

## **President Muhammadu Buhari in Washington, DC, USA says 'Boko Haram is losing'- 20 July 2015**

This month, the world moved a step closer to the defeat of Boko Haram, the jihadist group that has terrorized hundreds of thousands in the northern states of Nigeria. In one of my first acts since taking office as president six weeks ago, I have replaced the heads of Nigeria's army, navy and air force. Our new military leadership has not been chosen because of their familiarity with those in government, as was too often the case in the past, but on their track records and qualifications alone.



**President Muhammadu Buhari (L) with US President Barack Obama during a meeting in Washington DC on 20 July 2015**

These new military leaders will be based in Borno State in northern Nigeria, where the headquarters of the armed services has been relocated. This shift of resources and command directly to the front line, in addition to the replacement of the head of the State Security Service, Nigeria's intelligence organization, and a new emphasis on working in partnership with our neighbours, has equipped us to take the fight directly to Boko Haram.

Already we are beginning to see a degrading of Boko Haram's capabilities as a fighting force. In recent weeks, it appears to have shifted away from confronting the military directly to an increase in attacks on civilian areas, as we saw only last week when an elderly woman and 10-year-old girl blew themselves up at a Muslim prayer gathering in north eastern Nigeria. We should not be confused by this change, hateful as it is: It does not mean that Boko Haram is succeeding in its aims — it shows that it is losing.

While we work to defeat the terrorists, I ask the people of Nigeria and the world for resolve and fortitude. The campaign we will wage will not be easy; it may not be swift. We should expect stages of success and also moments when it may appear that our advances have been checked. But no one should have any doubt as to the strength of our collective will or my commitment to rid this nation of terror and bring back peace and normalcy to all affected areas.

Similarly, my determination should not be underestimated in other matters. This includes instilling good governance and tackling the scourge of corruption that has held Nigeria back for too long. As I meet with President Obama today — the first time a president of the United States will encounter a Nigerian counterpart following the peaceful transfer of power in a contested election in our history — I will be discussing my plans for critical reforms. So, too, will I discuss why the formation of my administration is taking time and, crucially, why it must. Already

there are voices saying these changes are taking too long — even though only six weeks have passed since my inauguration. I hear such calls, but this task cannot and should not be rushed.

When cabinet ministers are appointed in September, it will be some months after I took the oath of office. It is worth noting that Obama himself did not have his full Cabinet in place for several months after first taking office; the United States did not cease to function in the interim. In Nigeria's case, it would neither be prudent nor serve the interests of sound government to have made these appointments immediately on my elevation to the presidency; instead, Nigeria must first put new rules of conduct and good governance in place.

I cannot stress how important it is to ensure that this process is carried out correctly, just as it has been crucial to first install the correct leadership of the military and security services before we fully take the fight to Boko Haram.

There are too few examples in the history of Nigeria since independence where it can be said that good management and governance were instituted at a national level. This lack of a governance framework has allowed many of those in charge, devoid of any real checks and balances, to plunder. The fact that I now seek Obama's assistance in locating and returning \$150 billion in funds stolen in the past decade and held in foreign bank accounts on behalf of former, corrupt officials is testament to how badly Nigeria has been run. This way of conducting our affairs cannot continue. Indeed, the failure of governance, it can be argued, has been as much a factor in Nigeria's inability thus far to defeat Boko Haram as have been issues with the military campaign itself.

So the path we must take is simple, even if it is not easy: First, instill rules and good governance; second, install officials who are experienced and capable of managing state agencies and ministries; and third, seek to recover funds stolen under previous regimes so that this money can be invested in Nigeria for the benefit of all of our citizens.

We seek the support and partnership of the United States in these tasks. The importance of the fight against terrorism and corruption in Nigeria, Africa's most powerful economy and largest populace, cannot be underestimated. Our allies can provide much-needed military training and intelligence as our soldiers take the war effort to Boko Haram. Similarly, we look to U.S. businesses as well as the Obama administration to help develop governance initiatives that can ensure that Nigeria's wealth benefits all its people, not just a few. By taking these steps, we will be positioned to benefit from increased investment — particularly in energy and electricity — from the United States.

I was elected on a platform of change. I know this is what the people of Nigeria desire more than anything else. I know they are impatient for action. I realize the world waits to see evidence that my administration will be different from all those that came before. Yet reforming my country after so many years of abuse cannot be achieved overnight. In our campaigns against both Boko Haram and corruption, we should remain steadfast and remember, as it is said: "Have patience. All things become difficult before they become easy."