

**ASSESSING DEVELOPMENTS IN MALI: RESTORING  
DEMOCRACY AND RECLAIMING THE NORTH**

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**HEARING**  
BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
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# ASSESSING DEVELOPMENTS IN MALI: RESTORING DEMOCRACY AND RECLAIMING THE NORTH

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2012

U.S. SENATE,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS,  
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 9:10 a.m., in room SD-419, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Christopher A. Coons presiding.

Present: Senators Coons and Isakson.

## OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. CHRISTOPHER A. COONS, U.S. SENATOR FROM DELAWARE

Senator COONS. I will be joined momentarily by my friend and ranking member, Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia, and we expect other Senators to join, but I thought it was timely for us to proceed.

I'm grateful for the support of the committee and the hard work of my staff in making possible today the first time we will have a witness testifying directly from a foreign country which is the subject of a hearing, and I hope that will contribute to an ongoing process of trying to expand the range and scope of testimony included in these hearings.

Today's focus is on Mali, and as we speak, there are three simultaneous crises occurring in Mali—a security, a political, and a humanitarian crisis—all three of which, in my view, threaten United States interests in Africa and require the attention of the U.S. Government and the world. That's why we've convened this hearing today, to assess developments in Mali and to discuss a path forward to restore democracy, to reclaim the north, to stabilize the security situation, and to address ongoing humanitarian needs.

I would like to welcome my friend and partner on the subcommittee, Senator Johnny Isakson, and I understand we may well be joined by others, and to thank our distinguished witnesses for sharing their insight and expertise.

Earlier this year, a military coup deposed the democratically elected Government of Mali, and an ethnic rebellion staked its claim on the northern two-thirds of this vast country. This left a security and political vacuum that was exploited by Islamic extremists. As of today, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb—more commonly known as AQIM—and two affiliated groups control the

majority of northern Mali, an area roughly the size of the U.S. State of Texas, making it the largest territory controlled by Islamic extremists in the world.

I am concerned that the current United States approach toward Mali may not be comprehensive and forward-leaning enough to address all three of these difficult, complex, and interconnected crises—security, political, and humanitarian. So today we will examine U.S. policy in these three areas with the goal of providing recommendations for a path forward. We will assess evolving plans for a regionally led, multilateral military intervention in northern Mali and consider the complementary goals of encouraging elections and restoring security by reclaiming the north.

With growing ties between extremist and terrorist groups in Mali, Nigeria, Libya, Somalia, and beyond, there is growing concern that AQIM will leverage its new safe haven in Mali to carry out training and advance plans for regional or transnational terrorist attacks, making Mali, in the words of Secretary Clinton, a powder keg of instability in the region and beyond.

The U.N. Security Council will likely vote in the coming weeks on a resolution authorizing a military intervention by ECOWAS and the African Union. Similar African-led interventions—for example, in Cote d'Ivoire and Somalia—have provided a model for multilateral and regionally led solutions that allow the United States and our allies to provide operational support without putting boots on the ground.

This intervention will take time, and stability cannot be restored through military action alone. The situation in Mali is as much a crisis of governance as of security. The long-running grievances of the Tuaregs in the north and a political vacuum in the south must be addressed through diplomacy, rebuilding democratic institutions, and the restoration of a democratically elected government. In addition, any agreement that attempts to peel off groups currently aligned with AQIM will require a credible government to do so in Bamako.

Elections are the key to not only resolving and restoring now-frozen U.S. bilateral assistance, but also for reclaiming government control of the north and restoring Mali's nearly three-decade-long history of democracy.

Mali's political and security challenges cannot be addressed as separate issues. As the U.N. Secretary General's recent report on Mali suggested, the international community must work to address these multiple crises simultaneously and consider the implications of moving forward with elections that might exclude participation of northerners. Such an election could be viewed as a symbolic victory for AQIM and may further entrench those who aim to establish a permanent Islamic state in the north.

In short, this conflict has caused humanitarian as well as security, as well as diplomatic challenges. There are more than 400,000 people displaced in Mali, and an exacerbated and ongoing food crisis across the Sahel, leaving more than 4.5 million people in need of emergency food aid. NGOs have reported rampant human rights abuses in northern Mali, further adding to the instability and challenges, which include torture, executions, recruitment of child soldiers, amputations, as well as violations of women's rights,

children's rights, and restrictions on fundamental freedoms such as speech and religion.

To provide insight on our path forward and to discuss these three strands, we have assembled two distinguished panels. First, we will hear from Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Ambassador Johnnie Carson; then USAID Assistant Administrator for Africa, Mr. Earl Gast; and last, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Africa, Ms. Amanda Dory. We are grateful for your presence.

On our second panel we will hear from senior associate and regional director for West Africa at the National Democratic Institute, Dr. Chris Fomunyoh; and then senior researcher in the Africa Division at the Human Rights Watch, Ms. Corrine Dufka; and then independent policy researcher, Mr. Nii Akuetteh; and vice president of the Lobbying Network for Peace, Security, and Development for Northern Mali, Mr. Mohamed Ould Mahmoud, who will be testifying via webcast in order to provide a first-hand perspective from Bamako.

I look forward to hearing the testimony of all our witnesses on these two panels, and would like to turn to Senator Isakson for his opening remarks.

Thank you.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOHNNY ISAKSON,  
U.S. SENATOR FROM GEORGIA**

Senator ISAKSON. Well, thank you, Chairman Coons, and I commend you on calling this hearing on what is a very important and pressing issue in the ECOWAS area and in West Africa, where you and I traveled about a year and a half ago in the area to Ghana, Benin, and Nigeria, and there are a lot of fledgling democracies. We saw what happened in Cote d'Ivoire, where we ended up with free democratic elections and a transition of power out of a very difficult situation, and obviously our interest here today is to explore ways in which the United States can be of help to hopefully bring about free and fair elections in 2013 and return all of Mali back to a democratically represented country, as it has been for the last 20 years, until the March and spring initiative in the north which caused the coup and which caused the current problems.

The United States has played a significant role in Africa in many areas where there were problems. The Sudan could be no better example, where because of United States involvement, nonmilitary involvement but diplomatic involvement and special envoy involvement brought about a process in 5 years that brought about the free elections in the south and the creation of the newest independent state in the world, the South Sudan. The United States can play a great role in that, and it's important for us to understand the issues that affect us, the issues that affect that area, and what we can do to help.

Of a personal note, I also have concern anytime al-Qaeda takes advantage of a vacuum or flows into an area because of poverty or because of lack of governance. That's what's happened in the north. Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Maghreb is present. To the extent they are present we don't know for sure, and I'm anxious to hear from

our witnesses today to talk about that. But that also is a point of concern for our people of the United States and for our country.

So I commend you on calling the hearing. I look forward to hearing from all our witnesses and thank all of them who are testifying today.

Senator COONS. Thank you so much, Senator.

Let's now begin with our first panel, if we might, Assistant Secretary Carson.

**STATEMENT OF JOHNNIE CARSON, ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICAN AFFAIRS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ambassador CARSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to testify before you on this important subject. I also want to recognize the ranking member, Senator Isakson, for his keen interest also in issues related to Africa.

Mali's March 21, 2012, military coup d'etat ended two decades of Malian democracy, resulted in the loss of the northern Mali to extremist groups, and further destabilized an already fragile Sahel region. Mali is now facing four distinct but overlapping challenges: restoring democracy, negotiating a political solution to the Tuareg rebellion, countering the threat from Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, and responding to an ongoing humanitarian crisis.

Mali, its regional partners, and the international community must respond to each of these challenges simultaneously. Without addressing each of these issues, Mali will not be able to make a successful political or economic recovery.

Mali's first challenge is the restoration of democratic governance. The framework agreement negotiated by ECOWAS with the military junta following the March 21 coup mandates that Mali's interim government must organize elections and put in place a legitimate, democratically elected government by April 2013.

While the interim government has made progress in strengthening governance, preparations for elections are moving slowly. We continue to strongly encourage the interim government to set a date for elections and to develop a roadmap for the transition to a new democratically elected government.

The United States, along with the international community, stands ready to assist Mali in conducting free, fair, and transparent elections.

The interim government should build on the preparations that were undertaken before the aborted April 2012 elections and hold elections by April 2013 with as many voters as possible. The United States looks forward to working with the interim government and the international community to examine the best mechanisms to ensure that voters from all regions of Mali, including those in refugee camps in neighboring countries, can participate in national elections.

As Mali moves through its current political transition, we have been clear and unequivocal in our messages to coup leader Captain Sanogo and the Malian public about the need for Captain Sanogo to leave the political stage and to be held accountable for human rights abuses committed while he was in control.



We have imposed targeted travel sanctions on Captain Sanogo and more than 60 other individuals who were involved in the coup or who continue to impede the restoration of democracy. The U.S. Government has also formally terminated its assistance to the Government of Mali except for programs providing critical humanitarian assistance in health care and food security. We will maintain these kinds of pressures until Mali transitions to a new democratically elected government.

Elections and the restoration of Mali's democratic institutions by 2013 are critical for ensuring that the Malian Government has the legitimacy and the credibility that it needs to negotiate with the Tuareg and other northern populations and to coordinate effectively with regional and international partners to defeat AQIM.

The ongoing rebellion in northern Mali by the Tuareg community is a second major factor contributing to Mali's current political and security problems. The government must recognize and address the legitimate political and social-economic grievances of the Tuareg community. The United States commends the efforts of African leaders, including President Compaore of Burkina Faso, to facilitate dialogue between the interim government and northern groups that accept Mali's territorial integrity and who reject terrorism.

We support the commitment of interim President Traore to open a dialogue with those actors in the north who respect Mali's territorial integrity. We also welcomed the news that representatives of the Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, known as the MNLA, have retracted their declaration of independence of the north, and that key figures in the MNLA and the Ansar al-Dine have declared their readiness to negotiate with the interim government. These political negotiations should be pursued diligently.

Mali's interim government must demonstrate its commitment to negotiations by appointing a lead negotiator for the north. The interim government also must find ways to effectively address legitimate northern grievances in a peaceful manner.

The Tuareg are not terrorists, and the grievances of the Tuareg should be resolved peacefully and not through military actions.

The participation of Algeria and Mauritania, which are not members of ECOWAS, are also crucial in finding a lasting solution to the Malian problem. Later this week, a delegation of U.S. officials, including Deputy Secretary of State William Burns, will be traveling to Algiers to encourage the Algerians to play a more active role in addressing the political and security problems in northern Mali. Secretary Clinton was in Algeria to discuss Mali, among other issues, approximately a month ago.

The third challenge in Mali is terrorism. We are gravely concerned about the presence and activities of terrorist and extremist groups in northern Mali. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa, known as MUJAO, and other affiliated groups have exploited the political unrest created by the March coup and northern rebellion to expand their safe haven in northern Mali and to impose their ideology on local communities throughout the northern part of the country.

While these tactics remain alien to the vast majority of the population in the affected areas, AQIM and MUJAO have established

at least temporary relationships with a number of groups in northern Mali and currently control the key cities of Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal.

Any attempt to militarily oust AQIM from northern Mali must be African-led. It must be Malian-led. It must be well-planned, well-organized, and well-resourced to be successful.

Military plans must also account for civilian security and humanitarian needs.

We support the efforts of the interim government of Mali, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, neighboring states, and others in the international community to prepare a military response, in accordance with international law, to address the threat of terrorists and extremists in northern Mali. The threat of military force has contributed, we think, to a change in some of the northern groups, as witnessed by the recent willingness of the MNLA and other members of Ansar al-Dine, to renounce their efforts to establish an independent state in northern Mali.

The military concept proposed by ECOWAS and endorsed by the African Union provides a foundation for planning a proposed military intervention in northern Mali. However, several key questions must be answered to ensure that this response is well-planned, well-resourced, and appropriate.

These issues include, among other things, the required force levels, the cost and funding needs, the logistical requirements, the operational timeliness, the protection of civilians, and ensuring that the proposed military action is adequately linked to a political strategy and an end state for military operations in the north.

We have sent military planners to ECOWAS to assist with the continued development and refinement of the plans for international intervention. As the planning continues, we expect that many of the outstanding questions that I have raised, that we have raised as a government, will, in fact, be answered.

We also continue to engage actively in New York with the U.N. and other international partners in preparation for the ongoing U.N. Security Council discussions on a resolution on military intervention in the north. As plans develop for the military operation, we will be better able to determine how the United States can best support ECOWAS and the AU elements in this effort.

Mali's neighbors have intensified their ongoing efforts to bolster their own security and to address the AQIM safe haven in northern Mali. Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger are all deeply concerned that any military intervention in northern Mali will cause a spillover of extremists into their own countries. These governments strongly favor exhausting all political dialogue before any intervention.

We ourselves are assisting Mauritania and Niger, as well as some eight other states in the region, through our Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Partnership program, TSCTP. This program is designed to help build long-term capacity to counter and marginalize terrorist organizations; disrupt efforts to recruit, train, and provision extremists; and to build up the capacities of the states in the region.

However, lasting resolution to the terrorist threat will require that the countries in the Sahel develop the capacity to counter

AQIM, along with other transnational threats like drug smuggling and human trafficking.

The fourth crisis in the region is one of humanitarian proportions. The human toll of these overlapping challenges has been enormous. Since the start of the fighting in northern Mali, more than 410,000 people have become refugees or internally displaced. Of these, nearly 200,000 people are displaced within Mali alone, and more than 210,000 Malians have fled to Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso. Algeria also hosts large Malian populations of refugees.

In an effort to mitigate the effects of the complex humanitarian crisis in the Sahel, we are providing humanitarian food assistance to those displaced in the region. In 2012, the U.S. Government provided some \$445 million in assistance to the Sahel region, \$119 million of which was in support of emergency needs within Mali and among refugee populations outside of Mali. The humanitarian response should remain a civilian-led effort in order to ensure the neutral and impartial character of humanitarian operations.

We have encouraged greater international cooperation and coordination in developing a comprehensive approach to Mali's multiple crises and the greater Sahel. The U.N. Secretary General's recent appointment of a special envoy for the Sahel will help provide the needed facilitation and coordination. We will discuss the drafting of the Secretary General's integrated strategy for the Sahel at a meeting in Rome this Friday. It is important that the next U.N. Security Council resolution be based in part on the U.N. Secretary General's recent report to the Security Council on Mali, and that the restoration of democracy, political negotiations with the Tuareg, and the humanitarian response receive the same level of priority as any discussions about military interventions against AQIM. All four of these challenges must be met simultaneously.

ECOWAS clearly has a very important role to play in assisting Mali. Five of the organization's 15 Member States share borders with Mali. Although they are not ECOWAS members, Algeria and Mauritania also share long borders with Mali and have important contributions to make.

In closing, addressing these four overlapping challenges will require comprehensive, sustained, and dedicated regional and international support and engagement. We in Washington are committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali. We support inclusive dialogue and negotiations to address the economic and social needs of the marginalized populations in the north, especially the Tuareg. We support reunification of Malian territory, both through negotiations with Malians who support a unified and secular state and through well-planned and well-resourced African-led military actions to dislodge the terrorists. We will also continue to address the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region as well.

Mr. Chairman, I have a much longer statement which I have submitted to you for the record. But again, thank you for this opportunity to testify, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Senator Isakson, for your keen interest in this issue.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ambassador Carson follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY JOHNNIE CARSON

Thank you very much, Chairman Coons and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify before you on this most important subject. Mali's March 21, 2012, military coup d'état ended two decades of Malian democracy, resulted in the loss of the northern Mali to extremist groups, and further destabilized an already fragile Sahel region. Mali is now facing four distinct but overlapping challenges—the restoration of democratic governance, political negotiations with northern groups that reject extremism, Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb's expanded presence in northern Mali, and an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Mali, regional partners, and the international community must respond to each of these challenges simultaneously. Our response to any one of these challenges must not be dependent on the achievement of another.

## 1. RESTORING A DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED GOVERNMENT

Mali's first challenge is the restoration of democratic governance. The framework agreement negotiated by ECOWAS with the military junta following the March 21 coup mandates that Mali's interim government must organize elections and put in place a legitimate, democratically elected government by April 2013.

While the interim government has made progress in strengthening governance, preparations for elections are moving slowly. The longer Mali's political elite delay in putting this electoral process in motion, the more likely it is that the April 2013 date will slip. We continue to encourage the interim government to set a date for elections and develop a roadmap for the transition to a democratically elected government. I recently sent a letter to Interim Malian Prime Minister Diarra urging him to support preparations for elections and repeating our assurance that the United States, along with the international community, stands ready to assist him in overcoming the challenges for carrying out free, fair, and transparent elections. My letter also emphasized our support for recent ECOWAS statements regarding the ineligibility of current members of the interim government to run in the elections.

The United States has made elections in Mali a priority because historically transitional governments that are not pressed to hold elections and restore constitutional order tend to hold on to power long beyond their mandate. While we support Interim President Traore and Interim Prime Minister Diarra as they guide the transition government during this challenging time in Mali's history, transition governments, including this one, are inherently weak. Mali needs now more than ever a strong democratic government to restore its democratic tradition and provide the strong leadership necessary to negotiate a political agreement with northern rebels, reform its security sector, and lead a military intervention in the north to restore and maintain Mali's territorial integrity. Although there is currently some Malian public resistance to holding elections before the reunification of the country, we will continue to express the need to hold elections prior to recapturing the north. We encourage the interim government to consult with UNHCR and other stakeholders to find ways to hold polls in refugee camps so those displaced by the violence in northern Mali are given an opportunity to vote and ensure the participation of the population of northern Mali. Elections can send a strong message to coup leaders, extremists, and rebels alike—the Malian people will not allow violence to rob them of their democracy.

The interim government should build on the preparations that were undertaken before the aborted April 2012 elections and hold elections as soon as technically feasible with as many voters as possible. The United States looks forward to working with the interim government and the international community to examine the best mechanism to ensure that voters from all regions of Mali, including those in refugee camps in neighboring countries, can participate in national elections.

The 2013 elections must be transparent and free of intimidation from the coup leaders and their supporters. We have been unequivocal in our messages to coup leader Captain Sanogo and the Malian public about the need for Sanogo to leave the political stage and be held accountable for the excesses of this period, and in particular the human rights abuses and mistreatments credibly ascribed to Captain Sanogo and his associates. We have imposed targeted travel sanctions on more than 60 individuals who were involved in the coup, supported its authors, or who continue to impede the restoration of democracy. We will maintain these kinds of pressures until Mali transitions to a democratically elected government.

As a result of the March 2012 coup in Mali, the U.S. Government formally terminated assistance to the Government of Mali. Funding for programs that provide life-saving, critical assistance in health and food security, as well as democratic elections support programming, is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. These decisions will

be affected by the current political and security situation in Mali and how it develops, with recognition that these are complex challenges. Programs that have resumed include activities to reduce child mortality, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, essential life-saving services for maternal and child health, and preparation for the planting season to ensure food security. These activities are implemented through nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

The United States firmly believes that Mali's interim leaders must continue preparations in earnest to hold elections simultaneous with efforts to address the political grievances of Mali's northern populations, restore Mali's territorial integrity, and respond to the continued humanitarian crisis. Elections are critical for ensuring that the Malian Government has the legitimacy needed to negotiate with indigenous northern groups and effectively coordinate with regional and international partners to oust AQIM.

## 2. REBELLION IN THE NORTH AND NEGOTIATIONS

The ongoing rebellion in northern Mali is another major factor contributing to the instability and crises in Mali and the Sahel. Recognizing that the Tuareg and other nonextremist groups in northern Mali have legitimate political and socioeconomic grievances, ECOWAS, the AU, and the international community have encouraged a renewed and strengthened process of mediation to end the northern rebellion. The United States commends the efforts of African leaders, including President Compaore of Burkina Faso, to facilitate dialogue between the interim government and northern groups that accept Mali's territorial integrity and reject terrorism.

We support the commitment of interim President Traore to open dialogue with those actors in the north who are committed to Mali's territorial integrity and secular nature. We also welcomed the news that representatives of the Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of the Azawad (MNLA) have retracted their declaration of independence of the north, and key figures in the MNLA and Ansar al-Dine have declared their readiness to negotiate with the interim government. Mali's interim government must demonstrate its commitment to negotiations by appointing a lead negotiator for the north to peacefully address the long-standing political grievances of northern groups that accept Mali's territorial integrity and renounce terrorism. The feasibility of a lasting negotiated settlement, however, will ultimately depend on the legitimacy that can only come with a democratically elected government. Long-term talks will be needed to address the legitimate social and economic needs of northern populations; these future negotiations are a necessary complement to the current short-term negotiations to separate those groups in the north who respect Mali's territorial integrity and secular nature from the extremists and terrorist groups with whom negotiation is not an option.

The participation of Algeria and Mauritania, which are not members of ECOWAS, also will be crucial to a lasting solution in northern Mali. This week, a delegation of U.S. officials, including Deputy Secretary of State Burns, will be traveling to Algiers to encourage the Algerians to play a more active role in addressing the crises in northern Mali, as Secretary Clinton did during her recent visit to Algeria.

## 3. THREATS FROM TERRORISTS AND OTHER EXTREMIST ELEMENTS

We are seriously concerned about the presence and activities of terrorist and extremist groups in northern Mali. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), and affiliated groups have exploited the political chaos created by the coup and northern rebellion to expand their safe haven in northern Mali and impose their radical ideology on local populations. While their tactics and ideology remain alien to the vast majority of the population in the affected areas, AQIM and MUJAO established at least temporary relationships with a number of groups in the area and currently hold the military upper hand in the areas under their control, including the key towns of Timbuktu, Gao, and Kidal.

Any attempt to militarily oust AQIM from northern Mali must be African-led, well-planned, and well-resourced. Military plans must also account for civilian security and humanitarian response. We support the efforts of the interim government of Mali, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, neighboring partners, and others in the international community to prepare a military response, in accordance with international law, to address the threat of terrorists and extremists in northern Mali. The threat of military force has contributed to change in some of the actors, witnessed by the recent willingness of the MNLA and some members of Ansar al-Dine to negotiate with the interim government.

The military concept proposed by ECOWAS and endorsed by the AU provides a foundation for planning a proposed military intervention in northern Mali. The mili-

tary concept proposes an Africa-led effort, but several key questions must be answered to ensure that this effort is also well-planned and well-resourced. These issues include outstanding questions about necessary force levels, the capabilities of the Malian and international forces to accomplish the objectives of the mission, cost and funding needs, logistical requirements, operational timelines, planning for minimizing impacts on civilian security and the humanitarian situation, and ensuring that the proposed military action is adequately linked to a sufficiently detailed political strategy and end state for military operations in the north.

We have sent military planners to ECOWAS to assist with the continued development and refinement of the plan for international intervention. As the planning continues, we expect that many of the outstanding questions will be answered. We also continue to engage with the U.N. and our international partners in preparation for an anticipated U.N. Security Council resolution on a military intervention in the north.

As plans develop for the military operation we will be better able to determine how the United States can best support the ECOWAS and AU elements of the military force.

Mali's neighbors have intensified their ongoing efforts to bolster their own security and address the AQIM safe haven in northern Mali. Algeria, Mauritania, and Niger are concerned that any military intervention in northern Mali will cause a spillover of extremists across their borders. This could also have repercussions on the security of refugees. These neighbors are increasing their border security, and we are urging UNHCR to work with host governments to ensure appropriate security and screening measures are in place in order to maintain the impartiality, neutrality, and civilian nature of refugee camps. These governments strongly favor exhausting political dialogue before an intervention.

We are monitoring the actions of AQIM and other extremist and terrorist organizations in the north, and continue to work with the international community to address this evolving threat. We continue to enhance our work with Mali's neighbors, to increase their capacity to secure their borders, disrupt AQIM supply lines, and contain the spread of extremist groups. We assist Mauritania and Niger through the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Partnership (TSCTP), which is designed to help build long-term capacity to contain and marginalize terrorist organizations and facilitation networks; disrupt efforts to recruit, train, and provision terrorists and extremists; counter efforts to establish safe havens for terrorist organizations; and disrupt foreign fighter networks that may attempt to operate outside the region. Lasting resolution to the terrorist threat will require that the countries in the Sahel develop the capacity to counter this threat, along with other transnational threats like drug smuggling and human trafficking.

#### 4. HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The human toll of these overlapping challenges has been enormous. Since the start of the fighting in northern Mali, more than 410,000 people have become refugees or internally displaced. Of these, nearly 200,000 people are displaced within Mali, and more than 210,000 Malian refugees have fled to Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso. Algeria also hosts Malian refugees.

In an effort to mitigate the effects of the complex humanitarian crisis in the Sahel, we are providing humanitarian and food assistance to those displaced by the conflict in northern Mali and those affected by the region's food crisis. For 2012 to date, the U.S. Government provided more than \$445 million in assistance to the Sahel region, \$119 million of which was in support of emergency needs within Mali and among refugee populations outside of Mali. We support the work of the United Nations Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Sahel and his efforts to ensure access to affected populations and coordinate the humanitarian response, including contingency planning for possible new displacements as a result of a military intervention. We hold that the humanitarian response should remain civilian-led in order to ensure the neutral and impartial character of humanitarian operations.

#### 5. RESPONSE FROM PARTNERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

We have encouraged greater international cooperation and coordination in developing a comprehensive approach to Mali's multiple crises and the greater Sahel. The U.N. Secretary General's recent appointment of a special envoy for the Sahel will help provide the needed facilitation and coordination. We will discuss the drafting of the Secretary General's integrated strategy for the Sahel, at a meeting in Rome meeting on December 7. We will also discuss coordination at a UNSC ministerial-level discussion on the situation in the Sahel to be convened by the Kingdom of Morocco on December 10 during its Presidency of the Security Council. UNSC Reso-

lution 2071 provided a useful framework for addressing Mali's four overlapping challenges. It is important that the next UNSC resolution, which will be based in part on the U.N. Secretary General's report to the Security Council on Mali, ensures that the restoration of democracy, political negotiations with northern populations, and the humanitarian response receive the same level of priority as military preparations to oust AQIM.

ECOWAS clearly has a very important role to play in coordination. Mali was a founding member of ECOWAS and 5 of the organization's 15 Member States share borders with Mali. But we have to recognize that Algeria and Mauritania also border Mali, but are not members of ECOWAS. We have encouraged ECOWAS, the AU and our international partners to structure their engagements on Mali in a way that will incorporate Mali's neighbors, including Algeria and Mauritania.

We are continuing to work with our international partners to develop a specific plan for any military intervention in northern Mali that includes details on cost and burden-sharing for the intervention. We look forward to consulting with Congress further to ensure the support necessary to make our policy in Mali successful.

In closing, addressing these four overlapping challenges will require comprehensive, sustained and dedicated regional and international support. The United States continues to encourage Mali to prepare for elections to restore democratic governance. We are committed to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Mali. We support inclusive dialogue and negotiation to address the economic and social needs of marginalized groups in the north. We support reunification of Malian territory, both through negotiations with those Malians who support a unified and secular state and through well-financed, -resourced, and -managed military action to dislodge terrorists. And we continue to address the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel region with assistance.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much. Thank you, Assistant Secretary Carson, for your service and your very active and effective engagement with the region over such a long period. We're always grateful to have your testimony.

Next we turn to Assistant Administrator for Africa, Earl Gast.

**STATEMENT OF EARL GAST, ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR FOR AFRICA, U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. GAST. Good morning, Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Isakson. Thank you for inviting me to speak before you today. I have submitted a longer statement for the record, but I thought I would use my time to briefly give you an update on the current situation and how it has affected our development programming, as well as outline some of the key factors that are needed for development to progress.

The U.N. reports that 4.6 million persons in Mali are affected by food insecurity and in need of assistance. They are recovering from last year's food shocks, high prices, and the effects of conflict and displacement. Nearly 200,000 Malians have been displaced within the country, and another 210,000 have fled to neighboring countries.

In the north, international and local humanitarian actors are able to provide assistance in many places. However, access still remains negotiated on a case-by-case basis, and it is often very inconsistent.

Moving forward, a necessary component for solving Mali's complex crises is the establishment of a democratically elected government by April 2013, as called for by ECOWAS. The Government of Mali must pursue preparations for elections at the same time that it resolves the crisis in the north. To do this successfully, a legitimate process is needed to maximize the participation of populations that have been displaced by the violence.

It is also necessary to develop provisions for how the north will be meaningfully included in a new government, and to engage the broader Malian population in a dialogue about national reconciliation.

Prior to the coup, USAID's broad development portfolio included activities to strengthen democratic institutions, grow the agricultural sector, support literacy and education, improve community health and health systems, and manage instability and threats in the north, and Mali had made significant gains in these areas. Annual economic growth averaged more than 5 percent across the past decade, reducing the incidence of poverty from 56 percent to 44 percent by 2010. That was over a period of about 10 years.

Mali liberalized its cereal markets. It opened up trade routes, and it improved conditions for doing business.

What we have seen is that agricultural production has increased, particularly in areas where USAID support has been active.

As a result of the March 2012 coup in Mali, the U.S. Government formally terminated assistance to the Government of Mali. However, our support to address the emergency health, nutrition, and food needs of the Malian people continues.

In evaluating which programs can move forward in light of the applicable legal restrictions, we consider whether they provide essential life-saving assistance, whether they support children, strengthen food security, or advance U.S. foreign policy. We also consider operational issues, including efficient management and oversight. This case-by-case analysis ensures that there is careful consideration of the context surrounding a proposed activity.

Before the coup, USAID was the largest donor supporting elections in Mali. Programs trained poll workers and improved election monitoring systems, strengthened political parties, and provided voter education.

When the electoral support activities resume, provided the consent of Congress, assistance will help support a foundation for free and fair elections in Mali and a peaceful political exit from the current situation. A key issue will be ensuring the inclusion and participation of the internally displaced persons and refugees in the political process.

We plan to expand our election assistance programming to include broader civic engagement activities to support national reconciliation as part of the return to an inclusive democratic Malian society. The only USAID-supported economic growth activities that are continuing in Mali are those that address food security under the Feed the Future Initiative. Agricultural assistance has focused on supporting farmers and herders to increase their productivity, strengthen market linkages, and increase resilience to drought.

Some health sector activities have been approved to continue, including programs aimed at preventing maternal and child mortality through the provision of basic community health services, support of malaria testing and treatment, and other critically community-based health interventions.

Our approach to development programming is affected by the current political and security situation in Mali and how it develops. USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives recently conducted an assessment to determine the feasibility and appropriateness of a



transition program in Mali. If initiated, this program would allow the U.S. Government to respond to any opportunities and challenges that arise in the course of the transition, particularly in the areas of peace and security and reconciliation.

The ability of the United States to resume full assistance will depend on a democratically elected government taking office. USAID continues to monitor current humanitarian needs and plan for possible future needs in Mali. Since the crisis in April, USAID has provided nearly \$80 million to address humanitarian needs among Malians affected by drought and conflict.

While initial harvest projections are positive for this coming year, the most vulnerable will continue to need additional assistance for recovery and resilience to future shocks. In the north we will continue to respond to needs when and where access allows.

While USAID can provide immediate relief to the people, help set the foundation for democratic elections, and provide basic social services in the interim, Mali's future development must be led by the Malian people. This can only be achieved through a duly elected and participatory government against the background of peace and stability.

Accordingly, it is critical that the Government of Mali and the Malian people be encouraged to pursue a simultaneous and multi-pronged approach to the return to democracy, accountability, and a negotiated peace. None of these gains will be sustainable in the absence of the other.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I welcome any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Gast follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR EARL GAST

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Isakson, members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. Mali is facing a complex emergency: a political crisis, recovery from a major drought, and threats to internal and regional security. I would like to provide an update on the current situation and how it has affected our programming, as well as outline the key factors that are needed for development to progress.

COMPLEX EMERGENCY ENVIRONMENT

Insufficient rains during the 2011 Sahel agricultural season led to nearly 19 million people being at risk of food insecurity, nearly half of whom required emergency food assistance during 2012, according to national governments and U.N. data. In fiscal year 2012, the governments of eight Sahel countries and the U.S. Government declared disasters. Since the beginning of this year, the United States has responded with more than \$445 million in programming across eight countries in the Sahel. Food insecurity was exacerbated by the conflict in northern Mali, which led to large population displacement inside of Mali and to refugee flows in neighboring countries, further straining the ability of both displaced people and host communities to cope with increased food insecurity.

Although all indications are that this past agricultural season was above average, the U.N. reports that 4.6 million people in Mali are affected by food insecurity and will still need additional assistance in order to recover from last year's food shocks and deal with the ongoing high food prices and the effects of conflict and displacement. Humanitarian actors are currently refining monitoring of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conducting individual registration of refugees. While this is ongoing, the numbers will fluctuate; the most recent estimates of IDPs inside of Mali stands at nearly 200,000 and the number of refugees is reported to be more than 210,000. In the North, the conflict has more or less stabilized for the moment, allowing international and local humanitarian actors to provide assistance in many places. Many markets are open and trade is flowing across borders, and while there are more than 20 humanitarian organizations currently active in northern Mali, ac-

cess still remains negotiated on a case-by-case basis. The ongoing uncertainty has halted foreign and domestic investment in Mali, economic and tourism activity has slowed, and according to some estimates, 2012 economic growth projections have dropped from previous estimates of 6 percent to negative 1 percent or worse. It is also estimated that government revenues are one-fourth the level they were just 1 year ago and accordingly, that the majority of basic social services are being provided by humanitarian organizations.

In October, the U.N. Security Council adopted an important resolution addressing the overlapping governance, security, and humanitarian crises affecting Mali. In November, ECOWAS announced a plan to send an African-led force into northern Mali to resolve the security crisis. The United States has called on the interim Malian Government to engage in negotiations in earnest and appoint a lead negotiator for the north, demonstrating commitment to unifying the country.

The Government of Mali must pursue preparations for broadly inclusive, legitimate, democratic elections in parallel to negotiations and military intervention to resolve the crisis in the north. The restoration of democratically elected government in Mali by April 2013, as called for by ECOWAS, is a crucial component of the overall long-term solution to Mali's current crises. We support efforts by the interim government to ensure a legitimate process that maximizes the participation of populations that have been displaced by the violence, to develop provisions for how the North will be reflected in a new government, and to engage the broader Malian population in a dialogue about national reconciliation.

Progress on security and the restoration of democracy is also linked to accountability. Persons must be held accountable for abuses, including abuses against civilians that have occurred in the context of this crisis. Accountability supports our peace and democracy objectives by helping victims, and society as a whole, address past wrongs and move toward the future.

#### PAST DEVELOPMENT GAINS AT RISK

Mali has been a strong partner, particularly in the area of economic growth through the U.S. Government's Feed the Future Initiative and the Millennium Challenge Corporation program. The current threats to Mali's stability and development are all the more concerning given the cooperation that has characterized relations between our governments and Mali's past development gains.

Prior to the coup, in fiscal year 2011, USAID and the Department of State provided \$137.9 million in bilateral foreign assistance to Mali. The broad development portfolio included activities to strengthen democratic institutions, promote inclusive and sustainable agricultural growth, support literacy and educational development, improve health status and health systems, and manage instability and threats in the North.

U.S. assistance has advanced significant development gains in Mali through our longstanding partnerships. I would like to outline just a few examples of the progress that has been made. These development gains are precarious in the current situation, and underscore the promise of the Malian people and the importance of returning to democratic rule.

Over the past decade, annual economic growth has averaged more than 5 percent, reducing the incidence of poverty from 56 percent in 2001 to 44 percent in 2010. In the past two decades, under-5 mortality was reduced from 255 to 178 per 1,000 live births—still ranking among the highest in the world, but demonstrating progress nevertheless. Access to education has increased from 20 percent of primary school children in school in the 1990s to 80 percent of children in school in 2011. Prior to the coup, print and radio media were vibrant and largely independent with 230 stations, many established with USAID support, reaching more than 80 percent of the population.

Mali has liberalized its cereal markets, opened up trade routes, and improved conditions for doing business. The most vulnerable have survived drought and other disasters through the response and resilience provided by USAID's assistance. Agricultural production has increased in three regions where USAID has focused its assistance as a result of improved seeds and other inputs, extension services to improve farming methods and techniques, and farm-to-market linkages with greater private sector involvement.

In addition, Mali has been a central participant in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) from its onset. Programs to address drivers of violent extremism were implemented in the Northern regions of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu, focusing on radio programming, basic education, out-of-school youth vocational training, microenterprise development, governance, and conflict prevention and peace-building. USAID established 10 FM radio stations reaching 385,000 people,

and extended national interactive radio instruction to 200,000 students at 1,270 religious schools (madrasas). Prior to the coup, the program had just begun a significant expansion to increase the scope of activities and geographic reach in the north.

While USAID has made significant contributions to Malian development through its long engagement in the country and the hard work and diligence of the Malian people, recent events stand to reverse these gains.

#### LIFE-SAVING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CONTINUES WHILE ASSESSING FUTURE NEEDS

As the complex crisis began to unfold in Mali, USAID proactively supported early initiatives to mitigate the impacts of food insecurity through programs aimed at increasing agricultural production, improving diets, and strengthening livelihoods—all of which limited the impact of this year's shocks. Early fiscal year 2012 programs also focused on mitigating the impact of food insecurity through local and regional procurement of food, support for livestock health, and cash-based assistance to sustain adequate food consumption during the particularly hard lean season. In response to the conflict in the North, USAID scaled up assistance for IDPs, host families, and other conflict-affected populations, both in southern Mali, where populations were already struggling with decreased food availability, and in the North, once need was assessed and security permitted the safe delivery of life-saving assistance. USAID worked closely with the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, which provided timely support to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other U.N. agencies and nongovernmental organizations to respond to the resultant refugee situation.

For the current crisis, USAID has provided over \$80 million to address humanitarian and food needs among drought and conflict affected Malians. In addition, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration provided more than \$40 million in humanitarian assistance for refugees in the region and conflict-affected populations throughout the region.

For the coming year, the humanitarian situation is likely to be similarly complex. While initial harvest projections are positive, the most vulnerable will continue to need additional assistance in order to promote their recovery from the previous drought and help build their resilience to future food crises. Many vulnerable people took on large debts or sold productive assets to cope with last year's shocks. In addition, the conflict in Northern Mali remains fluid with various groups continuing to compete for position and territory in advance of a presumed ECOWAS military intervention, which will likely result in additional internal displacement and refugee outflows in 2013. USAID continues to monitor current humanitarian needs and plan for possible future needs in Mali.

In the year to come, we aim to support recovery from the past drought and build resilience to future droughts by helping the most vulnerable to diversify their livelihoods, improve agricultural productivity, improve livestock practices, and adopt behaviors that improve nutritional status. In terms of IDPs currently in southern Mali, many are congregating in urban areas. Recent evidence has shown that they are increasingly moving out of host family situations and are in need of housing and livelihoods. In response, USAID plans to provide resources to ensure appropriate housing, likely in the form of cash grants to assist with rent and support livelihood development. In the north, USAID will continue to support livelihoods, safe water, sanitation and security, as well as respond to newly identified needs when and where access allows. USAID, with the State Department, also supports U.N.-led regional humanitarian contingency planning for displacement and other likely humanitarian needs in advance of any military intervention in the North.

#### PRESERVING THE FOUNDATION NEEDED FOR DEMOCRACY, PEACE, AND PROSPERITY

In addition to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, USAID recognizes the need in times of crisis to deliver basic social services and thus preserve the foundation needed to resume a democratic, peaceful, and productive society. The continuity of carefully provided development assistance in Mali is critical to supporting a return to constitutional and accountable governance. It is also important to protecting the considerable development gains that Mali has achieved, maintaining stability and encouraging the economic and social conditions that facilitate a rapid rebound following the reestablishment of elected leadership.

As you are aware, section 7008 of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2012 (SFOAA) states that no funds appropriated under titles III through VI of that act can be, "obligated or expended to finance directly any assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected

head of government is deposed by military coup d'état." This restriction applies to assistance to the central, regional, and local governments of Mali.

On April 10, 2012, the United States formally terminated assistance to the Government of Mali, consistent with coup restrictions in the SFOAA. Some of the activities that were terminated included capacity-building programs for the Government of Mali Department of Health, public school construction, support for government efforts to increase agricultural production, and government capacity-building to spur commercial investment. Other assistance to Mali was also suspended on policy grounds, though certain forms of humanitarian assistance (including food assistance) and elections support were never terminated or suspended based on available legal authorities.

Programs that are life-saving, critical assistance in health and food security, as well as democratic elections support programming, have been under consideration for resumption as part of a case-by-case policy and legal review. In evaluating which programs can move forward in light of the applicable legal restrictions, USAID and the State Department consider the policy importance of the activities—for example, whether the proposed activity provides essential life-saving assistance, supports children or strengthens food security, advances a strategic U.S. foreign policy objective—as well as operational considerations, including efficient management and oversight of funding. This case-by-case analysis ensures that there is a careful consideration of the context surrounding a proposed activity and the expected impact of such an activity if it is approved to move forward. The analysis also takes into consideration how to protect previous U.S. Government investments in the proposed activity.

Before the coup, USAID was the largest donor supporting Mali's planned April 2012 elections, with activities that provided training of poll workers, political party strengthening, elections monitoring, and voter education. When the electoral support activities resume, assistance will help support a foundation for free and fair elections in Mali and a peaceful political exit from the current situation. A key issue in resuming assistance will be ensuring the inclusion and participation of internally displaced persons and refugees in the political process. USAID plans to expand its elections assistance program to include broader civic engagement activities to support national reconciliation as part of the return to an inclusive, democratic Malian society.

The only USAID-supported economic growth activities that are continuing in Mali are those that address food security under the Feed the Future Initiative. Agricultural assistance has focused on supporting farmers and herders to increase their productivity, strengthen market linkages, and increase resilience to drought. This continued assistance is critical not only to preventing further deterioration of the food security situation in-country, but also to maintaining the stability of the most populated parts of the country that are outside of the conflict areas.

Some health sector activities have been approved to continue in order to provide life-saving interventions. These include programs aimed at preventing maternal and child mortality through the provision of basic community health services, support of malaria testing and treatment, and other critical community-based health interventions.

USAID has currently suspended all education activities in Mali that benefited the Government of Mali, which included teacher training, curriculum development, and other forms of education assistance. USAID's peace and security programs, including those under the TSCTP, are generally on hold pending further analysis of the operating environment and policy considerations. A minimal amount of community-based programs that address peace-building and youth engagement are slated to continue.

These decisions are affected by the current political and security situation in Mali, with recognition that these are complex challenges. The ability of the United States to resume full assistance will depend on a democratically elected government taking office.

#### FUTURE OUTLOOK

The restoration of democracy and the return to a development focus in Mali is important to the region and to Africa as a whole. As the situation evolves, we remain vigilant to changes in the operating environment and the risks and opportunities involved.

Lives and livelihoods are at great risk without the prompt resolution of the current political, security, and food crises. While these crises are complex and inter-related, they also vary with regards to their timeframes for resolution. Under the right conditions, Mali has the potential to be a major food producer for the region

as well as advance trade and economic growth. Its history of partnership with the United States to improve health, education, and living conditions is noteworthy. While USAID can provide immediate relief to the people, help set the foundation for democratic elections, and provide basic social services in the interim, Mali's future development must be led by the Malian people. This can only be achieved through a duly elected and participatory government against a background of peace, stability, and accountability for past abuses. Accordingly, it is critical that the Government of Mali and the Malian people be encouraged to pursue a simultaneous and multipronged approach to the return to democracy, accountability, and a negotiated peace. None of these gains will be sustainable in the absence of the other.

I thank you for the opportunity for today's discussion and invite any questions you have on our assistance to Mali and its development outlook.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Assistant Administrator Gast.

Next we turn to Ms. Amanda Dory from the Department of Defense.

Ms. Dory.

**STATEMENT OF AMANDA DORY, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR AFRICA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. DORY. Thank you and good morning, Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Isakson. I add my thanks for the opportunity to speak about the overlapping challenges in Mali and the broader Sahel region this morning, and how the Department of Defense fits into the broader picture of how the U.S. Government is addressing this situation.

Department of Defense is extremely concerned about instability in Mali and is working closely with our interagency partners to strengthen efforts at countering AQIM and affiliates, as well as supporting Malian efforts to restore its territorial sovereignty. Our approach is to support Mali's neighbors to isolate the terrorist threat and to enable ECOWAS and others to degrade AQIM while working to restore Malian sovereignty.

This approach is consistent with section 7008 of the fiscal 2012 State Appropriations Act, which proscribes certain assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected government is deposed by military coup. As a result of the coup in Mali, DOD has ceased mil-to-mil capacity-building efforts with the Malian military.

Since January 2012, northern, primarily Tuareg groups have waged a rebellion, driven by longstanding political and economic grievances. This rebellion is the fourth such rebellion since Mali gained its independence in 1960. Although not caused by instability in Libya, the flows of militants and weapons from Libya have strengthened the rebellion and made it more difficult for the Malian authorities to combat it this time.

In late March, the President was overthrown by forces loyal to Captain Sanogo, who then installed a junta government. In response, ECOWAS imposed sanctions, as did the United States and others. ECOWAS has since brokered an agreement with the parties to establish an interim government, but Captain Sanogo continues to influence decisionmaking in Mali as head of a military reform committee.

Northern Mali has become a safe haven for extremist and terrorist groups, including AQIM and affiliates. As the Government of Mali lost control of its northern territory, these groups took over

administration of northern cities and began imposing a harsh version of sharia law. This expanded safe haven and control of territory allows al-Qaeda and its affiliates to recruit supporters more easily and to export extremism. It also gives them greater control over illicit trafficking networks that provide an important element of their funding.

Beyond the obvious threat to Mali's citizens and its neighbors, the growing terrorist presence in Mali also threatens U.S. citizens and our interests in the region, to include the ability to attack embassies and conduct kidnapping operations. Although AQIM has not demonstrated an ability to attack targets in the United States homeland, it does have a history of attacks in the Sahel and Maghreb, and has expressed an intent to target Europe.

The United States approach is focused on restoring democratic governance and security in Mali. This will require democratic elections, a political settlement of legitimate northern grievances, the restoration of Malian sovereignty, focused pressure on AQIM, and continuing a civilian-led response to the humanitarian situation. Department of Defense is working with African partners to enable ECOWAS to conduct military planning for an African-led international military force called AFISMA. This is very much an African-led process. Our efforts are aimed at making our partners more capable both at combating the terrorist threat in their territories and at providing better security for their people more generally.

The worsening situation in Mali also poses a risk to the surrounding governments in the region, especially Mauritania and Niger. The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership is the interagency mechanism for coordinating U.S. Government capability efforts to enable governments in the Maghreb and Sahel to counter AQIM. Department of Defense, the State Department, USAID, and others work closely to coordinate our capacity-building efforts to ensure unity of effort with the 10 participating partners, which include Mali and its neighbors.

ECOWAS, with the support of other partners, is planning for a military intervention in northern Mali in tandem with the African Union's work on a comprehensive strategic concept for the resolution of the crises in Mali.

Department of Defense, through U.S. Africa Command, is actively supporting the military planning effort through the provision of planning expertise. The broad strategic concept for that deployment is sound. More specific planning is underway to address myriad operational details.

The U.S. Government is exploring options for supporting countries that contribute forces to the ECOWAS mission. This could include the provision of training and equipment to countries that would contribute forces to deploy as part of the AFISMA international military force and additional planning and advisory support.

I'll stop for now and look forward to your questions.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Dory follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY AMANDA DORY

Mister Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today about the overlapping challenges in Mali and how the Department of Defense is responding to the situation.

The Department of Defense is extremely concerned about the instability in Mali and is working closely with interagency partners, especially in the State Department, to strengthen our efforts at countering Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and supporting Malian efforts to restore its territorial sovereignty. Our policy is to support Mali's neighbors to isolate the terrorist threat, and concurrently to enable the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to degrade AQIM while working to restore Malian sovereignty. This approach is consistent with the section 7008 of the FY 2012 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, which proscribes certain assistance to the government of any country whose duly elected government is deposed by military coup d'etat. As a result of the coup in Mali, DOD has ceased mil-to-mil capacity-building efforts with the Malian military.

Since January 2012, northern, primarily Tuareg, groups, have waged a rebellion, driven by longstanding political and economic grievances. This rebellion is the fourth Tuareg rebellion since Mali gained its independence in 1960. Although the rebellion was not caused by instability in Libya, the flows of militants and weapons from Libya strengthened the rebellion and made it more difficult for the Malian authorities to combat it.

In late March, President Ahmadou Toumani Toure was overthrown by forces loyal to Captain Amadou Sanogo, who then installed a junta government. In response, ECOWAS imposed sanctions, and the State Department reached the conclusion that a military coup d'etat had occurred, triggering the appropriations act restriction on most assistance to that government. As stated before, the Department of Defense followed suit, ceasing all DOD capacity-building efforts in Mali. ECOWAS brokered an agreement with the parties involved to establish an interim government, with Diounounda Traore as President and Cheick Modibo Diarra as Prime Minister. Captain Sanogo continues to influence decisionmaking in Mali as head of a military reform committee.

Northern Mali has become a safe haven for extremist and terrorist groups, including AQIM and affiliates. As the Government of Mali lost control of its northern territory, these groups took over the administration of northern cities and began imposing a harsh version of Islamic sharia law. This expanded safe haven and control of territory allows al-Qaeda and its affiliates to recruit supporters more easily and to export extremism. It also gives them greater control over illicit trafficking networks that provide part of their funding.

The growing terrorist presence in Mali threatens U.S. citizens, interests, and partners in the region. AQIM maintains the ability to attack regional embassies and other Western interests, and to attack or kidnap Westerners in the region for ransom. Indeed the group is currently holding Western hostages. Although AQIM has not demonstrated an ability to attack targets in the United States, it does have a history of attacks in the Sahel and Maghreb, and has expressed an intent to target Europe.

The U.S. approach is focused on restoring democratic governance and security in Mali. This will require democratic elections, a political settlement of legitimate northern grievances, the restoration of Malian sovereignty, increased pressure on AQIM, and continuing a civilian-led response to the humanitarian situation. The Department of Defense is working through African partners to enable ECOWAS to conduct military planning and limit the threat posed by AQIM. Failure to provide robust support to local partners at this stage could allow the threat to grow to a point where regional states could no longer address it. This is very much an African-led process and our efforts are aimed at making our partners more capable, both at combating the terrorist threat in their territories and at providing better security for their people generally.

The worsening situation in Mali is also a risk to the surrounding governments in the region, especially Mauritania and Niger. The lack of Malian control in the north, the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, and a history of Tuareg grievances in the region, raise the possibility that the situation in Mali could destabilize neighboring states. The food insecurity across the region further underscores the fragile political situation in the region.

The Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership (TSCTP) is the interagency mechanism for coordinating U.S. Government capacity-building efforts to enable governments in the Maghreb and Sahel to counter AQIM and has 10 regional partners. The Department of Defense, the State Department, USAID, and others work

closely to coordinate our capacity-building efforts to ensure unity of effort. Mauritania and Niger are both critical partners in TSCTP and are acting proactively to defend their territories, but their capacity is limited. For those reasons, the Department of Defense—in close coordination with the State Department—is providing capacity-building assistance to these governments. These efforts include enhancing Mauritania’s ability to collect intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) and to project power throughout its territory. We are also supporting Niger to help it better control its borders and project power within its territory.

ECOWAS, with the support of other partners, is planning for a military intervention in northern Mali in tandem with the African Union’s Strategic Concept for the Resolution of the Crises in Mali. The Department of Defense, through U.S. Africa Command, is actively supporting the military planning effort through the provision of planning expertise. The broad strategic concept for that deployment is sound; more specific planning is underway to address operational shortfalls. We understand that the ECOWAS mission in the north will have the dual objectives of restoring Malian national sovereignty and countering al-Qaeda and its affiliates. The United States strongly believes in the need to address the parallel political, security, and humanitarian crises simultaneously.

The U.S. Government is considering options for supporting countries that contribute forces to the ECOWAS mission. This could include the provision of training and equipment to countries that would contribute forces to deploy as part of the international military force and additional planning and advisory support. France and the European Union are also planning to provide significant support, and it will be critical to coordinate our efforts closely. The specific needs of troop contributing countries are not clear yet. Once we better understand the needs of the ECOWAS troop contributing countries, we will be able to assess how the U.S. Government and other international partners can best support that effort.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Deputy Assistant Secretary Dory. I’m grateful to the panel and for the opportunity to explore further this complex and very challenging situation.

If I might, first just on the question of sequencing, all three of you spoke to the interrelated and complex challenges on the path toward restoring democracy, dealing with humanitarian issues, addressing historic grievances in the north, and resolving security concerns in the north. In fact, Secretary Carson, I think you said in your testimony a response to any one of these challenges must not be dependent upon the achievement of another. Yet, they seem inextricably intertwined.

For reasons of our own laws, which I support, we’ve ceased mil-to-mil aid. We’ve cut off a lot of vital aid that will then make more difficult, in some ways, the accomplishment of the security objectives, the electoral objectives.

Please, if you would, in turn, just explain how you see the sequencing of events—elections, addressing regional and historic grievances in the north, restoration of sort of basic humanitarian support and services, and regional planning and execution—under an ECOWAS Malian-led, regionally led effort. How do these three things move forward, and is it possible to move forward on a security resolution without an election?

Ambassador CARSON. Mr. Chairman, a very good question. We have said that these four challenges must be handled simultaneously and in parallel. They must all be considered critical, and they all must be considered important. Addressing some of these challenges along one lane will move faster than along another lane, but we should not hold any one of these programs or efforts or streams of activity hostage to the success or the completion of another.

For example, we have to move forward in continuing to provide humanitarian services and assistance to the north, to displaced



populations to the extent that we have access to them through NGOs and through the international community, and we are doing that. We are continuing to push as hard as we can for political negotiations between Tuareg groups and nonterrorist groups in the north with the government. We are at the same time moving forward with discussions about military planning and preparation. And primarily on the democracy front, we do think that it's absolutely critical that the government not lose sight, in putting down a strategy, a roadmap, and a timetable for the return to democracy in that country.

I mention this last because in many ways it's critically important. If, in fact, there are going to be successful political negotiations with the Tuareg and the other northern groups who have political and social-economic grievances, they have to have a legitimate government in Bamako that they can rely on to fulfill these agreements. This has been a failure in the past. Negotiations and deals have been made with the Tuareg and others, and the government in Bamako has reneged on them. There needs to be a credible government in Bamako to be sure that these things are going to be done.

Equally, while we move ahead and work with ECOWAS and the international community on an African-led response to the terrorist problem in the north against AQIM and extremist groups, in the end, even if these terrorist groups are pushed out and eliminated, there will need to be a credible government in Bamako capable of extending services and providing security and authority over the areas that are recaptured from the north.

So there is a centrality in all of this. There also needs to be a credible government there to be able to deliver humanitarian response and to build up resilience against recurring droughts and food shortages, all in parallel, simultaneously. We should not hold the continued movement toward democracy hostage to the success of the military operations. We should not hold military operations and planning hostage to the completion of a restoration of democracy. But we must keep all four of these things clearly as objectives and goals, moving simultaneously toward them.

Senator COONS. Let me follow up with a more focused question about elections. In order to have a government that is credible in terms of negotiating some resolution to historic grievances that have led to four Tuareg rebellions, how critical is it to have northern participation in the election, and how is it possible to have meaningful northern participation in the election with 400,000 IDPs and refugees and with a very unstable security situation in the north? These two seem inextricably intertwined and very difficult. If you could just briefly address the question, how do you include northern participation in the election?

Ambassador CARSON. It can be done, and it would have been done in April 2012. The coup in March occurred approximately 6 weeks before national elections were to be held. They would have been difficult elections in the north, but they could have, in fact, occurred.

It's important to remember both a little bit about the geography as well as the population distribution. Although some 55 percent of the north has been taken over by the rebellious groups, only 10

percent of Mali's population lives in the northern part of the country. Some 90 percent of the population would have been able to carry on with elections.

But we also realize it is important not to exclude the north, but to include the north. Even today, it is possible to accommodate many, many of the northerners. We estimate that something in the neighborhood of 800,000 to 1 million people are residing in the north—resided in the north. We think that probably half of that population, as we've talked about, has in fact left—approximately 400,000 people—200,000 dispersed in refugee camps in the region, particularly in Mauritania, where one camp has 110,000 Malians. There are approximately 30,000 to 40,000 in Niger and Burkina Faso, and 200,000 dispersed to the south.

If there were elections, the elections could be held in the Mauritanian refugee camp, supervised by the UNHCR or with their assistance. This has happened before in other places, and those who are in the south as displaced persons could also be identified so that they could vote. It's not ideal but, in fact, it could occur.

Historically, the north has voted in a smaller percentage of the population than any other zone, and we estimate that in the last national elections it accounted for a very, very small percentage of the national turnout. The north must be included because we believe that, aside from the AQIM threat, there is a legitimate concern that people in the north have not benefited the way people in the south have from education, from health care, infrastructure. So they must be accommodated because this is important.

But we don't think that the movement toward the restoration of democracy should be held hostage to a complete military victory in the north. That's a date that is uncertain, and we may not know it. And there was tremendous instability across the north during the last national elections, as well.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

I'm going to turn to Senator Isakson for our next set of questions.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ms. Dory, for your testimony. I have a question for you which I understand I may need to receive the answer in a secure area, which I would be happy to do. But in your statement, you say AQIM maintains an ability to attack regional embassies and other Western interests, and to attack or kidnap Westerners in the region for ransom.

Given what happened in Benghazi, do you know if we have any evidence that it was Al Qaeda in the Maghreb that was a part of the attack on the U.S. consulate in Benghazi, and ultimately the death of Chris Stevens?

Ms. DORY. I think in this setting we can say that AQIM played a role, and the investigations are still underway precisely how AQIM members interacted with others, and the rest is better left to a closed session.

Senator ISAKSON. And we'll try and arrange that at some appropriate time.

On that same point, you acknowledge that U.S. Africa Command is coordinating with ECOWAS on making planning for an interven-

tion in the north. I guess that should be a potential intervention in the north. Is that correct?

Ms. DORY. It's correct to say that the intervention is in the planning phases at this point. The intervention would be led by the Malian Armed Forces with support from the international military force. There is no construct or intention of having a U.S. boots-on-the-ground type of support to that intervention, but at this point we're providing planning and support exclusively, and we will look at opportunities to provide training support to those partners with whom we can engage.

Senator ISAKSON. In your statement it says we understand the ECOWAS mission in the north will have dual objectives of restoring Malian national sovereignty and countering al-Qaeda and its affiliates. I understand the sovereignty goal. On countering al-Qaeda, you're talking about a significant, potentially significant military intervention. Do you think the people that you're planning to train are going to be sufficiently capable of taking on a force like al-Qaeda?

Ms. DORY. For any military force to succeed, it's a combination of training, equipping, and will. I believe that the countries in the region are demonstrating the will and the intent to intervene. They are certainly capable to do some of the related missions, and for those where additional training and equipping is required, that's the role of the international community to provide that support.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you very much.

Ambassador Carson, thank you, as always, for your tireless efforts on behalf of the African people and the United States interests in Africa. I appreciate the great job that you do.

On the question that was raised by Senator Coons regarding elections and your statement that it's absolutely essential that the north be included in those elections—I think that's what you said, and I agree with that—we have a recommendation. I haven't talked this over with the chairman yet, but I think I'm right. You can tell me if I'm wrong.

There's a gentleman in Nigeria who pulled off the Nigerian elections when Goodluck Jonathan was elected. He was the election commissioner. His name was Jaeger, if I'm not mistaken. Jaeger? I'd get him over there in a heartbeat and see if you couldn't get his help to do that because he overcame similar obstacles of violence, and it was in the north where they had their problems in Nigeria. So I just wanted to throw that out as possible help.

Mr. Gast, on delivering—we've got a bunch of people hungry because we had a famine in Mali, particularly in the north. Since the coup, have we been disrupted from being able to get humanitarian aid to the people in Mali?

Mr. GAST. Initially, Senator, I would say that that was the case. There was a period where no humanitarian assistance was being delivered. Since then, since the early months, our partners who are operating in the north have been able to negotiate access. For the most part, the population in need, their needs are being met.

And so in addition to the displaced persons, whether they're refugees or internally displaced persons, as well as those who are still residing in the north, the needs are being met.

Senator ISAKSON. Has the coup in the north caused a refugee problem in any of the bordering countries? Have there been people who have left Mali because of the disruption?

Mr. GAST. Yes, roughly 210,000 persons.

Senator ISAKSON. And where have they gone?

Mr. GAST. Mainly to Mauritania. The majority have gone into Mauritania, and then a sizeable population going into Niger.

Senator ISAKSON. Is USAID assisting in those camps to get humanitarian services?

Mr. GAST. We are, but primarily through PRM.

Senator ISAKSON. And PRM stands for—

Mr. GAST. I'm sorry. That's the State Department Population, Refugee and Migration Bureau.

Senator ISAKSON. You have the most acronyms of anybody I've ever heard.

Mr. GAST. Sorry about that. [Laughter.]

Senator ISAKSON. I'm going to have to learn acronyms one of these days.

Mr. GAST. The short answer is yes, the needs are being met.

Senator ISAKSON. Good.

Ambassador Carson, the goal is to have elections by April. Is that right?

Ambassador CARSON. Yes, sir, by April or as soon as technically feasible.

Senator ISAKSON. I'd just ask this question and get you to just opine on it. It's not really a specific question. But if you have a 20-year successful democracy in West Africa, which Mali was, and then you have a coup, things leading up to that coup had to take place which created some degree of instability, and also those things probably are still present to a certain extent and need to be overcome for an election. Do you know what led to the deterioration of the democracy that caused the coup?

Ambassador CARSON. The proximate cause of the coup was the series of military defeats that occurred in the north. These were military defeats at the hands of the Tuareg. The military felt very strongly that it was being underresourced, that it was not being given the kind of equipment and material support that it required to go after the Tuareg rebels and to fight a successful military campaign.

The Tuareg, of course, were fighting because they felt that the government had not fulfilled its obligations under the last agreement signed in Algiers in 2006. This combined with growing discontent among some elite in the south with the corruption of the outgoing government under former President ATT were probably the precipitating reasons for the coup d'etat. Military discontent and elite disaffection in the south with corruption and poor governance and poor delivery of services.

Senator ISAKSON. So Africa's biggest developmental problem, which is corruption, is still alive and well in Mali. Is that correct?

Ambassador CARSON. Indeed. I think that the former President, ATT, toward the end of his administration, was not resolving, and he was not responding effectively to crises in his own country. I think that he probably had begun to tune out, had not focused sufficiently on the economic and social issues in the south, and had

neglected deeply the issues throughout the north. His leadership was starting to flag. His interest had flagged, and he was not doing a very effective or energetic job.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Senator Isakson.

We'll go to a second round of questions. First, if I might, to Deputy Assistant Secretary Dory, just what is the feasibility of plans to train and restructure and equip a force of 5,000 Malian Armed Forces? As was just referenced by the Assistant Secretary, the proximate cause of the coup in many ways was a series of military defeats, and the capacity of the Malian Armed Forces is a critical first step. What's the feasibility of that? Under what timeline is it possible to stand up a Malian security force that could actually meaningfully contribute to retaking the north? And if elections were held, what kind of role might the U.S. be prepared to play directly in training or supporting or equipping the Malian forces, rather than through regional partners?

Ms. DORY. In terms of feasibility, I think that's the key dimension in the planning process, which is at what point do your missions align with your proposed concept of a maneuver in alignment with the force generation process? And you don't engage until you've assessed that the feasibility in a situation of moderate risk is accessible to the force on the ground. So the feasibility is built into the planning process, which continues.

We're very fond of quoting former Commander in Chief, General Eisenhower, in the Department when it comes to focusing. On preparing for a battle, the criticality of the planning process, even above the plan itself, is that process of bringing the different military components together, identifying the scheme of maneuver, what the vulnerabilities are, how those can be addressed, and then interfacing in a very robust way with the political process, to refer to your second question.

I think one of the concerns that we have at this point is that the military intervention planning has moved relatively robustly and is making excellent progress. The political development, relatively speaking, is underdeveloped as far as a political roadmap is concerned, whether it's the roadmap to elections, as Ambassador Carson was speaking to, or a roadmap for the negotiations between Bamako and the various disaffected elements in the north that are willing to renounce violence and engage in a negotiations process.

Obviously, if we get to a point of elections being held and being able to resume assistance with the Malian Armed Forces, that will be an important step forward for the United States to be able to directly help the Malian Armed Forces, in addition to support to other troop contributing countries.

The European Union, France, others have all already begun to reengage with Malian Armed Forces. So it's not as if there is absent support for them in the intervening period.

Senator COONS. What lessons have we learned, if I might, both Ms. Dory and Mr. Gast? We were actively engaged—I think the USAID mission just celebrated a 50th anniversary in Mali. We were actively engaged in mil-to-mil training, equipping, support, and very broadly in democracy support and in trying to create and

sustain a culture of democracy. What lessons are there that we might learn going forward about political failures, ignored domestic issues? Our rather abrupt requirement that we break off relations and support here has created a great difficulty, with regional consequences. What lessons would you suggest we learn from this?

Mr. GAST. Thank you, Senator. An excellent question. I would say in the best of times, Mali is a country in crisis, and when one looks at the human development index, Mali is a country that ranks in the bottom dozen. As Assistant Secretary Carson mentioned, 90 percent of the population is in the south, and that population is also in need of services.

So it is unfortunate that the government hasn't included, both in the delivery of services as well as in the governance of the country, the people of the north. And although we have implemented programs in the north, unless there is the connection between government and individuals, our programs aren't going to have the effect of people feeling as though they're part of the society.

So there was an effort planned over the last couple of years, where the development partners, in tandem with the government, the central government, would deliver resources to the north, again with the government out in the lead and with the donors supporting. Unfortunately, the pace of that was too slow and not very effective.

Another point moving forward I think is that we do need to concentrate on decentralization and making connection between government delivery of services and the individual at the community level.

Ms. DORY. To build further on the comments about the resource base within Mali, clearly there are difficult choices for the government there involved between guns versus better types of decisions, and the resourcing for the Malian Armed Forces was insufficient, relatively speaking, to the building threat that they now face vis-a-vis AQIM. I think in terms of the United States support to the Malian military, we provided training and equips for many years now, but in relatively modest quantities, and I don't think that level of resourcing was commensurate with the threat either.

I think the other lesson learned for us is to look beyond the tactical level of training that's provided by Department of Defense to consider what ways we might also engage in terms of institutional development with defense institutions, and that's something in the last several years where we are really ramping up within the Department the ability to provide advisors and other types of institutional reform engagement with various military partners to ensure that, just as we're looking at strengthening at the tactical level, we're also focusing on the institutional strength of these defense institutions.

Senator COONS. Let me ask a last question. Then I'll turn to Senator Isakson.

Ms. Dory, can we afford to wait what may well be a year for planning, training, assembly of a regional force for the completion of negotiations for a successful election? In some press accounts, AQIM in northern Mali is described as, at this point, the best funded, best equipped, most potentially lethal AQ affiliate in the world, and perhaps those accounts are overblown. But the sugges-

tion that we should have an area the size of Texas controlled by terrorists who are engaged in drug trafficking, kidnapping, that have had an inflow of some sophisticated weaponry from Libya is to some quite concerning.

Can we afford to wait a year for a regional solution, or is that the only way to achieve an appropriate security solution?

Ms. DORY. I think one of the things that, as we look at the situation on the one hand, your question, can we afford to wait, on the other hand can we afford not to wait to allow the political environment to be more conducive to a successful military intervention and to allow the process of force generation to proceed, which does take time to train, equip, develop a force before it's employed. So in a sense, we have few choices but to allow those processes to unfold. Clearly, we're concerned that it takes time to do so, but I think we have a sense of moving forward as rapidly as feasible, as rapidly as the circumstances will allow us to do so, recognizing the tremendous leadership that the African partners have already shown both in terms of the political dynamics and the initiatives that are supporting this AFISMA planning process at present.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Senator Isakson.

Senator ISAKSON. I really just have one question. Ms. Dory, if, as Johnnie Carson said, or Secretary Carson said, if military discontent with the government support was a major contributing factor to the coup, and the military is going to be a major contributing factor to how successful an election is going to be, in your testimony you say there's a Sanogo, Captain Sanogo is in charge of the reform of the military for the interim government, do you know his capabilities and whether he's capable of pulling off the type of support it would take to bring the military together to support an election?

Ms. DORY. Captain Sanogo as a field-grade officer is certainly capable in terms of the activities that he has already caused of creating a difficult condition by mobilizing others to support a coup. Whether he is capable of leading the difficult efforts to restructure an institution and to mobilize the resources that will be required, I would say that I question that at this point.

Senator ISAKSON. Thank you very much. That's all my questions. Thank you for your testimony, all of you.

Senator COONS. I'd like to thank our first panel. I'm mindful of the time. We have a four-member second panel. Senator Isakson and I, I know both, are very concerned about and interested in this and will follow up with each of you, perhaps with additional questions but also actions that are appropriate and ways in which we might work together collaboratively to support U.S. efforts in what is a very challenging and dynamic security, humanitarian and diplomatic context.

Thank you very much for your testimony. We'll take a brief break while the second panel comes.

[Pause.]

Senator COONS. I'd like to now turn to our second panel on today's hearing about Mali and the path forward. Our second panel will include Mr. Fomunyoh, followed by Ms. Dufka, followed by Mr. Akuetteh, and then last by Mr. Mahmoud, who is joining us live

from Bamako. This is our first attempt at live testimony by—forgive me, is it Google Hangout? [Laughter.]

Senator COONS. I suspect no one has testified by Google Hangout, a thing I didn't know existed. So my thanks to the technical assistance and the policy support of several very capable folks who made this happen.

Dr. Fomunyoh, if you might begin? Thank you and welcome, and we appreciate your repeat testimony before this subcommittee.

**STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER FOMUNYOH, SENIOR ASSOCIATE AND REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR CENTRAL AND WEST AFRICA, NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE, WASHINGTON, DC**

Dr. FOMUNYOH. Thank you very much, Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Senator Isakson. On behalf of the National Democratic Institute, I appreciate the opportunity to discuss recent political developments in Mali.

Today Mali faces three interwoven crises: An ongoing armed occupation of two-thirds of the country with a humanitarian emergency in the north that has displaced an estimated 450,000 people; persistent political uncertainty in the capital, Bamako; and a severe food shortage that is affecting the entire Sahel subregion. If this crisis were allowed to fester, they would have a devastating and long-lasting negative impact on Mali and its neighbors in west and north Africa, especially countries such as Niger, Mauritania, and Algeria, with which Mali shares common and often very porous borders.

Mali's current transition often looks like a three-legged executive because of the ambiguous division of power and influence amongst three main actors: Iterim President Dioncounda Traore; Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra, who was given expanded powers under an ECOWAS-brokered agreement as the junta left power; and former coup leader Captain Sanogo, who continues to pull some levers of power from behind the scenes. Without strong political leadership and clear decisionmaking in Bamako, Mali's transition government would find it difficult to achieve its two primary objectives, which are to reconquer the country's northern regions and organize credible elections before May 2013.

When I was in Bamako in October, the country seemed to face a conundrum of sorts in that some Malians argued that elections cannot be conducted in a peaceful and inclusive manner while the north is occupied by extremists. Others believed that the government in Bamako may lose its legitimacy at the expiration of the May 2013 ECOWAS deadline and that only credible elections can provide the next government with the legitimacy to tackle the country's challenges.

Holding elections before May 2013 would require significant technical and political commitments on the part of Malians and development partners. Increasingly, Malians are demanding that the impending military operation in the north not preclude active preparations for national elections.

Concrete steps would have to be taken to include displaced populations and Malian refugees in the electoral process, given that the electoral law of Mali allows for Malians residing outside of the



country to vote. Working in collaboration with organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees that maintain statistics on displaced persons and refugees, the government could take steps to allow the now significant population of refugees in neighboring countries and internally displaced persons to vote while out of the three occupied regions of the north.

At the same time, as logistically challenging as it may be, holding elections in major cities in the northern regions would be the strongest signal possible of Mali's exercise of sovereignty over its territory and of early steps at rebuilding its democracy.

The transition government must continually and clearly communicate government plans and actions to the public and be cognizant of the potential crisis of legitimacy that looms on the horizon once the May 2013 date lapses.

The international community needs to harmonize its approach toward the simultaneous pursuit of polls that could lead to a legitimately elected government in Bamako and military actions to retake the north. Contradictory public statements that take the military option off the table in the short or medium term may only serve to embolden the extremists, allowing them time to reinforce their presence in the north. Such declarations also exacerbate fears amongst many Malians that there may be a conspiracy afoot to break up their country.

Active United States support for Mali's return to civilian democratic rule would bolster the hand of pro-democracy forces within the country and further reinforce the work of regional bodies such as ECOWAS and the AU that are deeply invested in Mali's return to democratic rule.

Many Malians in the precoup era were proud of their country's democracy, although they envisaged consolidating it further by strengthening institutions and enhancing transparency and accountability in governance. Nine months after the March 2012 military coup, the false excitement about dramatic change in the early days of the coup has now been superseded by consternation over the cloud of uncertainty that now hovers over Mali.

Despite the numerous challenges confronting Malian democrats today, I am optimistic that with concerted efforts and the right kind of support, Malians will be able to rebuild a stronger, renewed democracy that works effectively for all of the country's citizens.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Dr. Fomunyoh.  
[The prepared statement of Dr. Fomunyoh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DR. CHRISTOPHER FOMUNYOH

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, on behalf of the National Democratic Institute (NDI), I appreciate the opportunity to discuss recent political developments in Mali. Since Mali's first steps toward democratization in the early 1990s, NDI and other U.S.-based nongovernmental organizations have worked with Malian legislators, party leaders, and civil society activists to support the country's nascent democracy. Early this year, and with funding from USAID and other partners, NDI was providing technical assistance to citizen observers of the electoral process, fostering interparty dialogue, and taking steps to increase the participation of women and youth in political processes. I last visited Bamako in October, and met with civic and political leaders to gauge the level of election preparations and their overall commitment to a democratic transition.

## INTRODUCTION

Today Mali faces three interwoven crises: an ongoing armed occupation of two-thirds of the country and a humanitarian emergency in the north that has displaced an estimated 450,000 people<sup>1</sup>; persistent political uncertainty in the capital, Bamako; and a severe food shortage that is affecting the entire Sahel region.<sup>2</sup> Should Mali rebound from these crises, Malian democrats and the international community would need to better understand the reasons for the political alienation of citizens, including youth, women, and ethnic minorities from the previous democratically elected government so as to avoid future backsliding. On the other hand, if the current situation were to be allowed to fester, they would have a negative impact on its neighbors in West and North Africa, especially countries such as Niger, Mauritania, and Algeria, with which Mali shares common and often porous borders.

The military coup of March 2012 brought to the fore Malian disenchantment with the country's fledgling democracy under the previous government of President Amadou Toumani Toure. While the immediate trigger of the coup may have been the military's frustration with losses incurred in fighting separatist rebels and jihadists in the country's northern regions, the population in Bamako showed surprising indifference to the coup while it was in progress, and was willing to embrace the group of junior officers that staged the coup once President Toure agreed to step down. The overthrow of Toure surprised many in the international community, especially because it came 6 weeks before Presidential elections in which Toure was not a candidate. However, the country's democracy showed many weaknesses in the last decade, notably: consistently low voter turnout; allegations of widespread corruption; ineffective institutions; and the embrace of a "consensus politics" model in which almost all political parties aligned their policy to those of the head of state.

Shortly after the March coup regional organizations—notably the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the African Union, and the international community at large—strongly condemned the military's incursion into politics and hence denied the coup leaders legitimacy. By April 2012, ECOWAS had negotiated an agreement whereby the military junta relinquished power to the former speaker of the National Assembly, who became interim President and who appointed a Prime Minister after consultations with the junta.

## COMPETING POWER BASES IN BAMAKO

Under the agreement brokered by ECOWAS, the coup leader, Captain Amadou Sanogo, ceded power to the transition government. Despite these early signs of a swift return to civilian rule, the junta continues to influence decisionmaking in Bamako and thereby threatens to undermine prospects for a prompt resolution to the security crisis in the north and the timely organization of elections in 2013. Many months after the coup, Captain Sanogo and his allies dominated public space and discourse, with frequent appearances on the state-run radio and television station. By tapping into the frustrations of citizens who were marginalized by the previous government, Sanogo gained early support among unemployed youth and others who organized rallies in his favor. Also, some military officers with close ties to Sanogo were appointed to key positions in the transition government, such as the Minister of Defense and Veterans Affairs, the Minister of Territorial Administration, Decentralization, and Territorial Integrity, and the Minister of Internal Security and Civil Protection. As recently as October 2012, it was revealed that Sanogo had been appointed chairman of the Committee on Security Sector Reform in August—a position that allows him to wield considerable influence within the Malian military even as that position further undermines both the credibility of civilian authority in Bamako and the professionalism of the Malian Armed Forces.

Mali's current transition often looks like a "three-legged" executive because of the ambiguous division of power and influence among three men—interim President Dioncounda Traore, who derives his power from the Malian Constitution and ECOWAS support; Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra, who was given expanded powers in the initial agreement that forced the junta to give up power after the coup; and Captain Sanogo, who seems to pull the levers of power from behind the scenes.

Upon President Toure's resignation on April 8, the Malian Constitutional Court conferred power to the then-President of the Malian National Assembly Dioncounda

<sup>1</sup>For more information on the humanitarian crisis in northern Mali, see UN HCR: "Mali Emergency." Available: <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4f79a77e6.html>.

<sup>2</sup>For more information on the Sahel food crisis and its impact on Mali, see World Food Program "Sahel Crisis: Country by Country." Available: <http://www.wfp.org/stories/sahel-crisis-by-country>.

Traore. President Traore, a member of Mali's largest political party, ADEMA, is viewed by critics as emblematic of the "old guard" of the Malian political elite whose mismanagement contributed to citizen discontent and the military coup. In a brazen show of disrespect for President Traore, supporters of the military junta staged demonstrations and physically attacked Traore at the Presidential palace on May 21. He was later evacuated to France for medical attention, and returned 2 months later, but has seemed hesitant in asserting his leadership.

After consultations with party leaders and the military junta, President Traore appointed Cheick Modibo Diarra as Prime Minister in a government largely composed of technocrats. Prime Minister Diarra is criticized by his opponents for his family ties to the former autocrat Moussa Traore, who ruled Mali from 1968–1991 (Diarra is Traore's son-in-law) and his alleged closeness with Captain Sanogo. In a move that is seen as possibly intended to curb the personal partisan ambitions of Diarra and other members of the transition government, ECOWAS declared in November that none of the transitional leaders would be allowed to contest the Presidential elections of 2013.<sup>3</sup>

On August 20, Traore named a broad-based government of national unity. He also declared his intention to appoint two transition Vice Presidents and hold a national convention to validate his government's proposed structure and a transition roadmap. However, as of early December, the new transition bodies have not been created, and the government had yet to release a detailed roadmap for the elections or the transition process. Mali's 147-member National Assembly's mandate has been extended until the end of the transition; but its responsibilities could conflict with those of the National Transition Council (Conseil Nationale de la Transition–CNT), should one be created as proposed by President Traore.

Against this backdrop, U.N. Security Council Resolution 2071 (2012) of October 12 was welcome news. It clarified the leadership structure in Bamako and strengthened the hand of the interim President by recognizing his legitimacy and urging him to present a timeline for elections. The resolution also reiterated its previous demands that remnants of the military junta refrain from further interference in the political process.<sup>4</sup>

Without strong political leadership and clear decisionmaking structures in Bamako, Mali's transition government would be challenged to instill much-needed confidence regarding its ability to achieve the two primary goals of the transition which are to reconquer the country's northern regions in the immediate term and organize credible Presidential and legislative elections before May 2013. Similarly, the lack of such leadership would deprive development partners and the international community in general of a strong and reliable anchor in the Malian Government to facilitate partnerships and technical assistance in meeting these two goals.

#### EVOLVING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND CRYSTALLIZING DISAGREEMENT

Since March 2012, new political movements and alliances have emerged in Mali. Currently, there are seven major political groupings that are likely to influence the country's political transition and its future:

- The Unified Front for the Safeguard of Democracy and the Republic of Mali (FDR) is a grouping of political parties, civil society organizations and labor unions that was opposed to the coup in March and continues to speak out against the national convention favored by Captain Sanogo. At various times, the FDR also has called for the resignation of Prime Minister Diarra.
- The Alliance of Patriotic Democrats for an End to the Crisis (ADPS) is another antiputsch grouping led by former Prime Minister Soumana Sacko.
- The Alliance IBK 2012 is a coalition supporting former Prime Minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, a leading Presidential candidate prior to the coup. Originally part of the FDR, the Alliance IBK separated from the group in April but still shares the FDR's staunch opposition to the coup and its advocacy for a swift return to democracy.
- At the other end of the spectrum, the Coordination of Patriotic Organizations in Mali (COPAM) is the most prominent organization affiliated with Captain Sanogo and the coup makers. COPAM has organized large demonstrations in

<sup>3</sup>The full text of ECOWAS's statement, Communiqué 311/2012, "ECOWAS determined on its two-pronged approach to resolving Mali crisis," dated November 12, 2012, is available at: <http://news.ecowas.int/presseshow.php?nb=311&lang=en&annee=2012>.

<sup>4</sup>The full text of resolution 2071 is available at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2012/sc10789.doc.htm>.

Bamako demanding the resignation of President Traore and protesting against foreign military assistance in the reconquest of the north.

- The Convergence for Saving Mali (CSM) is a coalition formed in support of Prime Minister Diarra.
- The Force for Reconciliation, Democracy, and Peace (FRDP-Mali-Ko) aligns itself with COPAM and others in staging demonstrations in favor of Captain Sanogo.
- The Coalition of Immigrants from the North (COREN) is a heterogeneous group of northerners that seeks to draw attention to the plight of Malians from the northern regions and urges a swift reconquest of the three occupied regions.

The recent controversy over the national convention on the transition roadmap is illustrative of a sharp political discord between junta sympathizers and their opponents that will continue to fester in the coming months. The FDR threatened to boycott the convention, claiming that participation had been stacked in favor of junta forces and that its input had not been incorporated into the agenda. The transition government responded by delaying the convention until December 11–13, although the participation of the FDR and its allies has yet to be confirmed.

#### IMMINENT MILITARY ACTION IN NORTHERN MALI

From most indications, an international military intervention to assist the Malian military to retake the north is inevitable. The Malian Government, ECOWAS and the African Union have asked for military intervention as a matter of urgency. Extremists continue to consolidate their control over the three northern regions of Gao, Kidal, and Timbuktu; historic sites are being destroyed; and sharia law is being rigorously implemented in those areas. Many Malians are fearful that without military intervention, the partition of their country would become a geopolitical reality and extremist elements would have found a safe haven and enormous territory from which to destabilize other fragile democracies in the subregion and beyond. The persistent insecurity that now prevails in northern Mali would have a significant impact on the credibility of the 2013 electoral process if the estimated 450,000 displaced citizens are not able to vote and the government is not able to hold elections in the three occupied regions.

The recent U.N. Security Council resolution on Mali lays the groundwork for regional and international support to the Malian Government in organizing a military operation to retake the north of the country. ECOWAS is prepared to deploy approximately 3,300 troops to assist in this effort. While dissonant voices have emerged with regard to the exact timing of such an intervention, it is hoped that regional and international efforts to support the Malian military will bolster the country's transition leadership, provide strategic guidance, and embolden a now weakened and demoralized Malian military. The role of countries such as Algeria, Mauritania, and Chad that are not members of ECOWAS, but share a common border with Mali and/or have combat experience in the Sahel, would be crucial in such a military undertaking.

#### TWO BENCHMARKS ON THE HORIZON: MILITARY OPERATION IN THE NORTH AND COUNTRYWIDE ELECTIONS

The first half of 2013 will be of paramount significance to Mali's political transition as two critical benchmarks would have to be met: the ECOWAS-mandated May 2013 deadline for the holding elections and swearing in of a civilian democratically elected President; and the launch of a military operation to retake the country's three northern regions.

When I was in Mali in October, the country seemed to face a conundrum of sorts in that some Malians argued that elections cannot be conducted in a peaceful and inclusive manner while the north is occupied by extremists; others believed that the government in Bamako may lose its legitimacy at the expiration of the May 2013 deadline granted by ECOWAS, and that elections would therefore need to be held by this date so as to elect a government with the legitimacy to tackle many of the country's challenges. Holding elections before May 2013 would require significant technical and political commitments on the part of Malians and development partners, as a number of challenges would have to be addressed with urgency. Increasingly, Malians are demanding that the impending ECOWAS-African Union (AU) military operation not preclude active preparations for national elections.

As of today, the transition government has yet to release a credible roadmap for elections. While an audit of the voter register is underway, the government has not consulted other elections stakeholders, such as political parties and civil society organizations, to obtain their buy-in to the process. The government has not yet updated the voter register, nor has it defined how to facilitate voting by displaced

citizens and Malian refugees in neighboring countries. As a result, many Malians are doubtful that the transition will be as broadly inclusive and participatory as originally hoped. For example, according to the electoral law, Mali's voters list should have been updated from October 1–December 31, 2012. This did not occur, even in the regions of the country where the security situation is stable. Hopefully, when the political decision is made to proceed with election preparations, the Minister of Territorial Administration would invoke a section in the electoral law that allows for an exceptional update of the national voter registry outside of the usual October–December timeframe.

Concrete steps would have to be taken to include displaced populations and Malian refugees in the electoral process, given that the electoral law allows for Malians residing outside the country to vote. Working in collaboration with organizations such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that maintain statistics on displaced persons and refugees, the government could update the voter rolls to include the now-significant population of refugees in neighboring countries and internally displaced persons. Some analysts speculate that even if the military operation succeeds in liberating key cities in the north relatively quickly, some remnants of occupying forces may retreat into the more remote areas of the north. Under these circumstances, holding credible elections in major cities in these northern regions would be the strongest signal possible of Mali's exercise of sovereignty over its national territory and of early steps at rebuilding its democracy. Organizing elections in the north would be challenging. Nevertheless, it would reassure Malians that the country is on track to restoring national unity and civilian democratic rule across its entire territory.

#### LOOKING FORWARD—A LOOMING CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY

As the electoral deadline of May 2013 approaches, questions about the continued legitimacy of the Malian Government will likely be raised by various domestic constituencies and their international allies.

An early release of the electoral timeline would help calm political tensions and assure Malians that the transition government has the political will to work toward restoring the country's democracy and rebuilding its democratic institutions. The recent declaration by ECOWAS leaders that members of the transition government would not be permitted to stand as candidates in the 2013 polls is an important step in building citizen confidence in the impartiality of those leaders as they execute the transition. Public commitments by these officials themselves would provide further assurances and invite greater citizen engagement in the electoral process.

The transition government must continually and clearly communicate government plans and actions to the public, and be cognizant of the potential crisis of legitimacy that looms on the horizon once the May 2013 date lapses.

#### CONCLUSION

For decades, Mali faced governance challenges, even as its leadership continued to profess its commitment to democracy. Indeed, the quick unraveling of Mali's democracy is yet another reminder that multiparty elections alone, even when regularly held, are not a guarantor. As we seek to assist Malian democrats forge a path toward elections in 2013 and restore the country's democratic institutions in the post-election phase, we must draw hard lessons from this experience to make sure that future institutions are more inclusive, effective, and transparent in their management of public affairs and resources.

To do so, the international community must maintain pressure on coup leaders to return definitively to the barracks and avoid any undue influence on the governance and electoral processes. Development partners can also contribute to a credible transition by encouraging meaningful, inclusive dialogue around political and electoral issues, as many political party leaders and civil society activists feel excluded from decisionmaking process. They should provide more technical assistance to Mali's shaky transition government in finalizing and widely publicizing, as soon as possible, a credible electoral timetable. The sooner such a timetable is released, the greater prospects will be for higher public confidence in the country's prospects to transition back to civilian democratic rule. At the same time, the international community needs to harmonize its approach toward the simultaneous pursuit of polls that would lead to a legitimately elected government in Bamako and military operations to retake the north. Contradictory public statements that take the military option off the table in the short or medium term may only serve to embolden the extremists, allowing them time to reinforce their presence. Such declarations also exacerbate fears among many Malians that there may be a conspiracy afoot to break up their country.

Restoration of U.S. aid programs to Mali would have a positive impact on the country's ability to tackle many of the political and technical challenges I have outlined today. The U.S. Government can be a valuable interlocutor with Malian partners in shaping transition and electoral processes. While some of the missteps or sluggishness of the past few months can be attributed to inexperience on the part of Malian transition leaders, renewed American involvement in Mali during this critical period could enhance prospects for successful and peaceful elections in the coming year. Active U.S. support for Mali's return to civilian democratic rule would also bolster the hand of pro-democracy forces within the country and further reinforce the work of regional bodies such as ECOWAS and the AU, that are deeply invested in Mali's return to democratic rule and have benefited from American support in the past.

Once touted as a model of democratic progress in West Africa, Mali quickly lost this standing after the coup in March. Many Malians in the pre-coup era were proud of their country's democracy, although they envisaged consolidating it further by strengthening institutions and enhancing transparency and accountability in governance. Nine months after the March 2012 military coup, the false sense of dramatic change of the early days of the coup have been superseded by consternation over the cloud of uncertainty that now hovers over Mali because of developments in the northern regions and political maneuvering in Bamako. Despite the numerous challenges confronting Malian democrats today, I am optimistic that with concerted efforts and the right kind of support Malians will be able to rebuild a stronger, renewed democracy that works effectively for all of the country's citizens.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.

Ms. Dufka.

**STATEMENT OF CORINNE DUFKA, SENIOR RESEARCHER,  
AFRICA DIVISION, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, WASHINGTON, DC**

Ms. DUFKA. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Coons and Ranking Member Isakson, for providing Human Rights Watch the opportunity to testify this morning. It is a great honor to be here.

Since April, I've conducted four research missions to Mali during which I have interviewed hundreds of victims and witnesses to serious abuses and war crimes in both the Islamist-controlled north and government-controlled south. I've also spoken with a wide variety of other individuals, many from the armed factions from various different groups, government officials, civil society and religious leaders. I am also in daily phone contact with Malians all over the country who keep me abreast of ongoing violations and dynamics.

This hearing comes at a critical time not only for Mali, but for Mali's partners, including the United States, as they struggle to establish a vision and actionable plan to put Mali back together in a way that doesn't simply turn back the clock to December 2011. I will today briefly characterize our findings on abuses by all factions, very briefly. It's more detailed in the testimony that I've submitted. And then I'll highlight four issues the United States might consider as it crafts a response to the crisis, and perhaps more importantly, the issues that gave rise to it.

With respect to Islamists groups, since consolidating their control in the north, Ansar al-Dine, MUJAO, and AQIM have become increasingly repressive as they tighten their grip over the population, among whom, I wish to emphasize, they have precious little support. Abuses committed include frequent, often severe beatings, arbitrary arrests against those engaged in haram or forbidden behavior such as smoking, drinking, watching television, listening to music, or having music on one's cell phone. Countless women that

I have interviewed have been beaten and detained for failing to adhere to their dress code.

The Islamists have also carried out summary executions, including the January execution in Aguelhoc of some 70 Malian soldiers, which is, to date, the single most serious war crime of this conflict.

Also in Aguelhoc, Islamists stoned to death a couple for adultery. A witness I spoke with described seeing the man and the woman crouch, hands bound, in a hole as the Islamists hoisted large rocks, shattering the skull of first the woman and then the man. As well, they have carried out eight, at least eight limb amputations as punishment for theft.

These punishments were meted out by the Islamic police, often after a summary trial before a panel of hand-picked judges, many of them foreign. These trials can only be described as a cruel parody of justice.

They have also recruited hundreds of child soldiers as young as 11. Dozens of witnesses I've interviewed, and a few children as well, have seen these kids in training camps manning checkpoints, guarding prisoners, and applying sharia. In advance of the planned intervention, they have ramped up recruitment. Indeed, a witness I spoke with just yesterday had just seen, just visited three of these camps within the Gao region in which she saw many, many children being planned.

The Islamists have also destroyed mausoleums, shrines, amulets, ritual masks, both in Timbuktu as well as the Dagon Country, which hold tremendous significance for Malians. They have as well denied Malians, who have a rich musical tradition, to be able to play or listen to their local music. Quoting one witness, "They have erased our history. They have taken all joie de vivre from our lives."

With respect to the MNLA, they too have perpetrated numerous and often systematic abuses after taking over the towns of Menaka, Goundam, Niafounke, and Gao. These included the abduction and brutal rape, often gang rape of numerous women and girls, widespread pillaging of hospitals, schools, aid agencies, government buildings, and use of child soldiers. The MNLA has done absolutely nothing to rein in their forces, as well as even acknowledge that these abuses have taken place.

Briefly, with respect to the Malian Army, the coup, of course, has led to a striking deterioration in discipline and command and control within the army. For example, very worryingly, in the days after the attempted countercoup on April 30, security forces directly under the command of Captain Sanogo disappeared at least 21 soldiers allegedly implicated in it. A witness I interviewed told me how at 2 a.m. on May 3, the soldiers removed at least 21 men from Kati barracks, put them bound and blindfolded into a military truck, and they have not been heard from since. Many other victims of torture described how they were stabbed, starved, burned with cigarettes, and forced at gunpoint to sodomize one another.

The security forces have also intimidated opposition voices, including journalists who have been abducted by masked gunmen, beaten and dumped on the outskirts of Bamako after being warned to stop criticizing the military. More recently, they have done the

same thing. They have tried to abduct, descended upon the home of a local rapper who wrote a song critical of the military.

Outside of Bamako, soldiers have detained and executed numerous men accused of collaborating with the groups in the north. Most of these victims were Tuareg and Arab. In September, 16 Islamic preachers were executed within a military camp in Giabali, and in October eight Tuareg herders were executed by soldiers also in Giabali.

Again, there has been no meaningful effort to investigate, much less hold accountable, those implicated in any of these incidents, and as others have noted, disturbingly, Sanogo, who we believe—we have testimony suggesting he is directly implicated in the torture and disappearances, was rewarded with the position of being put in charge of security sector reform.

Briefly, with respect to recommendations, I want to highlight four areas. The first is to publicly raise abuses by all sides. The U.S. Government has been very strong in their condemnation of Islamic behavior, of the Islamic forces, as well as Sanogo. However, I would say they also have to widen that view, widen that criticism of the Malian Army outside of Sanogo, as well as the MNLA. The United States should press all parties to investigate and prosecute those responsible, as well as stand firm against any attempt to include an amnesty as part of an eventual negotiation.

The second area addresses rising ethnic tension. Mr. Chairman, over the last 8 months I have observed an alarming increase in ethnic tension. Perceptions of neglect or favoritism by the Malian Army or international community of one community or the other has led communities to seek redress for their grievances, including through the formation of armed militias and apparent organized plans to settle scores outside the legal framework.

I cannot emphasize enough how impunity, not only for Path violations during Path Tuareg rebellions, but also more recent violations, is fueling this tension on all different sides from all different ethnic groups. If not addressed, I believe these tensions could, in the short term, lead to incidents of deadly collective punishment, and in the long term sow the seeds for future violence.

To address this, I urge the U.S. Government to do a few things. No. 1, as the negotiation process takes shape, push Mali to ensure the grievances of all northern residents are heard, not just those who have taken up arms. The second would be press the Malian Government to adopt a communication strategy that addresses the rising level of ethnic tension and to respond to hate speech that incites violence. No. 3, through USAID, support Malian civil society to be able to support community radios and peacebuilding initiatives, and that's something that should not wait. It should be done now. And the fourth would be to ensure the situation in Mali is discussed by the Atrocities Prevention Board.

The third area I want to address, and this gets to Senator Isakson's question, is adopt policies that address the underlying causes of this conflict. Mali's recent crisis is rooted in years of deterioration in the institutions—the police, the army, the judiciary, the Parliament—that should have protected and represented them adequately. Mali's partners turned a blind eye to corruption scandals, criminality creeping into state institutions, some predatory



behavior by the security forces, and lagging development indicators countrywide, but especially in the north.

Mali's judiciary, which could have mitigated some of these problems, was severely neglected, allowing a dangerous culture of impunity. And as we have seen, narcotraffickers, extremist religious figures, and those with ethnic agendas have taken advantage of this rule-of-law vacuum. The United States must support programs in the short and long term that serve to strengthen Mali's stressed institutions.

The last point is, in advance of the planned military intervention, I urge the United States to press for a strong human rights component within this military intervention to avoid some of these problems that we have seen with AMISOM intervention in Somalia, which failed to adequately monitor human rights abuses, particularly indiscriminate shelling.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Ms. Dufka.

We have just about 15 minutes left in our hearing.

Mr. Akuetteh.

**STATEMENT OF NII AKUETTEH, INDEPENDENT POLICY  
RESEARCHER, WASHINGTON, DC**

Mr. AKUETTEH. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Isakson, good morning, and thank you very much for including me. But I really appreciate that you are focusing on such a grave problem in Africa, so I can't thank you enough. I submitted a longer statement, so I'll just take a few minutes to highlight some of it, but I would like for it to be kept in the record.

Senator COONS. Yes, it will.

Mr. AKUETTEH. I mentioned that some issues in the way Mali descended, we have to keep certain things in mind. One of them is the connection with Libya. The Tuareg rebellion had occurred many times, but this particular one did not occur because of incidents—did not start because of incidents inside Mali but because of weapons that flowed over from Libya. And I think it is interesting that Libya does not share a border with Mali, but troops and men went all the way, and it seems to me the question should be raised about why they were not seen. Mali's Army had been trained in the Trans-Sahara counterterrorism program, and yet they collapsed very quickly. So it seems to me that also raises questions.

But the core of my testimony is I am suggesting four improvements in U.S. policy, particularly in the State Department. Mr. Chairman, I notice that some people look at the crises as three, others say four. I think that the international community, it would be good to actually add a fifth dimension, which is contagion, because I think it is important, whether three or four, they are inside Mali. But the reason that ECOWAS is so concerned is the real risk that this will not be contained inside Mali. So I think it's important to stress contagion.

Second, I think that the State Department, if we listen carefully, my reading of their priorities is elections first, by all means, and then negotiate. As for intervention, maybe.

Frankly, I think that should be the other way around, that it's very hard to have real elections with so much insecurity around, and populations have moved. So the security issue is extremely important, and I'm reminded of what happened in Cote d'Ivoire, where they took 5 years to do an election and still questions were raised. I fear that if you rush elections in Mali, you are giving people all kinds of excuses who lose to stir up trouble and make allegations. So it's important to establish enough security so the elections can be credible.

I also think that while the grievances of Tuaregs must be addressed and minority issues are very important, Mali has almost 60 ethnic groups. So we must be careful that it's not seen as favoritism toward Tuaregs, which might suggest to other groups that the way to get attention is to create the same kind of problem.

And the fourth and final area of policy recommendation that I'm making, Mr. Chairman, is actually that I do think that since 9/11 and United States counterterrorism policy in Africa, I think the problem in Mali should be an opportunity and an occasion to do a thorough review of the whole strategy, because, for instance, the Trans-Sahara counterterrorism issue, as I mentioned, its job was to make the Malian Army strong, and yet the army collapsed very quickly. The Operation Flintlock, which used Mali as the base to train soldiers, again it raises the question why did the Malian Army collapse so quickly. So I think this is an opportunity to do a very thorough review and raise a lot of questions.

My particular question, because I really think that democracy is so important, that in the training of African soldiers, I would very much like it if the respect for civilian leadership and for democracy is stressed, that the first thing the soldiers have to learn is to respect their civilian leaders and the democracy process, and any training to make them better fighters must come second.

I thank you very much again for including me, and I'll be happy to answer questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Akouetteh follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NII AKUETTEH

OPENING

Chairman Coons, Ranking Member Isakson, other subcommittee members, thank you. The personal honor of your invitation is my smaller reason. The much bigger reason is this: Being African-born and a strong believer in democracy, I very much appreciate that you are devoting the moral prestige and other priceless resources of this great institution of democracy to the deadly cocktail that is assailing Mali. It has and continues to inflict much suffering on millions of Malians. Furthermore, it is contagious and poses grave threats to the rest of Africa, to Europe and even to the United States. In walking me through the process, your staff astounded me with their competence, promptness, patience, courtesy and sense of humor. I am grateful to them as well.

INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

Tuesday, January 17, 2012, (45 weeks ago) is a very important date in understanding Mali's dizzying descent. That was the day heavily armed Tuaregs (hardened former fighters for Libya's late leader, Col. Gaddafi) fired opening shots and reignited the latest Tuareg secessionist war against Mali.

Other 2012 dates are also vital. One is Thursday, March 22, 2012, when Capt. Amadou Sanogo and his fellow putschists chased their commander in chief away from the Presidential palace, declared themselves the government, and effectively killed the infant that is Mali's much admired democracy. It is crucial to keep in

mind their professed reason: Allegedly, the democratically elected President, Amadou Toumani Toure, himself a former general, had not prosecuted the war in the north well enough; the treasonous soldiers bragged they would do a far better job.

Within hours, the world—with one curious exception—sharply and emphatically rejected the coup. ECOWAS, the African Union, the U.N., even the international financial institutions, were all scathing in their condemnation.

The lone exception was the U.S. administration. Initially, following an inter-departmental meeting, the State Department spokesperson was strangely sympathetic to the coupmakers, questioning whether this was really a coup, and speaking about the coupmakers' "legitimate grievances," about the government needing to negotiate, and taking days before announcing that some aid has been suspended as required by law. Happily this puzzling equivocation from the State Department has since disappeared.

From Mali's neighbors, there was not the slightest hint of such equivocation. By promptly closing land-locked Mali's most vital borders, ECOWAS forced the reluctant coupmakers to hand over power to an interim regime which in turn was forced to agree to a 1-year deadline for holding the previously scheduled legitimate national elections.

The next memorable day came 15 days after the coup. The Tuareg secessionists—allyed with three jihadist fighting groups—completed conquest of 66 percent of Mali (a territory rivaling France in size). On Friday, April 6, from Paris, they declared the conquered territory the independent nation of Azawad. This proved a phantom independence. And rather brief. Not a single country recognized the declaration.

Much worse soon followed. The Tuareg secessionists, the MNLA, had implemented their war project by forming alliance with three jihadist groups—AQIM, Ansar Dine, and MUJAO. Within weeks, the jihadists turned on their former allies killing and chasing them out of the population centres in the north, taking over and announcing their real intent—an Islamic rule based on strict sharia law. What has transpired since is more legitimately described as a reign of terror: summary executions; amputations and floggings; forced marriages; conscription of child soldiers; confiscation of private property; enforcement of dress codes; banning of much music; and destruction of ancient Islamic shrines recognized by the globally as World Heritage monuments. Understandably, a large proportion (perhaps half) of Malians in the north who are able to have fled. That non-Malians (from as far away as Pakistan and Afghanistan) have played leading roles only makes the situation more intolerable.

Two more dates must be mentioned. On Sunday July 15, with little territory remaining under their control, some Tuareg secessionist leaders told Reuters they were renouncing independence.

Mr. Chairman, my condolences. Reason: I am acutely aware that the remaining date carries pain for Americans and especially for this full committee—Tuesday September 11, 2012. That day witnessed the murder of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other patriots in Benghazi, Libya. The relevance to Mali is this: Though investigations are ongoing, there have already been believable hints that some of the murderers of Ambassador Stevens are jihadists who came from northern Mali.

There is a reason for my recounting these many dates in 2012: They show that Malians and friends could be forgiven for regarding this year as our own *annus horribilis*.

And yet this one year of agony does not reflect the entire historical journey traveled by Mali and its people. For West Africans and hundreds of millions of others, admiring fascination with Mali goes back centuries to the ancient empire. After military dictatorship dampened the pride brought by 1960 independence, people again held their heads high when "the soldier for democracy," Amadou Toumani Toure, in 1991 and 1992, stopped the massacre of protesting women and children, humanely but decisively eased out the dictatorship, set the democratic experiment on course, and then gave up power to an elected politician. Ten years later, there was little surprise when popular sentiment brought him back to power on the strength of two landslide electoral victories.

However, there was disappointment when, many years into the Toure administration, Malians and outsiders began recounting stories of corruption in Mali.

More than disappointment, concern was the emotion evoked in some observers by one other observation. What triggered the concern were the incentives provided to the Malian Government by U.S. antiterrorism strategy in general and in particular by three elements—the Trans-Sahara Counter-Terrorism Program, AFRICOM, and Operation Flintlock. Some observers including me felt unease that, as operated, these elements in U.S. policy might prove an ineffective and even counterproductive strategy for combating terrorism in Mali, and perhaps in other African countries as well.

That is not to say terrorism does not bother Africa. To the contrary. Terrorism and violent extremism remains the gravest of threats to Africa—by itself and because terror attacks makes it impossible for Africans to respond to other challenges and opportunities. The attacks must be fought robustly and effectively. The war waged in Algeria by what is now AQIM; the Embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania; al-Shabaab in Somalia; Boko Haram in Nigeria; the World Cup bombing in Kampala—all these have killed and maimed thousands of innocent Africans, even when the declared targets have been Western officials, installations, and interests. Clearly, defanging violent extremists across the continent saves African lives and otherwise serves African interests.

There are two parts to the concern about U.S. counterterrorism strategy in Mali. One is overreliance on militarization instead of on democratization, reconciliation, and development. The other is a near-exclusive focus on incoming foreign jihadists such as AQIM at the cost of paying even greater attention to the home-grown challenge of Tuareg grievances.

When in January, Tuareg fighters abandoned Col. Gaddafi, and returned to Mali to launch the latest of their latest secessionist wars, there was a sinking feeling that our worst fears had happened.

#### FOUR SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS IN U.S. POLICY

Mr. Chairman, in June, I paid close attention to the Mali testimony that Ambassador Carson gave in the other chamber. In the ensuing 6 months, I have tried being an even keener observer of the Mali situation: monitoring events on the ground in Mali and dissecting the words and deeds of the major stakeholders—Malian factions; ECOWAS countries, especially Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Niger, and Nigeria; non-ECOWAS neighbors especially Algeria, Mauritania, and Chad; the African Union; the European Union, especially France, Germany and Italy; the United Nations, and above all, the United States.

In his June testimony, Ambassador Carson reacted as follows to Malian and African vows to restore territorial integrity, “We think an ECOWAS mission to militarily retake the north is ill-advised and not feasible.” Months later, however, at the U.N. and in Algiers to push a reluctant Algeria, Secretary Clinton said kinder things about military intervention. And last week at Howard University, here in Washington, another senior State Department official said this: “We support the efforts of the government of Mali, ECOWAS, the African Union, the United Nations, neighboring partners, and others in the international community to prepare a military response as necessary, in accordance with international law, to restore the unity of Mali.”

The pattern is unmistakable: U.S. policy toward Mali is evolving—for the better, in my opinion. This is commendable.

Despite this progress, however, some concerns remain. Put another way, further improvements are possible and needed in current Mali policy. Consequently, the heart of my testimony today is to highlight four such concerns/improvements. They are unequal, varying in individual importance and weights.

The first concern/improvement is semantic and may appear trivial and unimportant. But I believe this appearance is deceptive because precise semantics reflect clear thinking which is a pre-requisite for effective problemsolving.

A cocktail of four crises. That is how today's Mali situation is described by the U.S.—and by all the major global actors and even most analysts. The four are: the Bamako-centred broken democratic rule; the deeply rooted, recalcitrant secessionist aspiration and wars of the Tuaregs; Mali's loss of integrity over most of its territory and the control of that area by violent religious extremists, significant numbers of whom are foreigners; and the humanitarian crisis centred in the north, epitomised by mass displacement of the population and fueled by environmental deterioration, by the secessionist war, and by harsh jihadist rule.

While agreeing that these four crises are afflicting Mali, I add a fifth dimension—contagion—which must be recognized and explicitly included in the discussion and analyses. By contagion I refer to the clear and present danger that Tuareg irredentism, large population displacements, and most critically, jihadist violence, will not be contained within Mali's borders. Indeed they are already boiling over and destabilizing other countries. And not just in Africa: Jihadist violence especially has not been shy in declaring Europe and the U.S. as its prime targets.

To a significant degree, the international community already appreciates the high contagion risk in Mali. Contagion and enlightened self-interest—and nothing else—explain why Paris, Bonn, and Brussels, are so seized by the agony an impoverished African country. I am convinced that were the risk of contagion negligible, Mali would get little or no global attention.

But I am also convinced that significant benefits would flow from explicitly adding contagion—correctly counting Mali’s crises as five. Put another way, I believe the American and European general publics, if they became more persuaded that the jihadists in Mali have them in the cross-hairs, would be far more supportive of rapid reaction to help the Malians. In other words, recognizing the high risk of contagion would mean much less foot dragging and hand-wringing outside Africa when it comes to extinguishing the jihadist threat in Mali.

Nor can it be denied that such foot dragging does exist. Irrefutable evidence is the reason. Exhibit A, to my mind, is time: Seven months after 66 percent of Mali was violently sliced off by irredentists who were then shoved aside by their own jihadist allies who immediately began terrorizing and pushing out much of the populace, the U.N. Security Council has still not authorized an alarmed Africa to use force. Perhaps the Council has a convincing argument for such nonchalance. If so I have not heard it. Which makes me wonder: Would Security Council authorization would be this slow in coming had the amputee country whose cultural heritage are being smashed been a rich, powerful global player—Brazil, China, Canada, Germany, or Italy?

African disappointment and frustration at the delay is unmistakable. This is apparent in a leaked letter sent last Thursday by the Africa Union’s head, President Boni Yayi of Benin to U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The letter described U.N. foot dragging as “beneath the expectations of the African Continent as a whole,” warned that this “will be interpreted as a sign of weakness,” and advised that “What we must avoid today is giving the impression that we lack firmness in the face of determined terrorists.”

But reluctance to urgently and forcefully dislodge the terrorists from Mali is not confined inside the Security Council. Sadly, and hoping I am wrong, it seems apparent in U.S. policy too. As observed above, compared to June, U.S. today is noticeably more serious about Mali’s terrorism crisis.

But this progress is clearly limited and insufficient. The State Department continues to discourage a swift restoration of Mali’s territorial integrity and a forceful end to the terrorizing and displacement of northern Malians which has continued for 7 months. This conclusion seems inescapable after scrutinizing what last week’s Howard University statement said about intervention and contrasting that with its stance on elections and negotiations.

On national elections across Mali in 2013: “The United States *firmly believes that Mali’s interim leaders must continue preparations in earnest to hold elections* in this timeframe simultaneous with efforts to restore territorial integrity. We continue to encourage the interim government to set a date for elections. The interim government should build on the preparations that were undertaken before the aborted April 2012 elections and *hold elections as soon as possible with as much of the country as possible . . . The return of democracy must not be held hostage to the security agenda.*” [emphasis added].

On negotiations with the brutal terrorist and secessionist groups: “We *urge* the interim government to find ways to effectively address northern grievances in a peaceful manner . . . We also welcome the news that representatives of MNLA have retracted the declaration of independence of the north, and key figures in the MNLA and Ansar al Dine have declared their readiness to negotiate with the interim government. *Mali’s interim government must demonstrate its commitment to negotiations* by appointing a lead negotiator for the north.” [emphasis added].

And on the overwhelming Africa desire to militarily eject the jihadists and restore Mali: “We . . . recognize that an African-led, multinational force, supported by the international community, *may be necessary* to assist the Malians to dislodge extremists from the north. . . .” [emphasis added].

Reflecting on these pronouncements, I conclude thus: The two top priorities of the Department are first, elections by May 2013, and second, negotiations with northern groups including the irredentist MNLA and the jihadist Ansar Dine.

Sugar-coating feels impossible; so here goes: I disagree respectfully but firmly with these State Department priorities. Instead I believe the number one priority must be swift African-led international military intervention (with zero European and American boots on the ground, none) to restore Mali. Intervention must be given higher priority over elections and over negotiations—vital as those two are. To flip one of the State Department’s assertions: Re-asserting Mali’s sovereignty, restoring its territorial integrity, and ending the terrorizing of its population—these steps must remain top priority and they must not be held hostage to hasty ill-planned elections in only parts of the country, nor to endless haggling with violent, untrustworthy groups of questionable legitimacy. But there is another State Department argument that I do fully endorse, “Any military response in Mali should be well planned, managed, and resourced, and account for civilian security . . .” No

question about that. But the bottomline remains that I believe the State Department's current priorities—putting security and Mali's restoration on the back burner—have it backward.

Several arguments support my critique. To begin with, ECOWAS and the African Union clearly prefer making security and Mali's restoration the number one priority. President Yayi's fresh letter is only one indicator among many of this strong African preference. This is not to deny that forceful U.S. advocacy of a different strategy can be extremely valuable in such a global effort. But it is to say that an unmistakable contradiction must be acknowledged: dismissing what Africans are loudly demanding negates the following assertion routinely made by State, "The United States supports the principle of regional ownership . . ."

A sequencing question also arises in this disagreement over priorities. State is right in saying that all of Mali's crises are critical and all must be addressed simultaneously. However, to govern is to choose; this observation is a cliché precisely because it is so true. Consequently, choices and setting of priorities must be made in allocating resources to Mali's crisis. This poses a question: Is it a better sequence to first establish reasonable peace and security in Mali as a condition for properly preparing, organizing, and holding credible elections across the country? In contrast to State, my answer is emphatic yes.

Now it may well be that current Malian conditions and other information justify the opposite sequence preferred by State: prioritizing hasty, ill-prepared truncated elections in only part of a war-torn country over the restoration of sovereignty, law and order over 66 percent of Mali's territory. But if so, such conditions and information must be woven into a convincing argument. So far, I have not seen such an argument; I am yet to see the persuasive case made.

One's preferred images for seeing military intervention in Mali constitute another important consideration in the priorities disagreement. In a way it is a variation on the sequencing question. Two images capture my view: Proper military intervention in Mali to me is akin to a fire brigade that must race to a dangerous fire in a crowded neighborhood. My other image is of intervention as the sending of a SWAT team to a hostage situation. Either way, I see the proposed African-led military intervention as a first responder. And like all first responders, it must still respond first to bring to the swiftest end to a dangerous emergency wreaking havoc.

To reiterate: In northern Mali, 7-month-old dire havoc must be swiftly ended. For Malians the havoc takes the form of summary executions; amputations and floggings; forced marriages; conscription of child soldiers; confiscation or destruction of private property; enforcement of dress codes; banning of much music; destruction of ancient Islamic shrines recognized by globally as World Heritage monuments; and forcing much of the northern population into involuntary exile.

For the international community the havoc also includes contagion—the reality that the jihadists will keep trying to attack bigger fish, especially France and the United States.

The urgent need to immediately halt northern Mali's havoc is crucial. This urgency drives my strong recommendation that the State Department should upend its current priorities and adopt a new one where military intervention is deemed a higher priority than elections and negotiations—even though those two are very important. This recommendation is the second—and by far the most important—among the four policy improvements that this testimony is advocating.

Now to the third desired policy improvement. It emanates from observed American attitudes toward the Tuareg minority in Mali. Mr. Chairman, in the very first paragraph of this testimony I identified myself as an ardent believer in democracy. Vanity was not the reason. Nor does self-pity drive this other self-description: I am a double ethnic minority—within both of the two countries I love: Ghana where I was born and the United States where I immigrated almost four decades ago. Rather, I offer the self-observations as possible explanations of political sentiments I hold: I happen to possess deep empathy for minorities everywhere and minority rights to me are no mere academic concept.

Notwithstanding these sentiments, I am today concerned about romanticization of the Tuareg political project in Mali. I fear this may be coloring and tilting U.S. policy views and positions. Specifically, evidence abounds of persistent U.S. pressure, throughout 2012, for Mali to concede "that the Tuaregs and others in northern Mali have legitimate political and socioeconomic grievances" and to negotiate with them. Washington has exerted this pressure on Bamako and on ECOWAS, even though throughout the spring of 2012, when the MNLA Tuareg had the choice, they rejected negotiation and opted to plunge Mali into war, dismemberment, and other dire consequences. And even though the MNLA cynically formed alliances with brutal Islamists like Ansar Dine—whose leadership contains ethnic Tuaregs as well. I fail to understand the U.S. is running so much interference for a minority that rejected

negotiation, unleashed devastating war, broke Mali's territorial integrity and ceded most of the country to marauding jihadists.

Two reasons drive my concern. Democracy, equal justice and peaceful coexistence within multiethnic African countries constitute the big one. According to one U.N. data source, Tuaregs form two related branches among Mali's 57 ethnic groups. At 813,000 they constitute 5 percent of today's population of 16,319,000. Given this slim proportion within much diversity, extra care must be taken to avoid creating the impression of unfair ethnic favoritism for the Tuaregs—especially one purchased through the barrel of a gun.

African colonial history is my other reason. After carving up Africa, 19th century European imperialists embarked on strategies of divide, weaken, and rule. They vigorously promoted division by romanticizing some groups while demonizing others; by rewarding others while depriving others; and by stirring up mutual prejudice, suspicion, and antagonism. The baleful consequences still plague Africa more than a century later. The visible signs discernible from Rwanda to Nigeria, and from Kenya and Congo to Cote d'Ivoire are only the tip of an iceberg. This politicized ethnicity may even apply to Mali's Tuaregs. Some analysts suggest that in addition to legitimate grievances, the four secessionist wars of the Tuaregs have been driven by a superiority complex. Allegedly, with independence approaching, French colonialists encouraged the lighter-skinned Tuaregs to refuse to live under the rule of Mali's darker-skinned majority, presumed to be inferior. These analysts claim that this is a reason why the very first Tuareg rebellion against Bamako's rule happened within days of independence.

The third policy improvement this testimony is advocating then is this: The U.S. must put in place effective mechanisms and bend over backward to ensure that its pronouncements and positions are not perceived as playing ethnic favorites in Mali.

Policy review and adjustment is the fourth and final improvement this testimony calls for. The policy in question is America's counterterrorism strategy not just in Mali before the implosion, but across the Sahel-Sahara area and from 9/11 to today.

If a reason for the review is required, perhaps the following can suffice. A question has persisted since Mali's implosion almost a year ago: Why did the collapse of the much-admired 20-year democracy happen so fast and with such apparent ease? To find answers, all possibilities must be explored. As noted above, some observers, several years ago, had become concerned at the counterterrorism strategy's close militaristic embrace of Mali's young democracy. Consequently, one hypothetical possibility is that the strategy inadvertently contributed. After all, Captain Sanogo, the soldier who inflicted the fatal blow, had been trained multiple times by the U.S. as part of the strategy.

I have a preferred list of constituent elements within the strategy which must be scrutinized for their possible impact on Mali. They must include AFRICOM, the Trans-Sahara Counter Terrorism Program (TSCTP), Operation Flintlock, and the curriculum used to train African soldiers. The policy review must establish if any of these produced unintended or unforeseen consequences in Mali. If so the consequences and their causal mechanisms must be fully understood. One narrow practical reason why is obvious. Any detrimental consequences in Mali must be guarded against in Mauritania and Niger where TSCTP is being operated right now. A broader positive reason can also be advanced for the policy review: It could lead to improvements that make more effective the overall strategy that the U.S. has used to fight the scourge of terrorism across Africa since 9/11.

#### THUMBNAIL ANSWERS TO SELECT QUESTIONS IN INVITATION LETTER

Mr Chairman, your invitation letter posed several questions. They have proved extremely helpful in shaping the preceding bulk of my testimony. In this rump section I will provide direct thumbnail answers to a select few.

*Q1: What recommendations do you have for U.S. policy as we consider next steps in addressing the simultaneous political, security, humanitarian crises in Mali?*

As the bulk of the testimony elaborates, I make four strong recommendations. Washington must:

- (a) Highlight the high contagion risk in Mali and designate contagion as crisis #5.
- (b) Change the State Department's current priorities and place military intervention to dislodge terrorists from northern Mali above elections and negotiations.
- (c) Take precautions to prevent U.S. from being perceived as practicing ethnic favoritism to benefit Tuaregs.
- (d) Conduct thorough, in-depth review of U.S. counterterrorism strategy, especially how the component elements of AFRICOM, TSCTP, Operation Flintlock, and training of African soldiers worked or not in Mali and then adjust policies accordingly.

*Q2: Why were we so unprepared for the recent coup in Mali, a country which was largely heralded as a stable democracy for so many years? What lessons can be learned from this experience as we look at U.S. policy toward Mali and the region?*

This first is among the questions that can only be well answered following a thorough policy review. One superficial answer is that presumably we, like everyone else, were taken in by the appearances and failed to drill below the surface. Regarding causes, chances are that many causal factors contributed to Mali's implosion. Good candidate hypotheses to test include: (a) the extreme fragility of all infant democracies; (b) the incentive to focus on foreign terrorists diverted Mali's attention from aggrieved domestic groups such as the Tuaregs; (c) why TSCTP failed to make a capable fighting force of Mali's army; (d) the failure to detect and neutralize armed Tuaregs moving into Mali from Libya; and (e) the failure to come to the aid of Bamako once Tuaregs from Libya struck in January and to give sufficient help in defeating returning Tuaregs. Lessons, like causes, are best extracted after thorough policy review. Excellent early warning systems that target domestic grievances may be one likely lesson. Another might be to change curriculum for training African soldiers to imbue them with sacred and robust respect for civilian control.

*Q3: What are the regional implications of AQIM's presence in northern Mali and what is the extent of the threat to U.S. interests?*

The implications cannot be good—especially the more time AQIM has to create a thriving haven in northern Mali, a territory as big as France. Significantly, it has already been reported that AQIM personnel probably participated in inflicting the U.S. national trauma that was the Benghazi murder of Ambassador Stevens and his three colleagues.

Being no expert, I must defer to the judgement of the countless experts advising both State and DOD—except to observe that with time the threat to the U.S. can only worsen.

*Q5: How can the government in Bamako negotiate more effectively with the Tuaregs?*

I believe legitimacy on both sides is the key, a critical prerequisite. The Bamako government must be democratically elected. Similarly, Tuareg leaders negotiated with must also be legitimate representatives of the community and its subgroups. We must not be satisfied with unelected, self-appointed Tuareg individuals. This again bolsters the sequence that this testimony advocates: security first, then impeccably prepared democratic elections to reveal Mali's real leaders both in Bamako and among Tuaregs.

*Q6: How might military operation impact the humanitarian situation in the north and plans for elections, and what is a realistic timetable for holding elections in 2013?*

Clearly, war would affect the humanitarian situation for the worse. However precautions can and must be taken to minimize the detrimental effects. This is because the risks and consequences of not intervening and leaving northern Mali at the mercy of the brutal jihadists, those risks and consequences are far worse than intervention and they will only deteriorate with time.

*Q7: What are potential implications of holding elections without the participation of the northerners in the north?*

I believe this runs a high risk of opening up a messy post-elections Pandora's box. Sore losers would make all manner of claims. At worse they could ignite small wars and stir up other trouble across a land already torn by war and instability.

This risk bolsters the argument for a sequence of restoring Mali first and thereafter making impeccable plans and preparations for free and fair elections nationwide.

Cote d'Ivoire's recent trauma may be instructive. Ex-President Laurent Gbagbo's claim of rigging failed to convince the world precisely because there had been 5 years of pains-taking and transparent electoral preparations. The Gbagbo claims would likely have been more credible, the world would have been more divided and the Ivorian civil war would have been longer and bloodier had the elections been less well prepared.

#### CLOSING

Mr. Chairman, let me express again my deep appreciation for this focus on a grave situation afflicting countless Africans. I hope that my opinions are of some use. I would be glad to respond to any questions or clarifications you might have.



Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Mr. Akouetteh.

Mr. Mahmoud, you've been quite patient. You are, if I understand correctly, in Bamako at the U.S. Embassy, and I'm grateful for your taking the time and for being quite patient in joining with the six other witnesses we've already heard from. I'd like to invite your testimony now.

**STATEMENT OF MOHAMED OULD MAHMOUD, VICE PRESIDENT, LOBBYING NETWORK FOR PEACE, SECURITY, AND DEVELOPMENT FOR NORTHERN MALI, BAMAKO, MALI**

Mr. MAHMOUD. Thank you very much for inviting me to talk about the issue.

Early in January 2012, the rebellion started under the label of MNLA, National Movement of Azawad Liberation. It took 3 months for the army to be defeated and sent back to the capital, Bamako. The national army was at the threshold of its capacity to sustain security and national integrity. Therefore, the morale of the troops was seriously undermined, and the military was horrified by exactions of the insurgents mainly in Aguelhoc and Tessalit. Accordingly, the army claimed munitions and guns to be more equipped to face the insurgents. This demand was followed by demonstrations and riots from the army which led to the coup in March 2012.

However, the northern part of the country was really occupied by all kinds of networks—drug trafficking, arms smuggling, hijacking, tribal conflicts, and so on. The National Security Forces had never controlled the area for the last 20 years and, therefore, the GISP had found a no-man's land to operate and implement his terrorism activities. They enrolled and trained many young people coming from many countries.

The GPC—the Salafist Group for Call and Combat—became AQIM—Al Qaeda of the Northern Maghreb—and developed an international network of recruitment of jihadists. Furthermore, AQIM became the most important security actor in northern Mali and controlled all roads of drug trafficking and arms smuggling. AQIM leaders also developed a strong connection with security officials, politicians, traders, and some local chiefs' tribes. This situation turned AQIM into an important actor within the local communities by delivering some basic services such as health care and water supply, and later on, the group started offering equity and justice through the soft application of sharia law.

Meanwhile, officials of the central government were very reticent to talk or hear about these issues because of their strong involvement in drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and the liberation of Western hostages. As a result, community leaders became more and more skeptical of the role of the central government to take charge of the local security issues and deliver justice and equity all over the country, especially where controlling drug trafficking and AQIM are concerned.

Alternatively, leaders in the north started to concert and organize themselves to determine the best way to face the terrorist activities and take control of drug trafficking. In December 2009, all community leaders and stakeholders from the north held a meeting in Kidal to share information and debate about the best approaches to deal with terrorist activities. The 3-day meeting resulted in the

formation of the Chiefs Network for Lobbying for Peace and Development.

Groups controlling the northern part. Since the clashes between MUJAO and MNLA, there remain only three main groups controlling the area: Ansar Dine, MUJAO, and AQIM. These different groups have one common interest, the implementation of the sharia law. MNLA, on the other hand, was claiming the independence of the Azawad Republic.

MNLA currently has no control of any territory in the north, but they are claiming to adhere to the values of democracy and “laicite”—secularism—unlike the three other groups. MNLA is composed of former Tuareg rebellion officers and intellectuals and is reinforced by the former Libyan Leaders Legion. This organization was the most popular among the youth community, but today it has lost its credibility as it has lost its ability to control the north. During the last months, MNLA has lowered its own political ambitions and instead of claiming the independence of Azawad, MNLA members are now talking about federalism.

Ansar Dine was created by Iyad Ag Aghaly to balance the leadership of rising MNLA, which did not accept him as a leader. On the other hand, Ansar Dine was created to protect the interests of the Ifoghas community, and it has benefited from the protection of AQIM where Iyad Ag Aghaly used to be an important intermediary with the central government to free hostages.

Ansar Dine is today controlling two main regions, Kidal and Timbuktu. This group is joined by some jihadists of AQIM and MNLA fighters. Ansar Dine has tried to combine forces with MNLA many times without success, up until now. This failure of having a single Tuareg organization has demobilized too many fighters from MNLA to Ansar Dine.

It seems today that Ansar Dine has integrated militants and fighters from MNLA and built credibility within the Tuareg community.

The relationship between Ansar Dine and AQIM is a tactical deal to consolidate the leadership of the Ifoghas communities and create a connection between AQIM and local leaders. In reality, Ansar Dine had no sound political agenda, and this explains the will of Ansar Dine to join jihadists in the implementation of sharia law. This practice does not fit with the expectations and traditions of the Tuareg community.

Ansar Dine has the strongest military position compared to MUJAO and MNLA. To get Ansar Dine out of the influence of AQIM, we need to create a space of debate for the Tuareg community as a whole in order to decide what will be the most appropriate future of the society, the ruling system, and the spiritual and cultural dimensions. The strategy to create the space and framework for people to talk would help dilute the role of the actual Ansar Dine leaders.

MUJAO is an international network of jihadists hosted by the Lamhar community of Gao. It is composed of Arabs who are specialized in drug trafficking and who have a strong connection with AQIM leaders. The only agenda held by MUJAO is to create terror beyond the Malian borders and to impose their local leadership on other communities in the region. This is the most criminal organi-

zation and will never give up drug trafficking and terrorism as activities.

People's perceptions and expectations. The majority of people living under the occupation and who are in refugee camps want to see an end to AQIM's activities and living in a strong state which can ensure freedom, equity, and justice. War is the last wanted solution because terrorists and others groups could easily escape and leave the people under the bombs of international community.

How to get the north back to the country. First of all, we need a legitimate and credible central government in the south. We have to organize free and independent elections. This does not mean that the north is neglected, but it's the part of starting point.

To engage talk with Ansar Dine and MNLA; to create spaces for people and local leaders to debate on the future of their lives; and to change the national governance which could allow freedom of choices.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Mahmoud follows:]

#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF MOHAMED OULD MAHMOUD

##### CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Early in January 2012, the rebellion started under the label of MNLA (National movement of Azawad liberation). It took 3 months for the army to be defeated and sent back to the capital, Bamako; the national army was at the threshold of its capacity to sustain security and national integrity. Therefore, the moral of the troops was seriously undermined, and the military was horrified by exactions of the insurgents mainly in Aguelhoc and Tessalit. Accordingly, the army claimed munitions and guns to be more equipped to face the insurgents; this demand was followed by demonstrations and riots from the army which led to the coup in March 2012.

However, the northern part of the country was really occupied by all kinds of networks (drugs trafficking, arms smugglings, hijacking, tribal conflicts, and so on). The national security forces had never controlled the area for the last 20 years, and therefore, the GISP had found a no man's land to operate and implement his terrorism activities. They enrolled and trained many young people coming from many countries.

The GPC (The Salafist Group for Call and Combat) became AQIM (Al-Qaeda of the Northern Maghreb) and developed an international network of recruitment of jihadists. Furthermore, AQIM became the most important security actor in northern Mali and controlled all roads of drugs trafficking and arms smuggling. AQIM leaders also developed a strong connection with security officials, politicians, traders and some local chiefs tribes. This situation turned AQIM into an important actor within the local communities by delivering some basic services such as health care and water supply, and later on, the group started offering equity and justice through the soft application of sharia law.

Meanwhile, officials of the central government were very reticent to talk or hear about these issues because of their strong involvements in drugs trafficking, arms smuggling, and the liberation of Western hostages. As a result, community leaders became more and more skeptical of the role of the central government to take charge of the local security issues and deliver justice and equity all over the country, especially where controlling drugs trafficking and AQIM are concerned.

Alternatively, leaders in the north started to concert and organize themselves to determine the best way to face the terrorist activities and take control of drugs trafficking. In December 2009, all community leaders and stakeholders from the north held a meeting in Kidal to share information and debate about the best approaches to deal with terrorist activities. The 3-day meeting resulted in the formation of the "Chiefs Network for Lobbying for Peace and Development."

##### GROUPS CONTROLLING THE NORTHERN PART

Since the clashes between MUJAO and MNLA, there remain only three main groups controlling the area: ANSAR DEEN, MUJAO and AQMI. These different

groups have one common interest—the implementation of the sharia law. MNLA, on the other hand, was claiming the independence of the Azawad Republic.

- MNLA currently has no control of any territory in the north but they are claiming to adhere to the values of democracy and “laicite” (secularism) unlike the three other groups. MNLA is composed of former Touareg rebellion officers and intellectuals and is reinforced by the former Libyan Leaders Legion. This organization was the most popular among the youth community, but today, it has lost its credibility as it has lost its ability to control the north. During the last months, MNLA has lowered its own political ambitions, and instead of claiming the independence of Azawad, MNLA members are now talking about federalism.
- Ansar Dine was created by Iyad Ag Aghaly to balance the leadership of rising MNLA which did not accept him as a leader. On the other hand, Ansar Dine was created to protect the interests of the Ifoghas community, and it has benefited from the protection of AQIM where Iyad Ag Aghaly used to be an important intermediary with the central government to free hostages. Ansar Dine is today controlling two main regions (Kidal and Timbuktu). This group is joined by some jihadists of AQIM and MNLA fighters. Ansar Dine has tried to combine forces with MNLA many times without success up until now. This failure of having a single Touareg organization has demobilized too many fighters from MNLA to Ansar Dine.

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The relationship between Ansar Dine and AQIM is a tactical deal to consolidate the leadership of the Ifoghas communities and create a connection between AQIM and local leaders. In reality, Ansar Dine had no sound political agenda, and this explains the will of Ansar Dine to join jihadists in the implementation of sharia law. This practice does not fit with the expectations and traditions of the Touareg community. Ansar Dine has the strongest military position compared to MUJAO and MNLA. To get Ansar Dine out of the influence of AQIM, we need to create a space of debate for the Touareg community as a whole in order to decide what will be the most appropriate future of the society, the ruling system, and the spiritual and cultural dimensions.

The strategy to create the space and framework for people to talk would help dilute the role of the actual Ansar Dine leaders.

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#### PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

The majority of people living under the occupation and who are in refugee camps want to see an end to AQIM’s activities and living in a strong state which can insure freedom, equity, and justice. War is the last wanted solution because terrorists and others groups could easily escape and leave the people under the bombs of international community.

#### HOW TO GET THE NORTH BACK TO THE COUNTRY

- First of all, we need a legitimate and credible central government in south. We have to organize free and independent elections. This does not mean that the north is neglected but it’s the part of starting point.
- To engage talk with Ancar Deen and MNLA;
- To create spaces for people and local leaders to debate on the future of their lives; and
- To change the national governance which could allow freedom of choices.

Senator COONS. Thank you, Mr. Mahmoud.

I’m going to ask one question. Just if I could summarize, and thank you for your testimony, each of the four members of this panel. The United States has had a long and a close relationship with the Malian people. We have long supported development, security, democracy. The developments of the last year, nearly 2 years, have been very upsetting, disturbing, troubling. We now

have a significant area of Mali and many of its people facing security challenges, legitimacy challenges, human rights abuses, fundamental human rights abuses caused by many different actors, and this should cause us in the United States to reconsider some of our strategic approaches and some of our choices.

If each of you had one suggestion for what is the most important thing that we should be taking away from this hearing and pressing for the United States to do, whether to advance human rights, to advance a secure and credible election, to advance a regional strategy that is successful, or to ensure that we effectively engage with the real human needs of the people of Mali, what is your one suggestion for us, for our actions going forward?

Mr. Mahmoud, I will start with you, and then Mr. Akuetteh, Ms. Dufka, and Dr. Fomunyoh.

Mr. MAHMOUD. I think for us, the first thing to do is to get this election done, a legitimate government in Bamako, so that they can stop openly the rebellion movement in the north. As far as we don't have legitimacy, we can't move forward to a peaceful north, and even the south part of the country.

I'm afraid that even Bamako and the other cities will be occupied by the terrorists and so on. So we should be rushing to get this election done as soon as possible.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Mr. Mahmoud.

Mr. Akuetteh.

Mr. AKUETTEH. Thank you very much. My choice would be, my recommended choice would be a regional strategy for combating terrorism, because I do think if you look at what has happened, a lot of Africans have been killed. So terrorism in Africa is not just a threat to the United States. It is to Africans, too.

Now, the kind of strategy that I will stress, though, is I think it has to be rooted in democracy and social justice and good governance inside every African country. That will then take away the grievances and the things that will attract—create terrorists.

Now, if there are foreign terrorists coming around, there are different ways of dealing with them. But I do think that it has to be rooted in democracy because if we focus on foreign terrorists and ignore what is happening inside countries, I think it's really dangerous. For 2 years, some of us were worried about the lack of focus on the Tuareg problem until they moved back from Mali.

So I think the regional strategy rooted in democracy as a way of fighting the big threats of terrorism across Africa.

Senator COONS. Thank you.

Ms. Dufka.

Ms. DUFKA. You've given us the most difficult question. I would say a few things. Of course, I see things through the prism of rule-of-law institutions which, as I've noted, were very weak.

I would say to encourage a dialogue in which all Malians can be a part, because to focus only on the Tuaregs and those Tuaregs who have taken up arms, which are a tiny minority—there were a lot of Tuaregs who were not in favor of this war. They felt it was a very opportunistic action on the part of a very few. So to open up with respect to the north, to ensure that there is a dialogue so that all voices in the north can be heard, not just the Tuaregs who have taken up arms, and to ensure a dialogue that would address

the underlying causes which affect all Malians, not just Malians in the north but some of these rule-of-law issues that affect all Malians.

And then, of course, do not forget the issue of addressing abuses and the culture of impunity, which could potentially lead to much graver violations in the future as military intervention happens and after a vacuum is left in some of these areas in the north in which abuses could happen. Thank you.

Senator COONS. A broad and inclusive dialogue, and real accountability.

Dr. Fomunyoh.

Dr. FOMUNYOH. Mr. Chairman, I would say the one thing to take out of this is I think all of us are trying to draw lessons from the Malian experience and asking ourselves constantly what happened to this country that for 20 years seemed to be a functioning democracy. I think one of the takeaways for us is that elections, even when held regularly, do not necessarily an effective democracy make.

So even if we fast-forward into 2013 and the military operation goes well, and the big cities are regained by the government in Bamako, and we have good elections, inclusive elections, I think the one lesson that we should all take from this experience is the need for sustainable partnerships, that democracy support programs shouldn't end with support for an electoral process. We really have to deepen the process of service delivery and strengthening of institutions.

Senator COONS. Terrific. Thank you very much. I appreciate those concise summations.

Senator Isakson.

Senator ISAKSON. Underlining concise, I'll be quick.

I thank all of you for your testimony. Mr. Mahmoud, thank you very much for your testimony. You focused on one of the first, most important needs is a credible government in Mali, in the south.

I'll ask Ms. Dufka a question. I asked the DOD lady before, Amy, or Amanda. Evidently, from your testimony, Captain Sanogo is not the kind of guy that would be the representative of reform. Is that correct?

Ms. DUFKA. Yes.

Senator ISAKSON. I think that's representative of what Mr. Mahmoud said and what they need in terms of the government to build on.

Second, I want to make a comment. Mr. Akuetteh made a critical observation, adding contagion as a fifth concern in Mali, and it may be really the biggest concern for the United States of America, because if this spreads across boundaries and if Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb becomes more and more powerful in neighboring partners around there, it will be a significant problem not just for the United States but for all of West Africa, and I appreciate your testimony on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Senator COONS. Thank you very much, Senator Isakson. I'm always grateful for your partnership and for the ease with which our staff works together to prepare these important hearings.

Forgive us but it is past 11 o'clock, our appointed hour. All of your testimony, all of your written testimony will be submitted for the record.

There were several other Senators who expressed real interest in this hearing today but due to their schedules were not able to join us. So I'm going to leave the record open for a week, which will allow other Senators to submit questions for the record of any of our witnesses, and for us to then take some actions going forward.

I'm grateful for the support efforts that made it possible for us to get a great and full discussion of the many challenging issues facing us in the United States, in the region, and in Mali.

Thank you, Mr. Mahmoud, for joining us from Bamako.

Thank you, Dr. Fomunyoh. Thank you, Ms. Dufka. And thank you, Mr. Akuetteh. We are grateful for your testimony today.

With that, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:07 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

