

**RELEASE IN PART
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**2015-2016 Bureau of Counterterrorism “Partnership Concept”:
Sahel Region of Africa**

Summary:

Terrorist groups continue to exploit porous borders, weak governance, and conflicts to operate in the Sahel region of Africa¹ and West Africa more broadly. The Nigerian Army and regional military forces have made significant military gains to reduce Boko Haram’s territorial control, but the group still poses a potent and deadly threat to the people of the Lake Chad Basin region. In response to military pressure, Boko Haram is increasingly employing asymmetric attacks in Nigeria and the neighboring countries, including heretofore unprecedented suicide bombings in N’Djamena, Chad, during 2015. Boko Haram has also publicly affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Meanwhile, al-Qa’ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and other extremist groups remain active in northern Mali and Niger, exploiting instability in Libya. Lebanese Hizballah (LH) also has extensive financing networks across West Africa.

Governments in the region are committed to countering terrorism but have critical gaps in their abilities to monitor and manage their borders and engage border communities, to respond to terrorist attacks, to counter violent extremism, and to conduct terrorism-related investigations and prosecutions. In conjunction with the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) and working closely with other U.S. government partners and key international allies, the Bureau of Counterterrorism (CT) will pursue diplomatic engagements, capacity-building assistance, and other activities to advance the following strategic goals (in no particular order):

1. Impede terrorist transit by increasing the capacity of law enforcement border units in the Sahel to partner with regional counterparts, military forces, and border communities to conduct patrols, share information, and secure major border crossing points.
2. Counter community-level support for Boko Haram, AQIM, ISIL, and violent extremist ideology in the Sahel by promoting increased partnerships, community engagement, and media initiatives by national government entities, law enforcement agencies, and civil society leaders.
3. Mitigate Boko Haram attacks by strengthening the capacity of law enforcement units and other first responders in Boko Haram-affected countries to conduct coordinated crisis response and protect communities in a manner that respects human rights.
4. Strengthen investigations, prosecutions, and incarceration of active and former Boko Haram members in a rule-of-law framework by enhancing and enabling the capacity of the justice sector in Boko Haram-affected countries.
5. Reduce the threat posed by former Boko Haram combatants by assisting governments and communities to establish effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs, including in prisons.

¹ For purposes of this paper, the term “Sahel” refers to the countries of Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

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6. Disrupt LH fundraising networks and other sources of terrorist financing by expanding awareness, capabilities, and information-sharing among law enforcement, judicial, and financial actors in West Africa.

Strategic Context and Gaps:

With U.S. and international support, regional military forces and the Nigerian military have reduced Boko Haram's territorial control in northeastern Nigeria over the past year; however, the group has responded by increasing its asymmetric attacks in Nigeria and neighboring countries. Boko Haram benefits from weak governance, lack of economic opportunity, and limited security sector capacity in the Lake Chad Basin region, including limited law enforcement presence. Boko Haram has carried out increasingly significant attacks in Niger and Chad, including heretofore unprecedented suicide bombings in N'Djamena, Chad, in 2015. Boko Haram has also publicly affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), possibly to align goals and mobilize new support networks.

Boko Haram or another terrorist organization could resurge and regain territory in northeastern Nigeria if progress is not made to stabilize and strengthen rule of law in liberated areas, improve government service delivery, and counter violent extremism (CVE). One recent research study commissioned by USAID found the primary push factor of violent extremist recruitment in northern Nigeria to be local frustration with state and local governments that fail to meet and respond to citizen expectations. A related factor was the sense of relative deprivation in the northeast as compared to the rest of the country; a similar sense reportedly prevails in much of northern Cameroon. Boko Haram has also reportedly provided money to encourage young men to join its ranks, while at the same time killing or threatening moderate leaders and educators. All of the affected countries have limited criminal justice sector capacity to prosecute terrorism cases and handle Boko Haram detainees in a rule of law framework.

If Boko Haram is given the opportunity to regroup and regain territory in northern Nigeria, this could undermine the larger reform goals of the Buhari administration and exacerbate larger tensions in Nigeria, Africa's most populous and diverse country. [REDACTED]

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AQIM remains active in northern Mali and along the border corridor between Mali, Niger, and Libya. Over recent years, France and select regional partners have degraded efforts by AQIM, al-Murabitun, and associated violent extremist groups to maintain a safe haven in northern Mali. However, the security situation in northern Mali remains tenuous and AQIM and associated violent extremist groups continue to exploit porous borders, ungoverned territory, and political conflicts across the Sahel region, as well as ongoing instability and violence in Libya. Governments in the Sahel face significant gaps in managing their borders and providing services to border and rural communities. The governments and people of the Sahel region are among the

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poorest in the world and remain extremely vulnerable to security, environmental, economic and political upheaval.

Through TSCTP and related efforts, the United States has undertaken programs to build the capacity and cooperation of military, law enforcement, development, and civil society actors across the region to prevent terrorists from gaining new footholds. However, despite efforts to achieve a balanced civil-military approach, U.S. assistance in the region has been and is increasingly imbalanced toward military training and equipping. More support is needed to build the capacity of law enforcement and judicial institutions to handle terrorism challenges, as well as to address weak governance and the lack of broad-based economic growth. Given the scale of the development and security challenges and limited U.S. resources, the United States must also continue to work closely with and through regional and European partners to maximize the impact of U.S. assistance.

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B7(F)**CT Strategic Goals:**

In accordance with the TSCTP strategic priorities approved by the DAS Sahel-Maghreb Oversight Committee and the interagency U.S. Strategy for Countering Boko Haram, CT will develop and pursue diplomatic engagements, capacity-building assistance, and other activities that advance the following strategic goals.

1. **Impede terrorist transit by increasing the capacity of law enforcement border units in the Sahel to partner with regional counterparts, military forces, and border communities to conduct patrols, share information, and secure major land border crossing points.** Violent extremist actors continue to exploit the region's porous borders and weak governance in border areas to move individuals and goods, especially along the

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Through training courses, mentoring, and practical, skills-based exercises/simulations, CT seeks to increase the capacity and cooperation of designated law enforcement border units across the Sahel to patrol their borders, manage significant checkpoints and crossing points, conduct traveler screening, share information, respond to critical incidents and information, and detain, promptly investigate, and, if necessary, arrest suspicious individuals and facilitate forfeiture of their assets. CT seeks to provide select countries with Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation Systems (PISCES) and to promote greater information-sharing to enable effective traveler screening. To promote regional training and better military-law enforcement coordination, CT is working with

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CT is also seeking to promote efforts and approaches that strengthen partnerships between law enforcement border units and border communities.

2. **Counter community-level support for Boko Haram, AQIM, ISIL, and violent extremist ideology in the Sahel by promoting increased partnerships, community engagement, and media initiatives by national government entities, law enforcement agencies, and civil society leaders.** While the people of the Sahel generally do not support or sympathize with violent extremism, there are local and external actors who promote violent extremist ideology in the region. Local officials in certain parts of the region are concerned about increased messaging and narratives featuring violent extremist ideology. AQIM, Boko Haram, and other violent extremist groups also continue to try to exploit unresolved grievances and divisions in northern Mali, northern Nigeria, and elsewhere. Consistent with the White House CVE Summit action agenda, CT seeks to build the capacity of government and law enforcement actors in the region to

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develop and implement CVE initiatives, including with regard to countering violent extremist messaging and countering radicalization in prisons; there is a particular need to continue to expand the circle of government stakeholders active in CVE beyond security ministries/agencies. CT promotes the participation of Sahelian countries in multilateral workshops organized by Hedayah, the CVE center of excellence in Abu Dhabi, on developing guidelines for counter-messaging and radicalization. CT also seeks to strengthen civil society's role in countering violent extremism, and to support partnerships and collaborative initiatives between the law enforcement actors and communities susceptible to violent extremism.

3. **Mitigate Boko Haram attacks by strengthening the capacity of law enforcement units and other first responders in Boko Haram-affected countries to conduct coordinated crisis response and protect communities in a manner that respects human rights.**

[REDACTED] Law enforcement actors also have limited presence and capacity to protect communities in Boko Haram-affected areas, especially in northeastern Nigeria. Through training courses and mentoring, CT seeks to build the capacity of designated crisis response units to share information across agencies, detect and counter IEDs, respond to and manage critical incidents, and perform well-coordinated casualty care and evacuation. CT also seeks to support expanded efforts by law enforcement to secure areas that have been liberated from Boko Haram through military action.

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4. **Strengthen investigations, prosecutions, and incarceration of active and former Boko Haram members in a rule-of-law framework by enhancing and enabling the capacity of the justice sector in Boko Haram-affected countries.**

[REDACTED] CT seeks to build the capacity of investigators, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, prison officials, and other criminal justice actors in these cases to handle terrorism-related cases, arrests, prosecutions, and incarcerations. In particular, CT seeks to help these countries use intelligence in evidence-based investigations and prosecutions. CT is funding a Department of Justice Resident Legal Advisor (RLA) [REDACTED] and will soon fund a second RLA [REDACTED]

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5. **Reduce the threat posed by former Boko Haram combatants by assisting governments and communities to establish effective rehabilitation and reintegration programs, including in prisons.** CT is expanding efforts to assist the Lake Chad Basin countries on handling terrorist inmates and countering radicalization in prison settings. In partnership with [REDACTED], CT will also seek to provide technical support to help countries develop frameworks for rehabilitating and reintegrating low-risk, disengaged Boko Haram combatants. This includes strengthening the capacity and networks of civil society organizations in areas that involve significant numbers of former Boko Haram combatants. Effective policy frameworks and programs

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for rehabilitation and reintegration can also strengthen ongoing efforts to promote defections from Boko Haram's ranks and weaken the group's organizational cohesion.

6. **Disrupt LH fundraising networks and other sources of terrorist financing by expanding awareness, capabilities, and information-sharing among law enforcement, judicial, and financial actors in West Africa.** LH continues to maintain a significant network in West Africa – including Benin, Cote D'Ivoire, the Gambia, Nigeria, and Senegal – to conduct fundraising and financing activities. Other terrorist groups, including AQIM and Boko Haram, continue to raise funds through kidnappings for ransom (KFRs), extortion, and bulk cash smuggling. In coordination with the International Law Enforcement Taskforce on Hizballah, CT seeks to build awareness and capacity among law enforcement, judicial, and financial actors in West Africa to detect and counter LH's networks. CT also seeks to build broader capacity and adequate legal frameworks across the region to counter terrorist financing and money laundering, including through strengthening border controls to prevent bulk cash smuggling and strengthening financial intelligence units (FIUs). CT continues to fund an RLA in Senegal focused on these issues.

Under the auspices of GCTF, CT also seeks to convene regional actors to discuss how to better tackle the KFR challenge, including denying and reducing ransom payments and countering transnational bulk cash smuggling. KFRs remain the primary source of revenue for terrorists in the Sahel, including AQIM and associated violent extremists. CT will also continue to support governments in the region to fully implement UN terrorism sanctions, and have legally-sound, evidence-based, domestic designations authorities in which to designate additional terrorist organizations and individuals.

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Annex: Recent and Ongoing CT and Related State/USAID Programs**Current CT Bureau Programs:**

Over recent years, CT has funded major programs in the following areas:

- **Border Security:** Through the Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) program and the Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF), CT is overseeing rural border patrol operations training courses for law enforcement officers across the region. Through GSCF, CT is also overseeing efforts by Department of Justice- International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) to provide information-led and community-oriented policing training to [REDACTED]. Under the auspices of the GCTF, CT funded workshops in 2014 (one in Senegal, and one in Niger) to develop procedures and best practices on the "hot pursuit" of terrorist suspects across borders. Regional ATA trainings on border control management processes have also addressed the issue of border control cooperation practices in cases of terrorist transit. CT also provides select partners in the region with the capability to secure their ports of entry against known or suspected terrorists attempting to enter or exit the country through [REDACTED].

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- **Preventing and Responding to KFRs:** Under the auspices of the GCTF, CT has funded regional conferences and workshops on countering hostage-taking and kidnapping by terrorists. CT is providing funding to [REDACTED] to conduct a series of training workshops for Sahel and Maghreb countries on implementing the GCTF *Algiers Memorandum on Good Practices for Preventing and Denying the Benefits of Kidnapping for Ransom by Terrorists (Algiers Memorandum.)*

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- **CVE Messaging:** CT funded the establishment of [REDACTED] TV station that counters narratives promoted by violent extremists and their allies. CT also funds a project to build the capacity of women in civil society [REDACTED] to counter violent extremism, with a focus on fostering trust between participants and law enforcement. CT is also funding CVE training for civil society from the Maghreb and Sahel regions.

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- **Strengthening Rule-of-Law CT Frameworks and Capacity:** CT is funding DOJ Resident Legal Advisors [REDACTED]. In previous fiscal years, CT has also supported the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Department of Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) to conduct ad-hoc trainings in [REDACTED] about interdicting cash couriers, strengthening their FIUs, and preventing terrorist financiers from abusing non-profits. Under the auspices of the GCTF, CT has provided funding to DOJ to organize a series of regional workshops in [REDACTED] to raise the awareness and advance the implementation of the *Rabat Memorandum on Good Practices for Effective Counterterrorism Practice in the Criminal Justice Sector* (The Rabat Memorandum) and the *Rome Memorandum on Good Practices for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Violent Extremist Offenders* (Rome Memorandum). CT is currently providing funding to DOJ to conduct a series of regional

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workshops in coordination with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to advance the implementation of the *Rabat Memorandum*.

Related Department of State and USAID Programs:

- AF: Under the auspices of TSCTP, AF manages and oversees military and criminal justice sector capacity-building and CVE programming in the Sahel region. For example, AF has funded a range of CVE projects promoting peace/reconciliation, youth leadership, media capacity-building, civic engagement, and vocational skills. [REDACTED]

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- CTPF: As a pilot for the Counterterrorism Partnership Fund (CTPF), a State and USAID working group (led by CT and J) is developing an integrated plan with FY 2015 assistance to bolster ongoing civilian and community-oriented efforts to counter Boko Haram's influence, recruitment, and activity in the Lake Chad Basin.

- DOD: DOD is providing significant training and equipment to [REDACTED]

- INL: Under the auspices of TSCTP, INL is managing bilateral projects to promote prison reform in [REDACTED] and broader security sector reform in [REDACTED] including law enforcement institutional reform and justice reform through a resident legal advisor and access to justice programs. INL is supporting a six-country [REDACTED] community-police dialogue program to improve trust and collaboration between citizens and police. INL is also seeking to promote Maghreb and Sahel regional engagement on policing best practices through a series of workshops.

- USAID: Under the auspices of TSCTP, USAID is funding development activities across [REDACTED] to promote community resilience and vocational opportunities for youth.

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