

THE EFFICACY OF JOINT TASK FORCE IN COMBATING BOKO HARAM INSURGENCY IN NORTHEAST NIGERIA

BY

Joseph Emmanuel¹, Musa Gayus², Jennifer Chuga Fiyien³^{1,2}Center for Peace and Security Studies Modibbo Adama University, Yola,³Osborn Model Academy, Girei LGA, Adamawa state

Abstract

Over the years, Nigeria has been subjected to unrelenting attacks and threats by various Islamic extremists and armed violent groups. There is no part of the country that has been completely spared from the turbulence of violent conflicts since the return to democracy in 1999. In the North-east region, the persistent insurgency of Boko Haram presents a profound threat to state authority, perpetuating a cycle of violence that has resulted in widespread displacement and loss of lives. Because of the Boko Haram insurgency, a Joint Task Force (JTF) was set up to ensure the security of lives and properties in virtually all the states in northern Nigeria. But despite the heavy presence of the military and its Joint operations, conflicts seem to persist, and the capacity of the JTF to curtail them seems threatened or questioned. It is against this background that this study seeks to assess the efficacy of Joint Task Force in combating the Boko Haram Insurgency in the Northeast Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. three research questions were generated to guide the study. The population of the study consisted of the Military, Police, Vigilantes, Local Hunters and Civilians. The study adopted simple random sampling to select the respondents for the study. The sample size was 250 randomly selected to represent the whole population. The instruments for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The responses on the questionnaire were structured on a 4-point Likert and rating scales of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4; Agreed (A) = 3; Disagreed (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. A reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability method after a trial test of the instrument was conducted. Mean statistics and standard deviation were used to answer the three research questions of the study. All items with mean score of 2.5 and above were considered "Agreed" and if less than 2.5 was also considered as "Disagreed". The study revealed that the Joint Task Force (JTF) has played a pivotal role in enhancing peace and security in Nigeria's Northeast region. However, the JTF faced some challenges including inadequate funding, bad terrain, lack of mutual respect etc. It was recommended that to address the issue of poor communication and lack of mutual respect among security agencies requires the creation of unified command structures and joint operational strategies, to address the challenges of inadequate funding and logistical constraints, the government should allocate sufficient and consistent financial resources to the JTF.

Introduction

Nigeria's recent history is marked by various armed conflicts. No part of the country that has been completely spared from the turbulence of violent conflicts since the return to democracy in 1999. Non-state actors exert significant influence across the nation's six geopolitical zones, shaping socio-political dynamics and security landscapes. Alimba and Salihu (2020) asserted that the crises have assumed regionally based dimensions whereby the six geopolitical zones have been plagued with different forms of violent conflict. These violences have led to a surge in insecurity presently manifesting in all the zones with the Northwest presently witnessing a surge. Within the Northwest region, the proliferation of armed groups, notably bandits, has created a climate of fear and instability. These bandits, often operate with impunity, engage in a range of criminal activities including kidnappings for ransom and attacks on vulnerable communities, thereby exacerbating existing social tensions (Okwuwada, 2023).

Transitioning to the North-Central zone, recurrent clashes between herders and farmers, driven by a complex web of socio-economic, ethnic, and religious factors, further compound Nigeria's security challenges. These clashes not only result in loss of lives and properties but also deepen societal divisions and erode trust in State's institutions (Ojewale, 2024). Meanwhile, in the South-West, the emergence of cult groups, involved in the illicit activities

such as drugs trafficking and political violence, undermine governance structures and perpetuate a cycle of lawlessness (Rufus & Ogbe, 2025). Similarly, in the South-East, the agitation for secession led by the indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) continues to challenge the Nigerian State, with periodic protests and clashes with security forces highlighting deep-seated grievances and aspiration for self-determination (Sylvanus, 2023). Also, in the South-South, militant organizations such as the Niger Delta Avengers persist in sabotaging oil infrastructure, reflecting longstanding grievances over resources control and environmental degradation (Sanchi, *et al.*, 2022).

Concurrently, in the North-east, the persistent insurgency of Boko Haram presents a profound threat to state authority, perpetuating a cycle of violence that has resulted in widespread displacement, loss of lives, and significant humanitarian crises (Lamidi, 2024). The menacing acts of terrorism perpetrated by this group have generated a lot of worries especially in northeast Nigeria. This is more especially so because, since the insurgency began, the manner at which the civilian is being attacked and killed on day brought light is a matter of grave concern. Zenn (2020) and Chinonso (2018), opined that the group *Boko Haram* is an Islamic sect that is poised to create an Islamic state in Nigeria based on Sharia. The Boko Haram insurgency which started in 2002 lunched its full-scale attack in 2009 and since then became more violent each day.

The hot zones are Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States (Maza, *et al.*, 2020).

Though Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria especially in the Northeast region is not a new phenomenon, in recent times the terror unleashed on civilian population by the group has assumed an alarming dimension. The increased insecurity in the region and the operational complexity of the insurgent group have become a major concern. The group has even gained more significant global attention in recent times as a result of its increasing intensity and dangerous dimensions. According to Anaele (2021) and Gulyás (2021), Boko Haram made its presence known in 2004, in Yobe State and by 2011 it made its presence known to the global community by bombing the United Nations headquarters in Abuja. Especially in recent years, it has willfully attacked hundreds of buildings and killed many innocent Nigerians. Boko Haram's attacks increased in frequency and magnitude, killing and injuring many. The attacks occurred primarily in Nigeria's northeast, north-central, and typically focused on police, military, and government targets, as well as Christian churches. The shadowy nature of Boko Haram as well as its resilience

The Nigerian government initially responded by pursuing a strategy of military confrontation. This did little to end the attacks, though government forces were eventually somewhat successful in driving the group from larger cities. In 2013 it was apparent that Boko Haram had taken over many rural local government areas in northeastern states, where they were able to gain strength. Also troubling was the manner in which government security forces pursued the group, a manner that was often rife with extrajudicial violence and killings, and troops did not always discriminate between group members and civilians. Such methods heightened tensions human rights Montclos (2017) and Sule and Sambo (2020), the sect has inflicted violence in northern Nigeria for the past five years. Boko Haram means "Western education is forbidden." It upholds its principles by targeting schools, Christian churches, and more recently, the entire towns. Since 2009, Boko Haram insurgency is believed to have killed thousands of people and destroyed properties valued at over a billion dollars. The group also killed hundreds of people by detonating bombs in large gatherings, including Churches.

The initiatives and strategies adopted by the government and other agencies initially yielded some results. This was at the beginning of the new administration, which took over the mantle of leadership from the previous government of President Goodluck Jonathan in May 2015. Because of the Boko Haram insurgency, a Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Army, Air force, Navy, Mobile Police and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp (NSCDC) were set up to ensure the security of lives and properties in virtually all the states in northern Nigeria. The state governments of these states spend huge sums of money that could have been used for the development of these states to maintain and pay the allowances of the offices of the Joint Task Force (JTF) (Ojo, 2024).. Since the security crisis began in Borno state in 2009, each successive government failed in their attempt to bring the problem to an end despite

spending millions of dollars each year on security. The people in the northeast region have continued to witness widespread killings and great devastation. During the political campaign in early 2015, president Buhari promised to defeat the group within six months, and by August the same year he gave the service chiefs three months to defeat the sect.

This challenge made them put in more efforts and commitment to defeating the sect coupled with the efforts of the multinational joint task force. Moreover, more training was provided for the military (with security assistance from Western countries like the US and UK, which included deployment of military advisers and sales of light attack aircraft) in addition to co-opting local vigilante groups and the civilian joint task force. Between 2015 and 2016, activities of Boko Haram were confined to remote areas and forests as the military intensified their campaigns against the sect. Many territories were recovered from them, which made the military declare that the group had been decimated. The above achievements notwithstanding, some of the abducted children and others still remain in the captivity of the sect, including Leah Sharibu, who was among the kidnapped Dapchi Girls Secondary School in Yobe State in 2018. Furthermore, there is a resurgence of the activities of the sect in addition to banditry currently, which has escalated attacks not only in the North-East but also across some States in the North West. The conflict is far from over because it continues to intensify and create more humanitarian needs. The sect is still very active and in control of some areas in the North-East, with upsurge in attacks and casualties. It is against this backdrop, that this study sought to investigate the efficacy of the Joint Task Force in combating Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

The Boko Haram Insurgency which began in 2009 has escalated over the years resulting in loss of thousands of lives, property worth millions of dollars and mass displacement. The inability of the Nigeria police to bring the situation under control gave birth to a Joint Task Force. Oriola (2021) opined that because of the Boko Haram insurgency, a Joint Task Force (JTF) of the Army, Air force, Navy, Mobile Police and the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corp (NSCDC) were set up to insure the security of lives and properties in virtually all the states in northern Nigeria. The state governments of these states spend huge sums of money that could have been used for the development of these states to maintain and pay the allowances of the offices of the Joint Task Force (JTF). Since the security crisis began in Borno state in 2009, each successive government failed in their attempt to bring the problem to an end despite spending millions of dollars each year on security. The people in the northeast region have continued to witness widespread killings and great devastation (Gulyás, 2021).

Murtala (2024) observed that the Joint Task Force in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa is set up to curtail insurgency, JTFs are usually set up based on the principle of inter-agency collaboration, meaning that all the security

groups would formally work together to attain specific integrated mandates. But despite the heavy presence of the military and its Joint operations, conflicts seem to persist, and the capacity of the military to curtail then seems threatened or questioned.

The JTF initially yielded some positive results and Boko Haram appeared to be disbanded, or at least inactive, however in recent years, the insurgent group are beginning to gain more and more widespread, their onslaught increased in frequency and magnitude, killing and injuring thousands, assassinating individuals and bombing many places. In light of the critical situation and challenges confronting the Joint Task Force, this study seeks to analyze the efficacy of the Joint Task Force in combating Boko Haram insurgency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states of Northeast Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the efficacy of the Joint Task Force in combating Boko Haram insurgency in Northeast Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the extent to which the Joint Task Force enhances peace and security in the Northeast.
2. Determine the challenges confronting the Joint Task Force.
3. Examine the nature of inter-agencies collaboration within the Joint Task Force.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does the Joint Task Force enhance peace and security in the Northeast?
2. What are the challenges confronting the Joint Task Force?
3. What is the nature of inter-agencies collaboration within the Joint Task Force?

Methodology

The study which was conducted in Northeast Nigeria, adopted a descriptive survey research design. Gall, Gall and Borg (2007) described a descriptive survey as a method of investigation using questionnaire or interview to collect data from a sample that has been selected to represent a population to which the findings of the data analysis can be generalized. This research design was considered appropriate for this study as it allows the respondents to tick options that represent their opinions on the efficiency of the Joint Task Force on combating Boko Haram Insurgency in the Borno, Yobe and Adamawa States of Northeast Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of the Military, Police, Vigilantes, Local Hunters and Civilians. The study adopted simple random sampling to select the respondents for the study. The sample size was 250 randomly selected to represent the whole population. The instruments for data collection was structured questionnaire. The structured questionnaire was developed by the researcher titled "Questionnaire on the Efficiency of Joint Task Force in Combating Boko Haram Insurgency (EJTFCBH)". The responses on the questionnaire were structured on a 4-point Likert and rating scales of Strongly Agreed (SA) = 4; Agreed (A) = 3; Disagreed (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagreed (SD) = 1. The questionnaire was

validated by three experts from the Center for Peace and Security Studies, ModibboAdama University, Yola, Adamawa State. A reliability co-efficient of 0.81 was obtained for the instrument using Cronbach Alpha reliability method after a trial test of the instrument was conducted on Plateau state, which was not part of the study area. Data for the study was collected by the researchers. Mean statistics and standard deviation were used to answer the three research questions of the study. All items with mean score of 2.5 and above were considered "Agreed" and if less than 2.5 was also considered as "Disagreed".

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does the Joint Task Force enhance peace and security in the Northeast?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on the extent to which the Joint Task Force enhances peace and security in the Northeast.

S/N	Item	Respondent N = 250		
		X	D	Remark
1	Recovering of areas captured by Boko Haram	2.71	0.9	High
2.	Rescuing of citizens from the den of Boko Haram	3.28	0.5	High
3.	Protecting local communities from attacks by Boko Haram	2.91	0.6	High
4.	Fighting and neutralizing the Boko Haram members	2.43	0.7	Low
5.	Intelligence sharing within the Joint Task Force	3.61	0.7	High
6.	Human rights compliance	3.17	0.8	High
7.	Carrying out periodic operations	2.54	0.9	High
8.	Civil-military coordination	3.55	0.7	High
	Average	3.03		High

Table 1 showed the extent to which the Joint Task Force enhanced peace and security in the Northeast. The respondents indicated that to a high extent item 1 -3 and 5 – 8 which borders on Recovering of captured areas, rescuing of citizens from the den of Boko Haram as well as Protecting local communities from attacks by Boko Haram enhance peace and security in the Northeast with a mean range value between 2.51 and 3.55 and having a standard deviation which ranges between 0.58 and 0.99 respectively. However, the respondents indicated a low degree of success in item 4 with a mean value of 2.43 and standard deviation of 0.77. The grand mean of 3.03 implies that to a high extent, the Joint Task Force enhances peace and security in Northeast Nigeria.

Research Question 2

What are the challenges confronting the Joint Task Force in Northeast, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the challenges confronting Joint Task Force in Northeast, Nigeria.

	Item	Respondent N = 250		
		X	S D	Remark
1	Inadequate manpower	3.62	1.16	Agreed
2	Corruption	4.58	0.96	Agreed
3	Bad terrain	3.08	0.66	Agreed
4	Poor communication	3.74	0.80	Agreed
5	Unpreparedness	3.84	0.74	Agreed
6	Low inter-agency collaboration	3.91	0.54	Agreed
7	Cultural problem from the local communities	4.44	1.01	Agreed
8	Lack of trust within the Joint Task Force	3.84	0.62	Agreed
9	Betrayal within the Joint Task Force	3.39	0.93	Agreed
1	Language barrier	3.51	1.33	Agreed
1	Lack of mutual respect within the JTFs	4.41	1.06	Agreed
1	Inadequate funding	3.78	0.87	Agreed
1	Lack of motivation	4.34	0.98	Agreed
1	Lack of professionalism	3.18	0.74	Agreed
1	Inadequate weapons	4.73	0.59	Agreed
1	Inadequate information about the area	4.72	0.67	Agreed
1	Low intelligence sharing	4.82	0.56	Agreed
1	Poor civil-military coordination	3.44	0.98	Agreed
		3.97		Agreed

Table 2 presents the challenges confronting the Joint Task Force in Northeast, Nigeria. From Table 2, the respondents agreed with all of the items as challenges confronting Joint Task Force in Northeast, Nigeria with highest mean response of 4.82 and 3.39 as the lowest mean response and having a standard deviation range between 0.54 and 1.16. This shows that the respondents agreed that the identified items are the challenges confronting Joint Task Force in Northeast, Nigeria. The overall average weight 3.85 indicated that the respondent agreed with items listed as the challenges confronting Joint Task Force in Northeast, Nigeria.

Research Question 3

What is the nature of inter-agencies collaboration within the Joint Task Force?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on the nature of inter-agencies collaboration within the Joint Task Force

S/N	Item	Respondent N = 250		
		X	SD	Remark
19.	Information sharing	3.64	0.80	Agreed
20.	Collective decision making processes	3.61	0.77	Agreed
21.	Adopting cooperative efforts in combating the insurgency	2.95	0.80	Agreed
22.	Collaboration characterized by mutual respect	2.06	0.60	Disagreed
	Average	3.09		Agreed

Table 3 showed the nature of inter-agencies collaboration within the Joint Task Force. The respondents in item 19 – 21, agreed that the items listed are with mean value range from 2.94 to 3.61 and having a standard deviation range value from 0.62 to 0.80 respectively. However, the respondents disagreed with item 30. The overall average of 3.09 indicated the respondents agreed with the nature of inter-agencies collaboration within the Joint Task Force.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that the Joint Task Force (JTF) has played a pivotal role in enhancing peace and security in Nigeria's Northeast region. The Northeast, characterized by years of insurgency and instability, has witnessed significant improvements in security due to the coordinated efforts of the JTF. Adeyemi (2021) emphasized that the integration of military operations with community engagement has been a cornerstone of the JTF's success. This approach has improved intelligence gathering and fostered trust between security forces and local populations. Similarly, Mohammed and Bala (2022) reiterated that the strategic use of technology by the JTF, such as drones and satellite imagery has significantly enhanced the monitoring of insurgent activities. These technological advancements have been pivotal in securing critical infrastructure and reducing the operational capabilities of insurgents.

The study identified several challenges confronting the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Northeast Nigeria, including inadequate funding, logistical constraints, insufficient manpower, and limited community trust. Insufficient and inconsistent funding hampers the procurement of advanced equipment and affects personnel welfare, while logistical delays in essential supplies compromise operational efficiency. The findings of the study are well-supported by existing literature, which highlights the multifaceted challenges confronting the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Northeast Nigeria. For instance, Suleiman and Abubakar (2023) emphasized that inadequate funding remains a significant obstacle, limiting the JTF's ability to procure advanced equipment and sustain logistics, which are essential for effective counter-insurgency operations. Similarly, Mohammed and Bala (2022) identified logistical constraints, including delayed supplies of food, fuel, and ammunition, as a critical factor undermining the efficiency

of prolonged deployments in remote areas. In addition, Adeyemi (2021) noted that allegations of human rights violations during operations have eroded trust between the JTF and local communities, leading to reduced intelligence-sharing, which is vital for successful operations. Usman (2020) further supported the finding that poor coordination among security agencies leads to fragmented strategies, hindering the collective fight against insurgency. These studies reinforce the conclusion that while the JTF has made strides in addressing security threats, addressing these challenges requires strategic reforms, enhanced funding, and a focus on socio-economic development to achieve sustainable peace in the region.

The findings of the study emphasize the importance of information sharing, collective decision-making, cooperative efforts, and collaboration based on mutual respect in addressing the challenges faced by the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Northeast Nigeria. Information sharing has been identified as a critical factor in the success of counter-insurgency operations. By fostering trust and communication with local communities, the JTF has been able to gather actionable intelligence, which has significantly enhanced its ability to neutralize threats (Adeyemi, 2021). Similarly, Mohammed and Bala (2022) highlighted the effectiveness of collective decision-making processes, where input from multiple stakeholders, including security agencies, local leaders, and international partners, ensures a well-rounded approach to combating insurgency. The study also found that adopting cooperative efforts among security agencies and other relevant organizations plays a vital role in strengthening the overall strategy against insurgents. Suleiman and Abubakar (2023) noted that joint operations combining military, paramilitary, and civilian resources have led to improved coordination and resource allocation, minimizing operational gaps. Furthermore, the study underscores the value of collaboration characterized by mutual respect. Usman (2020) observed that partnerships between the JTF and local communities are most effective when they are built on respect for cultural norms and the recognition of the communities' critical role in providing support and intelligence.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the success of the Joint Task Force (JTF) in combating insurgency in Northeast Nigeria is heavily dependent on the integration of strategic approaches centered on information sharing, collective decision-making, cooperative efforts, and collaboration built on mutual respect. Effective information-sharing mechanisms enhance intelligence gathering and operational precision, while collective decision-making processes ensure that diverse perspectives are incorporated into strategic planning, leading to more comprehensive solutions. Cooperative efforts among security agencies and stakeholders foster better resource utilization and operational synergy, addressing gaps in counter-insurgency operations. Collaboration rooted in mutual respect strengthens trust with local communities, enabling sustained support and cooperation essential for long-term peace. The findings underscore the importance of addressing existing

challenges, including inadequate funding, logistical constraints, and community distrust, by institutionalizing these practices. To ensure sustained peace and security in the region, the JTF must prioritize inclusive, transparent, and respectful partnerships alongside continuous improvements in operational strategies.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made:

1. Addressing the issue of poor communication among security agencies requires the creation of unified command structures and joint operational strategies.
2. To address the challenges of inadequate funding and logistical constraints, the government should allocate sufficient and consistent financial resources to the JTF.
3. Given the importance of community cooperation highlighted in the findings, the JTF should prioritize building trust with local communities through regular engagement and adherence to human rights standards.
4. Government should organize programs to enlighten all the agencies on the importance of mutual respect and cooperation.

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