

Nigerian War Against Boko Haram Sabotaged by United States Imperialism

Washington anti-terrorism rhetoric falls flat in Africa's most populous state

By [Abayomi Azikiwe](#)

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Secretary of State John Kerry visited the West African state of Nigeria on Jan. 25 saying that the United States would impose sanctions on any terrorists based in the country.

This visit and statement came nearly three weeks prior to the national elections scheduled for Feb. 14. The two leading contenders, incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) and Ret.-Gen. Muhammadu Buhari, of the All-Progressive Congress (APC), held talks with Kerry during his brief stopover.

The top U.S. envoy stressed that the national elections must be held on time and conducted in a peaceful manner. Such a statement came amid a worsening security situation in the northeast of the country prompting fears among many Nigerians that under such circumstances open, free and fair elections cannot be held.

Kerry told the international media on Jan. 25 that "The fact is that one of the best ways to fight back against Boko Haram and similar groups is by protecting the peaceful, credible and transparent elections that are essential to any thriving democracy, and certainly essential to the largest democracy in Africa. It's imperative that these elections happen on time, on schedule. And that they are an improvement over past elections. They need to set a new standard for this democracy. That means Nigerians have to not only reject violence, but they have to actually promote peace."

The Role of the U.S. in the War Against Boko Haram

Boko Haram, an armed group fighting the Federal Republic of Nigeria largely in the northeast region of the country since 2009, has caused havoc resulting in the deaths and displacement of thousands of civilians. The war with Boko Haram has impacted the neighboring states of Cameroon and Chad, where many Nigerians fleeing the fighting have taken refuge.

Yet recent reports in a leading Nigerian newspaper indicated that Washington is not cooperating in the war against Boko Haram but is actually sabotaging the government. The U.S. has refused to provide arms to Nigeria and has blocked a recent sale of helicopters from the State of Israel.

In an article published by the Nigerian Vanguard on Jan. 28 it said that

"Twenty-four hours after U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry met President Goodluck Jonathan and former Head of State, General Muhammadu Buhari,

pledging his country's determination to work with Nigeria and other countries to end activities of the Boko Haram terrorists, the Israeli media, yesterday, revealed that the U.S. stopped Nigeria's purchase of Chinook military helicopters from Israel to fight Boko Haram. The sale/transfer of such aircraft required a review by the U.S., to determine its 'consistency with U.S. policy interests,' Obama administration officials told The Jerusalem Post."

This article went on to note

"Nigeria's largest arms purchase ever reported was from Israel in 2007, in a deal with Aeronautics Systems worth \$260 million. That company is Israeli, however, not American. A single Chinook costs roughly \$40 million to produce."

The same publication then reported

"the Nigerian military in the past has said that the country also resorted to training its security personnel on terrorist encounters in Russia and China because of the refusal of the U.S. administration to sell arms to the government following 'unfounded allegations of human rights violations by our troops,' among others."

In addition to these revelations, military sources in Nigeria say that the U.S. intelligence agencies have collected data on Boko Haram but will not share it with Abuja. During 2014, Washington pledged to enhance its aerial surveillance of Boko Haram areas of operation in the northeast and provide information about their movements and capabilities to the Jonathan government.

However, the Vanguard noted

"it was not just in the area of arms procurement that the U.S. has been most unhelpful, adding that contrary to its public stance that it was assisting in the rescue operations of the abducted Chibok secondary school girls it has done nothing significant to help Nigeria in this regard. Other intelligence sources also cited the fact that the U.S. has refused to share intelligence with Nigerian security forces in a timely manner."

A Nigerian government official who spoke on the condition of anonymity was quoted as saying "When we complained, they started sharing some intelligence, but days after such intelligence is of little value". Conflicting statements from U.S. diplomats add further to the confusion.

Allegedly these acts of duplicity stem from the Obama administration's concerns over human rights violations committed by the Nigerian military. Officials in Abuja have denied the allegations stressing that U.S. pronouncements related to its priorities in the so-called "war against terrorism", are not consistent with its deeds.

Kerry in response to such reports in the Nigerian press told reporters during his Jan. 25 visit that "We are engaging with the Nigerian government at all levels to identify areas of counter-terrorism cooperation." (Nigerian Vanguard, Jan. 28)

The Nigerian Vanguard however pointed out that “This was contrary to what the U.S. ambassador to Nigeria James Entwistle told reporters last October while speaking on the refusal by his country to sell high caliber weapons to Nigeria. Entwistle told reporters that ‘the kind of question that we have to ask is, let’s say we give certain kinds of equipment to the Nigerian military and that is then used in a way that affects the human situation, if I approve that, I’m responsible for that. We take that responsibility very seriously.’”

Collapse in Oil Trading With the U.S. and the Burgeoning Economic Crisis

The escalation of hostilities by Boko Haram coincides with the decline of the economy due to the collapse of the U.S. trade in oil with Nigeria. In previous years, Nigeria was the largest exporter of oil to the U.S. on the African continent.

Nonetheless, due to the oil glut on international markets stemming in part from the rapidly increasing domestic production inside the U.S., India is now the largest purchaser of crude from the West African state. These developments have created a financial crisis inside the country designated last year by the western imperialist states as having the largest economy on the continent surpassing the Republic of South Africa.

An article published on Jan. 31 reported that China is increasing its trade in oil with Nigeria. The two states have enhanced their economic relations over the last few years in the areas of railway rehabilitation as well as hydropower development at Zungeru in Niger state.

Naij.com wrote in this regard that “Reports just coming in inform that China has stepped forward to buy more oil from the Nigerian Federal Government. Making this cheery announcement on Thursday was China’s Deputy Chief of Mission in Nigeria, Mr. Zhang Bin. According to the diplomat, the Chinese government is looking forward to importing more of Nigeria’s oil following the loss of America’s market.” (Jan. 31)

This same publication says

“It would be recalled that since the slump in the price of crude oil in the global market coupled with the reduction of the amount of crude oil exported to the United States, the amount of revenues Nigeria generates from crude oil has reduced significantly. This situation has led to the devaluation of the Naira by the Central Bank of Nigeria.”

These recent events involving national security and economic relations reveal that Africa, despite claims of rapid growth, is still vulnerable to the shifts in U.S. political and economic policies. Consequently, leading governments on the continent must create alternative trade agreements coupled with the consolidation of cooperation among continental states designed to foster genuine qualitative growth and development.

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Articles by: **Abayomi**
Azikiwe

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