

# Counterterrorism in the Lake Chad Region: An analysis of the fragmented efforts in Nigeria's fight against Boko Haram

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## Abstract

While the need for securitisation and counterterrorism cooperation among states is consistently re-echoed in the previous studies on security, the role (or complicity) of the neo-liberal state in distorting and undermining these arrangements has been neglected. The objective of this article is to examine how state actors are implicated in the weakening of counterterrorism engagements in the Lake Chad region. Based on qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, the study identified three thresholds of state complicity undermining the fight against Boko Haram: (i) information compromise (ii) amnesty programme complicity (rehabilitation of Boko Haram members) and (iii) intelligence complicity. These are primarily underpinned by the rehabilitation of 'unrepentant' Boko Haram terrorists, fragmentation of military institutions, and complicity in cross-border arms movements. These acts do not only undermine internal peace and security but also perpetuate transnational terrorism in the Lake Chad region. The article, therefore, recommends a new peace agenda hinged on a hybrid of regional partnership on peace education and security cooperation.

**Keywords:** counterterrorism, military intelligence, Boko Haram, Nigeria's northeast, Lake Chad.

## Introduction

Boko Haram terrorist group was founded in Maiduguri in 2002 by an Islamic cleric, Mohammed Yusuf, who advocated for a strict form of sharia law that opposed all Western influence and education. Boko Haram has been involved in widespread human rights abuses, gruesome killings and wanton destruction of property in large parts of North-eastern Nigeria. Mosques and schools run by Boko Haram subsequently became recruiting grounds (United Nations, 2015). However, the group has become one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups following the killing of its leader in 2009 by state security forces which resulted in an increase in the group's terror attacks under the leadership of Abubakar Shakau (United Nations, 2015). In December 2013, the group extended its attacks to other states bordering Nigeria; namely, Cameroon, then Niger (in February 2015) and Chad (in June 2015) (Omenma & Hendricks, 2018).

The group is linked with nefarious activities such as terrorism, including suicide bombings, the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), car bombings, massacres, kidnappings, and destruction of property. In recent years, it has increased attacks on soft targets, or relatively unprotected public places, and used more women and children as suicide

bombers (Blanchard, 2016). Men and boys who refused to adopt the beliefs professed by Boko Haram were specifically targeted in killings, as well as law enforcement officials, teachers, health-care workers and members of civilian self-defence groups (United Nations, 2015).

Boko Haram's terrorist activities since 2009 have resulted in more than 300,000 deaths, and the large-scale humanitarian crisis is on the verge of famine status (Khalid, 2021). The United Nations estimates that roughly 2.8 million people have been internally displaced by Boko Haram-related violence in the Lake Chad region, where approximately 5.6 million people are in need of emergency food aid (Blanchard & Cavigelli, 2018). More than 2,000 women and girls have been abducted by Boko Haram and some of them have been forced into suicide bombing. Between 2014 and 2015, children under the age of 18 constituted 20 per cent of Boko Haram suicide bombers, and 75 per cent of them were girls (UNICEF, 2015). Despite the Nigerian government's claims in December 2015 that it had 'technically defeated' Boko Haram, the group has remained strong and more deadly as they carry out more high-profile kidnappings and deadly bombings across Nigeria and the Lake Chad Region (Iwuoha, 2019a). Boko

Haram overtook the Islamic State as the world's deadliest terrorist group in 2015. The increasing lethality and sophistication of Boko Haram's attacks on local targets has attracted international headlines with its brutal tactics and targeting of civilians, including the abduction of over 270 schoolgirls from the town of Chibok in 2014.

In July 2014, Boko Haram shifted from a tactical focus on asymmetric attacks (unconventional guerilla-style or terrorist strikes) against government and civilian targets, toward a conventional offensive to seize and hold territory. Nigeria ranked fourth most terrorist nation in 2014 after Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Iraq and Nigeria accounted for 53% of all deaths from terrorism in 2014 as both countries hosted the world's deadliest terrorist groups – ISIL and Boko Haram (Iwuoha, 2019a). Boko Haram was the deadliest terrorist group in 2014 killing more than 7500 people in Nigeria through terrorist attacks. In 2015, the group gained control of some parts of Borno state and some territory in neighbouring Yobe and Adamawa states, including border areas near Cameroon (Blanchard, 2016). Nigeria consistently ranked the third most terrorist nation in 2019 and 2020 after Afghanistan and Iraq in the respective years (IEP, 2019, 2020).

To contain the expanding influence of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad region, the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) was formed in 2015, comprising military forces from Benin Republic, Cameroon, Chad, Nigeria and Niger. The Nigerian military in collaboration with the MNJTF pushed through a decline of 8 per cent in the number of Boko Haram attacks and an 18 per cent reduction in the number of killings in Nigeria in 2015 (IEP, 2015).

As a result of this military intervention, Boko Haram fled some of the areas it previously controlled in Nigeria's northeast (Iwuoha, 2019a). The MNJTF has targeted Boko Haram in offensives which led to reductions in terrorism-related deaths in neighbouring Cameroon, Chad and Niger where Boko Haram has also been subject to intense military pressure (United Nations, 2015).

However, a major split in the leadership of Boko Haram in 2016, resulting from disagreements over doctrine, ideology and targets, has further led to intense terrorist acts in the Lake Chad region by both emerging factions namely, Boko Haram controlled by Abubakar Shakau, and Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP) initially led by ISIS installed Abu Musab al-Barnawi but later replaced by Ba Idrisa (also addressed as Abu Abdullah Idris ibn Umar al-Barnawi)

(Zenn, 2020). Despite the numerous efforts of the Nigerian government and its military forces in the fight against the spread of the activities of Boko Haram, some scholars such as Iwuoha (2019b), Orsuma (2013), Omenma and Hendricks (2018), Olojo (2018), Oriola (2021) and Oriola, et al. (2021) have raised important concerns on the reluctance of the Nigerian state to restructure its failing counterterrorism strategies which further suggests that the state could be implicated in the expanding influence of the terror group in the country and across the Lake Chad region.

This article, therefore, examines the extent to which state complicity has contributed to fuelling the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency. It argues that state complicity is promoting, escalating and sustaining the ongoing Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria. Relying essentially on qualitative methods of data collection and content analysis, we conceptualised state complicity as encompassing actions or inactions of state actors that aided or encouraged the spread of the Boko Haram activities and its deadly attacks. While the recent acquisition and deployment of air assets like Super Tucano aircraft have brought about tremendous battlefield advantages, there has been an adamant play down on

growing military corruption and sabotage. We, therefore, identified the elements of state complicity in the fight against Boko Haram in three distinct spectrums under which the major pieces of empirical evidence are examined and interpreted. These are (i) information compromise (ii) amnesty programme complicity (rehabilitation of Boko Haram members and (iii) intelligence complicity. The article has been divided into different sections: Rehabilitation of Boko Haram members by the Nigerian government, cracks and loopholes in local intelligence gathering, fragmentations and dilemmas in interagency cooperation among security and intelligence establishments, and conclusion.

#### **(i) Information compromise**

##### ***Did Nigeria's military 'technically defeat' Boko Haram?***

One of the most shocking information compromises by the state is the President Buhari government's insistent claims that Boko Haram was 'technically defeated' in 2015 (BBC News, 2015, online). President Buhari claimed that Nigeria has won the war, and that Boko Haram fighters are no longer capable of carrying out articulated conventional attacks on them because they now merely use improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, reaffirms thus: "Today, we can say confidently that not an inch of our territory is under the control of Boko Haram. They have been repelled even from their spiritual headquarters... every inch of Nigerian territory was now safe" (Mohammed, 2018, online). This statement was politically motivated and intended to misinform the public. This costly statement contributed to the boosting of the activities of Boko Haram as they stepped up their terror acts to demonstrate clear signs of tactical and strategic advantage over the Nigerian military. This is evident in the group's continued siege at some parts of Borno state and some territories in neighbouring Yobe and Adamawa states, including border areas near Cameroon (Blanchard & Husted, 2020), where it audaciously proclaimed an 'Islamic caliphate' and hoisted black flags (Pieri & Zenn, 2018). Deaths attributed to Boko Haram rose from 317 % in 2014 to 6,644 in 2015 compared to ISIL's 6,073 terrorist deaths, making Boko Haram overtake ISIL in 2015 as the world's deadliest terrorist group (IEP, 2015).

The false claims and impression that Nigeria has "won the war" and "have dealt with them," are implicated in the

slack in international military troop support to Nigeria. For example, the U.S. ignored and sidelined Nigeria in its military contingent support to neighbouring countries in which only Chad, Cameroon, Niger and Benin benefited (Iwuoha, 2020b). Up to 80 U.S. military officers were sent to Chad "as part of the U.S. efforts to locate and support the safe return of the schoolgirls, in furtherance of U.S. national security and foreign policy interests" (Blanchard, 2016). In October 2015, the U.S. sent 300 troops and surveillance drones to Cameroon as counterterrorism support to "conduct airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in the region, and are equipped with weapons for the purpose of providing their own force protection and security" (Obama, cited in Reuters, 2015).

However, the U.S. released about a dozen U.S. Special Operations personnel for Nigeria to serve in "noncombatant advisory roles" and to be stationed in Maiduguri, the Borno state capital (Schmitt & Searcey, 2016). The U.S. also provided commercial imagery and flew manned and unmanned ISR aircraft over Nigeria to support the search for abducted Chibok school girls (Friend, 2014). Despite this assistance, some

observers and stakeholders strongly feel these U.S. counterterrorism support for Nigeria are not enough. Nigeria's senator, Ahmed Zanna shifts the blame to the Nigerian government's approach in handling the Boko Haram problem which may have affected the U.S. counterterrorism support to the country. According to Zanna: "You have a very good and reliable ally [the U.S.], and you are running away from them. It is terrible. I pray for a change of government" (Cooper, 2015, p.3).

### ***Nigerian military false claims that it killed Boko Haram leader***

Since 2009 there have been several repeated false reports and claims by the Nigerian government and its military institution that they killed Mr. Abubakar Shekau, the leader of the dreaded Boko Haram group who hails from Yobe State (Maja-Pearce, 2013). Early in 2011, the military claimed repeatedly that it had killed Mr Shekau in a Kano neighbourhood during an exchange of fire with security agents. However, in April 2011, Mr Shekau appeared in a video debunking news of his death in the following words spoken in Hausa language: 'They will always go to the radio stations to tell lies about me. They will say they have arrested me and that they have killed me. All that is a lie. Look

at me here. I am alive and I am doing well' (Owete, 2017, online).

Again, on 18 August 2013, an Army spokesperson at the time, Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa, said the intelligence report suggested Mr Shekau was shot on 30 June 2013 when soldiers raided a Boko Haram base at Sambisa Forest. According to him, 'Shekau was mortally wounded in the encounter and was sneaked into Amitchide – a border community in Cameroon for treatment which he never recovered...It is greatly believed that Shekau might have died between 25 July and 3 August 2013' (Owete, 2017, online). However, on 2 September 2013, Mr Shekau surfaced in a video where he sat in a jungle setting surrounded by dozens of lieutenants dressed in military fatigues, saying the world 'should know that he could not die except by the will of Allah' (Owete, 2017, online). Also, on 24 September 2014, the Nigerian military issued an official confirmation to reports that Mr. Shekau had been killed by security forces in the Battle of Konduga which took place between 12 and 14 September 2014 (Owete, 2017). Surprisingly, the Defence spokesperson, Mr. Chris Olukolade claimed that an impersonator of Shekau, Mr. Mohammed Bashir, had also been killed; 'The impersonator is the man who

appeared in several Boko Haram propaganda videos, claiming he is Mr. Shekau...It was that new face of Mr Shekau that was killed in a fierce clash with the military last week in Konduga, near Maiduguri, Borno State (Owete, 2017, online).

On 23 August 2016, the military turned around to claim that Mr Shekau had been 'fatally wounded' and that three key commanders of the sect had been killed (Searcey, 2016). Army spokesperson, Mr Sani Usman, reported that Mr Shekau was fatally wounded on his shoulders during an air interdiction launched by the military on Friday 19th August 2016 while the terrorists were performing Friday rituals at Taye village. Mr Usman also noted that the airstrike killed key Boko Haram commanders including Abubakar Mubi, Malam Nuhu and Malam Hamman (Searcey, 2016).

However, in a 39-minute video posted on YouTube, Mr Shekau, flanked by two gun-wielding Boko Haram commanders, refuted the false claims by the Nigerian military: 'You broadcast the news and published it in your media outlets that you injured me and killed me and here I am... Oh tyrants, I am in a happy state, in good health and in safety. I will not be killed until my time comes' (Abdullahi,

2016, online; The Guardian, 2016, online). In another twist, on 28 March 2017, the Minister of Defence, Mansur Dan-Ali, assured President Muhammadu Buhari that the military would soon apprehend Mr Shekau; 'We will get Shekau as soon as possible... He (Shekau) is on the run. So he may be hiding in one of the enclaves of Sambisa forest that we are dominating' (Owete, 2016, online). It is unclear what the tactical or operational consequences would be if the army captured or killed Shekau (Campbell, 2016).

However, the expected international counterterrorism support towards Shekau's capture had been totally lost as a result of repeated fake news and false claims rendered by the military which faked Shekau's death, given that in 2013 the United States government placed a \$7 million bounty on Shekau's head — more than what was offered for the Afghan Taliban's top man, Mullah Omar (Maja-Pearce, 2013). The United States expressed scepticism over the reports that Shekau had been killed. According to the US Department of State, "the Nigerians have announced several times that the head of Boko Haram was dead, and every single time we find out that it is not true" (France 24, 2014, online).



Incidentally, the military neither had prior intelligence nor had a hand in the death of Shekau when it finally happened. Rather, it was in an undated audio recording that a voice thought to be that of ISWAP leader, Abu Musab al-Barnawi, confirmed that Shekau 'killed himself instantly by detonating an explosive on himself after a battle between the two groups' (BBC News, 7 May 2021).

**(ii) Amnesty programme complicity  
*Rehabilitation of Boko Haram members  
by the Nigerian government***

The Nigerian government established an amnesty programme for the 'repentant' Boko Haram members in 2016. This was handled by the Defense Headquarters which inaugurated the Operation Safe Corridor (OSC) in 2016 to carry out the amnesty programme. The OSC programme is a counterinsurgency approach aimed at rehabilitating low-risk repentant Boko Haram fighters and reintegrating them back into society (Onuoha, 2020; Owonikoko, 2022). The rehabilitation programme involves vocational training, access to deradicalisation and civic programmes. The Nigerian Army has already rehabilitated 893 ex-Boko Haram members since 2019 (Reliefweb, 2020). Meanwhile, the Nigerian Identity Management Commission (NIMC) said it

has registered about 900 repentant Boko Haram members in the country (Reliefweb, 2020). These programmes are to help the repentant fighters become productive members of society.

Although the move appears like a peaceful means of solving the Boko Haram crisis, there are serious concerns that the OSC lacks an effective reintegration component. While the ex-Boko Haram members are given preferential treatment, paid stipends and given vocational training to start a new life, the local communities/victims of Boko Haram operations continue to wallow in poverty, hardship and wanton neglect without any reparation or compensation for their great losses (Brechenmacher, 2018). There are no practical measures by the OSC to heal the victims who are still nursing the hurt and bitter memories of the terrorist attacks, humanitarian crises, as well as loss of loved ones and livelihoods. The local people are still internally displaced and have become refugees in squalid displacement camps (Brechenmacher, 2018). The preferential treatment of ex-Boko Haram members over their victims serves as a pull factor or enabler which incentivises local residents to join Boko Haram as a means to also receive preferential treatment, thus, expanding



and prolonging the conflict as against the goal of OSC.

Despite the seemingly over-exaggerated claims of the success of OSC, Boko Haram activities continue to be dangerous and widespread with far-reaching negative effects on the populace (Onuoha, 2020). These concerns show that the government's amnesty programme is more or less a negative peace approach which will in itself worsen the peace initiatives towards eradicating the Boko Haram terrorism.

### **(iii) Military intelligence complicity**

#### **Cracks and loopholes in local intelligence gathering**

The SBM Intelligence (2017) notes that cooperation between the Nigerian Army and residents of the communities under Boko Haram threat has continued to be frosty and negative, with regular reports of human rights abuses on the part of the military. There are serious concerns about military corruption regarding the military's appropriation of the welfare of the IDPs as well as human rights abuses and violation of women and girls in the IDP camps by some bad eggs in the military. The distrust between the security agents and the local communities had been mutual and

reinforcing, as the former accused some of the community residents of availing Boko Haram with intelligence on troop movements, pointing to instances of well-targeted ambush operations by Boko Haram against the military (Iwuoha, 2019b). It is further alleged that some local residents provide cover to Boko Haram militants by accommodating, shielding and allowing members of the group to use their houses as escape routes after attacks (Ayansina, 2012). This may be for fear of retribution from the sect or the inability of the security agencies to provide them with security (Osumah, 2013). The poor level of trust and confidence building between security agents and local people essentially hampered the ability of the security forces to leverage the local knowledge bank available to gather intelligence and provide early warning on insurgent movements. This was the case in the abduction of over 270 schoolgirls from the town of Chibok in 2014. Omeni (2017) noted that even when information about the Chibok kidnap finally filtered shortly after the attacks, the military's response remained incuriously ineffective and delayed.

Although a closer working relationship had been developed between the military and the Civilian Joint Task Force

(CJTF). The Civilian JTF consists of indigenes or community residents whose local knowledge serves as invaluable intelligence towards countering and aborting potential attacks of the insurgent group (Omenma & Hendricks, 2018). The local intelligence provided by the CJTF is intended to act as a solid bridge that reconsolidates and reinforces renewed trust between the military and local people. Unfortunately, there has been increasing friction between the Civilian JTF and the military on the one hand, and the military and international aid agencies on the other, thus undermining and eroding both the intelligence and avenues of building trust on the ground available for engaging with the insurgents (SBM Intelligence, 2017).

Boko Haram, therefore, exploits the cracks within the differing operational strategies and intelligence being implemented in the fight against it. This is easily possible owing to the reluctance of the local people to provide to intelligence to combat the possible renewed or resurgent militant attacks, as well as the security agents' reluctance to share and leverage available local intelligence to potentially forestall attacks. Again, the government's failure to adequately step in with its effective presence and

efficient governance in reclaimed territories and communities opens more security gaps which the insurgents have proved more than willing to exploit. In most cases, Boko Haram particularly preys on the unemployed, marginalised and disillusioned Muslim youths in Nigeria's Northeast, who are fed up with corruption and have limited economic opportunities. In Northern Nigeria, 72 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, compared to only 27 per cent in Southern Nigeria (Bartolotta, 2011). A Boko Haram spokesman stated that "there is a large number of our brothers, all eager to carry out suicide missions because of the abundant reward that awaits the person. So, we decided to introduce balloting to avoid disharmony among us" (Bartolotta, 2011, online).

Boko Haram made a tactical shift in which it changed its operational posture from fighting to capture territory to guerrilla-style hit-and-run attacks and increased its campaign of suicide bombings against soft targets (Pieri & Zenn, 2018). These new tactics availed the insurgent group the opportunity to adapt itself to its own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of its enemy, with less emphasis on re-surfing or claiming more territories. Its new strategic focus is on building

intelligence that helps it achieve more social and economic disruptions than territorial control. Boko Haram harnesses local intelligence and information on how to evade security agencies while covertly recruiting and indoctrinating community women and young girls for suicide bombings, and using its males for direct ambushes and assaults (SBM Intelligence, 2017). In 2015, Boko Haram abducted more than 2,000 women and girls, forcing some to participate in attacks (Amnesty International, 2015). The violence has forced more than 2,000 schools to close and disrupted the education of more than a million children in Nigeria's Northeast (United Nations, 2015).

This continues to raise serious concerns as to whether Boko Haram's tactics and intelligence machinery are more sophisticated and formidable than those of the Nigerian military and security agencies. The dilemmas of the defence and intelligence establishments in effectively countering the insurgent group require more investigation.

### ***Military's complicity in the abduction of 276 Chibok school girls***

Boko Haram kidnapped 276 girls from their school dormitory at the Government Secondary School in Chibok, in north-

eastern Borno state, in April 2014 and about 100 of the girls are still missing. This kidnapping was one of the high-profile incidents in Boko Haram's insurgency in northeastern Nigeria. On that occasion, the military had a four-hour advance warning but failed to take the immediate action needed to stop it, with most military personnel withdrawn shortly before the abduction (Amnesty International, 2018). The then governor of Borno state, Mr Kashim Shettima, stated that the local government chairman of Chibok called the police and contacted the military commander in Chibok between 9:30 p.m. and 10 p.m. on the abduction evening, but security backup never showed up. However, the military in a statement announced that it received no warning about the attack. It added that when reinforcements were sent, they were ambushed on the '120 km rugged and tortuous road' from Maiduguri, the state capital, and delayed (Abrak & Brock, 2015).

However, after the abduction, the Nigerian military announced that almost all the schoolgirls had been rescued in a counterattack which turned out to be false information. The military retracted this false statement on 18 April 2014 (Abubakar et al., 2014). In further debunking the military's false claims,

Boko Haram released a video of around 130 girls gathered together reciting the Koran on 5 May 2014 in which its leader, Abubakar Shekau, announced he would 'sell' the schoolgirls as 'slaves in the market'; and on another video on 12 May, Shekau proposed that 'If you want us to release your girls that we kidnapped, you must release our brethren that are held in Borno, Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Enugu and Lagos states, as well as Abuja' (Shekau, as cited in The Nation, 2014, online). A security expert explains that the military's operational failures leading to the incident are indicative, at the very least, of poor communication between troops *in situ*, and the nearest possible reinforcements outside Chibok; poor tactical assessment of troops' deployment in forward areas; poor threat assessment: the local presence of Boko Haram was misjudged, and the reluctance of ground forces to engage the enemy at the time because of the failure of echelons above brigade (EAB) to adequately equip and support outfield battalions (Omeni, 2017).

***Fragmentations and dilemmas in interagency cooperation among security and intelligence establishments***

Essentially, effective interagency cooperation is important in enhancing

intelligence gathering, information management and government communications toward mitigating both real and potential threats posed by terrorist groups (Cline, 2016). Hence, any counterterrorism strategy against Boko Haram in Nigeria should be fundamentally underpinned by interagency collaboration which must involve the key security agencies. Ikeanyibe et al. (2020) assert that there still exists foggiess about the nature, triggers, and what determines the results of interagency collaboration as it concerns counterterrorism in Nigeria. Weiss (1987) argues that the success of effective interagency cooperation depends largely on the availability of resources and the capacity of collaborating institutions. Hence, despite the shared willingness of the government and security agencies in quelling Boko Haram terrorism, a lack of resources and weak institutional capacity to mount collaboration largely explain why the counter-insurgency collaboration has not yielded the expected results (Ikeanyibe et al., 2020). Table 1 shows the key national agencies involved in Boko Haram counter-insurgency operations in Nigeria.

**Table 1: Key national agencies involved in Boko Haram counter-insurgency operations**

Name of agency	Role in intelligence and counter-insurgency operations
National Security Adviser (NSA)	Coordination for anti-terrorism operations to prevent infighting among security agencies—central coordinator
Nigerian Military	Frontline operations
Department of States Service (DSS)	Counter-terrorism intelligence gathering and sharing with sister agencies
Nigeria Police Force (NPF)	Investigating acts of terrorism and conducting proactive measures to prevent terrorist attacks through its established CTU/TIB
National Intelligence Agency (NIA)	Coordination of intelligence with other intelligence-gathering agencies to prevent terrorist activities
Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA)	Coordinate military operations with U.S. counter-agencies: DOD, DOS, FBI, & USAID
Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC)	Contributing of men on request by sister security agencies to combat terrorists
Nigeria Customs Service (NCS)	Monitoring the movement of items to and fro the country to prevent illegal importation of weapon materials
Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS)	Border control to monitor the movement of persons to/from the country at the entry point
Ministry of Justice	Administration of legal instruments against terrorist acts through the administration

Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)	Countering terrorism financing
Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU)	Countering terrorism financing
Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Centre, Jaji (CTCIC)	Training security personnel from various security agencies on terrorism
Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)	Providing critical and necessary responses to terrorism threats in the Northeast through its knowledge of the local context

*Note.* Ikeanyibe et al. (2020).

A major drawback faced by defence and intelligence establishments in forging strong intelligence and counterintelligence against Boko Haram is the lack of mutual trust and confidence building amongst them (Iwuoha, 2020b). There is undue rivalry and suspicion among the sister organisations, and a quest for personal glory at the topmost levels of the agencies (Orsuma, 2013). For example, it was reported that a lack of cooperation and teamwork was responsible for the failure of the security agencies to prevent the attack on the United Nations building, Abuja, in 2009, despite receiving intelligence on the plan about nine days before the attack was launched (Ayorinde, 2011). The Nigerian Department of State Security (DSS) earlier reports predicting the imminent Boko Haram attacks were treated with

levity by some government officials (Danjibo, 2011).

In a system with deep inter-service rivalry, it will not be difficult to understand why some of the agencies worked hard to undermine and out-do each other (Danjibo, 2011). Salisu et al (2015) argue that the challenge of gathering accurate and timely intelligence and security tips that could assist security organisations has been a significant clog in the fight against the Boko Haram insurgency. It is unfortunate that even when there is intelligence gathering on Boko Haram, a section of the military is sometimes reluctant to act on it given that they share sentiments and ideological bias with the terrorist organisation. This amounts to sabotaging the efforts of the security agencies.

Haleru (2014) points to circumstances in which military raids on the camps of the terrorists were foiled because information about the raid was leaked to the leaders of the terrorist group from top-ranking military officers of the Nigerian Army. This draws attention to the convictions of Raimi and Robert (2019) on the complicity of some Nigerian Northern elites and top Muslim politicians within the central government in providing underground support for the activities of the insurgents.

Hassan (2017) argues that Nigerian security agencies are handicapped and consequently powerless because they lack the operational intelligence to thwart the activities of Boko Haram. This is partly because security agencies themselves sabotage the intelligence gathering process by acting as snitches for the terrorist group. This loophole in the intelligence-gathering process is likely to be difficult to manage unless the government promotes a very tight mechanism for monitoring security information (Raimi & Robert, 2019). This flags attention to the need to build a cooperative framework that takes into account the areas of interface such as policy coordination, intelligence sharing, integration of resources, and joint planning and conduct of operations

(Iwuoha, 2019a). The government should, therefore, hinge critical decision-making on accurate information and intelligence, especially in developing its counterterrorism and national security strategy.

Olojo (2018) highlights how the infiltration of the military by Boko Haram has critically undermined intelligence gathering. It is also alleged that there are some political links to factions of the group. The impression that Boko Haram has infiltrated the Nigerian military, security services and government agencies dates back to 2012 when the then President, Goodluck Jonathan opined that Boko Haram had penetrated the innermost circles of his government and the security services. According to him, 'some of them [Boko Haram] are in the executive arm of government, some of them are in the parliamentary/ legislative arm of government, while some of them are even in the judiciary. Some are also in the armed forces, the police and other security agencies' (Premium Times, 2012, online). Former Chief of Defence Staff, Alex Badeh confirms that:

The activities of fifth columnists in the military and other security agencies who leaked operational plans and other sensitive military



information to the terrorist, combined to make the fight against the insurgents particularly difficult. The activities of these unpatriotic members of the military not only blunted the effectiveness of the fight, but also led to the needless deaths of numerous officers and men who unwittingly fell into ambushes prepared by terrorists who had advance warnings of the approach of such troops (George, 2015, online).

However, the above-stated information left no important clue on the nature and modalities of such terrorist infiltration of the government and public institutions. Again, there were no further revelations or tangible evidence to establish the perpetrators and how such a security threat was tackled. This half-baked intelligence report raised serious apprehensions and distrust that further shattered interagency confidence and mutual trust in the fight against Boko Haram. It also sent strong signals to Nigeria's counterterrorism partners abroad, with far-reaching imprints on US-Nigeria security cooperation and counterterrorism against Boko Haram (Iwuoha, 2019a).

## Conclusion

The article underscores the tendency of the government to take actions or indulge in inactions that promote, aid or encourage the expansion of Boko Haram activities. This study conceptualised this scenario as 'state complicity' in the fight against Boko Haram. In some instances, the Nigerian government and its military covered up perceived loopholes in its counterterrorism fight against Boko Haram despite their counterproductive and negative effects on the ongoing war against Boko Haram terrorism. Again, this article contends that the government's amnesty programme is particularly a negative peace approach which will in itself worsen the peace initiatives towards providing a lasting solution to Boko Haram terrorism.

It is, therefore, important to adopt military approaches and strategies that scale down the activities of Boko Haram and not the ones that encourage their expansion. The government should act promptly on military intelligence at its disposal in order to ensure that both the military and the public are not rendered vulnerable to the deadly attacks of Boko Haram as a result of its reluctance or inaction. Developing robust security agencies and community cooperation will lead to a peace pact that will enhance

intelligence sharing between the security agents and local communities in the flashpoints of the Boko Haram activities. In these communities, the security and

intelligence establishments should respect the fundamental rights of the residents which is key in gaining the local people's trust and confidence.

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