

Proposal: **GREATER SAHEL FORENSIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Proposal #: **RSI-1616**

Funding Requested: **\$500,000.00**

Status: **Regional Review Pending**

RELEASE IN PART B7(F),B6

Age: **0 day(s)**

Submit Date: **24 Apr 2015**

Project Owner(s):

	Name	Email	Phone
1.			

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Project Purpose:

To assist law enforcement agencies in the greater Sahel utilize forensics in investigations related to violent extremists. Forensic evidence has potential in the investigation of bombings, kidnappings, fraudulent travel documents, and any other terrorism-related crimes. Critical to these investigations is the full exploitation of evidence through coordination across multiple disciplines such as fingerprints, DNA, chemistry, ballistics, questioned documents and digital evidence. Equally as important, results must be presented in court and found credible for maximum effectiveness. With the developing nature of forensics in the region, assisting our partners produce reliable forensic evidence will be critical in prosecuting terrorism cases. Given the transnational nature of the crimes and the possibility of evidence being utilized across jurisdictions, the ability to demonstrate the reliability of evidence through the use of international best practices is even more important.

Description of Program Proposed:

Unlike the United States, the forensic capacity of the countries in the region is still developing and little international assistance is being provided to many of the forensic laboratories. Countries in the region have begun to demonstrate interest in forensics and plan for the creation of national forensic databases. This one year project will serve as a pilot project for the region and focus initially on developing capacity in Mali while also promoting regional cooperation. The Mali National Police recently created a new section called the Scientific Police with the hopes of creating a working forensic laboratory. A main motivation in particular is the creation of a national fingerprint database. The section has lofty aspirations concerning organization, but initially needs formally trained staff and basic laboratory equipment to start. The project will have the following objectives: 1) improve the ability of Malian forensic laboratories to produce reliable forensic evidence in terrorism-related investigations, and 2) increase cooperation between regional forensic professionals. To achieve the first objective, ICITAP will deploy an intermittent senior forensic advisor (SFA) to work with the Malian forensic laboratories conducting terrorism related investigations. The SFA will assist the Malian laboratories adopt international standards and best practices relating to the analysis of physical evidence. Additional TDY subject matter experts (SMEs) in specific forensic disciplines such as latent prints, biology, and explosive analysis will supplement the SFA in providing training. ICITAP will utilize U.S. Government (USG) forensic experts whenever possible for TDY training assignments to build law enforcement to law enforcement relationships and trust. The training will be a combination

of classroom and practical exercises in the laboratory. Specific examples will be cited demonstrating how forensic techniques may be applied to evidence in terrorism-related investigations. As needed, ICITAP may provide limited supplies and equipment when necessary to support the training objectives. This may include excess USG forensic equipment. The SFA may also provide training for prosecutors to ensure the end users of the laboratory results have a thorough understanding of forensic evidence. The second objective will be to improve the cooperation between forensic professionals across the region. It will be important to create open lines of communications between forensic laboratories in the region and their staff, especially for evidence related to transnational criminal investigations such as terrorism cases. ICITAP will initially achieve this objective by providing opportunities for Malian forensic scientists to visit more advanced laboratories in the region and potentially participate in joint training. ICITAP will also reinforce the need to conform to international standards by funding participation of select scientists at an appropriate international conference. As part of the pilot project ICITAP will evaluate the capacity of the forensic laboratories in greater Sahel to further define the common training needs in the region. Ultimately, a regional approach will increase sustainability by increasing the communication between the more established forensic labs and those less advanced. Over time, the professional networks created will allow technical leaders in the region to emerge and support others in the region thus increasing the sustainability.

Specify explicitly how this proposal advances US national security and foreign policy interests:

The project objectives advance security and stability in the greater Sahel region through promoting evidence-based convictions of violent extremists within a rule of law framework. The project will facilitate the adoption and implementation of international standards and best practices on the collection, documentation, preservation, and analysis of physical evidence related to terrorism cases. The assistance will help ensure that evidence developed in these cases is handled and tested in a manner that will allow the results to withstand the scrutiny of the courts. Furthermore, developing forensic capacity directly aids human rights investigations and provides investigators with reasonable alternatives to utilizing coerced confessions to solve crimes. A more professional approach to criminal investigations will promote the legitimacy of the governments and mitigate the failures of the criminal justice systems that extremists exploit in their messaging campaigns.

Specify explicitly how this activity supports law enforcement's ability to counter terrorism:

This project is consistent with the Global Counterterrorism Forum's Rabat Memorandum on Good Practices for Effective Counterterrorism Practice in the Criminal Justice Sector which recommends using forensic evidence to determine the identity of those involved in terrorist acts. The project will improve ability to process challenging pieces of evidence found in terrorism related cases such as post-blast evidence. It will also provide guidance on developing the proper documentation necessary to defend results in a court of law. Technical assistance on quality assurance will help ensure the integrity of the data populating the biometric databases which may be used to link multiple cases together. When possible, ICITAP will use forensic experts from the various U.S. government law enforcement agencies to deliver training and technical assistance. In doing so, the project will not only strengthen relationships regionally, but with U.S. government law enforcement agencies as well.

What have the sponsors of the project done to coordinate this program with this interagency or multilateral partners? (What offices/agencies have been consulted. How did you ensure this is not duplicative?)

Traditionally, foreign assistance in forensics has focused on crime scene investigators rather than the scientists conducting analysis in the crime laboratories. Despite the acute need, as far as ICITAP is aware, there are only limited international donor efforts focusing on developing the capacity of the national forensic laboratories in the targeted countries. ICITAP has a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor in Mali that is familiar with current international donor efforts. The European Union has discussed providing a fingerprint database, but at this time has not been unable to identify the necessary funding. The French intend to continue basic crime scene training in Mali. The Department of State's Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA) Program has provided assistance in the region. However, ATA assistance in the area is primarily in specialized crime scene processing and electronic evidence. The UNODC has had a regional program in the West Africa since 2010; however, these efforts are focused on drug analysis. The French have helped fund a regional crime scene investigation school in Benin. However, the French are ending this assistance and the assistance provided did not address the laboratory analysis of forensic evidence.

Project Monitoring:

Federal forensic experts at ICITAP headquarters in Washington, DC will oversee the technical direction of the program and conduct periodic reviews. ICITAP has a Senior Law Enforcement Advisor in Mali to assist with project coordination. The SFA will relay successes or concerns to our Embassies and ICITAP forensic experts in Washington. For project evaluation, ICITAP will create a minimum capability check-list for the Malian forensic laboratories handling terrorism related evidence. The checklist will be based on the mandate of the laboratory, recognized best practices, and budget realities. This checklist will drive the training efforts as well as procurement of required supplies or equipment. For the training, ICITAP will conduct pre- and post-training surveys to ensure the training deliveries are effective. When possible, ICITAP will also track new analytical techniques implemented in the laboratories as a result of training delivered. This project will utilize ICITAP's experience in developing quality management systems necessary to eventually achieve international accreditation. With time and funding, ICITAP has successfully mentored other countries through this process leading to accreditation by independent accrediting bodies. Full accreditation is a lengthy process and will not be realistic under this pilot project request. However, while the process to achieve accreditation is a multi-year endeavor for established laboratories, ICITAP will help the forensic laboratories in Mali put in place the basic framework of a quality management system that will help improve the reliability of results and improve acceptance of forensic evidence in courts. For those less advanced laboratories like Mali, ICITAP will track the number of policies or standard operating procedures (SOPs) created or updated which improve the reliability of results or broadly support the laboratory's quality management system. Tracking the generation of new or improved policies and SOPs will provide a reasonable metric on the implementation of improved techniques. If any laboratories in the region are found to be reasonably prepared to set international accreditation as a goal, ICITAP can conduct a gap analysis against the applicable international standards for forensic laboratories as a baseline to monitor progress for future programming. The applicable standards are issued by the International Organization for

Standardization (ISO), specifically ISO 17025:2005 General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories. For established laboratories, a gap analysis against these standards is the ideal method to evaluate project impact. It also is a key to sustainability because once accredited, agencies and senior leaders are reluctant to lose accreditation. ICITAP will use a combination of federal SMEs and contract advisors to create the minimum requirement checklist, monitor implementation of new procedures, conduct a gap analysis, and periodically evaluate progress.

Time Frame for Implementation:

From: 10/01/2015 **To:** 09/30/2016

Place of Implementation:

- Burkina Faso
- Cameroon
- Chad
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Niger
- Nigeria
- Senegal

Implementer Information:

Implementer	Partner	POC Name	POC Email	POC Phone
1	n/a			

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Program Audience:

Primary: Partner nation forensic scientists, **Secondary:** Partner nation investigators and prosecutors

Funding Breakdown:

Country	Budget Item	Amount
Mali	Forensic Assistance	\$500,000.00

Funding/Implementation Mechanism Type:

- MOU/IAA

Objectives & Indicators:

Objective	Indicator

Funding Sources:

- **None**

Fiscal Year:

2015

Comments: