

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

The recent abduction of nearly three hundred innocent young girls in Nigeria is the latest brutal demonstration of the growing sophistication and aggressiveness of Boko Haram, an al Qaeda-linked Islamic militant group that operates with near-impunity in northern Nigeria.

Boko Haram has a long history of Islamic radicalism and violence, and it has clear links to international terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Shabaab. The name "Boko Haram" itself means "western education is forbidden" and the group has openly stated its ambition of creating an independent Islamic state in northern Nigeria under sharia law.

Boko Haram first earned international attention when a suicide bomber detonated a truck laden with explosives outside a United Nations facility in Abuja in August 2011. Since then, a steady string of suicide bombings, kidnappings, and military-style raids have killed thousands of Nigerians, many of them children. Christians and churches have been specifically targeted.

In November 2011, at our direction, the House Committee on Homeland Security prepared a bipartisan report on the threat Boko Haram posed not just to the region but to America's national security. The report found that the group's tactics and increasing sophistication "all point to a dangerously evolving organization."

But despite Boko Haram's radical Islamic beliefs, its ties to other terrorist groups in Africa, and its desire to target western interests in Nigeria, the State Department only recently added Boko Haram to its list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTO).

More than two years passed between the 2011 United Nations bombing and the State Department's FTO designation in late 2013. In that time, Boko Haram has grown stronger and more lethal while our own intelligence and law enforcement agencies were hamstrung and unable to effectively address the threat it posed.

In light of the events of the last several weeks, which prove conclusively that Boko Haram has the ability to destabilize the region and inflict significant damage in Nigeria, we respectfully seek answers to the following questions:

- Under federal statute, militant groups must meet three requirements in order to be designated as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. For designation as an FTO, a group must be a foreign organization, it must engage in terrorist activity (or retain the intent and capability to engage in such activity), and it must threaten the security of American nationals or the national security of

the United States. Why, when it was clear as early as 2011 that Boko Haram met all of these conditions, was the FTO designation not made until November 2013?

- In January 2012, senior Justice Department officials urged the State Department to designate Boko Haram as an FTO. Assistant Attorney General Lisa Monaco, now the Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, expressed her concern that the group “openly espoused violence against the West” and continued to build ties with “transnational terrorist groups” like al Qaeda. What steps were taken to address the Department of Justice’s concerns?
- In March of 2011, then-assistant secretary of state for African affairs Johnnie Carson testified before Congress that religion was “not the primary driver behind extremist violence in Nigeria,” and said Boko Haram was exploiting “the legitimate grievances of northern populations to garner recruits and public sympathy.” Given that it is now clear that Boko Haram’s goals are rooted in Islamic radicalism, what was the basis for Asst. Sec. Carson’s statements?
- In September 2013, the Committee on Homeland Security issued a second report on Boko Haram and providing recommendations for how to address the threat they pose to Nigeria, to US interests, and the Homeland. What has the State Department done to implement these recommendations so far, and what will the Department of State do going forward?

Just yesterday, some three hundred Nigerians were killed by Boko Haram in an attack in Nigeria’s northeast. Hundreds of young girls remain missing and it’s clear that Boko Haram’s leadership is becoming more and more emboldened. It is critical that we address the threat posed by Boko Haram before it has the ability to export its violence and harm American interests and potentially Americans themselves. Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Patrick Meehan
Member of Congress



Peter King
Member of Congress