

Journal of Public Policy and Administration (JPPA)

MILITARY SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE INSURGENCY PERIOD IN BORNO STATE AND LAKE CHAD REGION: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

Shettima Bukar Kullima, PhD, Smart Chikwere Attah, PhD and Abdullahi Garba

MILITARY SPECIAL OPERATIONS IN THE INSURGENCY PERIOD IN BORNO STATE AND LAKE CHAD REGION: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS

^{1*}Shettima Bukar Kullima, PhD
Department of History: University of Maiduguri
bukarkulli2015@gmail.com

²Smart Chikwere Attah, PhD
Department of History: Kashim Ibrahim College of Education Maiduguri
smartchikwere@gmail.com

³Abdullahi Garba
Department of History: University of Maiduguri
abdullahigarba73@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: Nigeria military together with other multi-national military formations have been battling insurgency in Borno state and other parts of the Lake Chad region since 2009. This necessitated this paper titled “Military Special Operations in the Insurgency Period in Borno State and Lake Chad Region: National and International Efforts”. The purpose of this study is to show how protracted nature of the insurgency has prompted various military special operations of national and international collaborations in the affected territories.

Methodology: By so doing, the efficacies or otherwise of these operations were examined. This paper was based on secondary and primary analysis of data drawn from texts and oral interviews.

Findings: The paper revealed that the military operations have been admixed with ups and downs. It was however shown from the paper that challenges leading to some operational challenges in the fight against insurgency are largely caused by both traditionally known operational difficulties and atypical professional ingress of the security personnel. So far, the prolonged nature of the conflict is partly as a result of this qualms in the military operational lineups as well as metamorphic nature of the insurgents’ tactics.

Unique contribution to theory, practice and policy: On this note, the paper concluded that relevant stakeholders should device other non-military approaches as alternative to address the lingering insurgency in the Lake Chad region. As such, the paper has contributed in supporting the postulations that robust efforts in counter-insurgency is essential, which include proper military coordination and other non-lethal policies.

Keywords: *Insurgency, Military, Special Operations*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Insurgency and extremist agitations are gradually becoming the order of the day world over. Since the progression of American led onslaughts against global terrorism, there have been rising phenomenon of insurgency and separatist agitations in the Middle East with ardent neighborhood effects in vast of sub-Sahara Africa. Information technologies and other devices of globalization have provided smooth ground for the development of webs of organizational synergy among diverse insurgent groups across regions of the world¹. Thus, there appeared to be a “script playing” of violence in different countries, as several opposition armed groups tend to be following similar patterns of insurgency against government, security forces, the people and institutions. The implication is that within different civilian settlements, high caliber warfare takes place beyond the control of traditional civil authorities. Unfortunately, in most instances, the military intervened only to found themselves to be equally overwhelmed, leading to all forms of regional and international military collaborations.

The “Boko Haram” insurgents in Nigeria’s north-east, Borno state in particular and Lake Chad region in general, by all standards is a good example of this evolving global security threat. Technically, this group over the years has been a replicating ideologically based insurgents, with distinct military tact and structure that is very difficult to be defined in simple terms². In the ten years of fierce existence, the group has grew into a complex organization that as at present, ordinary military conceptualizations cannot explain their mode of operation or command chain³. Initially military emphasis to nab the conflict seems to have been placed on high ranking members of the group. Nevertheless, as it stands today the super heroic stance on identified leaders of the group seems to have become more or less insignificant, as the group has shown itself to be a corporate modelled entity with numerous provincial commanders who act in personal discretion and utmost anonymous, so as to preserve their “mummified” leadership, thereby mystifying the group⁴.

In this whole scenario, the Nigerian military forces have not failed to up their strategies as the conflict constantly change tides like virus antibodies. This perhaps explain why different codified military operations have been undertaken by virtually all the military arms of Nigeria- army, air force and navy, in the bid to combat the menace of the insurgents. The police and other security agencies together with mass forces of hunters and youth volunteer or vigilante groups are not left out in the entire security operations. Besides this, other international military and security operations have been jointly created among West African states as well as other foreign military assistance (technical) from western countries.

1.1 Problem Statement

Counter-insurgency operations against the insurgents within the Lake Chad region have been going on over a decade now. These operations have been in different fronts, including local, national and international military collaborations with recorded successes here and there. Some of the fundamental questions raised in this light include, why has the insurgency lingered, in spite of the military special operations and collaborations? Why is the international community not proactive in the counter-insurgency? What other efforts could be harnessed from both

national and international fronts to end the protracted insurgency? How could the military evolve unity of purpose among the services to enhance counter-insurgency operations? These are some of the silent questions to be addressed in the course of this paper.

2.0 OVERVIEW OF “BOKO HARAM” GROUP

“Boko Haram” is a group that originated within Borno axis of north-east Nigeria. The name “Boko Haram” was coined by the public in connection with the group’s teachings and practice. To the group, such name is derogatory, hence, Jama’atu Ahlis Sunnah Liddawa’ati wal Jihad (people committed to the prophet’s teaching and jihad) is adopted as the actual and original name of the group⁵, irrespective of other names that has traded or emanated in recent times, either as a result of internal splits of the group or open conceptions by different commentators.

Due to this variation of the group’s nomenclature, its formation has remained a subject of debate in various quarters. However, one important inference in all the accounts of the origin of Jama’atu Ahlis Sunnah Liddawa’ati wal Jihad is the fact that charismatic personalities played important roles. Nonetheless, the major challenge to that effect is to identify who the first charismatic leader of the group was, as there are many personalities put forward by many narrators⁶. Nevertheless, amidst the contentions, there is a general agreement that Mohammed Yusuf either by omission or commission inherited a nucleus of a group that was transformed to what later became known as “Boko Haram”. In other words, by all accounts he was not the leader of the group at its embryonic stage rather he ascended to power and brought his influence to bear on the doctrinal and operational models of the group. This he actually did using different approaches and knowledge he acquired from diverse Islamic teachings or groups where he belonged, before his leadership exploits⁷.

It is not indeed our intention to debate on the originator of the group that metamorphosed into “Boko Haram”. This is against the backdrop that the efforts of any of the presumable personalities before Yusuf to champion an entirely new movement never came to international limelight, compared to that of Yusuf’s leadership force. The supposed forerunner(s) before Yusuf relied on existing movements or organizational modules to operate their immature agenda. However, the glaring ingenuity of the “Boko Haram” movement was made typical by Mohammed Yusuf, by creating a completely new movement that took a different posture of Islamism, at least within Nigeria and the West African sub-region⁸. This as a matter of fact makes his ascendancy to leadership position of the group an important discourse, considering the influence he had on the whole “Boko Haram” ideological precepts.

At the embryotic stage, the group’s ideology hinge against western education which to them is forbidden, on the supposition that it negates the religion of Islam. It is against this background they christened to be known as Ahlan waljamaah walkhamati wassunah. At the same time, some adherents of the group had preference to identify themselves with their self-styled leader, Mohammed Yusuf, hence, the nomenclature “Yusufiya”. The Yusufiya had a tapping of Salafist doctrine practice across parts of Asia and the Middle East. The group initially started peacefully as an itinerant band of preachers canvassing support for their cause, until July 26 2009, when they launched massive attacks on security forces in Maiduguri, Borno State⁹.

Meanwhile, the style and strategies shown during the four days war with security forces in Borno state, to large extent shows that even during the so called peaceful period, the group was

undergoing some high level of politico-military preparations¹⁰. This is typical of most insurgent groups, the early years is usually used for indoctrination and recruitment of foot soldiers, as well as making necessary contacts for internal and external political, military and organizational supports.

The radicalization process of the group apparently was solidified with the seclusion of the group members from the larger society. Through the administration of the mosque known as “Ibn Taimiyya Masjid”, the group created a community of the faithful, where the group’s “ideal state” was practically illustrated. Departments were created for essential needs of the members with Mohammed Yusuf serving as the Amir-leader¹¹. It was in this arena that the overall radical posture of the group took shape, leading to the 2009 violent onslaught with security forces.

It is saddening that Nigerian government neglected and/or had inadequate mechanism to respond to early warning signals. Prior to the group’s violent outing, empirical study revealed the activities of the group to be revolutionary against known accepted norms, tenets and values from both social and moderate religious perspectives. The group involved in incendiary tendencies resulting from incitements, derogatory messages and preaching, blitz campaign and spread of membership as well as unequivocal declaration of intention of violent attacks¹². All these early warnings came to the fore to the government, through intelligent reports and observations raised by concerned citizens and some Islamic clerics alike. But not much repressive actions were taken by the government, most especially the federal government of Nigeria, till the eruption of violence.

Penitently, the acute eruption of violence exposed lack of preparedness of the Nigeria’s civil security operatives for counter insurgency, as the group held Maiduguri under siege for about three days, attacked police headquarters, killed many security agents, captured about nine (9) police stations, took away police arms and ammunitions, mounted road blocks and screened road users in about a quarter of the metropolis¹³. This swiftly led to mobile police re-enforcement and intervention by the Nigerian army, following late President Umar Musa Yar’adua’s directive¹⁴.

Justifications for Military Involvement in Counter Insurgency

To an ordinary observer, the military has no business intervening in the counter insurgency. Judging from the civil security architecture of Nigeria, it could be asserted that counter-insurgency security concerns have been taken care of, through the formation of Mobile Police Force and subsequent establishment of the counter-terrorist unit of the force. In spite of this, the makers of the 1999 Nigerian constitution in section 217 among other responsibilities of armed forces asserted that to “suppress insurrection and act in aid of civil authorities to restore order when called upon to do so by the President but subject to such conditions as maybe prescribed by an Act of the National Assembly”. Frequency of internal insurrection has led to the removal of the rigidity of the military deployment in aid of civil authority, as suggested through parliamentary motions¹⁵.

In the insurgency in north-east Nigeria and Borno state in particular, there are numerous factors to justify the involvement of the armed forces besides the constitutional layouts. Since the inception of the insurgents group, it has evolved in different phases. On this note, Attah S.C identified five major eras of the insurgency starting from the pre-July 2009 period to the last developing period of post 2013 rise of mass force (civilian JTF)¹⁶. The ever progressive nature of

the group has involved full scale guerrilla attacks, asymmetric operations, use of vehicle and persons borne explosive device in populated places, planting of pressure triggered mines and outright direct offensives against security formations, have been major military strategic challenges¹⁷. This has of course prompted the Nigerian military to come up with different operational tactics, often times codified to give direction on the actual aims of the campaign, from the central objectives.

3.0 OVERVIEW OF COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS SINCE 2009

It is indeed no doubt that the insurgents have deliberately put the Nigerian armed forces in a protracted warfare, using different unconventional military approaches. As such, the military in order to catch up with the insurgents evolutionary tactics have lunched different special military operations in Borno and beyond. The first security outfit that combated the Jama'atu Ahlis Sunnah Liddawa'ati wal Jihad group was the joint taskforce codenamed "Operation flush". As the name of this operation indicated, the early violent posture of the group coupled with other security challenges necessitated the government of Borno state to come up with "Operation flush I & II" in 2009, which was headed by the Nigerian Mobile Police Force in collaboration with the Nigerian Army. Operatives of this special operation were overwhelmed by the July 2009 crisis with high ranking commanders of the taskforce paying the supreme price. Subsequently other operations were initiated, which included "Operation Mesa", Operation Restore Order", Operation BOYANA", "Operation Zaman Lafia" and "Operation Lafia Dole"¹⁸.

Operation BOYANA was a joint operation comprised of all the security operatives both para-military and military, aimed at tackling the various aspects of the security challenges in three states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa¹⁹. However, in August 18, 2013, 7 Division of the Nigerian Army was created, and a new operation was lunched, codified, "Operation Zaman Lafia". This operation was the watershed to complete military-counter insurgency, as the operation was solely carried out by the Nigerian Army headquarters while other security forces were excluded²⁰. But it is noteworthy that this fundamental change did not come without major setbacks in the counter-insurgency operation, as it led to acute inter-agency rivalries among civil and military security agencies alike. A typical pointer to this discord was the fact that from the period Operation Zaman Lafia was lunched, to the end of 2014, the insurgent group held over 20,000 square kilometers of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states affecting 10 local government areas²¹. It is against this backdrop that the Nigerian general election scheduled to hold on February 14, 2015 was postponed to March 28, 2015, to give way for military clearance of the insurgents controlled areas. The military successfully dislodged the insurgents in most of the areas where they had direct control, before the rescheduled election. Nevertheless, huge success recorded in this direction was partly attributed to Close Air Support supposedly mounted by some hired foreign mercenaries.

"Operation Lafia Dole" came into force in July 21, 2015 after the general election which ushered in a regime change in Nigeria. President Mohammed Buhari who won the election among other things promised to bring the scourge of the insurgency to an end. As part of this effort, General Tukur Yusufu Buratai an indigene of Borno state was appointed Chief of Army Staff, who in return declared "Operation Lafia Dole", which literally means "peace by force". In his declaration of the operation at the 103th Battalion Konduga, Borno State, General Buratai

asserted that the aim of the change was “to reign and add renewed vigor to the fight against terrorism and insurgency”²² in the North-East region and Nigeria at large. By this mandate, the Nigerian army pursued the military strategy of Decimation, Domination and Occupation (DDO) as against the traditional Responsive- Offensive Doctrine (ROD) which was quite obsolete, considering the evolutionary nature of the insurgency²³. Meanwhile, the expedition plans for the operation was based on seven (7) operational lines of which special operations was among them.

Meanwhile, at the regional front of Lake Chad, the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was reorganized with headquarters in N’Djamena Chad Republic. Remarkably, MNJTF has been in existence before the emergence of insurgency, basically to check cross-border crimes and banditry along the Lake Chad region. But as the taskforce continued in its operations, command quibbles and funding challenges started among the contingents²⁴, resulted to troops been largely restricted to their country’s borders²⁵.

This was the situation when insurgents’ threat emanated, till when the then headquarters of MNJTF at Baga was overran in 2014²⁶. After much diplomatic breakthrough the security framework of Lake Chad Commission (LCBC) and the Republic of Benin adopted in November 1, 2014²⁷ came into existence in 2016. By this development the MNJTF came into a new force with troops from Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Benin, amounting to 8,700 men at its take off²⁸.

4.0 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SPECIAL MILITARY CODIFIED OPERATIONS SINCE 2015

Between 2015 and 2018 several codified military exercises were carried out under Operation Lafia Dole, sometimes in collaboration with MNJTF. Some of such operations include, “Operation Sharan Daji” (cleaning-up the Bush); “Operation Harbin Kunama” (Scorpion Sting); “Operation Hardknock”; “Operation Karye Gwuiwa”; “Operation Gama Aiki” (Finish-up the task); “Operation Crackdown”; “Operation Thunder I &II”; “Operation Rescue Finale”; “Operation Ruwan Wuta I, II, III & IV”; “Operation Deep Punch I & II” “Operation Rawan Kada” “Operation Green Sweep”; “Operation Amni Farkhat”; “Operation Last Hold”; “Operation Thunder Storm” (by the Air force component); “Operation Rainbow” etc²⁹.

In spite of the fact that these series of special operations were recapped in the actual planning of Operation Lafia Dole, it is instructive to note that the ever changing nature of the counter-insurgency and the unending potency of the insurgents apparently compelled the Nigerian military and the MNJTF to constantly plan and design these special military exercises aimed at tackling specific operational threats. In addition, some operational “mishaps” on the side of the military is believed to have equally informed the redesigning of the tactics through special operations. This constant changes in special operational code could also be attributed partly to the efforts of the military high commander to encourage rejig on the fighting troops and to obviate fatigue from the ranks and files of the military, having been under the same Service Chiefs with almost the same strategy over a period of time (2015-till date), yet the conflict is still ongoing. Such special operations as suggested by some keen observers could also be a means of justifying defense spending by the military high command, since each operation requires budgetary allocation³⁰.

Nevertheless, it is evident that some of these above listed special operations could be remembered for their significant breakthroughs in the counter insurgency campaigns, while some of them largely ended up to be operational and tactical fiasco that caused the military some misfortunes. It is quite difficult in this paper to analyze every one of these special operations from the inception of the Operation Lafia Dole. However, some of the significant ones deserve some notes to show how they contributed to the success of the military counter insurgency or otherwise.

Security-politicization seems to have become one of the prominent feature of Nigerian politics since the emergence of insurgency. As such, few months after their inauguration, the government of President Buhari came under serious pressure to keep his words to rescue the kidnapped “Chibok girls” and bring the north-east security situation under control. This apparently necessitated the launch of “Operation Crackdown”. The operation was conducted between April and May 2016, with contributory troops from 21 Brigade, 26 Task Force Brigade, 28 Task Force Brigade and 7 Division Garrison³¹. The major aim of the operation was to carry out aerial and ground operations around the Sambisa Forest in order to identify and rescue the abducted girls of Chibok Secondary School. Thus, it was a well-planned operations that saw the encirclement of the enemy fighters with a blocking force provided by troops of 25 Task Force Brigade. High caliber equipment were equally deployed in the operation, which include 18 VICKERS; 7 Scorpion CRV-T; Gun Trucks; Support weapons; ambulance; Space Command- Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) and Close Air Support (CAS); Communication gadgets and so on. In earnest, “Operation Crackdown” facilitated deep incursion into the Sambisa Forest, leading to the rescue of over 5,000 prisoners, held captive by Boko Haram. Above all, the operation also propelled the successful recapture of Alagarno, the acclaimed spiritual headquarters of the insurgents³².

However, besides the initial achievements under “Operation Crackdown”, the major entry point to most military special operations under Operation Lafia Dole was the operational gains of MNJTF. This is against the backdrop that many areas in the Lake Chad region and north-east as a whole were under the influence of the insurgents. By July 2016 the MNJTF were able to recapture Damasak in Mobbar LGA of Borno State. Prior to this time several operations to recover that area were unsuccessful. Similarly, in September 29, 2016 Malam fatori in Abadam LGA of Borno state was successfully regained from the insurgents. The virtues of these military efforts triggered three military special operations within a span of three months, “Operation Hardknock”, “Operation Rescue Finale” and “Operation Karye Gwuiwa”³³.

“Operation Hardknock” was launched in November 2016 by the 8th operational Division of the Nigerian Army. The major objective of this operation was to clear the insurgents from their safe haven along Niger border and other parts of northern Borno, which extended to places like Ngala and Marte. In the same vein, by November 2016 “Operation Karye Gwuiwa” which literally means “breaking knees” was declared, with the sole aim of breaking insurgents’ network around north-west of Biu and Damboa axis of Borno state, together with other areas in Gujba and Gulani of Yobe state. This operation was championed by the troops of Forward Operation Base, located in Buratai in Biu LGA of Borno State³⁴.

In December 2016, “Operation Rescue Finale” was launched by the Nigerian military. This operation was purely an offshoot of “operation crackdown”. As the name suggested, it was aimed at liberating in complete all the abductees in insurgents captivity. The essence of this operation was the byproduct of ISR footage and human intelligence that narrowed down insurgents presence in the Sambisa Forest to Mallam Maja, Ngari Mari, Boroshi, Sulala, Gumari, Markas and Camp Zero³⁵. It was a well-coordinated operation that kick-started with airstrikes from the air-force components of the Operation Lafia Dole. Other tactical artillery shelling were also lunched in targeted locations of Sambisa Forest. This was finally followed by infantry operations on the ground that resulted in the capturing of the famous “Camp Zero”, which was believed to be of strategic relevance to the insurgents, in terms of training³⁶.

It is nevertheless important to note that this particular operation was later graced by many intrigues, as the media was awash with so many stories in this direction. Indeed, one of the fundamental argument put forward in the public space to that effect was that the capturing came easily without any reported fierce engagement with either fleeing insurgents or those guarding the camp. More so, the celebration that followed thereof has been argued by some keen observers to be part of the security-politicization syndrome in the Nigerian system. This is against the backdrop that the military organized a dinner party in the presidency and handed over the insurgents flag to the President and concluded thereof that the insurgents have been “defeated”. Nevertheless, later security events in the north-east of Nigeria and Lake Chad region in general, obviously subjected this celebration to a political “gimmick”.

Little wonder when reality sets-in “Operation Gama Alki” which literally mean “complete the task” came into force almost immediately after “Operation Rescue Finale”. This operation took special attention in addressing prevalence of insurgents’ attacks in areas around Kukawa, Monguno, Mobbar, Abadam and Diffa region of Niger. In furtherance of the daunting security challenges “Operation Thunder I” was declared in January 2017 by Nigerian military in collaboration with their Cameroonian counterpart. The mandate of the operation was to curtail insurgents activities around south-western Gwoza, including the Mandara Mountain and Bama area as well as the stretch along the Cameroonian borders with Nigeria³⁷.

In February 2017, the MNJTF came up with “Operation Rawan Kada” translated as “dance of the crocodile”. Local government areas in the northern section of Borno state were the targeted zone of this operation. The Logone-et-Chari area of Cameroon was also covered in this special MNJTF operation. “Operation Deep Punch I” followed up in the same direction by April 8, 2017. However, this operation was largely made up of troops from the Nigerian and Cameroonian armed forces. Assigned task of the operation was to extricate insurgents in parts of Sambisa Forest, southern Borno axis and traverse to Bama, Gwoza and Sambisa Forest section that borders Nigeria and Cameroon. In the same vein, “Operation Deep Punch II” was conceived by the MNJTF in August 2017. This operation was a triangulated operation to curb the whole of Lake Chad, Alagarno and Sambisa Forest. As a matter of fact, it involved all the arms of the military- navy, air-force and the army³⁸.

Furthermore, in September 16, 2017 the MNJTF launched “Operation Ruwan Wuta” which means “rain of fire”. Unlike the former one, this operation was largely an aerial calculated operation, aimed at discomfiting insurgents dwelling in the various Islands, along the Lake

Chad region. By October 2017 the second version of this operation was carried out with the same mandate³⁹.

Meanwhile, the height of MNJTF special operation was the introduction of “Operation Amni Farkhat”. This operation came into force in April 2018. It was a strategic military operation with a specific time frame of three months. It was designed to deny insurgents access to strategic locations or supply chains. Thus, the operation focused on Koma-douguo River, the Lake Chad and Malam-fatori area, down to Baga axis. In spite of the challenges encountered by the MNJTF, this operation is regarded as one of the most successful operations that strategically impacted on the activities of insurgents in the northern part of Borno and the Lake Chad region⁴⁰. By the time the operation ended in June 25, 2018, blocking security forces were mounted in different logistical channels of the insurgents across Arege, Gashigar, Garere, Metele, Kanama, Malam fatori and so on. The existence of these troops along these notorious routes, distorted the insurgents’ free movement and supplies⁴¹.

The turnaround of security incidents in northern Borno as a result of “Operation Amni Farkhat” prompted the Nigerian Army to initiate “Operation Last Hold”. This operation had humanitarian picture in intent, however, not without political publicity. By the prescription of the Nigerian army this operation was to water the ground for systemic return of internally displaced persons to their homeland, and allow for increase humanitarian access, specifically in northern Borno⁴². As such, the operational headquarters of the “Operation Last Hold” was located at Cross-Kauwa, a ring section connecting Kukawa, Monguno and Baga areas. In spite of the good intention of this operation, it turned out to be monumental disaster in the memory of fighting troops and in the general strategic development of the counter-insurgency⁴³.

The bulk of the troops that made up the operation were newly recruited, most of whom did not have “baptism of fire” before their deployment. The end result was acute dislodgment of the troops and their weaponries and other logistics seized by the insurgents. To this end, all the subsequent insurgents’ attacks were carried out with the aid of captured Operation Last Hold weapons and camouflaged vehicles⁴⁴. Sadly, it was very easy for the insurgents to penetrate military formations before engaging them, as they were often assumed to be “friendly forces”. The climax of this saga was the October 8, 2018 massacre of 157 Task Force Battalion of Nigerian troops in Metele, including the Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Sakaba⁴⁵. As a matter of fact, this development put undue pressure in all the established blocking forces along the Lake Chad region and other military formations in northern parts of Borno and beyond; as they were constantly attacked by the insurgents; Gagiram, Minari, Gudunbalo, Gamasa, Jeli, and host of other military locations suffered heavy attacks⁴⁶.

Against this backdrop, “Operation Last Hold” died a natural death, but the military had to deal with the operational scar left behind by this ill-fated operational design. It is therefore penitent that there are different categories of operational challenges impacting on counter-insurgency operations.

5.0 CHALLENGES TO MILITARY COUNTER-INSURGENCY OPERATIONS

Presently, fashioning out challenges to military counter-insurgency operations is a difficult task as far as Nigerian military is concern. It is problematic in the sense that some of the challenges are so atypical to military tradition itself. But because of societal decadence such characters have

become endemic in the military high commander, dropping down to the entire institution. This notwithstanding, there are surmountable known challenges to counter-insurgency in the north-east; some of which we identified to include;

training commitment;

medical evacuation;

logistical matters;

civil-military cooperation;

repairs of vehicles, equipment and platforms;

procurement of arms, ammunitions and equipment;

man power shortage;

psychological issues;

welfare of troops-operation allowance etc;

kitting of troops;

intelligence extraction;

engagement of non-military approaches with intellectuals and other stakeholders⁴⁷ etc.

In spite of the fact that good number of these identified challenges have received attention from the military and the federal government of Nigeria, more still need to be done in all dimensions mentioned above.

On the other hand, there are other challenges that are not known traditional problems in the military, rather a creation of newly emerged character of gentlemen officers. Some of such were largely invoked by politics of the day, greed and other personal interest that tend to supersede core military patriotism. These non-traditional challenges as articulated here include;

politicization of postings, resulting to careerist traits;

distorted *esprit de corp*;

condoning of mediocrity against valor, due to *god-fatherism* and sycophancy;

mercantilism against professionalism;

Publicity of security operations to gain political propaganda;

In-house misgivings among gentlemen officers;

Sit tight syndrome among the military Chiefs;

Superiority struggle among the three arms of the military;

Silent ethnocentrism⁴⁸ etc.

All these are challenges that are kept off the public gist, but in reality they are impacting negatively on the counter-insurgency operations in Borno and the rest of the Lake Chad region.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Counter insurgency operations in Borno state and the Lake Chad region as a whole have passed through different operational designs. The Nigerian military with the help of other regional forces have made severe efforts to tame the insurgency. The insurgents on the other side of the divide have continue to put up metamorphoses of tactics, aimed at dragging the stamina, patience and capacity of the troops. Consequentially, there are some adept fatigue and muffled “obsession” among the troops, as well as muted “suspicion” on the entire insurgency phenomenon. In addition, the intra and inter agency squabbles in the military and other security agencies undoubtedly smeared the operation efforts. This invariably affected the unity of purpose and authority of the military, which consequently acted in prolonging the insurgency.

From the foregoing, the paper concluded that inter-agency collaboration in the counter-insurgency is not adequate enough. More so, there is lack of clear-cut harmonization of the international military interventionists, alongside the domestic military forces. Furthermore, there is need for professional reorientation among the gentlemen officers, soldiers and security forces alike, so as to eliminate all elements of non-professional traditions in the security forces. In addition, political will to end the insurgency in the national borders of the regional governments still need to be revisited by their leaders.

This paper therefore present non-military approach as an alternative. This is base on the fact that military operations only cannot speedily offer the desired peace in Borno State and the Lake Chad region in general.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Non-military efforts could as well be initiated at various strata of the divides. Within different context, identified stakeholders could be useful in peace-making efforts. Above all, elements of human security in the affected areas should be given a priority as they could also be fueling components of the conflict. Involvement of clerics, traditional rulers, the academics and other stakeholders in finding other peaceful alternatives to this lingering conflict has become expedient. Genuine negotiation channels should be open and effectively utilized for seize fire and subsequent end to the conflict.

Inter-agencies collaboration should be enhanced among military establishments. Internal command structure must be focused in coordinating the counter-insurgency operations to enhance professionalism.

International interventionist forces should develop a clear guideline in their intervention endeavor in the conflict zone. This is to avoid a friction between them and the domestic interventionist forces.

The neighboring international governments should reevaluate their political will to end the conflict within their borders.

Governments should make necessary efforts to harmonize the activities and efforts of the local militias/vigilantes.

Endnotes

1. S.C Attah and M. Ibiam, “Transcendence from the Trends of Industrial Revolution to Globalization: the African Experience” International Journal of Administration and Developmental Studies. Vol.5 No. 2 2014.
2. J.B Saliba “the Boko Haram Phenomenon in Nigeria” in M. Mohammed and L.F Abdullahi, Global Terrorism: the Nigerian Experience in Taming Boko Haram, Headquarters Nigerian Army 2017.
3. Ibid
4. Shettima Bukar Kullima and Abudullahi Garba “Understanding the Dynamics of the Boko Haram Phenomenon” in A.M Ashafa and Hussaini Jibrin The Nigeria Army in a Democracy since 1999 Kaduna: Pyla-Mak Services Ltd 2017.
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Ibid
10. Op. cit. J.B Saliba 2017
11. S.C Attah “Multi-Dimensional Manifestation of Insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria” in M.S Imam and Victor Aniekan Usoh Escalation of Insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Historical Perspective. Maiduguri: University of Maiduguri Publishing House. 2019
12. Nwabugwu O.S and Umar Kachallah “the Spread and Escalation of Insurgency in North-East Nigeria” in M.S Imam and Victor Aniekan Usoh Escalation of Insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Historical Perspective. Maiduguri: University of Maiduguri Publishing House. 2019
13. Ibid
14. Ibid
15. S.C Attah, Nigerian Government and Politics: Issues, Setbacks and Aspirations. Umuahia: Ideal Textbook 2013.
16. Op. cit. Attah, S.C 2019.
17. Op. cit. J.B Saliba 2017
18. S.C Attah “Approaches of Nigerian Government against Boko Haram Insurgency 2009-2014” in M.S Imam and Victor Aniekan Usoh Escalation of Insurgency in North-Eastern Nigeria: A Historical Perspective. Maiduguri: University of Maiduguri Publishing House. 2019
19. Ibid
20. Ibid
21. Ibid
22. Cited in T.I Agbor and L.F Abdullahi “Taming the Monster: Boko Haram” in M. Mohammed and L.F Abdullahi, Global Terrorism: the Nigerian Experience in Taming Boko Haram, Headquarters Nigerian Army 2017, P. 172

23. Ibid
24. Osioma B.C Nwolise “the Role of the Multinational Joint Task Force in the Counter-terrorism war in Nigeria’s North-East Zone” in A.M Ashafa and Hussaini Jibrin The Nigeria Army in a Democracy since 1999 Kaduna: Pyla-Mak Services Ltd 2017.
25. Oral Interview with Nigerian Army Personnel (Anonymous)
26. Ibid
27. Op. cit. S.C Attah, 2019.
28. Op. cit. Osioma B.C Nwolise 2017
29. Military operations complied by the authors from different sources.
30. Oral Interview with Nigerian Army Personnel (Anonymous)
31. Op. cit. T.I Agbor and L.F Abdullahi 2017.
32. Ibid
33. Ibid
34. Oral Interview with Nigerian Army Personnel (Anonymous)
35. Op. cit. T.I Agbor and L.F Abdullahi 2017
36. Ibid
37. Oral Interview with Nigerian Army Personnel (Anonymous)
38. Ibid
39. Ibid
40. Ibid
41. Ibid
42. Ibid
43. Ibid
44. “True story of Metele Attacks by Surviving Soldier” Vanguard December 10, 2018 <https://www.vanguardngr.com>
45. Abdulkareem Haruna “How Boko Haram Killed ‘Over 70 Soldiers’ in Metele Attack-Survivor” Premium Times November 22, 2018 www.premiumtimesng.com/region/north-east/296967
46. Op. cit. Vanguard December 10, 2018
47. Complied by the authors
48. Ibid