to Boko Haram in the lead up to the 2015 Presidential elections
- Any political pact between US officials and the APC carries risks – the US should adopt a neutral approach to the Nigerian elections and political landscape

- An international investigation that can bring sanctions against political and business leaders in Nigeria and abroad who are financing Boko Haram should be commissioned immediately

### **Boko Haram – An Escalation in Violence**

More than 250 Nigerian schoolgirls who were kidnapped and forcibly converted to Islam are entering their third month as captives of Boko Haram, whose leader promised on May 5 to “sell” the girls as “slaves in the market.”<sup>i</sup> The plight of these schoolgirls who have been taken to hideouts in Nigeria’s border region and to other countries has led to the widespread realization that Boko Haram poses a threat not only to the health and safety of young women in Nigeria, but also Christians who are being “cleansed” from their villages and killed in their churches throughout northern Nigeria. Meanwhile, Boko Haram continues to target Muslim leaders who oppose its Salafist ideology, including assassinating the prominent Sheikh Auwal Albani in Kaduna in February 2014.<sup>ii</sup>

Boko Haram’s leader, Abubakar Shekau, proclaims to be waging a “war on Christians” in Nigeria and a “jihad” against the Nigerian government, America and the West.<sup>iii</sup> In August 2012, Shekau called on Nigerian

president Dr. Goodluck Jonathan and U.S. President Barack Obama to “forsake Christianity” in order to be spared from future attacks. Since 2010, approximately 10,000 people have died in Boko Haram-related violence, with casualties steadily increasing each year.

Boko Haram’s senior kidnapers and bomb-makers are mostly former Nigerian al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) militants.<sup>iv</sup> They returned to Nigeria in 2011 and attacked high-profile political and international targets, such as the Federal Political Headquarters and United Nations Headquarters in Abuja. Both buildings were destroyed in the first two suicide bombings in Nigeria’s history in June and August 2011 and claimed by Boko Haram. The masterminds of the attacks were trained at AQIM and al-Shabab camps abroad.<sup>v</sup>

Now, suicide bombings are commonplace in Nigeria. On June 8, 2014 – just days after Boko Haram killed 200 people in predominantly Christian villages in Borno State – the first female suicide bomber in Nigeria’s history detonated explosives at military barracks in Gombe State.<sup>vi</sup> Less than two weeks later, on June 19, another suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a World Cup viewing centre in Yobe State,

killing 15 fans.<sup>vii</sup> On June 25, another female suicide bomber carried out an attack in Lagos, southern Nigeria's commercial capital. This attack was claimed by Abubakar Shekau and provided the first clear evidence that Boko Haram has infiltrated the majority Christian oil-producing regions of southern Nigeria.<sup>viii</sup>

Boko Haram's threat also extends to foreign personnel in Nigeria. Boko Haram threatened to assassinate U.S. ambassador to Nigeria, Terence McCulley, in February 2012. This was three months before AQIM-linked Ansar al-Sharia threatened to assassinate U.S. ambassador to Libya, Christopher J. Stevens.<sup>ix</sup> When Ansar al-Sharia murdered Ambassador Stevens and two other Americans in Benghazi, Libya in September 2012, a Kano-based Boko Haram faction was quick to "commend" the "jihad of our brothers" in Libya.<sup>x</sup>

Boko Haram and its internationalist offshoot, Ansaru, have also kidnapped more than 25 foreigners in northern Nigeria and Cameroon, including engineers, priests and nuns, and tourists. Thus far, 10 foreign hostages from the United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, Greece, China and Lebanon have been killed, while 10 from France have been exchanged

for millions of dollars. Ten foreigners – all Chinese engineers – remain in captivity in Nigeria.<sup>xi</sup> On July 16, Boko Haram militants on motorbikes also kidnapped a German development worker in Adamawa State; he, too, remains in captivity.<sup>xii</sup>

Only after the Chibok kidnapping in April 2014, however, did the international community, including countries that were targeted by Boko Haram such as the U.S., United Kingdom, France and China, finally begin to forge a coordinated strategy to combat Boko Haram. This was too late, but an investigation now into Boko Haram’s international operations could still help roll back Boko Haram’s financing and undercut its transnational support networks.

## **Late Designation of Boko Haram as a Foreign Terrorist**

### **Organisation (FTO)**

The U.S. State Department was provided with intelligence showing that Boko Haram and Ansaru were connected to AQIM, al-Shabab, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Ansar al-Sharia and Osama bin Laden as early as 2002.<sup>xiii</sup> However, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did not label Boko Haram as a “foreign terrorist organization (FTO)”

from the time she entered office in 2008 until she left office in February 2013. The State Department finally designated Boko Haram and Ansaru as FTOs in November 2013, but it was likely too late to stop crucial flows of funds to Boko Haram or launch more thorough investigations into Boko Haram's sources of transnational funding.

When Nigeria's President Jonathan ordered a State of Emergency in three states of north-eastern Nigeria to combat Boko Haram in May 2013, Boko Haram had already acquired sufficient weapons from Muammar Qaddafi's caches in Libya and funds from Sudanese, Gulf region, and northern Nigerian supporters to withstand the Nigerian military's offensive.<sup>xiv</sup> If not for Boko Haram's retreat into Cameroon, the militant group likely would not have survived the offensive and been able to revive the insurgency and created as much devastation in 2014.<sup>xv</sup>

The State Department's decision not to label Boko Haram and Ansaru as FTOs until late 2013 became the subject of heightened inquiry after the Chibok kidnapping.<sup>xvi</sup> Nonetheless, there are several reasons which

explain why the State Department's inaction on Boko Haram during Mrs. Clinton's time as Secretary of State.

First, Barack Obama's election campaign mantra in 2012 was that "al-Qaeda is on the run."<sup>xvii</sup> If Mrs. Clinton publicly acknowledged that Boko Haram, like AQIM, al-Shabab and Ansar al-Sharia, was proliferating and expanding, it could show that this mantra was as inaccurate as the claim that a YouTube video was responsible for inciting the murder of Ambassador Stevens in Benghazi—as opposed to Ansar al-Sharia and its Boko Haram partners, who were then planning similar attacks in Nigeria.<sup>xviii</sup>

The State Department also followed a theory that "poverty" explained Boko Haram's rise and led it to become a killing and kidnapping machine. It is relevant to note, however, that Borno State, where Boko Haram's is most active, is not especially poor; it has the 19<sup>th</sup> highest-ranked GDP of Nigeria's 36 states.<sup>xix</sup> Moreover, as New Jersey Republican Congressman Chris Smith said in response to this "poverty" theory, "poor people do not necessarily become terrorists and killers. That is an insult, frankly, to poor people."<sup>xx</sup> A more accurate analysis is

that while low-level recruits may join Boko Haram because they are paid like mercenaries, many of the more educated leaders of Boko Haram, including those trained by AQIM and al-Shabab, are attracted to Boko Haram's anti-Western and pro-Bin Laden ideology.<sup>xxi</sup> Moreover, Boko Haram employs *takfirist* ideology to make the claim that any Muslim who supports Nigerian democracy or secularism is as liable to be killed as Christians and others Boko Haram calls "infidels." Abubakar Shekau's recent declaration of support for the "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria shows that Boko Haram receives inspiration from the most violent international jihadist group and that Boko Haram may seek to seize territory across borders as the Islamic State (ISIS) has done in Iraq and Syria.

Boko Haram and Ansaru may also have outwitted the State Department and other security services. Ansaru's leader,, Khalid al-Barnawi, first called his faction by the name of "al-Qaeda in the Lands Beyond the Sahel" in 2011— a reflection of al-Qaeda's true geographic scope in sub-Saharan Africa and the expansionist goals of long-time AQIM leaders and masterminds.<sup>xxii</sup> Based on the advice of AQIM's leader, al-Barnawi eliminated "al-Qaeda" from the faction's name in order to "pretend to be

a 'domestic' movement” and obscure his faction’s ties to al-Qaeda.<sup>xxiii</sup>

This is why al-Barnawi later called the faction by the Arabic-language name “Ansaru” in 2012, which is an abbreviation that means “Supporters of the Muslims in Black Africa.”

According to Droukdel, this name, which contains no reference to al-Qaeda, would reduce international attention on al-Barnawi’s faction and forestall the pressures of an FTO designation; evidently Droukdel was correct. While al-Barnawi, Shekau and Adam Kamar, who was also a Nigeria AQIM member who joined Boko Haram, were designated foreign terrorists by the State Department in 2012, Ansaru did not receive FTO designation until more than one year later in November 2013.

### **The Rise of “Nigeria’s Muslim Brotherhood”**

There are concerns that some representatives or consultants of the U.S. Democratic Party may be associating with northern Nigerian politicians connected to Boko Haram. They may also be allowing the Boko Haram insurgency to become an excuse for siding with political candidates opposed to President Jonathan on grounds that Boko Haram is

“Jonathan’s fault.” The Boko Haram insurgency, however, started in 2010 under Jonathan’s predecessor and became more lethal in part as a result of the cooperation or complicity of certain opposition politicians, who are now criticizing Jonathan’s presidency.

Recent political rhetoric in the U.S. suggests that former Secretary of State and Prospective Presidential candidate, Hilary Clinton, is favourably disposed to the opposition: the All Progressive’s Congress (APC). The APC is an Islamist-leaning political party founded in 2013 for the purpose of challenging President Jonathan in Nigeria’s 2015 presidential elections, which are to be held on February 14. Two of the party’s likely presidential and vice-presidential candidates, Muhammed Buhari and Bola Ahmed Tinubu, would constitute what many Nigerians consider to be a pro-Sharia Law “Muslim-Muslim ticket.”

Buhari promised he would make Nigeria “ungovernable” after he lost the presidential election to Jonathan in a landslide in 2011, which is exactly what happened when Boko Haram’s violence destabilized Nigeria starting in 2012.<sup>xxiv</sup> Another APC Senator in Borno State contacted a Boko Haram spokesperson 73 times in 2011.<sup>xxv</sup>

Tinubu was also the leading backer behind Sanusi Lamido Sanusi's appointment as Emir of Kano on June 7, 2014.<sup>xxvi</sup> Sanusi, who is also a prospective presidential candidate in 2015, was the key figure in Nigeria behind the country's Islamic banking movement. He studied at a university in Khartoum, Sudan in the 1990s, when Bin Laden was in that country and Shari'a Law, including Islamic banking, was imposed in Sudan. Sanusi is also close to the manager of Nigeria's first Islamic bank, Alhaji Umaru Abdul Mutallab, the father of the Nigerian youth who attempted to bring down a Detroit-bound airliner on Christmas Day in 2009 on behalf of AQAP with an explosive in his undergarments.<sup>xxvii</sup> Sanusi's connections as well as the fact that several Boko Haram and Ansaru leaders were recruited from universities in Sudan worries some Nigerians. They suspect Sanusi may support politically oriented Boko Haram factions that have sought to destabilize Nigeria during Jonathan's tenure.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Nigeria's Aviation minister, Femi Fani-Kayode, announced he was resigning from the APC and returning to Jonathan's Party – the People's Democratic Party (PDP) – in May 2014 because he believed the APC has

ties to Boko Haram.<sup>xxix</sup> Fani-Kayode said, for example, that the APC is full of “Boko Haram sympathizers bent on foisting an Islamic Agenda on Nigeria through the promotion of Muslim-Muslim candidates.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Mrs. Clinton seems to have weighed on the Nigerian political scene in a way that garnered attention with Nigeria. She appears to prefer the APC to President Jonathan and, according to Nigerian media, “carpeted” President Jonathan at philanthropy event in New York City on May 8.<sup>xxxi</sup> Two days earlier, on May 6, a New York Times editorial said President Jonathan had “little credibility” (despite that he received nearly 59% of the vote to Buhari’s 32% in the 2011 presidential election).<sup>xxxii</sup> This suggests a U.S. government that continues to be led by the Democratic Party would welcome the rise of the APC in Nigeria– as it initially did with Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood. The events that led to the recent military takeover in Egypt following short-lived and unstable Muslim Brotherhood rule exposed the dangers of such a policy.<sup>xxxiii</sup> If Mrs. Clinton and the U.S. Democratic Party is pro-APC, it may be no coincidence that the APC’s political consultants are at Chicago-based AKPD Message and Media, whose founder, David Axelrod, is the

Democratic Party's top-ranking political adviser with close links to President Obama.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

However, the APC and its sponsors may not be as liberal as those in U.S. presume. The party would certainly be an unwelcome sign for Nigeria's Christians. One of northern Nigeria's prominent Salafist clerics, Sheikh Ahmed Gumi, says, for example, that the APC should only field Muslims on its presidential ticket, whether Buhari, Tinubu, Sanusi, or another Islamist.<sup>xxxv</sup> As a result, it is likely preferable for U.S. politicians to avoid creating the impression or taking active steps to support one party or another, especially if an APC ticket leads to a Muslim Brotherhood style government in Nigeria that upsets the secular and democratic pillars of the nation.

## **Conclusions & Recommendations**

- 1. The U.S. government should clarify why it refused to label Boko Haram as an FTO before November 2013 and outline the criteria and standards upon which it will be used in the future.**

There was overwhelming evidence that Boko Haram is al-Qaeda's representative in Nigeria: AFRICOM Commander General David M. Rodriguez said in February 2013 that Boko Haram is an al-Qaeda "affiliate"; and the intelligence community and U.S. Department of Justice considered Boko Haram to be a terrorist organization.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

- 2. Former Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton, and the U.S. Democratic Party, including its consultants, should establish and maintain a position of neutrality in advance of the Nigerian Presidential elections.**

It is essential the U.S. avoids negative repercussions that could arise if it were viewed to be siding with the APC, which many Christians consider to be Nigeria's version of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Unlike the attack in Benghazi that led to the death of Ambassador Stevens, we cannot look at the situation in Nigeria – from the plight

of the schoolgirls in Chibok to the fate of the country after the 2015 presidential elections – and say, “What difference does it make?”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

- 3. International support and cooperation with the Nigerian government should be enhanced. More support is needed to ensure early successes in the war on Boko Haram are taken advantage of, and any chance of the terror group re-taking strongholds in the country are avoided.**

Western governments should recognise that although there is a common perception that “Boko Haram is winning,” the Nigerian military under President Jonathan has disrupted Boko Haram networks and eliminated the Ansaru terrorist cells in the northwest of the country during the past few years. Boko Haram’s main area of operations is a sliver of territory along Nigeria’s border with Cameroon, which necessitates Cameroon’s full cooperation to eradicate this haven. Similarly, eliminating Boko Haram’s capacity to acquire the capacity and funding to carry out major bombing attacks in the Middle Belt and southern Nigeria as well to undermine the cross-border logistics and financial networks involved in the Chibok kidnappings require Nigeria and its international partners to

work together to investigate and undermine Boko Haram's regional and global network.

- 4. An international investigation under the auspices and coordination of the US, UK, France, Nigeria and other leading states must be called to examine Boko Haram and its relationships with in-country political figures, businesses in West Africa and abroad and international terrorist groups. The probe and its conclusions should be neutral and objective and delivered well before the presidential elections next year.**

It is in the interest of Western countries, Nigeria's neighbours and, above all, Nigeria that the Nigerian government wins the war against Boko Haram. Continued success against the terror group may, however, be endangered by a change in leadership in Nigeria if links are proven between opposition politicians and Boko Haram, however innocuous such connections may seem at first. Further research must be carried out on allegations of previous or current APC links to Boko Haram and the sources of Boko Haram's financing from within Nigeria and abroad. President Jonathan would be well-advised to enhance transparency in coming months to provide evidence of the

links that his administration alleges exists between opposition figures and Boko Haram as well as Boko Haram sympathizers within the government and then expose and put on trial Boko Haram sponsors. Similarly, President Jonathan must expose and expel any Boko Haram sympathisers and supporters who are alleged to exist within his own administration. Boko Haram sponsors must face a transparent judicial process in Nigeria.

Without a united and concerted Western diplomatic and material push to support democratic forces in Nigeria, then this country's future will remain insecure and unstable; the stakes for Nigeria and the African Continent could not be higher.

## **About the Author:**

### **Jacob Zenn, Analyst for Eurasian and African Affairs, The Jamestown Foundation**

#### **Biography:**



Jacob Zenn is the author of "Northern Nigeria's Boko Haram: The Prize in al-Qaeda's Africa Strategy," which was published by The Jamestown Foundation in 2012, and is a frequent contributor on Boko Haram for the West Point CTC Sentinel. In November 2013, Mr. Zenn provided testimony to U.S. Congress on "The Continuing Threat of Boko Haram and Ansaru" on the day both groups were designated foreign terrorist organizations, and in February 2013 he testified before U.S. Congress on "Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia."

Mr. Zenn consults on countering violent extremism in Nigeria and Central Asia and on the international law and best practices related to freedom of association and provides expert testimony on Nigeria in terrorism-related court trials. Mr. Zenn received a J.D. from Georgetown Law, with the commendation of a Global Law Scholar, and earned a graduate certificate in international relations from Johns Hopkins SAIS campus in Nanjing, China. Mr. Zenn speaks Arabic, Chinese, Indonesian, French, Spanish, and Russian.

Jacob is based in the US and can be contacted via the below means:

E: [jacobzenn@gmail.com](mailto:jacobzenn@gmail.com)

M: +996556565222

T: (202) 483-8888 (direct)

T: (215) 901-7810 (US)

Skype: Jacobzenn22

---

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/05/bringbackourgirls-well-sell-chibok-girls-slavery-boko-haram/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.hudson.org/events/1046-witness-of-boko-haram-s-religious-cleansing-in-northern-nigeria-an-inside-look-at-the-world-s-deadliest-place-for-christians-112013>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/160135-boko-haram-wants-war-between-christians-muslims-in-nigeria-jonathan.html>

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/leadership-analysis-of-boko-haram-and-ansaru-in-nigeria>

<sup>v</sup> <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2011/09/un-house-bombing-the-hunt-for-mamman-nur/>

<sup>vi</sup> <http://www.tribune.com.ng/news/top-stories/item/7403-female-suicide-bomber-soldier-die-as-bomb-explodes-at-gombe-army-barracks>; <http://allafrica.com/stories/201406050432.html>

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/18/nigeria-suicide-bomber-world-cup-screening>

<sup>viii</sup> <http://news.yahoo.com/lagos-fuel-depot-blast-no-accident-experts-witnesses-032353233.html>

<sup>ix</sup> <http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/82344/1/boko-haram-threatens-to-assassinate-terence-mccull.html>

---

x <http://saharareporters.com/news-page/another-islamist-sect-surfaces-kano-threatens-bomb-radio-station?page=2>

xi <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22320077>

xii <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/World/2014/Jul-16/264088-gunmen-kidnap-german-national-in-northeast-nigeria-police.ashx>

xiii <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/05/11/boko-haram-s-bin-laden-connection.html>

xiv <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/2014/05/08/unsecured-libyan-weapons-went-to-boko-haram/>; <http://www.brianhaw.tv/index.php/index/2456-british-saudi-govts-fund-boko-haram-through-al-muntada-trust-10-05-2014>

xv <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/may/15/chibok-nigeria-200-kidnapped-schoolgirls-boko-haram>

xvi <http://www.informationng.com/2014/05/doyin-okupe-blasts-hilary-clinton-over-her-comments-on-the-abducted-chibok-girls.html>

xvii <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/obama-touts-al-qaeda-s-demise-32-times-benghazi-attack-0>

xviii <http://www.tpnn.com/2014/05/23/new-emails-reveal-obama-white-house-worked-on-concocting-benghazi-lie-during-the-attacks/>

xix [http://ihuanedo.ning.com/group/betterlivingofedolitesandnigerians/forum/topics/list-of-richest-and-poorest-states-in-nigeria-by-gdp?xg\\_source=activity](http://ihuanedo.ning.com/group/betterlivingofedolitesandnigerians/forum/topics/list-of-richest-and-poorest-states-in-nigeria-by-gdp?xg_source=activity)

xx <http://www.voanews.com/content/us-congressional-panel-examines-boko-haram-violence-in-nigeria/1382336.html>

xxi <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/boko-haram-and-the-kidnapping-of-the-chibok-schoolgirls>

xxii [http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/08/nigerian-hostage-killings-boko-haram/](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/mar/08/nigerian-hostage-killings-boko-haram;); “Algerian Journalist on ‘Real’ Identity of AQLIM Leader, AQLIM Future in Nigeria,” Agence France-Presse, October 27, 2010.

xxiii [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/02/al\\_qaeda\\_in\\_mali\\_sou.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/02/al_qaeda_in_mali_sou.php)

xxiv <http://www.punchng.com/news/govt-blasts-buhari-for-comment-on-insecurity/>

xxv <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/110878-senator-ndume-contacted-boko-haram-leader-73-times-in-one-month-sss.html>

xxvi <http://www.omg.com.ng/2014/05/could-bola-tinubu-be-the-man-behind-boko-haram/>; <http://www.thenigerianvoice.com/news/148987/1/how-tinubu-saraki-made-kwankwaso-appoint-sanusi-em.html>

xxvii <http://saharareporters.com/article/boko-haram-sponsor-discovered-presidency-kikiowo-ileowo-0>

xxviii <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/24/world/africa/in-nigeria-ansaru-militant-group-poses-new-threat.html>

xxix <http://newafricanpress.com/2014/06/02/its-official-femi-fani-kayode-dumps-apc-says-party-members-are-boko-haram-sympathizers/>

xxx Ibid.

xxxi <http://www.tribune.com.ng/news/top-stories/item/4922-hillary-clinton-carpets-jonathan/4922-hillary-clinton-carpets-jonathan>

xxxii <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/07/opinion/nigerias-stolen-girls.html>

xxxiii <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/libya/us-document-reveals-cooperation-between-washington-and-brotherhood-1.1349207>

xxxiv <http://www.africareporters.com/index.php/component/k2/item/587-nigeria-s-apc-hires-akpd-for-2015-polls>

xxxv <http://saharareporters.com/news-page/why-northern-christian-candidate-president-won%E2%80%99t-work-sheik-ahmad-gumi>

xxxvi <http://www.cananusa.org/index.php/campaigns/news/275-us-gets-tough-military-drones-base-in-niger-may-target-boko-haram.html>

xxxvii <http://www.thisdaylive.com/articles/apc-equivalent-to-egypts-muslim-brotherhood/168209/>

xxxviii <http://www.nationalreview.com/corner/379658/harry-reid-echoes-hillary-what-difference-does-it-make-andrew-johnson>