

UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT IN AFRICA

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH,
AND GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

AND

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA,
AND GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

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UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT IN AFRICA
Tuesday, September 28, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, AND
GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS,
JOINT WITH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND
GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittees met, pursuant to notice, at 2:04 p.m., via Webex, Hon. Karen Bass (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding. Ms. BASS. The Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights will come to order.

Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess of the subcommittee at any point, and all members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions for the record subject to the length limitation to the rules. To insert something into the record, please have your staff email the previously mentioned address or contact full committee staff.

As a reminder to members, please keep your camera—your video function on at all times even when you are not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves, and please remember to mute yourself after you finish speaking. Consistent with H. Res. 965 and the accompanying regulations, staff will only mute members and witnesses as appropriate when they are not under recognition to eliminate background noise.

I see that we have a quorum, and I will now recognize myself for opening remarks. Pursuant to notice, we are holding a hearing on understanding conflict in Africa. Today's joint hearing entitled "Understanding Conflict in Africa" is held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights along with the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism, chaired by my colleague and friend, Representative Ted Deutch. Representative Deutch, I believe, will be on the floor and will be joining us a little later.

I thank our witnesses for being here today, Deputy Assistant Secretary Gonzales from the State Department and the assistant to the administrator Robert Jenkins of the USAID. I look forward to hearing our experts describe the various types of conflict in Africa, the effectiveness of the U.S. Government's mitigated responses to the conflicts, and what we are doing to prevent future ones.

Ranging from violent extremism, armed conflict, and more traditional warfare, these conflicts, though varied, consistently require lawmakers to understand the drivers, whether ideological, socio-economic, or others; devise policy to address underlying cause; and

develop a framework to strengthen African governments and bilateral and multilateral responses.

As our witnesses highlight solutions to conflicts in Africa, I hope they will also list measures Congress can take to strengthen current and future responses. My colleagues, and I would like to know, what more the U.S. can do to assist conflicts that are happening, for example, the conflict in Ethiopia. Your answers will help inform legislation in the future.

Again, violent extremism spurred on by local and transnational actors for a variety of reasons include weak governance and perceived injustice across government and society, which has been on the rise since the 1990's. Extremist activities in places such as North Africa, the Sahel, Nigeria, Mozambique, and Somalia continue to make headlines, and my colleagues and I would like to hear your thoughts as to why.

Although the origins and types of conflicts across Africa vary, unfortunately they have similar results, civilian deaths, longstanding humanitarian crises, population displacement, unnecessary suffering, and regional instability. These outcomes are often made more complex by other factors, such as severe weather conditions and waning international support over time.

I am aware that the State Department, USAID, and DOD, have longstanding programming in conflict response and stabilization and mitigation and prevention, and would like the panel to describe existing programs and activities to address the drivers of violent extremism in Africa. I would also like to hear how the U.S. Government can better cooperate with the African Union and other multilateral organizations to assist in peace and security efforts on the continent.

As the Biden Administration positions itself to engage differently with Africa, I would like our witnesses to address what the U.S. Government can do differently in our approach to conflict on the continent, particularly in light of the major global challenges caused by COVID-19, and now the situation in Afghanistan. How will the U.S. change the narrative of its engagement with Africa to one of mutual prosperity given these complex security challenges?

My colleague, Mr. Deutch, will go into more detail on this, but the situation in Afghanistan does have an effect on the continent of Africa, particularly regarding conflict and stabilization. The current takeover by the Taliban has lessons for the continent, and I hope we can learn from these developments and are able to apply them to the hot spots where insecurity undermines longstanding partnership and investment.

I now recognize the chair of the subcommittee on the Middle East—oh—North Africa—actually, I do not believe he is still here. I think he is on the floor, so let me recognize Chris Smith, the ranking member of the Subcommittee on Africa.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Chairwoman Karen Bass. Thank you for your leadership on this.

You know, as Deputy Assistant Secretary Gonzales notes, almost half of the world's armed conflicts in 2020 were in Africa, 15 at current count he will testify. So I want to thank you, Chairwoman Bass, for convening this very timely hearing on a very important

topic, understanding the ongoing conflicts that continue to plague Africa.

Among the conflicts, I think the two most pressing in Sub-Saharan Africa at present are in Nigeria and in Ethiopia, in part because of the outsize importance these two countries play in the continent. This is not to minimize other areas of conflict, such as the Islamist insurgency in Cabo Delgado, the region of Mozambique, or the ongoing conflict in the Central African Republic, or the ever-lurking potential for civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Moreover, while focusing on Nigeria and Ethiopia, we need to, nonetheless, be aware of how cross border and interrelated many of these conflicts are. Indeed, it may make more sense to speak of regions, such as the Sahel or the Horn, rather than confining ourselves to colonial Euro lines on the map. And insofar as political leadership operates within dotted-line jurisdictions, these two countries, nonetheless, stand out and their potential disintegration could have an outsize impact on the entire region.

Nigeria today, I believe, is on the verge of disintegration, and I am concerned, deeply concerned that the State Department may not fully understand the reasons why, and is unprepared for what is unfolding. The State Department repeatedly explains the conflict in Nigeria by referencing a narrative of farmer-herder clashes exacerbated by climate change. That narrative, while containing some elements of truth, is nonetheless incomplete.

Prime responsibility for pushing Nigeria to the brink of disintegration lies, in my opinion, with President Buhari. He has failed to see himself as having a responsibility to protect all Nigerians regardless of ethnic group or religious background.

While parts of the conflict is attributable to the Salafist armed groups, Boko Haram, Islamic State West Africa, and Ansaru, the main driver today of conflict comes from Fulani, ethno-religious extremists who target non-Fulani. These could be predominantly Christian farmers in the Middle Belt, Muslim or Christian Yoruba in southwest, Christian Igbos in the southeast, and Shia Muslims in Kaduna State.

It is the failure of President Buhari to curb members of his Fulani ethnic group and organizations, such as Miyetti Allah, which translated as the cattlemen's association, which is pushing Nigeria to the brink.

He has also failed to stop the incursions of well-armed Fulani from Niger and the Sahel, and, indeed, has seemed to implicitly encourage it. Indeed, he has failed to stop the flow of weapons to extremists, which comes not only from the Gulf States, but also from Turkey.

He has also inserted Fulani into all key positions in Nigerian institutions, especially the military and security positions, such as the National Security Advisor, the Inspector General of the Police, the head of the Drug Enforcement Agency, and the Minister of Police Affairs, and the Chief of the Army Staff.

This extends to other institutions as well, such as Buhari's sacking of chief justice of the Nigerian Supreme Court, Onnoghen, and his replacement by Ibrahim Tanko Muhammad. In so doing, Buhari has marginalized other ethnic groups and frayed the fabric

of Nigeria's multiethnic society. He is pushing the country toward civil war, and as Nigeria goes, so goes West Africa.

Yet our State Department appears wedded to the incomplete narratives. I understand the Department of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, in the last Administration, was set to do an in-depth dive study of who was committing the killings in the Middle Belt in Nigeria, yet this project was scuttled this past January. Why was that? I hope they will take that up and begin that probe.

Regarding Ethiopia, I think there has been a failure by the State Department to call out the atrocities, regardless of who commits them. Like Nigeria, Ethiopia is a multiethnic and religiously diverse nation. Each major group sadly, both victims and victimizers of the State Department, however, has, for the most part, called out the atrocities by the Ethiopian Government and Amhara Regional Forces while neglecting equally reprehensible atrocities committed by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front which precipitated the immediate conflict last November.

By doing so, by painting the Amhara solely as the victimizers while neglecting to mention the atrocities committed in Tigray against ethnic Amhara, such as happened in the Mai Kadra last November, the question arises, has the State Department, perhaps unwittingly, abetted a scapegoating narrative which singles out one ethnic group as perpetrators of violence and implicitly absolves other ethnic groups of the same atrocities, thereby fueling additional tension and conflict? What States should do is recognize who is committing the atrocities, who is the victim, regardless of who that implicates.

In contrast, Administrator Samantha Power at USAID has been far more evenhanded in her approach, in my opinion, calling for accountability for all those who commit atrocities and recognizing victims regardless of their ethnic affiliation. This, I think, is the correct way to address the conflict.

Finally, I want to recognize that amid the forces creating division and discord in the Horn, in Ethiopia, and Somalia and Eritrea, such as under Isaias Afwerki regime, is responsible for so much suffering in both Eritrea as well as in Tigray.

There is one oasis of stability, and that is Somaliland, which is a de facto independent area from Somalia. I would like to hear comments from both State and USAID as to how to better recognize Somaliland in the global community with an eye toward building sustainable peace.

Again, I thank you for this hearing, and yield back to my good friend the balance of my time.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Smith.

I now see that the chair of the Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism, Representative Deutch, is with us. I know that they have called votes, but I think we have a few minutes and maybe we can get the chair and ranking member.

Mr. DEUTCH. Great. Thank you very much, Chair Bass. Thanks for holding today's joint hearing, and thanks to your ongoing commitment to highlighting these issues and all the issues facing Africa.

To our witnesses, thanks for being here.

We will examine today the conflict across the African continent where terror groups and non-State actors have wreaked havoc. Violent extremist groups, like Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and others have been inspired, and, in many cases, actively recruited and funded, by al-Qaeda and ISIS.

In the 20 years since 9/11, terror threats have morphed and metastasized. Africa became fertile ground for training and recruiting. Horrific human rights abuses have taken place at the hands of these groups, and dire humanitarian crises have arisen in the wake of their terror.

As the U.S. has funded humanitarian and development programs across Africa, over the last 20 years, the majority of our military footprint there has been rooted in counterterrorism operations. Comparatively, military leaders describe this footprint as light. But in the years of 9/11, the U.S. has significantly increased its joint counterterrorism operations with African forces. We recall the brutal 2017 attack by the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara that killed four U.S. troops in Niger.

So where has that led us? As we have decimated al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and destroyed ISIS's physical caliphate, what has the impact been on terror groups in Africa? We have not had the same level of success assisting African partners in reclaiming territory and pushing back against these violent actors. In attempting to cutoff support for these groups through sanctions, the many humanitarian crises across the continent have also been impacted.

Chair Bass, I know this is an issue where you are focused. I expect we will spend more on that on this hearing today. And while I do not subscribe to the U.S. as the world's policeman, I do believe that our counterterrorism partnerships are vital to protecting not just our homeland, but our interest and our partners abroad.

We must ensure these missions are able to adjust to evolving threats. We must place the same level of importance on our diplomatic and humanitarian missions. And as we continue to see the great power competition with China manifest itself across Africa, we must ensure that we are dedicating the necessary resources to countering China's efforts. The U.S. commitment may come with more strings attached, but the values that we place on democracy and human rights are a moral commitment that we stand firmly and proudly behind.

Chair Bass, again, I thank you for your leadership. I thank our witnesses, and I look forward to today's discussion.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

We are going to go to the ranking member now and then we will recess until after votes. Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Chairwoman Karen Bass and Chairman Ted Deutch, for calling this timely hearing to discuss conflicts and terrorism trends in Africa.

With a young population and some of the fastest growing economies in the world, there is no doubt of the strategic importance of the continent. Unfortunately, progress toward stability in some parts of the continent is undermined by weak governance, corruption, and lack of economic opportunity.

Increasing external malign influence, particularly from China and Russia, is undermining U.S. national security and economic ob-

jectives. The Africa Center for Strategic Studies reports a doubling of militant Islamic extremist groups in the year 2019, a very concerning and sad trend.

As efforts to counter ISIS and al-Qaeda networks have made some progress to the Middle East, new ISIS and al-Qaeda affiliates have gained strength and legitimacy across the continent. The U.S. must work with African partners to effectively address these terrorist threats and target the drivers of extremism and radicalization.

I appreciated the opportunity to highlight, in a hearing last week, the importance of continued engagement with our European partners and partners on the ground to combat extremism and to maintain networks to advance counterterrorism objectives. By extension, we must also have those efforts to curtail the efforts of malign actors in the region, and seek to keep civilians safe.

I was grateful to join Chairman Ted Deutch in the bipartisan Libya Stabilization Act, which is to come up for suspension today, to curb the foreign malign influence by actors such as Russia. There is certainly more work to be done in that regard, especially given China's interest and devious investments, and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on any recommendations they may have.

We appreciate the witnesses for their expertise, and we appreciate Chair Karen Bass, and I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much. If my partner, who is the chair, agrees, I think we should recess until after votes?

Mr. DEUTCH. Agreed.

Ms. BASS. OK. Thank you. The committee is in recess. We will be back as soon as we finish voting. Yes, I want to thank our witnesses, Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Jenkins. I am so sorry that we need to do this. I would guess that we are talking about an hour, an hour and a half.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

Mr. JENKINS. We are at your disposal.

Ms. BASS. I appreciate that.

[Recess.]

[4:42 p.m.]

Ms. BASS. This hearing is back in session. And I see my—the chair of the subcommittee is here, and I believe the ranking member, Chris Smith, should be with us shortly.

But I wanted to go ahead and introduce our witnesses. So we appreciate all of you being here today, and we look forward to your testimony. Let me remind the witnesses that your written statements will appear in the hearing record. And under committee rule 6, each witness should limit their oral presentation to a brief summary of their written statements.

Our first witness is Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales. He joined the Bureau of African Affairs in October 2020. His portfolio includes West Africa and regional peace and security. He previously served as the Director for Analysis of Africa in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

As a career member of the Senior Foreign Service, he has served as Deputy Chief of Mission and Charge d'affaires at the U.S. Em-

bassies in Nepal and Malawi. Prior to joining the Foreign Service, he was an economic analyst in the antitrust division of the U.S. Department of Justice. And in 2009, he received the W.R. Rivkin Award for Constructive Dissent from the American Foreign Service Association. That is an interesting name for an award.

Our second witness is the Assistant to the Administrator, Robert Jenkins. Robert Jenkins serves as the assistant to the Administrator for the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization. A career member of the Senior Executive Service, he was previously a Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance, and the Director of USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives.

Prior to joining USAID in 1998, he designed and implemented emergency relief and recovery programs with World Vision in southern Sudan and Sierra Leone. As a Thomas J. Watson Fellow, he worked under Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Cape Town, South Africa, as a liaison between the church's peace and justice office and township communities.

I would like to welcome our witnesses, and you may begin. Mike Gonzales.

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL C. GONZALES, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, BUREAU OF AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you so much. Chair Bass, Chair Deutch, Ranking Member Smith, Ranking Member Wilson, and members of the subcommittees, thank you for this opportunity to testify on conflict in Africa.

Peace and prosperity in Africa directly benefit the United States. Unfortunately, however, almost half of the world's 34 armed conflicts in 2020 were on the African continent. Beyond the loss of life and livelihoods, conflicts take resources away from critical public services and development efforts.

While each conflict is different, there is a clear trend of conflict being fueled by poor or deficient governance. In some cases, weak capacity and limited resources prevent the State from delivering the conditions or the opportunities that people expect. With high rates of unemployment, these lapses exacerbate instability and increase young people's vulnerability to extremist messaging and recruitment under the promise of a better life.

In less benign cases, more predatory government actions, such as corruption, human rights abuses, ethnic favoritism, or political oppression, inflame grievances, and they spur conflict both among groups and against a State by exploiting rather than serving the people.

Governments push communities toward conflict. Terrorists and extremist organizations, such as al-Qaeda and ISIS, exploit these State weaknesses, igniting those grievances into violence. Other external actors also exacerbate conflict in parts of Africa. Russian mercenaries, such as the Wagner Group, have fueled violence, resource exploitation, and human rights abuses in Syria, Libya, and Central Africa. They now appear poised to expand into Mali. They have a proven record of leaving vulnerable African countries yet even weaker, poorer, and less secure, while being paid handsomely

in cash and mineral concessions that are no longer available to benefit the public.

Addressing conflict requires a comprehensive approach. We cannot focus solely on the security aspects of conflict, because too often, those are merely the symptoms of deeper dynamics. Instead, the United States leverages our diplomatic development and defense partnerships to bolster the capabilities, responsiveness, and credibility of the African institutions at national and local levels to enhance public confidence in the State, improve service delivery, and foster economic opportunity.

Diplomatic efforts are vital to prevent the spread of violence and help to deescalate conflict. Our professional diplomats engage government and societal leaders to mitigate conflict. They provide conflict early warning. They support prevention, conflict resolution, and humanitarian assistance efforts.

Our role is not to come in as outsiders to fight insecurity, but to enable our African partners to develop their own security capabilities. By building partner capacity, we promote sustainable impacts through comparatively limited investments.

Whether through diplomatic engagement, or programs, such as the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership, State Department initiatives support local-level conflict prevention and early warning systems. We engage women and youth to build cohesive communities that are resilient to extremism. We support government efforts to manage defectors, we embed advisers within host nation military elements, and we support community networks to foster trust between civilians and authorities.

Moreover, we leverage America's flagship initiatives to help our African partners achieve their full potential. Through YALI, we invest in the next generation of African leaders who will deliver brighter futures for their own countries. Beyond saving millions of lives, PEPFAR and the President's Malaria Initiative support health systems that enable governments to deliver service to the people.

AGOA, Power Africa, Prosper Africa, and the Millennium Challenge Corporation each offer catalytic investments to fuel economic growth and opportunity. And I commend this committee for your instrumental role in creating and ensuring the success of these initiatives. We appreciate the committee's leadership in addressing conflict in Africa, particularly you, Chair Bass and other members, for traveling to the continent and personally engaging. Your direct engagement with our African partners amplifies our 3-D approach by adding a legislative element to our partnerships.

As I wrap up, let me emphasize that the United States is a committed partner with African peoples, governments, and institutions. We work intently across agency lines to support and enable them to stem violence, secure their citizens and ours, and realize their full potential in an increasingly interconnected community of nations.

We are under no illusions about the challenges associated with addressing conflict, or the spread of violent extremism. There are no quick fixes or magic solutions. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of Africa's leaders to meet the needs and the aspirations of their populations and to address the conditions that fuel conflict.

The United States is, and remains committed, to support our African partners in these efforts. I thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statements of Mr. Gonzales follows:]

Testimony
of
Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Gonzales
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State
Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights &
the Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and Global
Counterterrorism
September 28, 2021

Understanding Conflict in Africa

Chair Bass, Chair Deutch, Ranking Member Smith, Ranking Member Wilson, and members of the Subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to testify on conflict in Africa. This hearing is very timely.

Almost half of the world's 34 armed conflicts in 2020 were concentrated in Africa, 15 at current count. Once thought to be anachronistic, the number of coups in Africa has risen, with three successful military coups during the past year and two unsuccessful attempts. The stakes involved with preventing, managing, and deescalating conflict in Africa are high. Conflict in Africa has vast humanitarian, human rights, political, economic, security, environmental, and geo-strategic consequences for Africa and its international friends and partners.

Long-term and sustainable peace and prosperity in Africa have direct implications for U.S. national interests and those of our closest allies. Conflict and political violence in Africa have had devastating effects, destabilizing states and borders, creating and perpetuating humanitarian and environmental crises, increasing poverty and stifling economic growth, and robbing young Africans of the opportunity for an education and a better life. Beyond the loss of life and livelihoods stemming from

conflict, the shifting of resources to engage in and win conflicts takes resources away from public services, distracts governments from needed reforms, curbs economic opportunity, and keeps business and investors away – all exacerbating the dynamics that first enabled the conflict.

The drivers of violent conflict in Africa are diverse. The violence and conflict between states that marked previous decades has, for the most part, been replaced by intra-state violence and insecurity. The conditions that perpetuate insecurity around the continent are unique to each situation, but regardless of whether we are talking about Mali, Cameroon, the Sahel, Nigeria, Mozambique, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, or Ethiopia, it is possible to draw several commonalities regarding the key drivers of conflict in Africa. Particularly, conflict is usually fueled, enabled, and exacerbated by poor governance.

These conditions undermine the legitimacy of governments in the eyes of their populations and exacerbate competition for economic and political power. Individual or group grievances are sparked by exclusion or perceived exclusion from the political process for reasons of personal, ethnic or value differences, lack of genuine access to national institutions of governance, or the perpetuation of dynastic political ruling classes. Good governance goes well beyond carrying out credible elections. National and local governments must deliver essential services to their people. Security forces must be professional, capable, accountable, and respect human rights. Civil society and a free press must be empowered. Women must be meaningfully engaged as peacebuilders and leaders across civil society, government, and the security sector. Independent judiciaries must ensure accountability and access to justice for all. These are not just best practices and aspirational principles; they are security imperatives.

Grievances from Government Neglect: Even under relatively benign circumstances when governments or ruling elites are not consumed by zero-sum political and economic competition, frustration and often violent competition is sparked by the state's limited capacity and resources, and sometimes unsuited policies that result in the inability to deliver services, jobs, basic security, or socio-economic development for its people. The spread of COVID in some areas has increased the stress on already fragile economic and health delivery services and reinforced perceptions regarding state inability or willingness to protect its citizens. Given the size of Africa's youth population, if governments are unable to prioritize education and training opportunities and create jobs commensurate with population growth, then high rates of youth unemployment will exacerbate instability and increase the vulnerability of both young men and women to violent extremist messaging and recruitment.

Terrorist organizations and criminal organizations remorselessly exploit and exacerbate African state weakness. In Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, and elsewhere, these groups often neither seek out large scale military engagements nor attempt to establish permanent control over major population centers. Instead, they engage in targeted assassinations or intimidation of local administrators, magistrates, religious leaders, market vendors, and security officials to destroy local communities and break down links with national or subregional governments. Terrorist organizations exploit harmful gender norms, exacerbate gender inequalities, and perpetrate gender-based violence. In some cases, these groups do deliver forms of alternative economic assistance, administrative services, and effective – although often brutal – administration of justice and security. This strategy allows terrorists and criminal organizations to operate with virtual impunity in large sections

of territory and draw upon expanding pools of recruits joining their ranks out of fear or desperation for even modest financial rewards.

Predatory, Corrupt and Discriminatory Government Actions: Too often, it is more predatory government actions – whether in terms of corruption, human rights abuses, sub-national favoritism, or intolerance of different views and dissent – that instigate public grievances and conflict both among groups and against the state. Security forces often generate fear and hatred from the populations they are supposed to protect. Security forces may perpetrate gender-based violence. Heavy-handed security tactics against the political opposition, the media, and civil society have a corrosive effect that propels a constant cycle of conflict and alienation. When corruption goes unaddressed, citizens may conclude the government exists not to serve, but to exploit. Such predatory actions by the state against the governed drives grievances and, hence, conflict.

The Role of External Actors

As discussed, al-Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliated groups in Africa represent a direct threat to peace and stability to the Horn of Africa, the Sahel, coastal West Africa, and parts of Southern Africa. Somalia-based al-Shabaab is al-Qaeda's largest and best financed affiliate in the world and represents a threat to U.S. interests and allies throughout East Africa. In the Sahel, the threat posed by JNIM (Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin) is expanding beyond its traditional operating areas to new areas in coastal West Africa. In the Lake Chad Basin, ISIS-West African Province (ISWAP) continues to terrorize populations in northern Nigeria and neighboring countries. In Mozambique, ISIS has terrorized the population in northern parts of the country and hampered investment in one of the largest natural gas deposits in the world.

Other external actors are also contributing to conflict in parts of Africa. For example, we are concerned about the Russian mercenaries including the Wagner Group who have fueled violence, resource exploitation, and human rights abuses in Syria, Libya, and central Africa and now appear poised to expand into Mali. The group has expanded its paramilitary activities from Libya but is increasingly active in sub-Saharan Africa. A June 2021 United Nations Panel of Experts report accused Russian instructors in the Central African Republic (CAR) of indiscriminate killings, looting, and enforced disappearances conducted alongside the Central African military. Russia was the largest arms exporter to sub-Saharan Africa in 2016–20. Its arms deliveries to 12 states represented 30 per cent of total sub-Saharan arms imports.

The United States Response

Addressing conflict in Africa requires a comprehensive and balanced approach. It is important to resist the temptation to focus solely on the security aspects of conflict because too often these are merely the symptoms of deeper grievances that must be addressed if African countries and their international partners are going to stem and resolve conflict sustainably. Military, intelligence, and law enforcement tools are important components of our response, and we are prepared to protect American lives and interests in Africa when necessary. As vital as our security efforts are, these efforts must support -- and not replace -- robust diplomacy, development, humanitarian assistance, and civilian-led stabilization and conflict resolution efforts. As a wide range of factors contribute to conflict in Africa, it is vital that the United States has the flexibility to tailor our responses to address most effectively the unique challenges presented by conflict situations. The State Department, USAID, the Department of Defense, and several other agencies offer unique expertise and capabilities, and it is essential that

each organization has the tools to contribute to the prevention, management, and de-escalation of conflict.

The State Department has a multi-faceted role. Recognizing the damaging effects that conflict has on local populations and implications for regional stability, the United States focuses diplomatic efforts on preventing and stemming violence and working alongside others to create conditions for enduring resolutions to conflict. For example, Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman and U.S. diplomats are working with regional and international partners to promote a negotiated ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia and create conditions for a permanent, non-military end to the conflict. Similarly, we have mobilized our diplomatic resources to enable and coordinate regional and international efforts to resolve serious conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, the Great Lakes, the Sahel, and the Lake Chad Basin. In individual countries, our professional diplomats provide conflict and atrocity early warning, work with international partners and the U.S. interagency to develop violence prevention and peace-building programs, and plan and implement conflict-resolution and humanitarian assistance efforts.

The United States is committed to building and sustaining partnerships and alliances to address conflict in Africa. Our role and approach is not to come in as outsiders to fight insecurity, but to enable our African partners to develop the security capabilities to provide security themselves. Africa's leaders have intensified individual and collective efforts to address these challenges and take greater ownership of their own security. Individual African governments, the African Union (AU), and sub-regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) are taking leading roles in addressing security and

political challenges in Africa. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in the Lake Chad Basin, the G5-Sahel in West Africa, and other African-led efforts are essential. These efforts allow the United States to pursue our security interests in Africa and help reduce violent conflict using a very small military footprint and modest resources. Our focus on partner capacity-building and enablement provides maximum value through comparatively limited investments.

Let me emphasize, however, that violence and conflict are often the security manifestation of deeper grievances that often stem from governance deficiencies. So, while security responses may be necessary to temper the symptoms, the State Department, USAID, and other U.S. government agencies use a range of bilateral and multilateral tools to address these underlying drivers of conflict for more sustainable peace. We leverage our diplomatic, development, and defense partnerships to bolster the capabilities, responsiveness, and credibility of state institutions – at national and local levels – to enhance public confidence in the state, improve service delivery to the people, and create and foster opportunity for future prosperity. We do this because strong, stable, healthy, and prosperous partners are in America’s interest, and addressing the underlying dynamics that enable and fuel conflict ensures the successful pursuit of these interests while delivering on our values to our African partners.

We do this by leveraging the flagship initiatives designed over the years with bipartisan support to help African people, governments, and institutions to achieve their full potential, and realize their own version of the American Dream. For example, through the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), we are investing in the next generation of African leaders, as it is they who will deliver the brighter futures for

their countries. Moreover, in addition to saving millions of lives, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) have bolstered health systems capacity across the continent that have been critical in the responses to outbreaks of Ebola and have been the backbone of the C19 response.

The U.S. Government is the first globally to enact national legislation codifying its commitment to Women, Peace and Security (WPS), recognizing that peace and security is more sustainable when women are equal partners in the prevention of violent conflict, the delivery of relief and recovery efforts, and in the forging of lasting peace. The State Department, USAID, the Department of Defense are equally committed to building USG capacity to ensure that women are more prepared and increasingly able to participate in efforts that promote stable and lasting peace; and that women and girls are safer, better protected, and have access to humanitarian services. The U.S. government implements a wide range of WPS programming across Africa, empowering women and girls as leaders and peacemakers and preventing and responding to gender-based violence.

Recognizing that it is the private sector and jobs that will develop Africa, the Africa Growth and Opportunity Act provides market access benefits to the American market to deepen U.S.-African business ties while giving African producers a leg up. Since the launch of Power Africa in 2013, more than 88 million people in sub-Saharan Africa have first-time electricity access. Since 2019, Prosper Africa has helped to close 800 deals across 45 countries for an estimated value of \$50 billion in exports and investments in sectors such as energy, agribusiness, health, and information and communication technology. The Millennium Challenge Corporation puts our money where our mouth is, investing catalytically

in the success of those countries demonstrating the policies and political will to unleash their citizens' potential.

Collectively these efforts help African governments and communities to meet the needs, desires, and expectations of the people to prevent and address grievances that drive conflict. This Committee has played instrumental roles in creating and ensuring the success of many of these initiatives and I applaud your vision, support, and partnership in enabling our successes. We also appreciate strong congressional support via the Global Fragility Act (GFA), which directs the Departments of State, Treasury and Defense, and USAID to prioritize conflict prevention via a forward-looking, integrated, and locally owned approach. The GFA will bolster U.S. efforts to prevent and respond to conflict in Africa.

While USAID implements significant programming toward these objectives, allow me to offer some specific examples of State Department programming:

In Nigeria, a Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) and the U.S. Institute for Peace (USIP) program helped decentralize conflict prevention to the sub-national level. To date, we have supported the establishment of state peace building institutions in four Northern Nigerian states, which have brokered cross-border peace agreements and trained a cadre of local peacebuilders to identify and address tensions before they escalate into violence.

In Nigeria, CSO is also strengthening early warning and early response in atrocity-risk areas. This program employs innovative technology to alert trained early responders to take action to prevent attacks in near real time. It also helps document attacks, which are currently

underreported, to improve our understanding of the nature and scope of the violence.

In Mozambique, as part of the multi-pronged strategy, the Partnership for East Africa Counterterrorism (Preact) and other initiatives support the creation of a network of civil society organizations, peace clubs, and government officials, to foster trust, communication, and collaboration among citizens and between civilians and authorities. We are also working with youth leaders and the private sector to strengthen opportunities for young people to engage positively in their communities--as entrepreneurs, mentors, and change agents to prevent violent extremism. Although the situation in northern Mozambique remains dire, we have seen the impact of these efforts at the local level, particularly in integrating internally displaced people and engaging youth and women to build cohesive communities that are resilient to violent extremism.

In Niger, Cameroon and Chad, our Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP)-funded Disengagement, Disassociation, Reintegration and Reconciliation project supports government efforts to manage defectors from Boko Haram and ISWAP.

In Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, TSCTP and the Secretary's Office of Global Women's Issues (S/GWI) are working together to increase women's capacity, agency, and level of engagement to support them as effective peace and security leaders through a regional program to build capacity and a cross-border network of women working on violent extremism in the Sahel.

Also in Nigeria, our embassy partnered with the YALI Network to launch an election-focused campaign to deter electoral violence and boost civic participation in the presidential and gubernatorial elections in

2019. Over the course of the six-month campaign, over 15,000 people joined the NaijaVotes campaign against violence, and campaign messages reached hundreds of thousands.

To complement and support these activities we use targeted TSCTP and PRACT programs build professional, capable, and accountable military and civilian forces to meet the expanding threat of terrorism and insecurity. Examples include embedding advisors within host nation air forces, military intelligence organizations, logistics organizations, and special forces units; provision of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities; strengthening counterterrorism training institutions; provision of key training and operational support infrastructure; and, donations of critical equipment required to responsibly execute counterterrorism operations.

Proactive diplomacy by our dedicated diplomats across the continent inform, advise, and influence African officials, civil societies, and influencers to promote reforms, policies, and engagements that enable citizen-responsive governance, prosperity, and stability.

Conclusion

We appreciate the Committee's interest in addressing conflict in Africa. The United States is a committed partner with African peoples, governments, and institutions. We work intently across agency lines to support and enable them to stem violence, secure their citizens and ours, and realize Africa's full potential in an increasingly interconnected global market and community of nations. We are under no illusions about the challenges associated with reducing conflict and the spread of violent extremism. There are no quick fixes or magic solutions. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of Africa's leaders to meet the needs and aspirations of their populations and address the conditions that fuel

conflict. The United States will remain engaged to support these efforts. It is in our national interest to prevent the spread of conflict and insecurity that threatens American lives and interests, and to work with our African partners to realize the continent's vast potential.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much. Mr. Jenkins?

STATEMENT OF ROBERT JENKINS, ASSISTANT TO THE ADMINISTRATOR, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, BUREAU FOR CONFLICT PREVENTION AND STABILIZATION

Mr. JENKINS. Well, thank you. Chair Bass, Chair Deutch, Ranking Member Smith, Ranking Member Wilson, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

No matter how you look at the problem of violent extremists in Africa, the trends are going in the wrong direction. The International Committee of the Red Cross recently tallied 296 non-State armed groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Sahel, there were more armed attacks between April and June of this year than in any other 3-month period, and violence has displaced over 2 million people in the Sahel, four times as many people that were displaced in 2019.

Across Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad, extremists challenged State authority, they recruit disaffected youth, and they align themselves with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. They prey upon communities and use long periods of simmering war and violence to expand their influence.

But the problem is much broader than the Sahel. Looking across a map of Africa, extremist violence is spreading. Places like Cote d'Ivoire are now grappling with attacks from violent extremist groups.

Northern Mozambique grabbed headlines this year when insurgents claiming links with the Islamic State orchestrated attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. Mozambique illustrates some important considerations. By attaching the Islamic State brand, the insurgency guarantees international headlines.

But the label obscures more than it reveals. Rather than a group of committed fighters adhering to the Islamic State's global goals, this insurgency recruits and thrives on local conditions and grievances. Take away the Islamic State label, and you still have those grievances based on exclusion and violence.

Meanwhile, in Ethiopia, we are witnessing just how quickly contentious politics can escalate and boil over into war. We are all concerned about the prospects of extremist violence in Somalia. Al-Shabaab is one of al-Qaeda's most successful and well-financed branches. The current political standoff in Somalia only benefits Al-Shabaab, and it presents the most direct threat to Americans.

These conflicts, civil wars, and armed extremist groups take a terrible human toll. That alone is enough to give us pause, but the proliferation of violent extremist activity in Africa has implications for American security. Ungoverned spaces offer violent extremist groups room to grow, bide time, and plot against Western targets.

So what is to be done? Success requires the right balance of defense, development, and diplomacy, what we call the three Ds. This means looking at how all of our foreign assistance interacts and affects environments where armed extremists work. We need the Department of Defense because we cannot ignore the security aspect.

I discuss this frequently with our leaders at U.S. Africa Command as part of our constant and collaborative civil military dialog.

But militaries and security services alone cannot succeed. In a seminal 2017 report on extremism in Sub-Saharan Africa, the U.N. found a majority of subjects who joined violent extremist groups cited negative interactions with authorities, particularly with military and security forces.

This fact warns us of the dangers of seeing security actions alone as an answer. I firmly believe U.S. development assistance has a role to play in preventing the further expansion of violent extremism in Africa. USAID's programs and expertise challenge narratives legitimizing violence.

We know our programs build trust between marginalized communities, State authorities, and security forces. Our programs can improve governance where it is fragile, create economic opportunity, and allow for freedom of religious expression. The success of these programs will require the right funds with the right flexibility. It also requires reviewing the authorities around how and with whom we can work.

But still, development assistance alone will come up short. Even the best designed and implemented development programs cannot stop dozens of young men on motorcycles with AK-47s. That is why I am happy to be here today with Michael, my colleague from the Department of State. Success will require diplomatic support to work with allies and build meaningful partnerships with governments in the region.

Chair Bass, Chair Deutch, I will conclude today by thanking you for calling this hearing. It is not always easy to get attention on these issues amid so many fires in the world. I am optimistic about our chances to make progress, in part because of the support we have from Congress, most notably, the Global Fragility Act. That Act, as you know, charges USAID, the State Department, the Department of Defense, and others to take an integrated approach to just these types of problems. To succeed, USAID and other parts of our government must use the GFA as a tool to prompt an unprecedented level of collaboration across the U.S. Government to arrest this growing threat.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statements of Mr. Jenkins follows:]

Statement of Robert W. Jenkins, Assistant to the Administrator for the Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Stabilization Before the House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights the Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism September 28, 2021

INTRODUCTION

Chair Bass, Chair Deutch, Ranking Member Smith, Ranking Member Wilson, members of the subcommittees, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. No matter how we look at the problem of violent extremists and conflict in Africa, trends are moving in the wrong direction. A recent report by the International Committee of the Red Cross tallied 296 non-state armed groups in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Sahel alone, a database of attacks conducted by armed groups counts 410 attacks between April and June of this year—the highest number of attacks in a tracked quarter. Earlier this year, the United Nations reported violence had displaced over 2 million residents of Sahelian countries within their own borders, four times the number of displaced recorded in 2019. These data give a sense of the scale of growing violence.

Across the African continent, USAID sees several states that appear particularly fragile, with weak governments characterized by corruption and lack of accountability, youth bulges, unprofessional security forces, limited services and opportunities for citizens, intercommunal conflicts, and armed groups looking to recruit. On top of these factors, African countries also grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic—an event that not only places already weak health systems under strain but also reduces the overall presence of states, exacerbates social fragmentation, creates economic hardship, and opens spaces for armed groups to exploit. Climate change will take a particularly strong toll on several African countries, prompting increased competition and opening fissures between communities. Meanwhile, democratic governance—the best mechanism to identify peaceful solutions to political problems, including those underpinning much of this violence—is under assault, with several extra-constitutional changes in government in recent history. These diverse conflicts and societal fractures in turn give international terrorist groups opportunities to exploit, recruit, and perpetuate existing conflict. Under those conditions, we can expect violent extremism to remain a problem for the foreseeable future.

USAID invests resources in countering violent extremism (CVE) to serve U.S. national security interests by supporting peace, prosperity, and stability overseas and reducing threats to Americans at home and abroad. In 2020, with the support of Congress, USAID launched the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization, creating a bureaucratic structure in the Agency for all issues related to preventing and stabilizing violent conflict, including violence perpetrated by violent extremist organizations. Earlier this year, when I took charge of this new bureau, it was evident we needed to prioritize a region. We chose West Africa. As a government, we don't always prioritize well, and as a bureau responsible for preventing conflict and stabilizing violence across the globe, some questioned why we would choose West Africa

over some other more obvious places: the Horn of Africa, the Middle East, or Central America. West Africa provided several rationales. Several countries confront high levels of violence by armed groups—arguably as part of civil wars—where central government authority is challenged in large geographic areas. Other countries, especially those along the coast, provide an opportunity and a test for prevention efforts. These countries do not experience anything like the violence of Sahelian states, but the southern spread of the violence, recruitment opportunities, and occasional cross-border attacks give the coastal states reason for concern, all against a backdrop of weakening democratic norms. Not all African states confront a situation where armed violent extremist groups have exploited vulnerabilities and thrived, but in regions where fragility, insecurity, and political conflict build on major grievances (e.g., among underserved Muslim communities) and fuel cycles of violence, armed violent extremist groups can thrive. The scale of the problem, the imperative to prevent the geographic spread of extremist violence, and the development and governance issues contributing to this problem all persuaded us to choose West Africa as the priority.

THE SAHEL

The Sahel provides a striking example of the threats and challenges posed by violent extremists and conflict. In Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Chad, armed groups have challenged states' authority, recruited disaffected youth into their ranks, aligned themselves with groups like Al-Qaida and the Islamic State (IS), and used an extended period of simmering war and violence to grow and expand their influence. Several of these groups have evolved beyond simply carrying out attacks; they now look to fill roles of the state, whether collecting revenue, administering justice, or expanding their recruitment pool (including not just fighters, but also their families).

Even more concerning is the spread of these groups. Countries like Benin and Côte d'Ivoire must now grapple with the risk of attacks and recruitment from violent extremist groups. A decade ago, many of us would not have imagined these scenarios for a place like Ghana. In light of this risk, USAID is investing people and resources in Coastal West African countries with the goal of weakening the appeal and curbing opportunities for violent extremist groups to make inroads in these places. Part of how we should define success in West Africa is by keeping violent extremist groups from challenging governments, recruiting disaffected citizens, and carrying out attacks in coastal states the way they have elsewhere in the region.

EAST AND CENTRAL AFRICA

While the Sahel offers a clear example of how violent extremist groups threaten states, borders cannot contain conflict and armed groups. Throughout 2021, the alarm bells grew louder in northern Mozambique after insurgents with links to the Islamic State orchestrated on-going attacks in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, culminating in the seizure of Palma in March 2021. By taking the name IS, this insurgency gained experience, guaranteed itself headlines, and developed an international element to its violent struggle.

The Mozambique case illustrates important considerations. For example, the IS label obscures more than it reveals. Rather than a well-established core of committed fighters adhering to IS's global goals, this insurgency recruits and thrives on local conditions. USAID's own research indicates that youth are the most vulnerable demographic to recruitment to violent extremism in northern Mozambique. They are motivated to join the IS branch there because of long-standing grievances against the government and the global success of the IS brand. Limited economic opportunities in Cabo Delgado feed young Mozambicans' frustrated aspirations; they feel they have a limited role and impact on society. They are devoid of hope.

It is an insurgency with its roots in local economic and social grievances with IS branding and support. Take away the IS support and the IS label, and you still have the grievances and conditions for exclusion and violence—conditions which could find violent expressions through other outlets. We see IS and read about the violence, but what we witness are the symptoms of endemic social problems. At its core is an unresolved political and economic dispute (now with the added element of large energy discoveries) in an underserved region.

Elsewhere, in Somalia, Al Shabab continues to make territorial and financial gains in the backdrop of a deeply fractured political environment, evidenced most recently by election delays, dire humanitarian conditions, and continued intercommunal conflict. Al Shabab's increasing revenue stream and growth in power has allowed for more sophisticated attacks. The group has shown itself able to collect tax and revenue streams regardless of whether it owns territory, signaling that a security-driven response with the aim of holding territory will be insufficient to degrade Al Shabab.

In Ethiopia, meanwhile, the political situation boiled over last year into armed conflict; we will soon approach a year since the fighting began. USAID continues to work on the humanitarian response and support vital human rights work, all while the United States pushes for a ceasefire and ultimately an end to the violence.

U.S. INTERESTS

The human toll alone is enough to give us pause, but the proliferation of violent extremist activity, on top of ongoing conflicts already stressing under-capacitated governments with competing interests, in Africa has implications for American security. While USAID supports a rebalanced national-security approach, a profusion of increasingly experienced armed violent extremist groups with links to international terrorist groups still presents risks to Americans, the United States, our interests, allies, and partners.

As violent extremist groups grow, recruit, network, and become more emboldened, so too do the risks to our overseas facilities and potentially Americans. The United States must prepare to confront future threats, but in our recalibration, we must continue to pay attention to the threat posed by violent extremist groups in places like the Sahel.

AN APPROACH FOR THE UNITED STATES

As the case of Mozambique underscores, violent extremist violence often reflects local political, economic, and social schisms rather than the commitment of inveterate ideologues. The high levels of violence perpetrated by these groups under the banners of IS and Al-Qaida prompt us to resort to military solutions, but militaries and security services (American or other) cannot succeed alone. Research on violent extremism in sub-Saharan Africa has shown that absent a comprehensive approach, security and military forces can fuel the problem they ostensibly are trying to solve. In a 2017 [study](#) undertaken by the United Nations Development Programme, the authors found a majority of subjects who joined [violent] extremist groups (71%) pointed to “government action”, including ‘killing of a family member or friend’ or ‘arrest of a family member or friend’, as the incident that prompted them to join [an violent extremist group].” This figure underscores a point that practitioners of countering violent extremism have known and advocated for years: where security forces are unprofessional, biased, feared, and/or commit human rights abuses, they often stoke, rather than quell, the forces driving extremist violence. In the African context, any approach must remain conscious of this dynamic and explore alternatives to security-centric responses, balanced with the reality of providing military assistance where necessary.

To succeed, the United States’ approach should rely on a balance of political, security, peacebuilding, and stabilization responses across our diplomatic, defense, and development tools. The United States also cannot achieve results alone. Our efforts must support the national and local governments confronting these problems. The Department of State has a crucial role to play delivering the diplomatic pressure to secure that support, along with finding paths to end some of these conflicts. Likewise, these conflicts, while local in cause, can become global problems, so we will also rely on like-minded governments to work with the United States to address common security concerns and related effects, like unplanned migration. I have recently met with representatives from several European countries who are eager to work with USAID and the Department of State on cooperating to stem the tide of extremist violence in places like Somalia, the Sahel, Mozambique, and elsewhere.

The Department of Defense continues to have a critical role, not only in supporting these same international partners who are providing security assistance to nations, but in working with security forces to provide them with best practices, training. Getting that support right is pivotal if we want progress addressing this challenge; failing to do so creates further risk of alienating populations to the benefit of armed non-state groups. USAID has a close relationship with U.S. Africa Command, a relationship built on the mutual belief in applying defense, diplomacy, and development efforts to advancing American security interests in Africa.

I firmly believe U.S. foreign assistance has a role to play in preventing the expansion of violent extremism in Africa and supporting African countries to manage and transform conflict and violence. Over the years, USAID has come to understand that programming designed to strengthen and influence local institutions and communities systemically is likely to have a greater effect on radicalization and recruitment into violent groups compared to programming designed to address any single particular driver. Part of what our work targets key actors who

prevent the spread of violent extremism. As an example, USAID funds the critical role of women by promoting their participation in peace and security processes while reinforcing community resilience. The Women, Peace, and Security agenda broadens the discourse beyond "traditional" security and has increased recognition that marginalizing women and girls in any framework related to peace and security has produced communal instability, insecurity, and fueled violent extremism. USAID support to local voices also changes the narrative, providing an alternative to storylines pushed by violent extremist groups. Our media messaging programs, which reached an audience of over six million people across West African countries, deliver engaging content to change attitudes away from the appeal of violent extremist groups' narratives. This comes atop USAID's perpetual commitment to improving governance, economic, and development outcomes in all the countries where we work.

When so many causes of violent extremist grievance and recruitment rely on exploiting schisms in society, depressed economic opportunities, and political marginalization, the answer requires long-term, dedicated investment to improve those issues. The Secretary of State said it best in February 2021 when discussing the Sahel, stating "Instability and violence are symptoms of a crisis of state legitimacy." Without the patience to make material changes, the grievances and risks will persist.

A Call to Coordinated Action

The United States has several options moving forward. Many of us who watch Africa have grown more alarmed in recent years at the rapid spread of violent extremism, from then on affecting not just the Sahel and the Horn, but also, now toward the the West African coast, through the Horn, down the Great Lakes Region, and now along the shores of the Indian Ocean in northern Mozambique. Whereas just a few years ago, the center of attention was on the proliferation of groups in Syria, Iraq, Yemen, and elsewhere in the Middle East, African countries are increasingly featured and fill reports on global terrorism. These same countries feature in IS/Al-Qaida propaganda. The United States is waking up to that reality, and Congress can play an amplifying role, as this hearing today demonstrates. Thank you for giving these issues your attention.

We have an opportunity to reverse the trend in part because of the support we have from Congress, most notably the Global Fragility Act (GFA). That Act called for the development of a strategy to prioritize prevention and takes an integrated approach to just these types of problems. I also expect our whole-of-government, including USAID to use the GFA as the catalyst to prompt an unprecedented level of collaboration across the U.S. Government to arrest the growing threats to peace and stability.

For the subcommittees today, I will end with my views on what more Congress could do to help USAID and the rest of the U.S. Government address this problem. One recurring obstacle for USAID is the legal restrictions around how our funding is used and with whom we can reach with programs.

The ever-changing nature of conflicts, evolving armed groups, and shifting geographies would also benefit from increased flexibility in appropriated funding. Our budgeting process takes years—we have already started planning for 2024. USAID and the other parts of the U.S. Government working on this problem can't know with certainty the shape of conflict and needs that far out. We need the flexibility and contingency resources that allow us to adapt as fast as the facts on the ground change. It is a model that has succeeded and one USAID wants to scale to the size of the problem; we appreciate consideration of flexible funds. Similarly, USAID sees great utility in a further conversation on how to improve flexibility in getting our people into the field where they are needed, often side-by-side with Department of Defense and the Department of State colleagues. For all the enthusiasm of an integrated approach between departments and agencies here in Washington, the greatest difference comes in the field, alongside colleagues and international partners fighting together against this clear threat.

Thank you again for convening this important hearing.

<u>Bureau Level Clearances</u>	<u>Clearance Status</u>	<u>Date</u>
LPA/LEG: JFoltz	Clear w/edits	9/22/2021
LPA/LEG: DJaddallah-Redding	Clear w/edits	9/22/2021
LPA/LEG: CBullock	Clear w/edits	9/22/2021
AFR/SD:	Clear w/edits	9/23/2021
PPL/P:	Info	9/23/2021
BHA/OA	Clear w/ edits	9/23/2021
BHA/G3PC	Clear	9/23/2021
CPS/CMC: CKnudsen	Clear w/edit	9/23/2021
CPS/OTI: JGattorn	Clear w/edits	9/22/2021
CPS/CVP: JDrude	Clear	9/23/2021

Ms. BASS. Thank you very much.

Chairman Deutch, would you like to go ahead and ask questions first?

Mr. DEUTCH. Sure. Thank you, Chair Bass. I appreciate that.

I thank the witnesses.

I also sit on the Europe Subcommittee, and last week, we had a joint hearing with my subcommittee to address transatlantic cooperation on counterterrorism, and countering violent extremism. The fact that now half of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittees have addressed some facet of this issue in recent days is, I think, clear indication that CT and CV is a global issue whose implications go far beyond regional borders.

It is critical to engage closely with our allies and partners to apply best practices across all of our CT efforts worldwide, including the Sahel. The Biden Administration has expressed its clear support for French counterterrorism efforts, and the Sahel is re-engaging direct diplomacy with both our European allies and West African nations.

So with all of that as background, Deputy Assistant Secretary Gonzales, you made reference to the Wagner Group weakening African countries. You talked in particular about mineral concessions. Can you put the Wagner Group in the context of this broader effort and our engagement with our European allies to help combat it?

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Chair Deutch, for that question. Certainly, the Wagner Group has our attention, and for all the wrong reasons. We see that they go in and exploit environments that are vulnerable. Where there is a security need, they make broad promises of what they can provide and they under-deliver.

Countries believe that they are going to maintain authority and control over the security interventions, and in reality we have seen, time and time again, that they absolutely lose that authority. The Wagner Group we see in Central African Republic and other places the gross and rampant human rights violations that they are involved with, and how they complicate matters.

And so we certainly are engaging on a very active basis. As recently as this morning, conversations between myself and a colleague, another Sahel envoy from a European country, were discussing just this issue. And, so, we engage with our African partners directly to make sure that their eyes are wide open.

We engage also with our European and like-minded colleagues around the world to understand the challenges and implications, to see how we can better collectively partner with our African partners to address the very real security challenges that they face, but also, to put pressure to ensure that unintended consequences and funds and resources that are desperately needed by local populations do not get distracted and go to supporting security and not undermining it.

Mr. DEUTCH. So I appreciate that. I want to followup. Actually, let's—Mr. Jenkins, you referenced the 296 non-State armed groups. And so following up on Mr. Gonzales' comments, to what extent should our strategy plug into French multilateral mechanisms versus our own direct diplomacy in the region? What is the right approach here, if I can ask?

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Chair Deutch. This is a problem for the entire world, and it is going to be a problem that takes partnership in all aspects. Last week, I met virtually with my British counterpart; the week prior to that, met in person with my German counterpart. We have plans for getting hopefully together with the French as a group as we are looking particularly at the Sahel right now, but as explained, this is a problem that goes across the entire continent.

Whether it is the G5 countries and the Sahel, whether it is our European allies, whether there is the burden sharing that we are currently doing in West Africa with the French doing much more on the military side, one could say, in Somalia, they are looking to us and hoping that we can find some solutions; all of us have to work together on this.

Obviously, we have not found the solution. We think we know what works. We have to do that. We have to ramp things up. But we have a lot to teach each other, and I am hoping that post Afghanistan, at least the conversations I am having with other government officials from other governments, people are in a very positive mode of let's assess what we know works, what hasn't worked, and moving forward together in a way that is mutually supportive and not at odds with each other.

Mr. DEUTCH. Great. Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I hope as we go forward we will have an opportunity to probe a bit further into our efforts post Afghanistan and whether our allies view us differently coming out of that as we approach all of these really critically important issues.

And I want to thank you, Chair Bass, for conducting the—for holding this hearing and for giving us the opportunity to participate. It is really important. I so admire, as you know, your work in this area, and I am honored to be able to work on this with you in this instance. And thanks very much, and I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Well, absolutely, and thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate working with you. We should do this more often. We have a lot of—

Mr. DEUTCH. Hear, hear.

Ms. BASS [continuing]. Subjects in common and we should definitely do that.

Well, I want to follow your questions to Mr. Jenkins. You know, as you mentioned the help that is being given in the Sahel and all, and you mentioned the French and you mentioned the G5, I just wonder, do we ever come together with our European partners and talk about how to bolster the African Union? Because at some point in the future, it would be nice to think of when there are conflicts, that they are managed by other African countries.

There was a great example where the countries of ECOWAS intervened when a President refused to leave power. And so I just want to know if that is ever a discussion that you are aware of with our European partners?

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Chair Bass. I will be quick, because I believe that DAS Gonzales might have more on this than I do. We currently have the partnership for peace program, which works with the Executive Secretary of the G5 Sahel. We also—we have done a lot of work directly with the African Union through Women,

Peace, and Security, helping them get both a continental women, peace, and security strategy, but, also, working on individual nation States with their own strategies.

But you mentioned ECOWAS as well, whether it is SADC or ECOWAS, we look to regional partners, who—they are going to have the better ideas than we do. We are there to help. We are there to support where we can, but they often are the ones that should be in the lead, because they know these issues more than we do.

Ms. BASS. And Mr. Gonzales?

Mr. GONZALES. Great. Thank you. I would say that we absolutely coordinate with our international partners, European and beyond, in terms of collaborating on identifying ways how we can bolster African institutions and support the efforts that African institutions take the lead on.

Most recently, in terms of ECOWAS and their dynamic role in supporting the post-coup dynamics in both Guinea and Mali, my conversations with the Sahel envoys and counterparts from Canada, the EU, France, and the U.K. and beyond, very much focus on how can we best and optimally support them.

And we ask that question directly. We do not just divine the answers, but we go directly to President Brou of the ECOWAS Commission, or the representatives of the United Nations and the African Union in the field of how can we best support you. And the collaboration, the dialog has been robust. And, fundamentally, this is at the core of the Biden Administration's partnership with Africa is working very closely and in very close coordination with African institutions.

Ms. BASS. I hope for the day, when these conflicts happen, that they are dealt with and resolved on the continent.

I wanted to ask you about a couple of them. Well, one, in CAR, a big concern about the role of Russia and the mercenaries who say they are independent, not affiliated with the Russian Government, if you have a comment about that?

And then also, in terms of some of the violence that we see, you know, how much of it is ideological? Just take Mozambique, for example, that does not have a history of this. How much of it is ideological, and how much of it is opportunist, basically when people feel they have no other alternative? Do you want to respond first, Mr. Jenkins, or Mr. Gonzales, whichever one want to respond?

Mr. GONZALES. I will take that. In terms of Central African Republic, we are very concerned about the human rights abuses that are underway at the hands of the Wagner Group, mercenaries, Kremlin-linked mercenaries, as well as the armed forces of the Central African Republic, both in terms of their direct dynamics, but frankly, also the lack of coordination of various actors.

We have a very large robust and critically important international U.N. peacekeeping operation on the ground there. And the lack of coordination of what is going on by other actors really puts the international efforts under stress, particularly as humanitarian actors and the peacekeeping operations tried to access areas where Wagner or others are operating.

In terms of ideological versus other, frankly, I think, often what we see are these are longstanding historical grievances of commu-

nities against the center core periphery-type issues. People feel that the State hasn't delivered for them.

Ms. BASS. Right.

Mr. GONZALES. And when the extremists come in and offer something brighter, shinier, more that they can aspire to, it is appealing. And, frequently, it is that kind of dynamic as well as opportunists and criminal groups that take advantage, rather than its ideology that is driving it.

Ms. BASS. Well, thank you. And I think it is important that we stay centered on that too, because really, the goal should be to address the root causes versus just view it as a problem of violence or ideology.

With that, I would like to go to the ranking member, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And thank you for the hearing and to our witnesses for their insights in testimony.

I wanted to ask, if I could, you know, I do not know if you heard my opening comments, but, you know, the concerns that I and many others have concerning the Fulani, and, really, an international misperception, it would appear, including some at State, about what they are all about. It is not about herdsmen versus farmers. There may be some historical reasons to think that, but today, particularly under Buhari, it would appear that this is an all-out attempt to eradicate, to kill.

You know, I have met with many leaders in Nigeria, including just a little while ago again today, who say when a phone call goes out or a message goes out to send the police to try to intervene, the police, the military are a no-show. In one case, I was told how just 2 kilometers away from an attack by the Fulani were the Nigerian army, and they refused to come. And so people—and women were slaughtered, raped, and people came in on motorbikes for a very fast blitzkrieg-type attack, particularly at the churches, but also throughout the town.

And, you know, the Church of the Brethren has seen something on the order of 48,000 dead people over these last 10 years. I mean, when you start adding it all up, I see no difference frankly between the Fulani and Boko Haram, and maybe, you know, Mr. Gonzales, you could speak to that, both of our witnesses.

Because even when the aircraft were used, Tucano aircraft, there were three instances where civilians were killed, you know, are we assured—are we sure that this was a mistake or were these individuals targeted? So it is—who happen to be Christians, of course.

And, you know, they also go after Shia Muslims. So, you know, there is animosity, if you will, toward people who happen to be of Islam, but from a different perspective, and they get hurt as well, or killed, but the predominance of it is against the Christians.

You know, I met with the bishop who came and testified at a hearing last year, and he was roundly criticized by Buhari for what he said. And when he talked, this bishop, you know, is all about reconciliation, love, manifesting the love of Christ, but also telling the truth. And he spoke very boldly, but very compassionately and then said, the Fulani, you know, what is the difference—this is me talking not him now—between other terrorist groups and the Fulani.

You know, we all know that Buhari used to be the head of the Fulani. The fact, and I said it in my opening comments, virtually everyone around him, the whole military infrastructure, the police infrastructure, all of it is packed with Fulani, and they have axes to grind and they also look the other way when these killings take place.

Finally, you know, Goodluck Jonathan had his flaws. I thought, you know, all of us have flaws. But he at least had a cabinet that was multiethnic, and it had people from all the persuasions. I remember—and, Karen, I am sure you met with him as well—you know, they really—they came from all different perspectives, and that became a very positive strength for them.

So if you could, Mr. Gonzales, speak to some of those issues? Again, are we investigating the counter fighter jets, and the fighter aircraft? Is there any thought of barring any further spare parts if they do not, you know, come clean on—that was three and there may be more where they have been—

Ms. BASS. And, Mr. Gonzales, if you could answer briefly, and then, Mr. Smith, we will do another round after other members have had. You could answer briefly, so I can go to Mr. Phillips.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Representative Smith. There is a lot to unpack there. I think Nigeria has many challenges and has over many years with many causes deep-rooted corruption, lack of national identity, patronage-based politics. The list can go on and on, and I would argue that those go well beyond any one leader.

Nigeria fundamentally is core to our interests, our economic interests, our stability interests, our security interests, our regional and global interests and so we must engage in support for a strong, stable, and prosperous Nigeria, and we are committed to doing that.

I think at the local level, I take your point. I would argue, however, that climate change is reducing resources, and population growth is increasing demand for those. And so the availability of resources is a dynamic that is driving some degree of conflict, but conflict in Nigeria is multidimensional.

So, too, are the Fulani community. The Fulanis are not a monolith, and while President Buhari is a Fulani, so too Macky Sall and numerous leaders across West Africa. And they are Fulani herders and Fulani farmers. I would argue that a nondifferentiated approach that identifies the Fulani, or frankly any individual group has a major driver. It is not particularly helpful in identifying the nuance, and ultimately we need to respond with the nuance. But frankly it also risks precipitating retaliation and further violence.

So I think at the local level, engagement with local communities on conflict resolution is key. We are engaging on that. And Rod, I am sure, Assistant Administrator Jenkins can discuss some of that.

And at the national level, frankly, I think the approach required is to help shape political discourse, to drive public demand for issue-based, citizen-responsive, nationally supportive policies, not only going into the elections in 2023, but holding those who come out of those elections victorious, accountable for delivering for the country.

I think you mentioned the Super Tucanos. Six of them have arrived; six are still on route. They may be arriving around now.

They have not been in use. And so the U.S.-provided Super Tucanos are not involved in the incidents that—

Mr. SMITH. Do we know what was, Mr. Gonzales?

Mr. GONZALES. I can get back to you with that. And we saw the strikes that hit civilians just in the past week. And the change in doctrine because of our engagement with the Nigerian Air Force has been instrumental in getting them to acknowledge, put out a statements, and convene reported inquiry within 24 hours of that strike. And so there is a doctrinal shift.

But the threat to security of the Nigerian people is real, and that is why the State Department, both the Africa Pol-Mil and DRL Bureaus, are all unanimous in our support for providing helicopter support that the Nigerians have asked for so that we can help the Nigerian Air Force protect civilians and convoys of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. SMITH. I know I am out of time. Thank you.

Ms. BASS. Mr. Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass. Greetings, colleagues. I want to salute our very interesting hearing timer that we are using on this meeting. And also, I have got 3 percent left on my iPad; if I happen to drop, please go ahead and move to the next—my next colleague.

But I want to focus my questions on Ethiopia. We all know what is going on and how horrific. The U.N. estimates that 5.2 million people in Tigray need emergency food assistance. More than 2 million have been displaced by violence. Of course, this is extending to other regions, including Amhara. Hundreds of thousands of people are being displaced, and food insecurity worsening. And the worst is that humanitarian aid is being blocked because of the conflict by both Ethiopian and Eritrean militaries, as we all know.

So my question, first, is to you, DAS Gonzales. As we are aware, the Administration announced a new sanctions regime that allows the U.S. to impose financial sanctions on individuals and entities in connection with the conflict. My question is, have you seen any change at all in behavior from these actors since the announcement was made?

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, sir. At this point, we have not yet seen the tangible action that we are looking to see, but that is the point of the executive order is that it has gone too long with too little action. And so, this is the effort to step up the pressure on those who are responsible for prolonging the conflict, for obstructing progress and hindering humanitarian access and those who commit human rights abuses.

It is not targeted to one group or another. There is plenty of blame to go around, and leaders on all sides have been quite vocal in using their rhetoric for inflaming situations and dehumanizing other communities. And the purpose of the executive order is to exert that pressure so that we can try to break this logjam.

Mr. PHILLIPS. So we talk about pressure. You know, we have hearings, we tweet, we issue press releases, we have press conferences, we condemn. But what tools do we have available to us that we might not be employing to push for humanitarian access, let alone a cease-fire? What tools are we not employing, if any?

Mr. GONZALES. I think it is a phased approach. The restrictions on security assistance, the public statements, the—we just now have a new African Union lead negotiator for the Horn of Africa, and so backing—going back to Chair Bass' point of backing African institutions and putting our support behind President Obasanjo.

So, I think the executive order is the next step, applying names, naming and shaming and holding and squeezing people responsible under that executive order will be follow-on, but this is something that has the highest level of attention at the State Department, and, frankly, across the Administration. I know Administrator Power, Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield, Secretary Blinken are all seized with this issue in Ethiopia.

Mr. PHILLIPS. And, of course, you are referring to Ambassador Feltman. Perhaps with my remaining time, you could speak to some of the activities that he has undertaken since being named to that role and what roadblocks he is facing and how he is adapting to these challenges.

Mr. GONZALES. So he shares the suite with me two doors down, and he is more absent than present, because he is always on the road leading U.S. engagements, whether it is in Ethiopia or the region engaging with the African Union and other African institutions, or, frankly, the international community of like-minded and other partners who are also seized with this.

So he was up in New York engaging with the deputy prime minister just last week and in Addis the week before and in Khartoum currently. And so, he is very much engaged in trying to explore every opening that we might have and helping the Administration identify what might be those additional pressure points that we can lean on to get progress.

Mr. PHILLIPS. I appreciate it. The clock seems to have stalled. If I do have a few seconds left, Mr. Jenkins, if you might speak to any leverage or pressure points that the U.S. Has with the Ethiopian Government or the TPLF to push for increased humanitarian access in Tigray?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, thank you, Congressman. I think as you know, our administrator, Administrator Power, is laser focused on the issues in Ethiopia and Tigray, and seeking accountability for the atrocities that have happened. As DAS Gonzales says, there is enough blame to go around on all sides in that terrible, terrible situation.

What we are also worried about, and I would like to draw attention to, is we did an atrocity prevention analysis internally that showed there are about 13 possible other fault lines within Ethiopia, any one of which could ignite. Many of them are already simmering.

And as we are all focused on Tigray right now, as we should be, hopefully, the lid will not blow off what could be a far more dire situation in Ethiopia. That is why we are very supportive of Special Envoy Feltman's efforts. And hopefully the bad situations that is going on now we will be able to exert the leverage that does exist to open up humanitarian access, quell the current violence, and, hopefully, prevent that situation from spiraling into an even worse situation.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you both for being with us today. With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Representative Meuser? Representative Meuser? Meuser?

Mr. MEUSER. I am sorry, Madam Chair, yes, Meuser. Thank you, Representative Bass. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Mr. Gonzales, Fulani violence against Christians in north and central Nigeria is growing very violent on a daily basis. It is apparent that President Buhari has exasperated this decades-long conflict by eliminating accountability for perpetrators of such violence. In fact, he has installed many Fulani in high levels of government, especially in policing and the judiciary.

Nigeria is a rapidly growing country, on track to be the third largest country by 2050, but is now on the verge of serious violence. Does the State Department agree that Nigeria is on the brink of disintegration, that President Buhari has failed to uphold his responsibility to protect the rights of all Nigerians? Mr. Gonzales?

Mr. GONZALES. We are incredibly concerned about security instability in Nigeria. Again, I mentioned to Representative Smith that it is multifaceted. Whether it is pirates or bandits or Fulanis or religious or ISIS West Africa, the threats against the people, the threats against the State are many.

I also look at, frankly, the numbers. We have 208 million people who are protected by 375,000 or so police and about 100,000 troops who are making basically a ratio of the security sector to civilians about one-ninth the global standard that is optimal. And so, there is fundamentally inadequate resources that have gone to security, and inadequate resources I would—or attention, I would say, at the senior-most levels going toward a security strategy that can stem the tide.

We are encouraged by President Buhari's replacement of the entire slate of senior brass and security sector officials in Nigeria. We are encouraged that the new Chief of Defense has recognized responding to insecurity requires a whole-of-government approach, and not just an approach by the army or the armed forces, but all elements of the government.

We are encouraged that the chief of the Air Force is commissioning a 9-month doctrine review to ensure that what the government does to respond to insecurity does not further inflame or fuel.

So, again, the challenges are many on the security side as well as on the civilian side, and that is why our close relationship with the array of actors across Nigeria is vital to help try to shape and shift what is really a keystone country in the region.

Mr. MEUSER. It sounds like you know a lot about it; I am trying to figure out what we are doing about it, however. By chance, has the State Department yourself been to Nigeria lately or met with any of its parliament members to discuss this?

Mr. GONZALES. So, I guess the most recent would be about a week ago, where I, as well as our Acting Assistant Secretary, met with four representatives of the Nigeria Governors Association who were in town. We have had about three intended visits that for one reason or another, has fallen through.

Mr. MEUSER. I doubt they told you that climate change was their biggest concern, OK. I am not saying it is not a concern, but tar-

geted murders and assassinations of large numbers of civilians within communities, and primarily Christians, not just Christians but also Shia and others. So, you know, the idea of President Buhari—you are not really answering my question as far as failing to protect the rights of all Nigerians. I am not sure—we are sort of making the problem larger rather than just understanding that Buhari has some responsibility here and as do we if we care about any humanitarian efforts in Nigeria.

So I just have another question for you. The policing of weapons trafficking into West Africa that is obviously contributing to the heightened violence, is that something the U.S. Government is policing?

Mr. GONZALES. I would not say the U.S. Government is policing it. I would say that certainly elements of the State Department, particularly my counterparts in the International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau, are supporting, through funds appropriated from Congress, a fair bit of support to build the capacity of African institutions, African government elements, for improving border security awareness of who and what is crossing through borders.

Those borders are incredibly porous, and it is a big challenge. But certainly it is something that we are seized with, yes.

Mr. MEUSER. All right. That is great.

Was there a fuller scale, deep study dive into the contact—conflict in Nigeria in the previous Administration that was terminated by the Biden Administration in January, or was it deviated, or was it a different—

Ms. BASS. Excuse me.

Mr. MEUSER. I am sorry, Madam Chair. I did not have the timer. I yield back. Thank you.

Ms. BASS. OK. Thank you.

Let me move to Representative Manning.

Representative Manning?

Ms. MANNING. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you so much for having this hearing, along with Chairman Deutch and the ranking members. This is really a critically important and difficult issue.

Let me start with Mr. Jenkins.

Terrorist organizations continue to exploit inadequate security and governance in many countries in Africa, recruiting some of the most vulnerable people in these societies, as you have talked about, and producing violence that furthers the cycle of instability and poverty.

And several of these countries have also suffered droughts, food insecurity, and civic unrest, creating more opportunities for terrorist groups to grow and thrive.

Can you talk to us a little bit more about how the USAID program seeks to break this vicious cycle, and can you point to some success stories?

Mr. JENKINS. Thank you, Representative.

I could try to go through what we are doing in Mali. I could give you a description of what we are doing in Cameroon. I could give you a description of what we are doing in Somalia.

A lot of those, when you talk about the objectives at the top, high level sound very, very similar, because while all of these crises and all of these conflicts are different and context is extremely important, the underlying causes for them are actually similar. It is a governance crisis. In every one of these, it is a governance crisis.

So the violence we see, the exploitation, the recruitment is a symptom of the underlying, more serious causes.

So our programs look different in different places, but they are almost all trying to, one, give youth a reason to have agency, the ability to have agency in their life. Give them meaning is what they are looking for.

Two, bringing societies together, trying to heal the divisions, opening up dialog.

Three, trying to get communities at the local level but also at the national level to understand what is really happening in their country, in their village.

Many of these problems are misdiagnosed. We easily say, oh, this is ideological, this is religious, this is transnational crime. It can be all of those things at the same time.

So where has it worked? Let's go to North Africa real quick, Sirte. People forget that in Libya, Sirte, Libya, was the largest place outside of Iraq and Syria where ISIS was in control.

When that city was liberated in 2016, immediately we went to work supporting the local government, \$16 million over about a year. 30,000 kids went back to school, 40,000 people got healthcare.

Within 1 year, 90 percent of the population that was displaced moved back, and year after year in annual polling, people are more optimistic and feeling better about local governance and about their life.

We forget about Liberia. Liberia in the 1990's was synonymous with fragile States and failed States. 2006, we have a new President, we get in there, get to work, the United States in a very big way—other partners too—but supporting Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Liberia is a success story today.

So I would last, in Kenya, where they are coming up to elections again, and we always cross our fingers and hope that things do not get bad like they have in the past, but in Kenya, working with the Kenyan Government, we have helped them create their own national counterterrorism center.

They are now training all of their civil servants on looking for CVE and coming up with CVE solutions, and going down to the county level, working on CVE plans that are indigenous to those localities, so people are aware and finding their own systemic solutions.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. That is very helpful.

Deputy Assistant Secretary Gonzales, I am concerned that women and girls are often victimized by or at the root of the outbreak of violence in conflicts throughout Africa.

Can you tell us how State is working to address gender-based violence in Africa and how working with our partners in the region has improved gender equality and protects women at risk?

Mr. GONZALES. I completely share your concern, and I think it starts with the engagements that we have, when we send our Ambassadors in to talk to heads of State, when we flag this very con-

cern, that we recognize that gender-based violence is one of the top flags for potential for atrocities in the future.

But also the opposite, where gender equality yields societies that are much less likely to go to war. It is why women, peace, and security is a critical element of our security assistance package.

I look at Niger, for example, a prime example, where previously each year the Nigerien military would take in just 10 women. Now it is over 300, and still a long ways to go. But by having women be the providers of security along with men, they engage with societies, they engage with the vulnerable in a different way and help provide that security.

And finally, because I see the time is up, just a month and a half ago, when Under Secretary for Political Affairs Toria Nuland and I met with President Bazoum in Niger, we were thrilled to hear that his No. 1 priority is educating girls, because ultimately that is going to be what delivers the brighter future for the society.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you very much. And I yield back.

Ms. BASS. Representative Omar?

Ms. OMAR. Thank you, Chairwoman Bass.

Mr. Gonzales, I wanted to see if you can tell us, has the Administration finalized a strategic plan for our policies toward Somalia, the Sahel, and the DRC?

Mr. GONZALES. I am not directly engaged with the Somalia policy, but my understanding is that it is moving forward through the interagency.

I am very much engaged day in and day out on the Sahel strategy, and I am pleased to say that it is quite far along. Certainly, there is consensus across the interagency in terms of the theory of the case and the theory of change.

It is a big territory with disparate environments. And so the key will be how we implement to respond to the specific nuances in each location, recognizing that resources are limited and we cannot do everything, and we cannot even do the select things everywhere, and so we must prioritize.

But we are not going to succeed if we do not have a strategy. And so we are—this Administration definitely is focused on developing strategies that are not only pursued at post, but are endorsed here in Washington, so that the totality of the U.S. Government is pursuing it.

Ms. OMAR. Yes. I asked because every time I have traveled to Africa, I have been briefed on the need to balance the three D's, but we haven't seen any evidence of that balance.

I have seen that the Pentagon has been calling the shots, especially in Somalia, so it is really important that we get a comprehensive strategy on all of these countries.

Public reporting has indicated that the drone strikes we have conducted this year in Somalia were approved by AFRICOM rather than the White House. Is that your understanding too?

Mr. GONZALES. That would really be a question for the Department of Defense. I am not sure about the protocols and how they exercise those authorities.

Ms. OMAR. OK. Do you know what the legal basis for these strikes were?

Mr. GONZALES. My understanding is that they are based in collective self-defense. But in terms of the specific legalities, I am afraid I do not have that information. I am not a lawyer.

Ms. OMAR. I have a letter out to you all, so I hope you will expedite some answers for me in that regard.

Do you know how many designated foreign terrorist organizations that mainly operated in the sub-Saharan Africa prior to 2001 before our war on terror began?

Mr. GONZALES. No, ma'am, I do not. I can certainly get that for you.

Ms. OMAR. It was zero.

Do you know how many are there now?

Mr. GONZALES. I just cleared off on the list a couple of days ago, so I have seen it, but the number I do not have off the top of my head.

Ms. OMAR. There are ten at the moment.

So we went from zero to ten since 2001. I think it is very hard to claim that our "security first" approach to counterterrorism, including drone strikes and partnering with security forces that violate human rights, is working.

Are you familiar with the 2017 report from the United Nations Development Programme entitled "Journey to Extremism in Africa"?

Mr. GONZALES. I am. And, in fact, that is the—I believe that is the report that Assistant Administrator Jenkins cited in terms of the 71 percent figure in terms of why people go to violent extremists, is because 71 percent of them had recently experienced a case of abuse at the hands of State authorities.

Ms. OMAR. Yes. And it is really important that we do understand that that very context, right, that the root causes of this might be very different, depending on where you are on the continent, but that the flash point for most of these people to join these organizations is a human rights violation.

So how is it that we are effectively combating terrorism in Africa by supporting security forces that are enacting these human rights violations, which is something that Mr. Jenkins did not answer? And how can we say it is good for stability when there have been two coups in Mali, one in Guinea, one in Chad, all within a year?

Mr. GONZALES. So I will go back to your first question, about strategy, and I think—because the Sahel strategy captures this quite nicely.

At the core of our Sahel strategy is we recognize that the cause is a governance deficiency, the remedy must be a governance response.

And so it brings the U.S. Government in totality, focused on supporting governance at the national level, in terms of what are the capabilities fighting corruption, transparency, accountability—

Ms. OMAR. It seems like we are—I am sorry—it seems like our strategy is to support the same governing bodies that continue to cause instability and continue to cause human rights violations, which, in turn, has increased the number of people who are joining terrorism and has increased the level of terrorism that exists in the continent.

I mean, we are currently involved heavily in all of these countries, yet they continue to get destabilized every year. So what are we doing that is different, and what have we learned from our involvement?

Mr. GONZALES. So, again, I would argue that we cannot counter the security threat or the governance threat if we are not engaging with the government that is involved in both sides of that. And so bolstering governance at the national level and the local level, but also engaging with security and enabling the security sector institutions to become more capable, more responsible and responsive to the needs of the citizens.

And, frankly, more accountable. I am incredibly blunt with my African counterparts in terms of the role that their forces' activities in abusing civilians play in driving citizens into the hands of extremists.

And not only do we need to support and protect and hold accountable abuses of human rights because it is the right thing to do and it is our values, but fundamentally it is critical to providing security and stability and public confidence back in the State.

Ms. OMAR. Yes. I appreciate that.

Thank you, Chairwoman for your generosity. I think it is really important that we also take accountability for the policies that we are engaging in and how that is fueling some of the things that are happening in the continent.

So thank you, and I look forward to following up with you, Mr. Gonzales.

Ms. BASS. Representative Sherman?

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you. And I want to thank the chairs for convening this hearing.

The first question relates to the Nile and Ethiopia's new dam. I wonder if Mr. Gonzales can tell us, what are the legal constraints on Ethiopia in filling this dam, both under the traditional international law of riparian States and according to any treaty obligations that Ethiopia has assumed?

Mr. GONZALES. Great. Thank you, Congressman.

Again, not a lawyer and haven't reviewed the particulars of Ethiopia's treaty obligations, but fundamentally as—

Mr. SHERMAN. Well, does the U.S. have a position on what are the legal rights? I mean, this is one of the biggest disputes in East Africa, the biggest international disputes? Do we know whether Ethiopia says, "Hey, the water goes through our country, we get to dam it up"? Is that a legitimate position legally or not?

Mr. GONZALES. We know that Ethiopia says that, and we know that the downstream effects are there. Ultimately, the answer needs to be a solution that is viable to the existence and the needs of all three of the member States.

And that is why we have tried over and over to lend our good offices both directly, as we have seen in recent years as well as—

Mr. SHERMAN. Reclaiming my time. I will have to go to other legal experts. But you would think that, in addition to just believing that it would be great if everybody works things out, we would know what the legal rights of the parties are, and that we would be standing up not only for everybody getting along, which is great, but also for international law.

Turning again to Ethiopia, without objection, I would like to put into the record the September 2021 situation report published by Omna Tigray.

Without objection?

Ms. BASS. Yes, without objection.

[The information referred to follows:]



MEMORANDUM

September 23, 2021

To: The Honorable Karen Bass
Attention: Tomckah Burl

From: Alexis Arieff, Coordinator, Specialist in African Affairs, aarieff@crs.loc.gov, 7-2459
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Sarah R. Collins, Research Assistant, scollins@crs.loc.gov, 7-0829

Subject: Conflict in Africa: Background and Possible Questions for Hearing

This memorandum was prepared at your request in support of a planned hearing on conflict in Africa. It includes possible questions for witnesses. Some material was drawn from and may be used in other CRS products, but the confidentiality of your request is assured. Please contact us for any further assistance.

Introduction: Recent Conflict Trends in Africa

After surging in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, conflicts waned in much of Sub-Saharan Africa (“Africa,” hereafter)¹ in the 2000s with the end of devastating wars in Angola, Burundi, Ethiopia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and southern Sudan. Over the past decade, new conflicts have erupted (e.g., in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, and South Sudan), and several long-running conflicts have eluded resolution (e.g., in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, and parts of Sudan). Data compiled by the non-governmental Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) show that conflict-related violent events grew in frequency in Africa between 2011 and 2020 (Fig. 1).² The number of forcibly displaced people in Africa rose from 10 million to 29 million over the same period.³ Estimates of African conflict fatalities vary; ACLED reports some 257,000 fatalities from 2011 to 2020, while other sources suggest a higher toll.⁴

Trends have not been uniformly negative. Sudan’s fragile political transition in 2019, for example, opened the way to peace talks with insurgent movements. Multiple African countries have weathered recent political turmoil without tipping into conflict—including democracies (e.g., Ghana, Senegal, and South Africa), post-conflict countries (e.g., Liberia and Sierra Leone), and some autocracies facing sharp

¹ Unless noted, “Africa” is defined herein as the countries within the scope of the State Department’s Bureau of African Affairs.

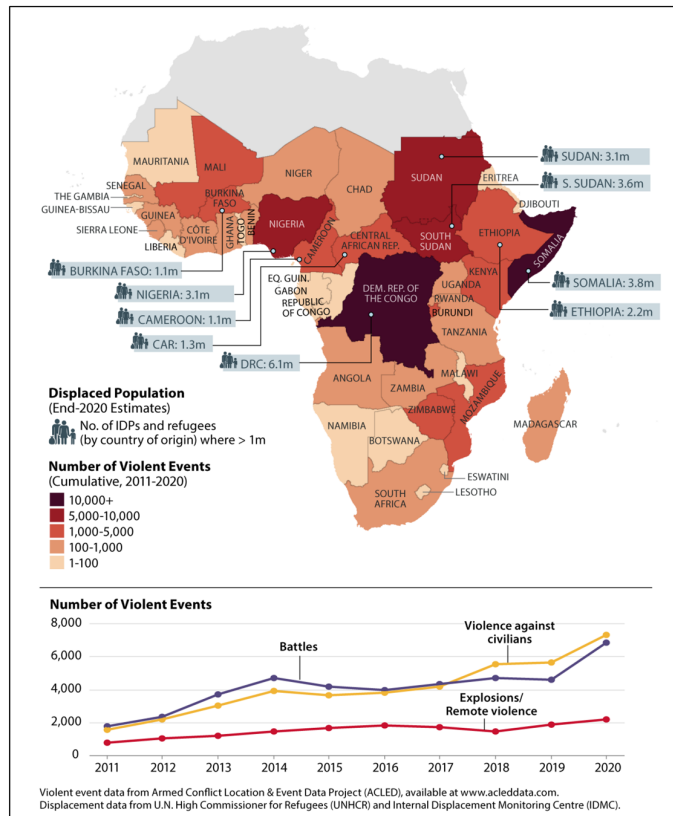
² ACLED data on “battles,” “violence against civilians,” and “explosions/remote violence,” January 1, 2011-December 31, 2020.

³ CRS analysis of U.N. data available at <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>. Conflicts are the leading but not sole cause of population displacement in Africa; some displacements are attributable to natural disasters or state persecution, for example.

⁴ ACLED data, *op. cit.*; Cecchi et al., *South Sudan: Estimates of Crisis-Attributable Mortality in South Sudan, December 2013-April 2018: A Statistical Analysis*, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), September 2018.

internal rifts (e.g., Togo, Uganda, and Zimbabwe). Still, African countries comprised 17 of the 25 most “fragile states” on the non-governmental Fund for Peace’s *Fragile States Index* in 2021, reflecting an analysis of social, economic, and political factors associated with “the vulnerability of states to collapse.”

Figure 1. Violent Events (2011-2020) and Displacement in Africa



Source and Notes: CRS graphic, based on ACLED data on “battles,” “violence against civilians,” and “explosions/remote violence,” January 1, 2011-December 31, 2020. IDPs=internally displaced persons. Ongoing conflicts in Ethiopia and elsewhere are likely to shift displacement and events data in 2021.

Drivers of Conflict and Insurgent Recruitment: Overview of Theories

Academics and policymakers have sought to identify factors that make some countries more likely to experience conflict, along with those that may make an individual more likely to participate in one. Both

are complex phenomena that generally elude straightforward or universal explanations. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has commissioned external studies on these topics and has identified several “factors, or drivers, that can favor the rise of violent extremism or insurgency”:

Broadly speaking, these include structural “push” factors, including high levels of social marginalization and fragmentation; poorly governed or ungoverned areas; government repression and human rights violations; endemic corruption and elite impunity; and cultural threat perceptions. Simultaneously, “pull” factors that have a direct influence on individual level radicalization and recruitment include access to material resources, social status and respect from peers; a sense of belonging, adventure, and self-esteem or personal empowerment that individuals and groups that have long viewed themselves as victimized and marginalized can derive from the feeling that they are making history; and the prospect of achieving glory and fame.⁵

Poverty alone does not appear to explain individual recruitment or instability in a given location.⁶ Studies point to the importance of “individual level” messaging, social networks, person-to-person contacts, and personal experiences of state repression or abuse.⁷ Characterizing the apparent interplay of contextual and individual factors, USAID’s conflict assessment framework posits that conflict “is driven by key actors in society... who actively mobilize people and resources to engage in acts of violence on the basis of grievance, such as a group’s perception that it has been excluded from political and economic life.”⁸

Social science research has identified various country-level factors that may drive conflict, including ethnic fragmentation, natural resource competition, and political transitions—all of which are debated.⁹ The U.S. government’s Africa Center for Strategic Studies recently linked conflicts in Africa to authoritarianism, asserting that, “the lack of legitimacy and accountability are at the root of many of Africa’s armed conflicts, reflecting an inability of these political systems to accommodate participation, contestation, and power-sharing.”¹⁰ Separately, an emerging body of research has looked at how gender identities, or what it means to be an “ideal” man or woman in a society, may interact with other dynamics to drive conflict, with some finding a correlation between conflict and “patriarchal” practices; some militant groups reportedly exploit different grievances of men and women for recruitment.

Sub-Regional Snapshots

West Africa

The Sahel.¹¹ Conflicts involving Islamist armed groups, ethnic separatists, communal defense militias, and criminal actors have proliferated in West Africa’s Sahel region over the past decade, deepening development, humanitarian, and governance challenges and threatening coastal West African countries. Affiliates of the Islamic State (IS) and Al Qaeda are active in Mali, Burkina Faso, and parts of Niger, a key Western security partner in the region. Mali has been mired in crises since 2012, when the state nearly collapsed amid a separatist rebellion, military coup, and Islamist insurgent advance. Conflict spread in 2016 to Burkina Faso, where Islamist armed groups have asserted control in parts of the country and carried out attacks in the capital. Human rights groups report that state security forces in the Sahel have

⁵ USAID, *The Development Response to Violent Extremism and Insurgency: Putting Principles into Practice*, 2011.

⁶ USAID, *Guide to the Drivers of Violent Extremism*, 2009. See also, e.g., Mercy Corps, “Injustice, Not Unemployment, A Key Driver of Youth Participation in Violence,” February 17, 2015.

⁷ U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), *Preventing and Responding to Violent Extremism in Africa: A Development Approach*, 2015; and *Journey to Extremism in Africa: Drivers, Incentives, and the Tipping Point for Recruitment*, 2017.

⁸ USAID, *Conflict Assessment Framework: Version 2.0*, 2012.

⁹ RAND, *Understanding Conflict Trends: A Review of the Social Science Literature on the Causes of Conflict*, 2017.

¹⁰ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, “Autocracy and Instability in Africa,” March 9, 2021.

¹¹ See CRS In Focus IF10116, *Crisis in Mali*; CRS In Focus IF10434, *Burkina Faso*; CRS In Focus IF11817, *Chad: Implications of President Déby’s Death and Transition*; and CRS testimony, “U.S. Counterterrorism Priorities and Challenges in Africa,” House Committee on Oversight and Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, December 16, 2019.

committed extrajudicial killings and other abuses, which may facilitate insurgent recruitment.¹² Since 2020, militaries in Chad and Mali—along with nearby Guinea—have seized power, underscoring state legitimacy and governance challenges. In June 2021, France announced plans to draw down its several thousand soldiers currently deployed under a U.S.-supported regional counterterrorism mission. Mali is reportedly considering contracting the Wagner Group, a Russian security firm under U.S. sanctions, with uncertain implications; Wagner is reportedly currently active in the Central African Republic (below).¹³

Nigeria and Lake Chad Basin.¹⁴ A years-long conflict with Boko Haram and an IS-affiliated splinter faction has reportedly killed tens of thousands of people in northeastern Nigeria and adjacent regions of Cameroon, Chad, and Niger.¹⁵ Insurgents and state security forces have reportedly committed extensive abuses,¹⁶ and the conflict has caused a multi-country humanitarian emergency. Armed banditry and other criminality (including mass abductions of schoolchildren) have meanwhile escalated in northwest Nigeria, where Islamist militants have reportedly sought to establish themselves. Violence between farmers and livestock herders also has surged the northwest and the ethnically diverse central Middle Belt region.

East Africa

Somalia.¹⁷ Al Shabaab, an Al Qaeda affiliate, continues to wage an asymmetric campaign against the Somali government, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and international targets. The group has killed thousands of civilians since the mid-2000s and staged large attacks in the broader region, most notably in Kenya. A January 2020 Al Shabaab raid on a Kenyan military base used by the U.S. military killed one U.S. soldier and two U.S. contractors.¹⁸ A relatively small IS faction is active in northern Somalia. Tensions between Somalia's federal government and its member states, and among political elites, have fueled instability, undermining both the fight against Al Shabaab and nation building.

Ethiopia.¹⁹ A conflict in the northern region of Tigray that began in late 2020 has created a major humanitarian crisis. Ethiopia's military, backed by subnational forces and Eritrea's military, is fighting an ethnic insurgency led by the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which dominated the country's ruling coalition for almost three decades prior to the 2018 election of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. The conflict has spread into other areas within Ethiopia and threatens to escalate further as the government mobilizes civilians to fight and the TPLF allies with other rebel groups. U.N. and U.S. officials have alleged atrocities and a de-facto government humanitarian blockade on Tigray. Eritrea's involvement and tensions between Ethiopia and Sudan have spurred concerns of broader instability.

Sudan.²⁰ Sudan's transitional government, which assumed power in 2019 after the military's ouster of longtime leader Omar al Bashir, signed a peace deal in mid-2020 with insurgent groups in the western Darfur region and Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Instability continues to plague the country's periphery. Continued intercommunal violence underscores concerns about the government's capacity to protect civilians since the U.N. peacekeeping mission withdrew from Darfur in late 2020.

¹² Human Rights Watch (HRW), "Sahel: End Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations," February 13, 2021.

¹³ Reuters, "French minister in Mali to pressure junta over Russian mercenaries," September 20, 2021.

¹⁴ See CRS In Focus IF10173, *Boko Haram and the Islamic State's West Africa Province*, and CRS Report RL33964, *Nigeria: Current Issues and U.S. Policy*.

¹⁵ Council on Foreign Relations, "Nigeria Security Tracker," updated as of August 25, 2021.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Amnesty International (AI), *Stars on Their Shoulders, Blood on their Hands: War Crimes Committed by the Nigerian Military*, 2015; AI, *Cameroon's Secret Torture Chambers: Human Rights Violations and War Crimes in the Fight Against Boko Haram*, 2017; and HRW, *They Didn't Know if I was Alive or Dead*, 2019.

¹⁷ See CRS In Focus IF10155, *Somalia*.

¹⁸ U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM), "UPDATE: U.S. Statement on Manda Bay Terrorist Attack," January 5, 2020.

¹⁹ See CRS Report R46905, *Ethiopia's Transition and the Tigray Conflict*.

²⁰ See CRS In Focus IF10182, *Sudan*.

South Sudan.²¹ South Sudan's civil war has featured widespread sexual violence, mass killings, and other atrocities since erupting in 2013, just two years after the country's separation from Sudan. A study estimated in 2018 that nearly 400,000 South Sudanese had died either as an indirect or direct result of the conflict, which has displaced at least a third of the population.²² A 2018 power-sharing deal between the government and some rebel groups quieted some areas, but parts of the agreement have not been fulfilled and some factions have refused to sign. Intercommunal conflicts also persist, spurred by political elites.

Central and Southern Africa

Cameroon.²³ In 2017, Anglophone rebels launched a separatist insurgency in this majority Francophone country after decades of agitation for greater autonomy. State forces and rebels have perpetuated violence against civilians, while attempts to negotiate a settlement have foundered. The Anglophone conflict has placed further pressure on a Cameroonian military already contending with the Boko Haram and IS-linked insurgencies in the north, where violence has intensified since 2018, reversing previous gains.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).²⁴ Instability and a large humanitarian emergency have persisted in eastern DRC since the 1990s. Tensions over land and citizenship rights, local disputes, criminal activity, and regional geopolitics have driven or incentivized violence among dozens of armed groups, some with roots in neighboring countries. The national military has a history of abuses and alleged factional cooperation with militias. Since 2019, the Islamic State has recognized a DRC-based armed group of Ugandan origin as part of a new "IS Central Africa Province."²⁵ Aid agencies have reported an increase in violence against civilians since the government imposed martial law in several eastern provinces in May 2021 as part of a stated effort to curtail violence by armed groups.

Central African Republic (CAR).²⁵ Rival militias and state security forces have fought for control of territory and economic assets (such as mining sites and trade routes) since rebels overthrew the government in 2013. Government forces retook large areas from rebel forces in the first half of 2021 with the help of Russian security contractors, reflecting expanding Russian influence in recent years. Violence against and among civilians has often played out along ethnic and sectarian lines, including the "ethnic cleansing" of CAR's Muslim minority in 2013-2014, per U.N. investigators.²⁶ The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan-origin armed group responsible for atrocities, is also active in parts of CAR.

Mozambique. Since 2017, Mozambique has faced a mounting Islamist insurgency in the economically and politically marginalized province of Cabo Delgado, along its northern border with Tanzania.²⁷ The group, recognized by IS media as part of the IS Central Africa affiliate, has targeted state facilities and personnel, local civilians, and workers in natural gas operations financed in part by the U.S. Export-Import Bank. Insurgents also have staged attacks in Tanzania and may have received operational support from IS networks abroad.²⁸ Mozambican security forces have allegedly committed extensive abuses during counterinsurgency operations.²⁹ Other African countries have recently deployed military forces to combat the insurgents, at the government's request.

²¹ See CRS In Focus IF10218, *South Sudan*.

²² Cecchi et al., *South Sudan: Estimates of Crisis-Attributable Mortality*, September 2018, op. cit.

²³ See CRS In Focus IF10279, *Cameroon*.

²⁴ See CRS Report R43166, *Democratic Republic of Congo: Background and U.S. Relations*.

²⁵ See CRS In Focus IF11171, *Crisis in the Central African Republic*.

²⁶ *Final Report of the International Commission of Inquiry on the Central African Republic*, S/2014/928, December 22, 2014.

²⁷ CRS In Focus IF11864, *Insurgency in Northern Mozambique: Nature and Responses*.

²⁸ *Twenty-seventh report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team submitted pursuant to resolution 2368 (2017) concerning ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities*, S/2021/68, February 3, 2021.

²⁹ HRW, *Mozambique: Security Forces Abusing Suspected Insurgents*, December 4, 2018; and AI, *Mozambique: Torture by Security Forces in Gruesome Videos Must be Investigated*, September 9, 2020.

Humanitarian Impact

Conflict-related emergencies in Africa have contributed to a global humanitarian and displacement crisis.³⁰ The conflict in South Sudan has forced more than 2 million people to flee the country as refugees—the largest refugee population in Africa and among the top five globally for years.³¹ Africa's largest internally displaced population is in DRC (5 million as of late 2020), behind only Syria globally. In recent years, Islamist insurgencies in Burkina Faso and Mozambique have generated two of the world's fastest-growing humanitarian crises. Four of the five most dangerous countries in the world for aid workers in 2020 were in Africa, according to the non-governmental Aid Worker Security Database: South Sudan, DRC, CAR, and Somalia. Ethiopia may join the list in 2021: at least 23 aid workers have reportedly been killed in Tigray since the conflict there began.

Conflicts have created or deepened existing food security crises in parts of Africa, and attacks on aid workers have impeded relief efforts. In June 2021, the U.N. top humanitarian official announced that famine was occurring in Tigray.³² The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Platform, which monitors global food insecurity, estimated in July 2021 that 400,000 Ethiopians in Tigray and neighboring areas were facing “catastrophe”-level food insecurity, with 4 million more facing crisis- or emergency-level food shortages.³³ USAID assesses that as many as 900,000 people in Tigray are facing famine conditions.³⁴ The IPC has also raised concerns of potential famine in South Sudan.³⁵ The IPC projects that 26 million people in DRC (one in four) will face acute food insecurity in 2021; in CAR, over half the population (2.6 million people) is reportedly food insecure.³⁶ Africa's conflicts have eroded state capacity and service provision, upended local economies, and complicated efforts to respond to public health challenges such as Ebola outbreaks and the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Selected Issues

Islamist Terrorism and Insurgency. Local IS and Al Qaeda affiliates are involved in a growing number of African conflicts, leading U.S. officials to identify Africa as a growing focus of global counterterrorism efforts.³⁷ The State Department currently designates 17 groups based in Africa (including North Africa) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs), of which 14 were listed in the past decade. The Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) has characterized Al Shabaab in Somalia as “the largest, wealthiest, and most violent Al Qaeda-associated group in the world.”³⁸ In some cases, armed Islamists have leveraged separatist or other types of insurgencies to expand their influence and establish safe havens (e.g., in Mali in 2012 and DRC since 2019). U.S. officials have publicly characterized many Africa-based Islamist armed groups as posing primarily local and regional threats, and Islamist armed groups are absent from several African conflicts with a high humanitarian toll (e.g., DRC, Ethiopia, and South Sudan).

³⁰ See CRS In Focus IF10568, *Overview of the Global Humanitarian and Displacement Crisis*, by Rhoda Margesson.

³¹ U.N. data, “Top International Displacement Situations by Country of Origin,” at <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

³² Reuters, “About 350,000 people in Ethiopia's Tigray in famine -U.N. analysis,” June 11, 2021.

³³ IPC, *Famine Review of the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis: Conclusions and Recommendations for Tigray Region, Ethiopia*, July 2021.

³⁴ Statement of USAID Acting Assistant Administrator Sarah Charles, HFAC, *The Conflict in Ethiopia*, hearing, June 29, 2021.

³⁵ IPC, *South Sudan: Consolidated Findings from the IPC Technical Working Group and External Reviews*, 2020.

³⁶ IPC, *DRC Acute Food Insecurity Situation*, July 2021; U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), *Central African Republic Situation Report*, September 15, 2021.

³⁷ State Department, “Readout of the Political Directors Small Group Meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh/ISIS,” September 9, 2021.

³⁸ AFRICOM 2021 *Posture Statement*, April 2021.

Mass Atrocities. U.N. experts have identified armed conflicts as a top risk factor for mass atrocities (i.e., large-scale, systematic violence against civilians).³⁹ In late 2020, the Early Warning Project of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum’s Simon-Skjoldt Center for the Prevention of Genocide reported that 14 of the top 30 countries at risk of new mass killings in 2020-21 were in Africa.⁴⁰ DRC, Nigeria, Somalia, and Ethiopia were in the top ten. At the time of the report’s release, state-led mass killings had reportedly recently occurred in Ethiopia, Nigeria, South Sudan, and Sudan, while non-state-led atrocities had recently been reported in DRC, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan.⁴¹ The Biden Administration subsequently reported acts of “ethnic cleansing” in Tigray, Ethiopia, and announced a review to determine whether human rights violations during that conflict constitute crimes against humanity or genocide.⁴²

Sexual Violence as a Tactic of War. Civilians in Africa’s conflict zones—particularly women and children, but also men—often are vulnerable to sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization, and forced marriage.⁴³ Some incidents appear to be opportunistic; in other cases, combatants appear to have employed sexual violence as a purposeful tactic. In his 2021 annual report on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), the U.N. Secretary-General expressed particular concern with reports of widespread rape by combatants in Ethiopia’s Tigray conflict.⁴⁴ The report also documented allegations of sexual violence linked to the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon, political violence in Burundi, farmer-herder violence in Sudan, clan-based attacks in Somalia, and intercommunal clashes in South Sudan and DRC. Four U.N. peacekeeping operations—in CAR, Mali, DRC, and South Sudan—have a specific mandate to address CRSV.

U.S. Responses: Overview of Tools

The Biden Administration has continued longstanding U.S. efforts to address regional security challenges in Africa (including terrorism and other transnational threats) through diplomacy, foreign assistance and military cooperation, support for U.N. and African-led peacekeeping and stabilization operations, and sanctions. These tools are discussed in further detail below. Congress has shaped these efforts through its authorization and appropriation of foreign assistance, security cooperation, and U.S. funding for U.N. peacekeeping, through legislation focused on certain African countries, and through oversight.

With bipartisan congressional support, successive U.S. Administrations also have sought to reinforce African-led peace and security institutions and initiatives, including via diplomatic backing for African mediation efforts and aid to build the capacity of African Union (AU) and sub-regional early-warning systems. The United States also has provided logistical support, training, and equipment to some African-led military interventions, along with military advisory support in some cases (notably Somalia). At the same time, the Biden Administration, like its predecessors, has rejected the use of U.N. assessed

³⁹ U.N., *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention*, 2014. Among the various atrocities referenced here, genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes are defined in international treaties and conventions.

⁴⁰ Early Warning Project, *Countries at Risk for Mass Killing 2020-21*, December 2020.

⁴¹ See, e.g., U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), “Tigray: Hundreds of civilians reported killed in artillery strikes, warns UN rights chief,” December 22, 2020; International Criminal Court, *Statement of the Prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, on the conclusion of the preliminary examination of the situation in Nigeria*, December 11, 2020; UNOHCHR, “U.N. Human Rights Commission collects evidence to hold more than 40 South Sudanese officials accountable for war crimes and crimes against humanity,” February 23, 2018; *New York Times*, “The Dictator Who Waged War on Darfur Is Gone, but the Killing Goes On,” July 30, 2020; UNOHCHR, “1,300 civilians killed in the DRC in past eight months – Bachelet,” June 5, 2020.

⁴² Testimony by Secretary of State Antony Blinken, *The Biden Administration’s Priorities for U.S. Foreign Policy*, House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC), March 10, 2021. See also UNOHCHR, “Ethiopia: Persistent, credible reports of grave violations in Tigray underscore urgent need for human rights access – Bachelet,” March 4, 2021.

⁴³ U.N. Peacekeeping Operations, “Conflict-Related Sexual Violence,” at <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/conflict-related-sexual-violence>. For background on U.S. responses, see also archived CRS Report R40956, *Sexual Violence in African Conflicts*.

⁴⁴ U.N. Secretary General, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence 2020*, S/2021/312, March 30, 2021.

contributions—of which the United States would underwrite at least a quarter of the cost—to fund African-led military operations in the Sahel, as the AU and U.N. Secretary-General have proposed.⁴⁵

Diplomatic Engagement. Addressing the conflict and humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia’s Tigray region and encouraging a democratic transition in Sudan appear to be top diplomatic priorities in Africa for the Biden Administration, which has appointed veteran diplomat Jeffrey Feltman as Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa. In her July 2021 Senate confirmation hearing to serve as Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador Molly Phee alluded to the Administration’s “current intensive effort to urge all parties to the conflict in Ethiopia to implement an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to put a halt to atrocities against civilians.”⁴⁶ More broadly, she drew a connection between addressing conflicts in Africa and the Administration’s foreign policy emphasis on democracy, asserting “a direct correlation between African governments that are authoritarian and the incidence of internal conflict, displacement, and migration.” The Administration has not appointed a Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan to succeed Ambassador (ret.) Donald Booth, who held the post until September 2021. The Administration is reportedly considering nominating a U.S. Ambassador to Sudan. Whether the Administration will appoint envoys to coordinate and lead U.S. responses to conflicts in Africa’s Great Lakes region and/or the Sahel, as previous Administrations did at various times, remains to be seen.

Foreign Assistance. Some USAID programs in Africa seek to mitigate conflicts, prevent “violent extremism,” and/or address the risk of mass atrocities. More broadly, many USAID programs seek to address issues that may drive conflict and instability, for instance by promoting good governance or inclusive economic growth. The State Department also administers some governance and stabilization programs, along with justice sector and security assistance that seeks to build African governments’ capacity to counter armed groups and address state abuses that may facilitate insurgent recruitment. The State Department and/or the Department of Defense (DOD, see below) have provided training and equipment to regional military intervention forces in Somalia, the Sahel, and the Lake Chad Basin.

In the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, Congress directed foreign assistance funds to address conflicts in LRA-affected areas, DRC, the Lake Chad Basin, the Sahel, South Sudan, and Sudan (P.L. 116-260, §7042 of Division K). Congress also has enacted restrictions on aid to some African countries due to concerns about conflict-related abuses, among other issues. For example, the same Act restricts certain aid to the government and/or armed forces of countries in Africa’s Great Lakes region, Cameroon, South Sudan, and Sudan. Separately, the State Department designated several African countries under the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA, Title IV of P.L. 110-457) in 2021—DRC, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, and South Sudan—triggering possible aid restrictions in FY2022.⁴⁷

Military Activities.⁴⁸ Somalia is the only sub-Saharan African country where the U.S. military currently conducts offensive counterterrorism strikes.⁴⁹ The Biden Administration has reduced the pace of these strikes, while asserting that U.S. military action against Al Shabaab remains “covered by the 2001 AUMF

⁴⁵ U.S. Mission to the U.N., “Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Mali,” June 14, 2021. U.S. officials have cited a range of concerns, including a potential reduction in U.S. oversight and possible congressional objections.

⁴⁶ Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), “Hearing on Pending Nominations,” July 20, 2021.

⁴⁷ State Department, 2021 Trafficking in Persons Report, June 1, 2021. See CRS In Focus IF10901, *Child Soldiers Prevention Act: Security Assistance Restrictions*.

⁴⁸ See “U.S. Military Engagement in Africa,” in CRS Report R45428, *Sub-Saharan Africa: Key Issues and U.S. Engagement*.

⁴⁹ In 2019, then-Commander of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) General Thomas Waldhauser testified to Congress in an open session that he had not been granted “offensive strike capabilities or [executive] authorities” outside Libya and Somalia, while asserting that any U.S. forces accompanying local forces on counterterrorism missions would have an “inherent right of self-defense and collective self-defense,” were they to come under attack. Senate Committee on Armed Services, *U.S. Africa Command and Southern Command*, February 7, 2019.

[Authorization for Use of Military Force] as an associated force of Al Qaeda.⁵⁰ Officials reportedly continue to review changes that the Trump Administration made to the U.S. military posture in Africa, including the relocation of some 650-800 U.S. military advisors from Somalia to neighboring countries in late 2020.⁵¹ In the Sahel, U.S. officials have pledged to continue U.S. military logistical and intelligence support for French-led regional counterterrorism operations amid France's stated plans to curtail its military posture in the region.⁵² DOD also administers certain U.S. security cooperation activities⁵³ in Africa and conducts regular military and naval exercises with African partners.

U.N. Peacekeeping. As a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, the United States plays a key role in establishing, renewing, and funding U.N. peacekeeping operations⁵⁴—of which six are in Africa, including the world's four largest (in CAR, DRC, Mali, and South Sudan). The Biden Administration has expressed support for multilateral approaches to global security issues, and recently voted to continue the U.N. operation in Mali (in June) and to increase the troop ceiling of the U.N. operation in CAR (in March). In addition to U.S. assessed contributions to U.N. peacekeeping budgets, the State Department provides training and equipment bilaterally to African peacekeeping troop and police contributors. As of July 2021, 27 U.S. military staff officers were serving in U.N. peacekeeping operations in Africa.

Sanctions.⁵⁵ Successive Presidents have invoked legal and constitutional authorities to impose financial and/or travel restrictions on persons found to be undermining stability or perpetuating abuses in African conflict settings. Country-specific executive orders establishing economic sanctions regimes are in effect with regard to conflict-affected Burundi, CAR, DRC, Ethiopia, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan.⁵⁶ Other executive orders with a global scope focus on factors that may contribute to African conflicts and/or occur alongside them, such as corruption and transnational organized crime. The Biden Administration announced the most recent African country-specific sanctions regime on September 17, 2021, related to the crisis in northern Ethiopia, and has threatened to designate personnel of the governments of Ethiopia and Eritrea, and the TPLF, if they continue to pursue conflict over negotiations.

Outlook. An interagency review in 2018 of U.S. stabilization assistance asserted that stabilization “is an inherently political endeavor,” requiring “locally legitimate authorities and systems [that] can peaceably manage conflict and prevent a resurgence of violence.”⁵⁷ The review assessed that U.S. stabilization efforts had “consistently been limited by the lack of strategic clarity, organizational discipline, and unity of effort.” Noting these and other findings, in 2019, Congress enacted the Global Fragility Act (P.L. 116-94, Title V of Division J), which—among other provisions—requires the executive branch to develop a global strategy to help stabilize conflict-affected areas, address “global fragility,” and increase U.S. capacity to prevent extremism and violent conflict. Members of Congress may examine whether U.S. conflict resolution efforts in Africa respond to congressional directives, incorporate lessons learned from other settings, and include appropriate benchmarks for evaluating effectiveness.

⁵⁰ SFRC, Hearing on Authorizations of Use of Force: Administration Perspectives, August 3, 2021. For background, see CRS Report R43983, *2001 Authorization for Use of Military Force: Issues Concerning Its Continued Application*.

⁵¹ *New York Times*, “Pentagon weighs proposal to send dozens of troops back to Somalia,” June 15, 2021.

⁵² State Department, “Digital Press Briefing with Ambassador Victoria Nuland,” August 5, 2021.

⁵³ See CRS In Focus IF11677, *Defense Primer: DOD “Title 10” Security Cooperation*.

⁵⁴ See CRS In Focus IF10597, *United Nations Issues: U.S. Funding of U.N. Peacekeeping*.

⁵⁵ See CRS In Focus IF11730, *Economic Sanctions: Overview for the 117th Congress*.

⁵⁶ Available on the Federal Register at <https://www.federalregister.gov/>. With regard to Sudan, see also CRS Insight IN11531, *Sudan’s Removal from the State Sponsors of Terrorism List*.

⁵⁷ State Department, USAID, and DOD, *Stabilization Assistance Review*, 2018.

Possible Questions

Terrorism. Do conflicts involving Islamist armed groups require a different international toolset from other types of conflicts? When, if ever, should Islamist insurgents be included in peace talks? How have U.S. counterterrorism and “countering violent extremism” efforts affected regional security in Africa? How, if at all, will the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan affect Islamist insurgencies or terrorism in Africa?

Atrocities and Sexual Violence. Where in Africa should the United States focus its atrocity prevention efforts? How would you assess U.S. atrocity-prevention efforts in Africa since the Obama Administration’s establishment of the interagency Atrocity Prevention Board in 2011? How can the United States respond to the specific challenges faced by women and girls in African conflicts?

U.S. Responses. What U.S. tools have proven most effective for addressing and preventing conflicts in Africa? What can or should Congress do, if anything, to bolster these or other tools? To what extent has the United States applied the findings of the 2018 Stabilization Assistance Review in Africa? What lessons from the U.S. experience in Afghanistan might be relevant to security assistance or other state capacity building efforts in Africa? How well adapted are U.S. security assistance tools to situations in Africa in which state abuses are reportedly driving insurgent or terrorist recruitment? What might alternatives look like? How has the Global Fragility Act influenced U.S. policy and aid in Africa? What, if any, U.S. efforts target criminal networks, arms traffickers, and money launderers that may help perpetuate conflicts in African countries? What have been the main accomplishments and shortfalls of the African Union’s peace and security initiatives? What can the United States do to make U.N. peacekeeping operations in Africa more effective? How well integrated is gender analysis in U.S. security cooperation planning in Africa? How has the United States utilized the Women, Peace, and Security Act (P.L. 115-68) to inform its engagement with African actors?

Mr. SHERMAN. Thank you.

When you look at the casualties in conflicts, the enormous casualties come from deprivation of food and medicine and disease hitting civilian populations, and that is certainly the case with regard to the dispute in Tigray.

We have 2.2 million people who have been internally displaced. We have millions who face starvation. We have 70,000 Tigrayans who have fled to Sudan. However, the Ethiopian Government continues to block humanitarian aid, including food aid, from entering the region.

Is it our position that that is a gross deprivation of human rights and/or a war crime?

Mr. GONZALES. We certainly perceive it as a gross deprivation of human rights.

In terms of particular war crimes determinations, we are looking at the totality of the information on the situation on the ground with regard to any type of designation along those lines.

Mr. SHERMAN. What are we doing to get food to the people who need it?

Mr. GONZALES. We are engaging across the board with all entities who play—

Mr. SHERMAN. We are talking to all the entities, but have we gotten any food into the country in the last week? Are trucks moving? Are planes landing?

Mr. GONZALES. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. SHERMAN. OK.

And I know Mr. Jenkins is right beside you there visually, or virtually, and I assume he confirms that unless he wants to speak up.

Mr. JENKINS. I cannot confirm what has happened in the last week, but we are seized with this issue. We have a disaster assistance response team in country. And yes, we think that it is a deprivation of fundamental human rights.

Mr. SHERMAN. OK, we are seized with the issue, but as far as you know, we haven't been able to get in any significant amount of food in the last week?

Mr. JENKINS. Not to my knowledge.

Mr. SHERMAN. OK.

And then finally, Mr. Gonzales, we lost a war in Afghanistan. To what extent will this inspire extreme Islamic nationalist forces from engaging in terrorism both against the United States but also among the African States that we respect and work with?

Mr. GONZALES. I would expect that it would certainly inspire them, and all the more reason for us to continue to double down on our engagement with our African partners to respond.

Mr. SHERMAN. Have we seen any particular increase in recruitment just in the last few weeks, or is this we have got to be aware of maybe a longer-term response?

Ms. BASS. If you could answer that quickly. I am sorry.

Mr. GONZALES. I would expect it is a longer-term response, but we have not yet observed that on the ground.

Mr. SHERMAN. My time is expired.

Ms. BASS. Thank you.

And I am sorry, members, our clock is off for a minute. So I am using my phone to keep the time.

But let me go to Representative Jacobs right now.

Ms. JACOBS. Well, thank you so much, Madam Chair.

And thank you, Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Gonzales, for coming before our committee.

I think, as we have talked about, we really need to look at conflict in a comprehensive way. Secretary Blinken said it best earlier this year: The tactical counterterrorism tools just do not cut it, and instability and violence are fueled by historical social grievances, a lack of accessible public services, and exclusion from political processes.

On top of that, we know that abuses by State security forces actually fuel local recruitment into these groups. So we need to make sure our counterterrorism operations are not enabling these abuses. And thinking about these challenges exclusively through the lens of counterterrorism is at best insufficient and at worst counterproductive.

In 2018, Rand found that since 1990 our assistance in Africa appears to have little or no effect on political violence. It did, however, find that a more holistic, long-term focus centered around governance and institution-building would yield better results.

So I am glad to hear you all talk so much about governance during this hearing. When I worked at the State Department, it wasn't always the case that our regional bureaus understood the focus on governance needed to be so much. So I am very glad to see that.

And thank you, Mr. Gonzales, for carrying that water.

And it is also why I am so excited about the implementation of the Global Fragility Act and really looking forward to see the selection of priority countries as soon as possible.

I know we have talked a lot about the Sahel and that the strategy will focus on governance. We are very in support of that. I was just wondering, Mr. Gonzales, if the Administration plans to appoint a special envoy to the Sahel.

Mr. GONZALES. At this point, there is no specific plan to do that. Once the Sahel strategy is finalized and we are looking at the specific tactics, it would be most appropriate to pursue it. That may be on the table.

For the time being, since January 20, I, as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for both West Africa and Regional Peace and Security, have effectively been serving the function. I engage with the other international envoys for the Sahel as their peer and counterpart and regularly engage with them.

Ms. JACOBS. Great. Thank you.

And I want to move on to the situation in Mozambique. I know folks have brought up the situation in Cabo Delgado. We know that it is not only a case of ideological issues but exploited grievances of the local population that includes exclusion from economic and political power, unemployment, corruption, abuses by State security forces.

But so far our response has been counterterrorism and security focused, which I think is very problematic.

So, Mr. Gonzales, what is the State Department's plan to devise a comprehensive strategy to address these challenges that actually addresses the underlying grievances of this balance and conflict

and not just more security assistance that I personally think will actually fuel more conflict?

Mr. GONZALES. Yes. So thank you for that question.

I would just counter that, in fact, our approach on Mozambique is not all about security. In fact, for the bulk of this year, our campaign plan to counter ISIS-Mozambique includes four lines of effort.

The first one is security assistance, because, again, providing a response to the manifestation.

The second is related to strategic communications and engaging the public so the public is aware of dynamics and has insight into the threats that are coming, but also on counter violent extremism messaging.

Targeted development humanitarian assessment is our third line of effort.

And then the diplomatic engagement. And in fact, in terms of our outreach to the Nyusi government, it has actually yielded first the appointment of a coordinator for the assistance part of responding to northern Mozambique and not so much the coordinator for the security component.

So I think the security gets a lot of attention because, sadly, the news that continues to reach us is dire, although turning around in the past couple of weeks. But, fundamentally, the core of our strategy really does look at this holistic approach to address the underlying drivers.

Ms. JACOBS. I am glad to hear that. I will say it is hard to message until you have—counter violent extremism messaging is only useful when you actually have the governance reform to go with it. So I hope you are working with the Government of Mozambique to be more politically inclusive of the people of the Cabo Delgado region.

In my last few seconds, Mr. Jenkins—

Ms. BASS. Yes, you have about 15 seconds,

Ms. JACOBS. I am sorry?

Ms. BASS. You have about 15 seconds.

Ms. JACOBS. Perfect.

In 15 seconds, Mr. Jenkins, what else can Congress do to help USAID respond to peace-building and conflict prevention in the continent?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, thank you. With 15 seconds, you took a great step with the Global Fragility Act. Hold us accountable, make sure that we implement that.

Second, we all need to have a conversation about more prevention, not less, and a conversation about less directives, less earmarks, and giving us flexible funding that allows us to not have to plan 3 or 4 years out, but be able to react to something like Cabo Delgado, be able to react to something like the littoral States in coastal West Africa.

We need more flexibility and we need to work with you to get a trust theory in there, that we know what we are doing, we can work together. Exactly as you are saying, it cannot just be a CT strategy. That is why we do not do CT today. We do countering violent extremism, and it is all about the governance.

Ms. BASS. Thank you. Thank you very much.

Representative Vargas?

Mr. VARGAS. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I want to thank the other chair and, of course, our participants today, especially our witnesses.

I want to start where we just left off: more prevention, more flexibility, trust with the youth. So you think that under some of the things that we are doing now, we are getting better at that, but we are not good at it yet.

What more should we be doing in this aspect? What do you need?

Mr. JENKINS. Well, thank you, Congressman.

We have learned a lot in the last 20 years. I would direct people to the Stabilization Assistance Review, the SAR, that was agreed to and written by State Department, Department of Defense, and USAID in 2018. For the first time, we as a government defined what we mean by stabilization. It is about 15 pages of very concise lessons learned not just from Iraq and Afghanistan, but mainly from those two places.

Also, if you have the time, please read the SIGAR, Special Inspector General Afghanistan Reconstruction report. The 20 year report just came out.

What have we learned? It is OK to be slow. In fact, slow is better. It is OK to start small. Shut up and listen. Don't go in with the answers. Just because we are the United States does not mean we are going to solve a problem with more people and more money.

We need to engage locals. We need to engage them with civil society and their local government. We need to listen to them. We need to stop doing things that aren't working. We need to ramp up things that are working.

And all of that needs to be within a strategy where we define what success is going to be. We need to be able to resource that plan and be able to resource it in a way that we can move with agility if things start to work better or stop working the way we want to do.

We know these things. We have known them for a long time. But we often do not execute them. That is the thing we have to do more, as we are currently learning lessons way too slow. We are acquiring the lessons. We just aren't learning them and acting on them.

Mr. VARGAS. One of the things it sounded like that you—actually, I do not think you said it, I think Mr. Gonzales said it—but the whole issue of governance, that it is tough working with some of the governance when you know that there is corruption, when there is abuse, and there is all these other things.

I mean, how do you do that successfully, at the same time making sure that U.S. money is going to the right place?

I mean, it is difficult. We just saw what happened in Afghanistan, and I think the American people are not happy about that and understandably. Of course, we spent so much money there and because of the corruption, in my opinion, and lack of focus, it really was a disaster at the end of the day.

Mr. JENKINS. We cannot let the objective blind us to the reality on the ground. We say this a lot, but we need to mean it. We cannot want to help them more than they want our help.

We can spend money. I can spend stupid money any day of the week. That is not the objective.

The objective is, how do we work with these people, find them where they are? Yes, we cannot tolerate any corruption, any waste, fraud, and abuse. Find a partner at the national level. If there is no proactive change agent there, find someone at the provincial level, find them at the local level.

But slow down and realize this is not a short-term endeavor. If it was easy and short-term, we wouldn't have these problems. We have got to be in for the long haul. There is going to be ups, there is going to be downs.

We need strategic patience. But we need to be realistic and do not sell ourselves on 6-month to 12-month solutions.

These problems are generational. They are going to take time, they are going to take patience, and they are going to take grit.

That is what we have to dedicate ourselves to, not the shiny object that we think we can achieve in a few months. If that was the way to fix these things, they would all be fixed.

Mr. VARGAS. I guess, last, I want to say this, that, obviously, we have to be very, very concerned about security and terrorism. Obviously, that is a great concern to us.

I agree, if we do not look at this thing holistically, that is what we are going to get, I mean, if we do not figure that out.

My niece was in the Peace Corps in Tanzania, and she was there for 2 years, and, unfortunately, because of COVID, she came back even though she applied to stay there longer. And she is a wonderful young lady, that was the greatest experience of her life, of course, and at the same time, she said, "I just loved being there, the people loved Americans. I mean, they did." This is Tanzania, of course, it is a different area.

And the help that they were able to receive was development help too. I mean, the chairwoman said this and it struck me the other day. It is not really until development comes in a real meaningful way and we intertwine all of our economies that a lot of this will go away, because people need affluence, people need the ability to take care of themselves, their family.

And when that happens, people feel that, OK, they are part of the world, they have some ownership in their life, you can call it agency or whatever you want to call it. But to really have ownership over where they are going.

And we have got to figure that out. And I do not think we have done a great job. And especially with all the problems we are having in China and elsewhere, I mean, I do not understand why we are not figuring out how to work deeply, in a deep economic way, with Africa. We need to figure that out.

Again, I know my time is probably up. I do not know how the clock works there. The clock is magical.

Ms. BASS. Yes. No, I am on my iPhone. You are almost at 6 minutes.

Mr. VARGAS. But I thank the chair, and I thank everyone. Thank you very much.

Ms. BASS. And I thank you, Mr. Vargas, for your instructive comments, absolutely.

Well, members and our witnesses, I want to thank you for your time today. I know we will have you back another time because this is an issue that is ongoing. And how to focus and target our authorizing legislation, as well as appropriation legislation, I think, will be very important.

So I want to thank you very much. And the hearing is adjourned.
[Whereupon, at 6 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

APPENDIX

JOINT SUBCOMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights

Karen Bass (D-CA), Chair

Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism

Ted Deutch (D-FL), Chair

September 28, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights and the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism to be held virtually via Cisco WebEx. The hearing will be available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Tuesday, September 28, 2021

TIME: 2:00 p.m., EDT

SUBJECT: Understanding Conflict in Africa

WITNESSES: Mr. Michael C. Gonzales
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Bureau of African Affairs
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Robert Jenkins
Assistant to the Administrator
Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization
U.S. Agency for International Development

By Direction of the Chair

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON ~~Understanding Conflict in Africa~~ ^{Africa + MENA} HEARING

Day Tuesday Date 09/28/21 Room WebEx

Starting Time 2:02p Ending Time 5:58p

Recesses 2:21p to 4:43p to to to to to

Presiding Member(s) BASS

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session Electronically Recorded (taped)
Executive (closed) Session Stenographic Record
Televised

TITLE OF HEARING: Understanding Conflict in Africa

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:
See attachment

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes No
(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

Letter from - Omar
(?)
QFR - Bass (2)

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____
or
TIME ADJOURNED 5:58pm


Subcommittee Staff Associate

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICA, GLOBAL HEALTH, AND GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM

HEARING

SEPTEMBER 28, 2021

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
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	Ami Bera, CA
	Tom Malinowski, NJ
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	Colin Allred, TX
	Tom Malinowski, NJ
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	Brad Schneider, IL

<i>PRESENT</i>	<i>MEMBER</i>
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	Brian Mast, FL
	Tim Burchett, TN
	Greg Steube, FL
	Ronny Jackson, TX
	Maria Elvira Salazar, FL

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

Outside Witness Testimony for the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights and the Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism

The HALO Trust & Mines Advisory Group (MAG)

September 28, 2021 Hearing: Understanding Conflict in Africa

As this distinguished committee deliberates on conflict in Africa, we must consider the lingering detritus of war that carries conflict long into the future. Across Africa, landmines, many laid in conflicts decades ago, continue to kill and maim civilians and disrupt lives.

This problem is extensive. According to the annual Landmine Monitor report, in the year 2020, the presence of landmines was confirmed in 20 countries/territories including Angola, Chad, the DRC, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Sudan, Western Sahara, and Zimbabwe. Further, Algeria, Mali, Namibia, and Cameroon are suspected to contain landmines as well. Beyond the enduring threat of landmines, several additional countries also possess other forms of unexploded ordnance (UXO) contamination such as cluster munitions.

Landmines, cluster munitions, and other explosive hazards in Africa are responsible for hundreds of casualties each year. In fact, Mali, Nigeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, and Niger have some of the highest casualty rates from explosive devices in the world. In addition to presenting a risk to human life and security, landmines block access to schools and hospitals. They keep land out of use for farming or the creation of infrastructure, and prevent children from safely playing outside. And terrifyingly, landmines and other hazards contain explosive materials that can easily be repurposed by terrorist organizations and other destabilizing groups. These threats must be addressed.

But, with U.S. leadership, progress is being made. As the world's leading funder of humanitarian demining programs, the U.S. State Department Conventional Weapons Program in Africa has provided more than \$509 million in demining and weapons security assistance to 37 African countries since 1993. According to the State Department's latest publication of *To Walk the Earth in Safety*, these investments support peacebuilding and economic development, as they systematically eliminate the threat of UXO and allow land to be released from contaminated status. State Department humanitarian demining programs are managed by the Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement in the Political-Military Affairs Bureau. Examples of critical U.S. humanitarian demining programs in Africa include:

- **Angola:** Landmines in Angola have injured more than 80,000 people since they were first used in its civil war, but with the help of U.S. foreign aid, well over 100,000 landmines have been destroyed and 180 square miles have been released for productive use. Demining must continue, especially in the rural areas of Angola, where some communities have been waiting decades for assistance. The U.S. is not acting alone. In 2019, the Angolan Government pledged \$60 million for demining assistance to support the clearance of 153 minefields from two of its national parks to allow safe wilderness management and develop a thriving ecotourism industry to diversify its economy. This sizeable investment presents a unique opportunity for the U.S. and Angola to strengthen their partnership while supporting human safety and the development of a

conservation economy in Angola.

- **Zimbabwe:** Zimbabwe possesses very dense, unfenced minefields close to houses, schools, and clinics that block communities from safely accessing clean water. According to the Landmine Monitor, over 1,600 casualties have occurred due to explosive hazard accidents – each bringing enormous psychological suffering in addition to the injury or fatality. With increased support, Zimbabwe could achieve mine-free status in the near future. And due to the predictable mine-laying patterns along the Zimbabwean borders, demining efforts in Zimbabwe are responsible for the elimination of some of the greatest numbers of landmines in the world.
- **South Sudan:** The former states of Central and Eastern Equatoria were heavily contaminated with mines and other UXO during the civil war between the Khartoum government and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA). Although the region remained largely accessible during the initial period of South Sudan's civil war in 2013, violence spread throughout the region following the resumption of hostilities in 2016, displacing large numbers of people. The U.S. is working to clear land of contamination and allow for the return of displaced families and economic development.

U.S. Conventional Weapons Destruction programs save lives, promote positive U.S. leadership – countering the influence of adversaries, foster economic development, enables the return of displaced families, and protect human rights.

After approximately twenty years of effective demining work, supported by the U.S. Government, Mozambique declared itself to be landmine free in 2015. More countries throughout Africa can soon achieve mine-free status with U.S. support.

As the committee discusses past, present, and future conflict in Africa, please consider the impact of weapons of war, from large anti-tank landmines, to cluster munitions, to improvised explosive devices. Millions of lives are at stake. And, only when these scars of war are removed can there truly be peace.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Gonzales by
Representative Colin Allred (#1)
U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 21, 2021**

Questions 1:

Does the Administration think that the politicization of ethnicity plays a role in driving conflict in Ethiopia and other African countries? If so, what are some ways that the State Department and USAID can help tackle the challenges posed by this and help build bridges between ethnic groups?

Answer 1:

Ethiopia has an ethno-federalist political construct that exacerbates ethnic tensions and does little to address long-standing grievances among ethnicities. State and USAID address intra- and inter-ethnic tensions and conflict in a variety of ways, such as:

- Fostering inclusive platforms for diverse ethnic groups - like the Amhara and Oromo - to dialogue, build trust, and advocate for peaceful alternatives to violence.
- Producing and broadcasting TV, radio, and social media content to promote civil political discourse between different ethnic, religious, and regional actors
- Engaging politically active youth and university students from Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, and Tigray to catalyze joint action on their priority issues
- Bringing together different stakeholders across the Oromo and Somali ethnic groups through capacity-building training, inter-community dialogues, public fora, and community peace actions.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Gonzales by
Representative Colin Allred (#2)
U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee
September 21, 2021**

Questions 2:

How will his expulsion impact the joint investigations' final report expected to be published November 1, 2021?

Answer 2:

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which is finalizing its joint report with the Ethiopia Human Rights Commission (EHRC), is actively discussing how to proceed. The U.S. Mission to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva is following this closely and expects a report to be issued around November 1, either jointly or directly from OHCHR. Despite the expulsion, OHCHR has a strong institutional interest in issuing a joint report with the EHRC as it would set a helpful model for conducting joint investigations and reports with national human rights mechanisms in other challenging contexts around the world. OHCHR is working on replacing the expelled staffer, but this might take a couple of weeks.

Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
Karen Bass (D-CA), Chair
Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism
Ted Deutch (D-FL), Chair

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD

Hearing: Understanding Conflict in Africa
Representative Colin Allred

Witnesses:

- Mr. Michael C. Gonzales, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs, U.S. Department of State
- Mr. Robert Jenkins, Assistant to the Administrator Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization, U.S. Agency for International Development

Questions:

Mr. Michael Gonzales and Mr. Robert Jenkins:

1. Ethiopia's Constitution is unique in dividing the country into ethnic-based regional states, based on a supposed majority ethnic group that resides within each. While the former ruling EPRDF government claimed to establish this system to solve historic inequities in Ethiopia, I can't help but notice that ethnic identity seems to be at the heart of most conflicts and political issues in the country.

Does the Administration think that the politicization of ethnicity plays a role in driving conflict in Ethiopia and other African countries? If so, what are some ways that the State Department and USAID can help tackle the challenges posed by this and help build bridges between ethnic groups?

Answer: The politicization of ethnicity is a common feature of conflicts across the African continent, as political leaders often mobilize support from respective ethnic groups to advance shared interests. Ethnicity has also often been associated with political affiliation and is a common feature in determining access to power and resources. As competition intensifies over such interests, resulting conflicts can include a framing based on ethnic identity as groups are divided along ethno-political lines.

This is the case in Ethiopia, where polarized political groups, many of which formed along ethnic lines, lack consensus on overall national interests. These ethnic ties and past grievances are leveraged by elites for personal and political gain. As the country struggles to address long-standing grievances related to natural resource management, border demarcation, and political participation, there is heightened competition between ethnically-aligned political groups over the future of Ethiopia's ethno-federalist system and how regional states relate to the central government. Across various subregions, ethnic identity has been a prominent element in the midst of historical and unresolved intercommunal conflicts and grievances that reflect national level tensions.

USAID is working to address the destabilizing effects of the ethno-political conflicts in Ethiopia through a variety of efforts. USAID works with civil society, youth, universities, media, political parties, and customary institutions across ethnic groups to mitigate conflict and promote inter-communal dialogue. For example, USAID engages university students to identify mis- and disinformation and hate speech circulating on social media and trains media on conflict sensitive reporting and how to create space for constructive political deliberation. USAID works closely with the State Department to ensure that development initiatives to promote peacebuilding in Ethiopia augment diplomatic priorities to stabilize the conflict situation through dialogue and a cease to hostilities.

USAID also supports people-to-people reconciliation work in Ethiopia and 25 other countries in Africa. This programming helps local actors create opportunities for reconciliation by building bridges for constructive interaction between conflicting groups. By promoting positive social and cultural exchanges, initiatives reduce prejudice and hostility, increase mutual understanding, and over time, support the reconciliation of grievances and differences between groups.

In Ethiopia, USAID supports ongoing people-to-people reconciliation programs with local partners to address inter-communal conflicts based on livelihood disputes and border demarcations along the Oromia-Somali boundary and in the Borena Zone along the Oromia-Kenya border. This includes initiatives aimed at improving social cohesion and peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups by reinforcing conflict management tools, such as dialogue, women's peace networks, and trauma healing, and promoting opportunities for positive exchange, such as public forums, youth clubs, and festivals.

Mr. Robert Jenkins and Mr. Michael Gonzales:

2. Among the seven individuals declared "persona non-grata" and ordered to leave Ethiopia is Sonny Onyegbula who is part of the United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OCHA) team conducting the joint investigation with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission in alleged violations of human rights, humanitarian and refugee law.

How will his expulsion impact the joint investigations' final report expected to be published November 1, 2021?

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), which is finalizing its joint report with the Ethiopia Human Rights Commission (EHRC), is actively discussing how to proceed. The U.S. Mission to the UN and other International Organizations in Geneva is following this closely and expects a report to be issued around November 1, either jointly or directly from OHCHR. Despite the expulsion, OHCHR has a strong institutional interest in issuing a joint report with the EHRC as it would set a helpful model for conducting joint investigations and reports with national human rights mechanisms in other challenging contexts around the world. OHCHR is working on replacing the expelled staffer, but this might take a couple of weeks.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Young Kim (#1)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 1:

Please give an assessment of the role of external actors in either facilitating, perpetrating, or playing a constructive role in resolving the conflict in northern Ethiopia. Further, when can we expect a determination from the Biden Administration on whether war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide have been carried out in Ethiopia?

Answer 1:

We are deeply alarmed at the escalating violence in northern Ethiopia, and we condemn in the strongest terms all violence directed against civilians, including all forms of gender-based violence. The Department of State is currently undertaking a review of available information to determine whether atrocity crimes have been committed in Northern Ethiopia. Those responsible for human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, as well as atrocities, must be held accountable through independent, transparent mechanisms. Comprehensive transitional justice is essential for lasting peace and for victims of these abuses. We call on all parties to comply with their international humanitarian law obligations, including those regarding the protection of civilians.

We welcome calls from African and international partners to demand an end to the conflict, along with efforts to facilitate life-saving humanitarian aid in the region. We also stand ready to support former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo's efforts as AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa to mediate this crisis and encourage other countries to do

the same. Meanwhile, we remain alarmed by the presence of Eritrean forces in northern Ethiopia, which is destabilizing the region, prolonging the conflict in northern Ethiopia, and exacerbating an already dire humanitarian situation. Eritrea should immediately and permanently withdraw all its forces from northern Ethiopia.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Young Kim (#2)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 2:

Please provide an update on whether independent journalists are being allowed unfettered access into Ethiopia to report on the conflict and humanitarian conditions? Further, could you please update this Subcommittee on whether humanitarian aid distribution is being hindered in Ethiopia?

Answer 2:

The Administration continues to press for an end to the ongoing humanitarian and human rights crises in northern Ethiopia, including calls for unhindered access for humanitarian actors, independent journalists, and human rights monitors. We remain gravely concerned by escalating violence, the expansion of fighting in northern Ethiopia and in regions throughout the country, and the growing risk to the unity and integrity of the Ethiopian state. Contrary to its public commitments, the Ethiopian government continues to severely restrict humanitarian access and to cut off Tigray, with limited entry of humanitarian goods, including life-saving food, medicine, fuel, cash, or humanitarian personnel. The expansion of the conflict into neighboring regions of Amhara and Afar is also impeding delivery of humanitarian assistance to hundreds of thousands of displaced people as well as thousands of refugees. This withholding of humanitarian aid, particularly food, is leading to unnecessary death and untold human suffering. Millions are at high risk of food insecurity in northern Ethiopia, and of those, hundreds of thousands are estimated to be at risk of starvation in Tigray.

We urge all parties to end hostilities immediately and for the Ethiopian government and the TPLF to enter into negotiations without preconditions toward a sustainable ceasefire. We call for the immediate restoration of transport corridors and air linkages to the Tigray region, as well as restoration of communication, banking, fuel, and other vital services within Tigray.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Young Kim (#3)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 3:

What is the Administration's current assessment of the risk of escalation between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the GERD? What is the Administration's strategy to manage that risk?

Answer 3:

The United States is committed to addressing the interlinked regional crises and to supporting a prosperous and stable Horn of Africa. Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman has been coordinating USG policy on the GERD and we stand ready to support collaborative and constructive efforts by Ethiopia, Egypt, and Sudan to resolve this dispute.

We understand that the Nile waters, and how these waters are used, are important to all three of these countries. A balanced and equitable arrangement on the filling and operation of the GERD can be reached with political commitment from all parties. Egypt's concerns on water security and Sudan's concerns about the safety and operation of the dam can be reconciled with Ethiopia's development needs. This begins with the resumption of productive, substantive negotiations, which should be held under the African Union's leadership. This process should use the 2015 Declaration of Principles signed by the parties and the July 2020 statement by the AU Bureau as foundational references. We believe that the African Union is the most appropriate venue to address this dispute, and the Biden-Harris Administration is committed to providing political and technical support to facilitate a successful outcome

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Young Kim (#4)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 4:

What is your assessment of Russia's presence in Africa, in particular, in the Central African Republic, Sudan, Madagascar, Mozambique and Mali and should the United States take steps to counter Russia's influence?

Answer 4:

Russia has increasingly exploited insecurity in order to expand its presence on the African continent, threatening stability, good governance, and human rights in the process. Russian "assistance" – particularly through Kremlin-linked mercenary groups – leaves countries weaker, poorer, and less secure, while often extracting payment in the form of mineral rights. In a recent example, UN investigations found members of the Russian-supported private military company Wagner Group have targeted religious minorities and extrajudicially killed civilians in the Central African Republic and Libya. Further, media reports suggest the Wagner Group has entered into negotiations with the Transitional Government of Mali to provide security services in that country. Given the Wagner Group's record elsewhere in Africa, any role for Russian mercenaries in Mali risks exacerbating an already fragile and unstable situation and would complicate the international response in support of the Transition Government of Mali.

The U.S. government is responding to this activity in a number of ways, including support for UN and other investigations into allegations of wrongdoing, a large-scale diplomatic outreach with allies and African partners to warn those who are considering engaging Russian private military companies, messaging around sanctions, and continuing to invest in the

governance and security institutions that make countries less vulnerable and better able to counter these actions. This includes working with ECOWAS and other partners to reinforce the need for a timely transition to legitimate, constitutional rule in Mali. In doing so, we are demonstrating that we are a trusted partner with whose support governments can deliver security and a more prosperous future for their people without mortgaging the country's wealth.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Gonzales by
Representative Karen Bass (#1)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 28, 2021**

Question 1:

We have many challenges in the Horn of Africa, as you well know. Secretary Blinken has noted the “interlinked political, security, and humanitarian crises” in this region of great geopolitical significance for the U.S.

What are your views on new approaches and actors we should be engaging with to tackle these challenges?

Answer 1:

The Horn of Africa faces serious challenges from internal conflict and state fragility, the lack of economic opportunities for an increasingly youthful population, the threat of terrorism, food insecurity, and the spread of COVID in some areas. The United States has used a variety of humanitarian, economic, financial, and security-based tools to address serious conflict and state fragility challenges. Our diplomatic engagement in the Horn of Africa has been particularly robust. The Secretary of State has directly engaged with foreign counterparts on several occasions and Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa Jeffrey Feltman and other senior U.S. diplomats are working with regional and international partners to promote a negotiated ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access in northern Ethiopia and create conditions for a permanent, non-military end to the conflict. We look forward to continuing engagement with the African Union and welcome the appointment of AU Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa former Nigerian President Obasanjo. Recognizing the implications of the situation in the Horn for the Red Sea region, we are identifying areas for broader regional cooperation as well as approaches to minimize the impact of potential spoilers.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Gonzales by
Representative Karen Bass (#2)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 28, 2021**

Question 2:

Despite not being recognized as a sovereign state for over 30 years, Somaliland has built a democratic and stable government that has had great success in preventing al-Shabaab from infiltrating its territory. It serves as a buffer against terrorists establishing footholds in Djibouti and parts of Ethiopia and could be helpful supporting the U.S. security presence in the region, including protecting vital shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. It also serves as a model for market-based growth rather than dependence on crippling debt financing that China has offered others in the region.

What lessons can be gleaned from Somaliland's success in deterring violent extremism from its territory?

Answer 2:

Violent extremist groups typically thrive in ungoverned spaces or where governments lack legitimacy due to citizen exclusion from the political process, predatory behavior, corruption, limited economic opportunity, and other factors. Relative to other parts of Somalia, which continue to struggle with these types of challenges, Somaliland has a well-functioning, representative, and democratically elected government. While Somaliland faces threats from violent extremist groups within its territory, it also has more capable, disciplined, and responsive security forces than most other parts of Somalia to manage these threats.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Michael Gonzales by
Representative Karen Bass (#3)
House Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 28, 2021**

Question 3:

Despite not being recognized as a sovereign state for over 30 years, Somaliland has built a democratic and stable government that has had great success in preventing al-Shabaab from infiltrating its territory. It serves as a buffer against terrorists establishing footholds in Djibouti and parts of Ethiopia and could be helpful supporting the U.S. security presence in the region, including protecting vital shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. It also serves as a model for market-based growth rather than dependence on crippling debt financing that China has offered others in the region.

What can the United States government do to support and strengthen this impressive example of good governance and security, and help replicate it elsewhere on the continent?

Answer 3:

The United States has supported Somaliland for several years through USAID-implemented economic growth, democracy and governance, stabilization, and other development assistance as well as limited State Department-implemented security assistance. While U.S. foreign assistance is increasingly prioritized on supporting stabilization efforts in southern Somalia, we remain committed to supporting Somaliland's stability and economic and democratic development within the parameters of our single Somalia policy. This includes encouraging Somaliland to address deficiencies on democracy and human rights issues, including media freedom and the lack of women's representation in parliament and other government institutions. We are also encouraging the authorities in Mogadishu and Hargeisa to cooperate on issues of mutual interest.

Working with international partners and host governments, the United States seeks to reduce and deter violent extremism through a coordinated whole-of-government approach that addresses the causes, context, and legitimate grievances of underserved and under-represented populations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Malinowski (#1)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 1:

How many people in the Africa Bureau are involved in the concurrence process on individual Sec. 333 programs/activities in the region? Is the desk officer normally involved well in advance? On average, how many individuals in your Bureau are involved in concurring on an individual Sec. 333 program/activity?

Answer 1:

The Bureau of African Affairs (AF) receives the final review requests from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), which has the lead coordinating the Department's role in the concurrence process. AF's Office of Regional Peace and Security (AF/RPS) serves as the bureau's central point of contact, coordinating across the office's government staff of at least twelve foreign and civil service officers. Additionally, as appropriate, AF/RPS also coordinates with the relevant sub-regional offices' desk officers.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Malinowski (#2)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 2:

What is the average lead-time/notice the Africa Bureau receives prior to concurring on a specific Sec. 333 activity?

Answer 2:

The Bureau of African Affairs (AF) receives the final review requests from the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), which has the lead coordinating Department's role in the concurrence process. AF receives, on average, a week to review and provide its input to PM to help inform the Department's response. However, AF, in coordination with PM, also participates earlier in the Department of Defense's Sec. 333 process, to include its Initial Planning Review (IPR), red team meetings, and two annual regional conferences where Sec. 333 proposals are discussed.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Malinowski (#3)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 3:

How many Sec. 333 activity/program concurrence requests did the Africa Bureau receive in FY21, FY20, and FY19?

Answer 3:

In Fiscal Years 2019, 2020, and 2021, the Bureau of African Affairs (AF) reviewed a total of 32, 18, and 19 programs, respectively. Additionally, in Fiscal Year 2021, AF also reviewed an additional 9 programs for renotification.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Malinowski (#4)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 4:

Does the Africa Bureau or the State Department make any efforts (internally or through external partners) to measure trust between local and national security forces in the Sahel and their peripheral/marginalized population groups? If so, has such trust improved or deteriorated in the past ten years?

Answer 4:

The Department of State uses a variety of sources to monitor the security situation across the Sahel, including the relationship between the population and security forces. Sources include surveys, program reports, and in-country assessments. The Department is data-driven and organizes quarterly meetings to hear from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) and review the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations' (CSO) quarterly West Africa conflict tracker. The Department also leverages available data from USAID, the Department of Defense, and NGO and multilateral partners. The Department continues to stress the importance of building trust between security forces and citizens, particularly marginalized groups, providing human rights training, and holding security forces accountable when violations occur.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Malinowski (#5)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 5:

Does the State Department have a metrics-driven system in place (whether internal to the department or contracted through external partners) to determine whether local partner security forces in Africa are improving in areas of performance that are systematically linked to radicalization, such as human rights abuse, corrupt justice systems, bribery solicitation, excessive use of force, or other abuses?

Answer 5:

The Department of State conducts rigorous monitoring, evaluation, and oversight of our security assistance in Africa. As a Department, we review CSO's quarterly West Africa conflict tracker to qualitatively assess the performance of security forces and track alleged human rights abuses, attacks on civilians, and risks for VEO expansion among other indicators. The Department's programs with security actors track relevant indicators on security force engagement with populations, respect for human rights, and excessive use of force where appropriate and feasible. The Department ensures that all security assistance complies with the Leahy Law.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Deputy Assistant Secretary Mike Gonzales by
Representative Malinowski (#6)
House of Foreign Affairs Committee
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Global Human Rights
September 21, 2021**

Question 6:

What have been the obstacles to concluding the Department's investigation? When does the State Department plan to conclude its determination? What impacts do you foresee on the Africa Bureau's policy planning if the determination finds that past actions of the Ethiopian government constitute either genocide or evidence characteristics of genocide?

Answer 6:

We are deeply alarmed at the escalating violence in northern Ethiopia, and we condemn in the strongest terms all violence directed against civilians, including all forms of gender-based violence. The Department of State is currently undertaking a review of available information to determine whether atrocity crimes have been committed in Northern Ethiopia. While this review and investigation are ongoing, any such future determination would likely have implications on our programs, policy planning, and bilateral relations going forward. Those responsible for human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law, as well as atrocities, must be held accountable through independent, transparent mechanisms. Comprehensive transitional justice is essential for lasting peace and for victims of these abuses. We call on all parties to comply with their international humanitarian law obligations, including those regarding the protection of civilians.