

THE EFFECTS OF BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY ON ISLAM AND MUSLIM NIGERIAN ARMED FORCES

By

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Abstract

This paper assessed the effects of Boko Haram insurgency on the Nigerian Armed Forces. A detail investigation of the subject matter reveals that Boko Haram is a so-called Sunni Jihadist Organization based in the North-East of Nigeria that has carried out violent attacks against the Nigerian public, taken hostage foreign workers, destroyed strategic installations and perpetrate other acts of terrorism. Islam is a religion of peace and it enjoined its followers to do justice, equity and fairness to both Muslims and the followers of other faith. The researcher identifies some challenges of the military in trying to combat the internal conflicts such as, lack of sufficient intelligence gathering, lack of sufficient equipments, inadequate manpower, among others. The research findings include, Hijab intolerance in the Barracks, restricting civilians access to Mosques in the Barracks, restrictions on business transactions in the Barracks as some of the effects of the insurgency on the military. The research applies conventional method of data collection.

Keywords: *Effects, Boko Haram, Insurgency, Islam, Muslim Nigerian Armed Forces.*

Introduction

Within the last three decades, Nigeria has witnessed a variety of crisis; some of which have threatened the corporate existence of the country as a nation. Some of these crises could be described as intra-religious, while others are inter-religious. There are others that are more of political or tribal in nature than religious, even though some people may see them as religious, simply because people involved came from different religions. Islam is a religion of peace and it enjoines its followers to do justice, equity and fairness to both Muslims and the followers of other faith.

These recurring internal conflicts between groups or communities in Nigeria can easily be attributed to the internal dynamic inherent in the complex geo-political, ethno-religious and socio-economic diversity that characterizes the country. The religious conflicts in Nigeria can be traced from the bloody Maitatsine religious crises in Kano and Jimeta areas in 1980s, the Zangon-Kataf ethnic religious crises in 1992 and now Boko Haram religious disaster in the northern part of the country coupled with the existing ethno-religious catastrophe in Jos Plateau State.



Boko Haram, meaning western education is forbidden, is the brand name for Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati Wal Jihad (People Committed to the propagation of the prophet's Teachings and Jihad), which was renamed the Wilayat al Islamiyya Gharb Afriqiyya (or the Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP) in March 2015. The group belief that Western influence is responsible for state failure, political corruption, underdevelopment, poverty, inequality and injustice in Northern Nigeria, and considered Islamic revivalism as the only way to redemption.

The Nigerian Armed Forces (Army, Navy, and AirForce) under the umbrella of Joint Task Force (JTF) used to resolve internal crisis in Nigeria dates back to 1962 and 1966. This period witnessed the Tiv riot of 1962 – 1964 in Northern Nigeria, the Western Region Crisis of 1965 and the Adakoboro insurgency in the Rivers province of 1966. These crises were characterized by civil disobedience and massing of people to form crowd. In 1980s, JTF was used to contain the violent political and communal related clashes in Ondo, Ife-Moda Kake and Shagamu. On 28 December 1980, the JTF was again mobilized to suppress the Maitatsine Sect disturbance in Kano. Operation Lafiya Dole is the current JTF fighting Boko Haram Terrorist in North-Eastern Nigeria.

The Rise of Boko Haram Crisis

Credible accounts on the origin of Boko Haram traced it to the year 2003 to the city of Maiduguri and Malam Mohammed Yusuf, a young radical Salafi scholar who was born in Girgir

village of Yobe state as its founding father (Onuoha, 2012). The first set of skirmish of the group was observed in Kanamma, a town along the Nigeria and Niger Republic border in Yobe state. On 23rd December, 2003 some students of Yusuf who were discontent with the newly installed democratic politics and constitutional government in 1999 after about two decades of military dictatorship, withdrew to Kanamma in protest and remained in isolation to practice crude live. However, dispute over fishing right and farmland between the Boko Haram members and the host community resulted in police action. Police were however resisted and overpowered which resulted to the death of two police officers. Boko Haram looted the police arm stores, freed criminals in police custodies, and stole police vehicle. Consequently, the robbery in Kanamma forms the earlier ground of Boko Haram weaponry (Bamidele, 2016). However, military crackdown dismantles the groups' camp with some of the members arrested, some killed and surviving ones re-joined the main camp of Yusuf in Maiduguri.

Excessive harm incurred on the group since then, forced the group to underground campaign to rally support for further action. The existentiality of Boko Haram comes to global notice in 2009 when it appeared in violent uprising in the city of Maiduguri. The Violence lasted for one week. Excessive military and police clampdown inflicted severe human and collateral damages both on the group and on the local population. Some estimates indicated that the military clampdown has resulted in

the death of over 1000 people (Bamidele, 2016), majority of which are members of the insurgent group. Death among the group includes of the groups' spiritual leader Mohammed Yusuf. Yusuf died in police custody in very controversial manner (Folade, 2016). Other deaths in 2009 includes of Alhaji Buji Foi a former commissioner and major financier of the group, as well as Baba Fugu, the spiritual landlord of the group and Yusuf father in-law. All men died in police custody. However, police had severally denied the alleged murdering.

With the unprecedented damages on its leadership and physical structures, Boko Haram conspicuously disappeared. Some claimed the group join other jihadist groups in the Sahel (Bintube, 2015), others claim the group dissolve into the larger population (Shuaibu & Salleh, 2015). Even as the exact place where the group took its asylum is not clear. Nonetheless, it recuperated and emerged more violently under a new leadership of Abubakar Shekau in 2011. Shekau is one of the two deputies of the late Yusuf. The other deputy is Mamman Nur, a Cameroonian immigrant residing in the city of Maiduguri.

Since assumption of Abubakar Shekau leadership, Boko Haram becomes more lethal, violent, disastrous and bloodletting including expedited rise in attack frequencies. According to Shuaibu and Salleh (2015), Boko Haram under Shekau becomes capable of carrying out major attacks including suicide and bomb detonating. For instance, in June 2011

for the first time, Boko Haram embarked on suicide attack on the convoy of Nigeria Police Inspector General in the capital city of Abuja. Since then, suicide bombing and explosion of Internal Explosive Devices (IED) continues unprecedentedly. Actual statistics of IED explosion are scarce, but recent report by Norwegian independent research group 'Action on Armed Violence' shows that Boko Haram is responsible for fifteen IED explosion involving Twenty-five suicide in the first quarter of 2017. Disturbingly, the number since then keeps counting causing untold human and collateral damages on the citizenry. Although accurate data are scarce, most evidences show that between 2013 and 2014, Boko Haram has killed over 5000 people. Nigerian officials and United Nations reports indicate that the insurgent affects more than six million Nigerians (Shuaibu and Salleh, 2015).

Moreover, in the first half of the year 2014, Blanchard (2014) indicates that the Nigeria's terrorist group is responsible for the death of over two thousand people. Most disastrous in the series of the attacks was the massacre in the ancient town of Baga. Local evidences claimed that over two thousand people murdered and unquantifiable properties destroyed. Amnesty International in particular described the attacks in Baga as the worst in the history of the Boko Haram insurgency. Many observers claimed that ruthless violence of Boko Haram under Abubakar Shekau contradicts the traditional styles of the group's warfare that are mostly



characterised by withdrawal and propaganda messages.

Furthermore, even as Boko Haram had coordinated and launched numerous attacks that destroyed numerous churches and office structures, in November 2014, the group extended its violence on the Muslim faithful by attacking on worshipers and destroying Mosques. The deadliest in the series of attack on Mosque is in Kano when the group fired and exploded three suicide bombs on congregation of worshippers observing the weekly Friday prayer. The attack left more than one hundred people murdered and many others injured. (Folade, 2016)

Consequently, on 14th April 2014, Boko Haram extended its global terrorism by rudely abducting over two hundred school-girls in their dormitory in boarding school at Chibok in the volatile Borno state. The abduction of the girls had attracted witnessed widespread condemnation nationally and internationally. Emerging evidences in the recent past shows that nearly one hundred girls freed on alleged payment of ransom and swap of prisoners by the federal government. However, many of the girls remained in the captivity of the insurgent. In fact, there is growing suspicion that some of the girls have been used for suicide bombing.

Consequently, Boko Haram in 2014 started seizing territorial lands to establish its Islamic state. In August 2014, the group invaded and conquered the town of Gwoza.

Propaganda video released by Abubakar Shekau claimed to have renamed the town as Darul Islam (the headquarter of the purported Islamic state). In the video, Shekau reiterated for conquering of more towns and cities including the city of Maiduguri, the original spiritual house of the group. Between 2014 and 2015, credible source shows that Boko Haram had seized control of about 20,000 km² of Nigeria's territorial land where it successfully established its authority including levying and collection of taxes from local population. (Odo, 2015)

The Military Responses to Boko Haram Crisis

The bulk of the literature on the Nigeria's counter insurgency against the Boko Haram shows hard military tactics as the major counter insurgency tactics of the Nigerian state (Abdulazeez, 2016). The focus of this type of strategy according to Folade (2016) is kinetic, a category of warfare that prioritises the use of coercive force in crushing insurgent violence by neutralizing alleged perpetrators. This strategy of the Nigeria's government according to Aghedo & Osuma (2012) conforms to traditional tactics of United States in most of its counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations around the world.

The emphasis on military response on Boko Haram by Nigerian government first emerged in 2003 when the first skirmish of group emerged at Kanamma in Yobe State. Source shows that government treats the group in purely military action. The action of the government was

demonstrated through massive deployment of troops to tackle the situation. Furthermore, even with dissipation of the group, a military special force 'Operation Flush' was inaugurated to fish out the fleeing insurgents into Maiduguri and other major towns in the north east. There is general belief that the brutal approach by members of the Operation Flush incubated for uprising of Boko Haram in 2009 (Adeniran, 2014).

Since then the government continued to expand and strengthen its troops in the north east. For instance, between 2009 and 2011, not less than thirty six thousand members of Nigerian Armed Force (the Army, Airforce, Navy) were combating the insurgent in the north east (Folade, 2016). In addition, by 2015, this number has grown to over one hundred thousand (Raphael & James, 2016) and since then its keeps growing. According to Lawal & Aluko (2016), Nigeria government expanded the capacities of its troops by withdrawing over one thousand members of its armed forces in various peace keeping missions in Africa. This massive deployment of troops to check civil violence is generally believed to be the first of its kind since after the end of the country's thirty-month civil war in 1970s.

Moreover, within the same period, the government hiked its military expenditure to procure ultra-modern arms to crush the insurgents. Between 2009 and 2013, Nigeria's defence budget was increased by over 100% (Odo, 2015) and it keeps increasing. This huge military budget score Nigeria as the sixth largest military

expenditure in Africa and 57th in the world (Abdulazeez, 2016). In addition, alliance countries such as Britain, China, and France also offered aerial surveillance, drones, and reconnaissance service to strengthen the Nigerian Armed Forces (Nwanpka, 2016). However, even with the heavy deployment of troops, experts claimed that the military largely operate in a defensive tactics. The defensive approach of the Nigeria's army according to Aghedo & Osumah (2012) is among the factors that made them gullible to the frequent raiding of their formations that often manifest in loss of logistics and arms.

Challenges of the Military in Internal Conflicts

The Optimum objectives of any Internal Security Operations is to bring the crisis situation under control within the shortest time possible in order to save further damage to lives and property and allows for peaceful negotiation. IS Operations by their nature are very sensitive operations that are prone to unexpected situations. The Nigerian military encountered many challenges such as:-

Intelligence

Successful Internal Security Operations based on sound accurate and timely intelligence. For example in the Niger-Delta, the sources of militants' arms and ammunition and their sponsors have not been identified. Their hideouts, training camps are also yet to be known. This is largely responsible for the protracted military operation to effectively control the activities of the



militants in the Niger-Delta. Inadequate intelligence about Tiv militants was also responsible for the easy abduction of the military patrol team in Taraba State in 1998.

Equipment

Both 7 Battalion and the Joint Task Force (JTF) that later took over the operations in Warri and its environs lacked the specialized equipments required for riverine operations. They have no compatible means of communications and lacked air support facilities, like armed helicopters as a result, coordinated operations and penetrations into the creeks to follow up and arrest the militants was difficult. The troops that intervened in Tiv/Jukun conflicts also had no combat patrol vehicles, so had to rely on civilian vehicles which was part of the reason why they could not be identified and were abducted by the Tiv militant youths. (Abubakar. 2008)

Inadequate Manpower

Since the end of cold war, most Armed Forces of nation states are reorganizing to meet the changing threats (from external to internal). Nigerian Armed Forces like others attempted reorganization in 1990, 1996 and the effort are still ongoing. As a result of long time neglect and inadequate planning, many skilled soldiers got discharged without a corresponding intake to replace them. This led to shortage of manpower experienced in many formations and units today.

Allegations against the Military

There are so many allegations on the Nigerian Military for being bias along religious line, among the Nigerians in

some of the operations in maintaining Internal Security (IS). Some of the allegations are on cases like raping and looting from the civilians' shops at different places. Among such allegations is the Amnesty International. It has accused Nigerian Military of raping thousands of women and girls at the Internally Displaced Persons. (IDPs), camps in the country. In a report released on May, 24th 2018, entitled "They betrayed us", the global rights group reported how the Nigerian Military and Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) have separated women from their husbands and confined them in remote satellite camps where they had been raped, sometimes in exchange for food. Amnesty International said it has collected evidence that thousands of people have been starved to death in the camps in Borno State, North-East Nigeria, since 2015. Instead of receiving protection from the Authorities, women and girls have been forced to succumb to rape in order to avoid starvation or hunger. According to Mr. Ojigho:

Amnesty International's report is the result of an extensive investigation involving more than 250 interviews and covers satellite camps established by the military in seven towns in Borno State, including Bama, Banki, Rann and Dikwa. It also includes interviews with 48 women and girls released from detention and the review of video, photographic and satellite imagery.

The Effects of Boko Haram on the Muslim Armed Forces

The government announced the formation of the 7th Division of the

Nigerian Army with its headquarters in Maiduguri. The 7th Infantry Division was established in August 2013 and the one thousand troops that returned from an operation in Mali formed the nucleus of the new division. (Vanguard, 2018) The establishment of the 7th Division of the Nigerian Army in Maiduguri was intended to stem the tide of attacks by insurgents in the North-East. The establishment of the new division became imperative, since the Joint Task Force battling the insurgents in the North-East is an adhoc arrangement, which could be disbanded at any time.

Hijab Intolerance in the Barracks

Islam fixed a minimal limit of decency for dressing at the times of prayer and devotion. Woman must keep her whole body covered, except for the face, hands and feet. It is in such attire that it was recommended to her to appear in society. Hijab is the proper Islamic dress code which is primarily intended to safeguard the modesty, dignity and honour of men and women. By wearing Hijab, women protect themselves from any lustful gaze or act that may expose them to temptation or harassment of any kind (Sajo, 2016).

Allah the Almighty Says:

“O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) all over their bodies (i.e screen themselves completely except the eyes or one eye to see the way). That will be better, that they should be known (as free respectable women) so as not to be annoyed. And Allah is Ever Oft-

Forgiving, Most Merciful. (Qur'an 33:59)

One may evaluate the noble intentions of Islam, when it imposes decent dress as a requirement for social life in which fashion was in no way taken into consideration. Wearing of Hijab to Muslim women is an act of worship which Islam enforces on faithful Muslims ladies at all times and in the places with a view to safeguarding their fame personality and belief as Muslims. (Sajo, 2016)

In view of the above, wearing Hijab to Muslim women is not voluntary. However, with the new tactics of Boko Haram members using women to hide bombs in their Hijab to attack military check points and other military formations, military personnel begin to hate the dressing by the Muslim women in their respective barracks. Soldiers on duty at the gate of every military barracks do ask every woman that wears Hijab to remove it for proper checking before they could allow her entrance. This measure taken by the soldiers in forcing Muslim women to remove their Hijab at the entrance gate of any military formations brought serious tension between Muslims and Christians officers. (Lt. Col. Sagir Musa)

Restricting Civilians access to Mosques in the Barracks

Communities that were living near the military barracks for long were enjoying access to the Barracks mosques and churches, either on Fridays or Sundays. Civilians were allowed to perform I'tikaf for about ten days during the month of



Ramadan in the Jumma'at Mosque of every military Barracks (Army, Navy and Air Force). Similarly ceremonial prayers such as Eid el Fitr and Eid el Adha that are annual events are observed in all the military Barracks parade ground and majority of the worshippers are civilians. This shows how cordial relationship between the military and the civilians look like prior to the emergence of Boko Haram.

With the emergence of Boko Haram insurgence, this relationship between the military and the civilians patronizing military barracks started to diminish. Mosques in the Barracks became so much restricted to only military personnel within the Barracks where the mosque is located. I'tikaf to none residents in the Barracks was banned, where Muslims outside the Barracks must come in for one reason or the other, they must undergo extra ordinary checks all in fear of Boko Haram members. This act of checks by the soldiers also creates tension between Muslims and Christians officers. This is because the restrictions affect Muslims more than how it affects the non Muslims. (Lt. Col. Sagir Musa).

Restrictions of Business Transactions in the Barracks

The most popular means of transport, commercial motorcycles known as "Okada or Achaba" was banned to enter any Military Barracks nationwide. This is as a result of the members of Boko Haram's tactics of using motorcycles to bomb their targets which military formations are their biggest ones. Mammy markets are the business areas attached to

almost all the Military Barracks nationwide, and the custodians of these mammy markets are the military personnel and their families with few civilians that live outside the Barracks. Boko Haram insurgents targeted and bomb Mogadishu Barrack's mammy market in 2014 in Abuja.

Thereafter, serious security measures were taken to protect other mammy markets in all the barracks nationwide. These security measures put in place to avoid future occurrence of bomb-blast, majority of civilians buying or selling in these mammy markets relocate elsewhere, which have a great effect economically in these Barracks and add more hardship to the residents therein. As usual, most of these people affected such as meat sellers, vegetables and fruits are Muslims, as a result of this, tension between Muslims and Christians officers intensifies.

Conclusion

Since 2009, Boko Haram campaign of terror has been the biggest security challenge facing Nigeria, although the escalating clashes between Pastoralists and farmers across the country struggle the insurgency. The group's ideological objectives have evolved from simple advocacy for Islamic puritanism in northern Nigeria to the creation of the Islamic State in West Africa and Lake Chad region in particular. Its campaign of violence started as a less organised and less sophisticated uprising in 2002, but by 2015, it has acquired the infamous title of the "World's deadliest terrorist Organisation". (IEP, 2015 P. 10)

This was how and when Boko Haram's Campaign of terror becomes a matter of serious concern in Nigeria and beyond. (Onapajo, 2017 P.61-63) Subsequent governments of Nigeria have been committing series of efforts to contain Boko Haram's violence. Other affected countries in the Lake Chad region, Chad, Cameroon and Niger have joined the war against Boko Haram, complemented by series of supportive initiatives by the international community.

When the military formally took over the operation from the police, the police were required to provide information about the parties in conflict, which the police have done so, and this enables the military to plan adequately for the operation. The use of minimum force in restoring peace is a vital factor. This is what the Nigerian Armed Forces is currently doing through the JTF Operations in the North-East and causes a lot of effects to officers and men of the Forces.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- Federal Government of Nigeria should ban all the militia youth groups nationwide to avoid joining Boko Haram.
- Nigerian should assist the Armed Forces by providing them with useful information on the hideout of Boko Haram Terrorist.
- Nigerian Religious Council (NIREC) should extend their Religious Tolerance Campaign to all military Barracks Nationwide.

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Mr. Osai Ojgho 58: Human Right Activist, Amnesty International Nigeria, Branch, 13/9/2019

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