

Press release: UK and Nigeria step up cooperation to end Boko Haram threat

The first ever UK-Nigeria security and defence partnership will transform the way we work together to tackle shared threats and keep our people safe, Theresa May said today.

The new Partnership will lay the foundations for us to step up efforts to promote our shared stability, prosperity and growth, through a series of new initiatives to help Nigeria defeat Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa.

The terror groups are responsible for the deaths of over 20,000 people, with almost 2 million still forced to live away from their homes in the north east of the country.

Today's agreement will help stop this regional menace from spreading and posing a direct threat to the UK.

Under the new partnership the UK will expand its provision of equipment and training for the Nigerian military to help them protect themselves from the threat of improvised explosive devices used by terrorists. This will save soldiers' lives and better equip them to combat Boko Haram's insurgency-style tactics.

The UK has also offered to help Nigeria – for the first time – train full army units before they deploy to the North East. Currently, soldiers are trained individually – not in their fighting teams. Training full units will give Nigerian forces a shared understanding and experience that will make them better able to defeat the enemy.

This will build on the UK's work to help Nigeria train more than 30,000 troops since 2015.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

No-one should live in fear of being targeted by militants or forced from their homes, and no child should lose out on an education because of the threat of terror.

Insecurity, violence and extremism destabilise countries and regions and undermine growth – holding back entire generations from reaching their potential.

It is only when people are safe and communities stable that nations have the opportunity to thrive.

We are determined to work side by side with Nigeria to help them fight terrorism, reduce conflict, and lay the foundations for the future stability and prosperity that will benefit us all.

Through the new partnership – signed in Abuja today – the UK and Nigeria will also work together to:

- deliver a new £13 million programme to educate 100,000 children living in the conflict zone whose teachers have fled and schools been destroyed, by providing equipment, teacher training, and safe places to learn; and
- implement a new Nigerian crisis response mechanism, similar to the UK's COBR system, to help the government respond to incidents like terror attacks so it can protect its citizens and British nationals and businesses in the country; and
- cut the number of new recruits joining Boko Haram by tackling the lies and false information spread by the group to attract new members – including by working with communities to push out counter-narratives and drawing on the UK's experience of countering terrorist propaganda at home and as part of the global campaign against Daesh.

Beyond terrorism, the agreement sets out how we will work together to strengthen policing, reduce piracy in the Gulf of Guinea, tackle organised crime – including kidnapping and trafficking, and stamp out corruption. A new civil asset recovery task force will help Nigeria recover stolen assets held in Britain and stop criminals using the UK as a safe haven for the proceeds of corruption.

To enable this closer partnership on security and defence, we have agreed to establish an enhanced human rights dialogue to ensure our joint work is in line with international human rights standards.

The partnership will also create a regular forum for ministers on both sides to meet and discuss common challenges and priorities so we can make sure cooperation continues to evolve to tackle new and emerging security threats.