

Press release: UK increasing support to save lives and rebuild north east Nigeria as famine looms after Boko Haram destruction

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson and International Development Secretary Priti Patel have visited Nigeria to see how the UK is leading the international response to the humanitarian crisis in the north east of the country, helping to avert famine and build stability and security after the destruction caused by militant Islamist group Boko Haram.

On their first joint visit, showing how the UK's response includes both security and humanitarian efforts, they both saw and heard how British military have been providing training to Nigerian soldiers fighting Boko Haram on the front line, and Priti Patel announced a new package of humanitarian support that is saving and changing lives.

Parts of north east Nigeria, including the outskirts of Maiduguri – a city that the Secretaries of State visited – have been decimated by attacks from Boko Haram.

The militant group have killed over 20,000 people, displaced 1.7 million and left 8.5 million in desperate need of urgent support, in some cases on the brink of famine.

Ongoing attacks continue to destroy communities, with recent reports of children being forced to carry suicide bombs.

The UK's increased support will extend DFID's humanitarian programme in Nigeria over five years (2017-2022) to deliver:

- lifesaving food for more than 1.5 million people on the brink of famine;
- treatment for up to 120,000 children at risk of dying from severe acute malnutrition;
- ongoing support to help keep 100,000 girls and boys in school to get a decent education, providing a brighter future for the next generation;
- safe humanitarian access to transport brave aid workers and deliver aid to the hardest to reach areas, for example using helicopters where roads are blocked or dangerous to use.

The UK has so far trained over 28,500 Nigerian military personnel, of whom a significant number have been deployed on counter-insurgency operations in north east Nigeria.

This includes counter-terrorism cooperation, providing training on response to terrorist attacks, bomb scene management, and improving aviation security.

By tackling the threat posed by terrorism across Africa, the UK government is

not only helping ensure long-term security in the area, so that people who have lost everything are kept safe and can rebuild their lives, but also protecting the British public.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

It is catastrophic that at least 20,000 people have been murdered by Boko Haram's terrorist regime, and over five million people have been left hungry and many homeless. Babies' bodies are shutting down and mothers who have lost everything are fighting to keep their children alive.

Global Britain is a country that stands tall in the world and the UK will not turn its back on people living in danger and desperation.

We are leading the way on the international stage through our world-class development, defence and diplomacy, providing a lifeline to over 1.5 million people on the brink of famine, tackling Boko Haram and pushing for global aid reform to deliver help more effectively.

Terrorism knows no borders and the Nigerian Government must now follow our lead to stop innocent people dying and securing the area so that these people can rebuild their lives in safety – reducing the threat of radicalisation and migration for the UK at home.

Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Boko Haram has generated suffering, instability and poverty on a huge scale, with profound knock on effects far from Nigeria's borders, and I am proud of Britain's commitment to supporting the Nigerian people in tackling terror.

In Maiduguri I met casualties of Boko Haram violence, including bomb and gunshot victims, and saw for myself the displacement of people that brutality and poverty have created.

Our military, diplomatic and development assistance is making a big difference. The British military has to date trained 28,000 Nigerian troops, equipping them with skills to turn the tide against Boko Haram, while our humanitarian aid is alleviating widespread suffering. This is about helping a Commonwealth partner in its time of need as well as addressing the root causes of international challenges such as migration.

The new package of emergency relief announced today also includes the restoration of key infrastructure and services in north east Nigeria.

This includes giving children living in conflict zones an education, improving access to health care, helping smallholder farmers to restore their livelihoods and produce food to generate higher incomes, and introducing innovative solar energy to power schools and health centres.

This longer term restoration work combined with our military support will enable the poorest and most vulnerable people to stand on their own two feet and rebuild their lives in safety.

Notes to Editors:

- The £200 million support is an allocation of DFID Nigeria's budget for four years from 2018 – 2022, building on our existing £100 million of humanitarian support for 2017 that the International Development Secretary Priti Patel announced earlier this year.
- The programme will be delivered through capable and cost effective partners including the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); UN agencies such as UNICEF, WFP, United Nations Humanitarian Air Service; INGOs and private sector partners.
- This is part of a wider UK Government package of support in the north east including political, military and intelligence support to tackle Boko Haram, and reduce conflict and bring stability to the area – helping to reduce the threat of radicalisation and migration to the UK.
- So far 500 UK military personnel have provided training to the Nigerian Armed Forces
- Over 40 UK military personnel have been deployed to Nigeria on an enduring basis
- Over 28,500 Nigerian military have been trained by the UK to date