

Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and Boko-Haram Insurgency in Nigeria Understanding the Activities of (CJTF) in Minimizing Boko-Haram Threat in the Northeastern Geo Political Zone

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Abstract: This work examines the activities of Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State Nigeria. The study became imperative because of the security challenges affecting the region and the importance of Civilian Joint Task Force in providing response to the security challenges posed by the activities of insurgents in Borno State since 2009. While adopting qualitative research design, data were sourced from both primary and secondary source. The study found out that CJTF was made up of young men who swore by the Holy Quran to fight insurgency in its ramifications and would not take bribe or implicate anybody who is not an insurgent. Similarly, the group swore to expose anyone who engages in the activities of Boko Haram, whether he or she is their relation or not. The study also found that the CJTF members have made a number of mistakes and almost becoming a nuisance to people who live in their areas of operation. The work recommends that CJTF should avoid been authoritative and focus on ensuring a better peace for the citizens in violent prom areas.

Keywords: Civilian Joint Task Force, Boko-Haram, Security, Insurgency, Brutality.

INTRODUCTION

Borno State which is one of the most peaceful states in Nigeria has in recent years been characterized by series of security challenges that wreaked havoc on the stability of the state affecting socio-economic and political activities. These challenges could be attributed to many factors among which are institutional weaknesses of the state, the ever eroding social fabric, the flow of small arms, manipulation of religious practices and huge unemployment coupled with politics of gansterism [1]. The resultant effect of all these culminated in the evolution of a militia movement called *Jamaati ahlus Sunna Liddawati wal Jihad* (JAS) otherwise known as Boko Haram under the auspices of its leader, late Muhammad Yusuf.

Defeat of these insurgents and restoration of normalcy to Maiduguri after the first uprising, the sect resurfaced through its second in Command, Abubakar Shekau, who was later reportedly killed by the Spokesperson of the Joint Task Force (JTF), Lt. Col. Sagir Musa who states on state and foreign media thus: "as far as I am concerned Shekau is dead and if the dead cannot comeback then Shekau cannot. "The reported death of Shekau led to speculation about the Federal Government's insincerity on the issue of addressing the security challenge in the state which spread to other

parts of the northern states. While the tide of insecurity persisted, and contrary to the widely circulated refusal to give information to security agents, several attempts were made by the residents of Maiduguri to stem the violence by sharing information with the security agents [2]. However it was found that all those who reported on the activities of these terrorist were attacked and killed on leaving the premises of the security agents. Indeed, the killing and maiming of individuals, bomb attacks and burning of churches, schools, and mosques by JAS occurred almost on daily basis. In particular, security agents, politicians, Christians, traditional rulers and Islamic religious leaders all became the targets of JAS's violence.

Fundamentally, the JTF's response was characterized by indiscriminate and excessive use of force. The JTF were accused of setting homes and shops on fire in areas where terror activities occurred while at the same time shooting and arresting individuals indiscriminately. The JTF did not bother to discriminate the innocent from the culprits and every member of the society was seen as either a Boko Haram member or supporter [1]. In the process, many innocent individuals particularly the youths were killed by security agents. Maiduguri, the Borno State Capital, came under siege such that normal daily activities were

severely restricted with curfews and state of emergency declared by the State and Federal Governments. It was under such deteriorating security situation and frustration that youth saw the need to defend themselves, their properties and communities from these attacks. Community members felt they had no option but to openly and boldly confront terror by identifying, arresting and handing over Boko Haram members to the JTF.

The successful silencing of the courageous personalities led to targeted assassination of the security operatives where ever they might be found, followed by the Igbo merchants, the tea sellers (Mai-shayi) notably, but not restricted, to the Michika people of Adamawa. Thereafter, the elite, public servants, established merchants, drivers, teachers, pupils and students of both Quranic and western education were targeted and killed. JAS also attacked public facilities such as schools, hospitals, communication masts and markets as well as assassination of petty traders, farmers and even livestock breeders in the bush. According to Wall [3] People from different categories were traumatized through threatening text messages asking for compulsory payment of certain amount of money by public servants, traders, artisans, livestock breeders' fishers and gatherers among others or risk being killed. JAS was so daring as it was able to erect road blocks, collecting imposed from motorists along the highway as well as going into commercial areas to collect such levies often obtained under duress. Upon all these atrocities, the military personnel and equipment deployed under the aegis of the JTF could not really differentiate the real Boko Haram from innocent citizens. Once JTF's formation, convoys or check points came under JAS's attack, the security agents' response had been to open fire and burn indiscriminately anything that comes their way with consequential effects on lives and properties.

It is truism that the military personnel are strong and indeed one of the best in terms of peace keeping, but the nature of insurgency in Borno almost differ from all the others we often hear from other countries. The insurgents have no respect even to their mother talk less of a father, brother or a community leader. Once they perceived an individual is a threat to their success, it is the immediate member of the family amongst their membership that would be assigned the responsibility of either slaughtering or gunning down the identified culprit [1]. These inhumane activities forced parents to desert their homes as their child become a member, parents who refuse to desert were forced to hide or conceal the weapons, some women were either hired or forced to give information on the movement of the security agents, so that they can change direction or immediately hand over weapon to a passerby woman to hide their weapon.

It is on this note that, the civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged as a response to the security

challenges posed by the activities of insurgents in Borno state since 2009[4]. It is mainly made up of young men and women who constitute the bulk of recruitments targets for the insurgents and are also suspected by the security agents of perpetrating the acts of violence against the state and the citizens. This difficult situation as well as the emasculation of socio-economic activities in the state resulting from this violence led to the evolution of the Civilian Joint Task force (CJTF) as a child of necessity first in Maiduguri and later spread across other parts of the state [1].

It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to unravel the Civilian Joint Task Force and Boko Haram insurgency in Borno State Nigeria. The general objective of the study is to ascertain the activities of the Civilian Joint Task force in minimizing Boko Haram terrorist in Borno State Nigeria. While the specific objectives are;

- To examine the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task force
- To identify the techniques of recruitments and mode of their operations
- To identify the impact of CJTF (Positive and Negative)
- To recommend alternative policies on the best utilization of the CJTF

Theoretical Framework

Despite the efflorescence and the profundity of writings on myriad of security challenges assailing the north-east region by scholars, series of theories have been proffered yet they always end into contradictory intellectual nullity and barefoot prognosis. This paper therefore is anchored on the twin theories of partnership policing and community participation. The former which is associated with Rosenbaum [5], posits that the criminal justice system cannot, by itself, solve the complex problems of crime and disorder, including terrorism, which afflict society. Consequently, it advocates that resources (human resources) from outside the system are needed, just as are new ways of thinking about diverse problems. Rosenbaum [6] asserts that this can be achieved through the creation of partnerships that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and that can produce coordinated and targeted responses to public safety problems. The latter theory underscores the need to give control of affairs and decisions to the people most affected by them, in this instance, civilians.

The advocates of community participation believe that besides serving as a means of getting things done, involving the people in solving their own problems also brings many lasting solutions to said problems or challenges. First, it allows for the redistribution of power that in turn enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included [7]. It

also brings people together in creating and making decisions about their environment. Participation brings about individual empowerment, as people gain skills in assessing needs, setting priorities, and gaining control over their environment [8]. Involvement by community members is a way to incorporate local values and attitudes into any programme and to build the layman's perspective into the programme. Community members' involvement can also provide access to local leaders, resources, and technical skills not otherwise available [9]. Above all, participation engenders a sense of identification and continuing responsibility for any programme, often referred to as the principle of ownership [10]. The aptness of this theoretical orientation is underscored by the increasing realization that no government or authority has the means to solve all the public problems adequately, and in the case of security, that the local people as stakeholders in their communities not only understand their neighborhoods better but share the common aspiration of promoting and protecting it. It is also this realization that explains the increasing demand for state police, an arrangement whose proponents believe would bring policing closer to the local people. Seen against the background of the war against terror, the understanding is that even though terrorist threat come from a tiny and marginal minority, these individuals are nonetheless integrated within their communities and are not, on the whole, loners working on their own. Consequently, communities, if involved in the fight against terror could act as an early warning system for the police and intelligence services should they come across information or have concerns about particular individuals or groups [4].

METHODOLOGY

The data for the research was obtained from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources constitute the lynch pin of the research considering the nature of the investigation and the subject matter. Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KI-I) were utilized to elicit information from various respondents. The data for the study were obtained from two local government areas, namely: Maiduguri Metropolitan Council and Jere Local Government Area. These two local government areas are contiguous and predominantly constitute the capital city of Maiduguri, both of which constitute the centre of JAS and bore the disproportionate share of the violent activities of JAS and the highhandedness of the JTF. It was not surprising that the Civilian Joint Task Force emanated from there. Four FGDs were conducted, two in each of the local government areas. Each FGD was conducted with consideration for gender representation.

The Emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in Borno State

Civilian JTF groups have existed in many cultures, in past and present times, in both rural and urban settings. It can be seen in south-west (Oduduwa People's Congress (OPC)) and in the south-east (Bakassi Boys (BB)). It would seem that most of Nigerian's counter terrorism efforts are reactive without the joint effort with civilian JTF model in the aspect of intelligence gathering because of the knowledge of the terrain [1].

In Borno State the CJTF came as an unexpected community response to the insurgency that completely changed the course of the crises that has engulfed Borno State for the past four years. Youths in form of vigilante boldly took to the streets of Maiduguri conducting body searches on pedestrians and motorists, ransacking suspected Boko Haram outposts and making arrests. Prior to this development, some CJTF members were secretly providing vital information on the location and movements of Boko Haram members and their weapons to security agencies.

On the emergence of the CJTF, interviews with various stakeholders in Maiduguri and Jere LGAs revealed that the CJTF was born out of necessity because community members were increasingly becoming the major victims of the atrocities committed by JAS on one hand and the JTF's excessive response [11]. The killing and maiming of individuals, bomb attacks and burning of churches, schools, and mosques by Boko Haram occurred almost on daily basis. In particular, security agents, Christians, traditional rulers and religious leaders all came into its sphere of violence. On the other hand, the JTF's response was characterized by indiscriminate and excessive use of force. The JTF sometimes set homes and shops on fire in areas where terror activities occurred while at the same time shooting and arresting individuals indiscriminately. The JTF did not bother to discriminate the innocent from the culprits and every member of the society was seen as a Boko Haram member. In the process, many innocent individuals particularly the youths were killed by security agents. Maiduguri became completely under siege such that normal daily activities were severely restricted with curfews and state of emergency declared by the State and Federal Government.

It was under such deteriorating security situation and frustration those youths saw the need to defend themselves, their properties and communities from these attacks. Community members felt they had no option but to openly and boldly confront terror by identifying, arresting and handing over Boko Haram members to the JTF.

According to Nuhu [3], the CJTF may very well be considered as one of the Biblical miracles of David and Goliath where an individual armed with a machete or knife confronts another individual with a gun. On the other hand, an Imam that was interviewed is of the opinion that the CJTF are life savers and if not

for the CJTF, there will be no peace in Maiduguri in the next 30 years. At the initial stage, the CJTF was brutal in its operations where suspected Boko Haram members were attacked and hacked to death with knives and daggers without handing them over to the security agents. The CJTF also undertook joint operations with the JTF in fishing out Boko Haram members. Unfortunately, the CJTF also lost some of its members in shoot outs and reprisal attacks. So far, over 100 CJTF members have been killed and over 200 injured.

Recruiting Members in to CJTF

Membership to CJTF is voluntary and free to all eligible members of the society to join. Discussions with CJTF revealed that most members joined the group after their loved ones were killed by Boko Haram. According to Campbell [12] to join the group, the identity of the individual is first established and confirmed by two referees. If the individual happens to come from a different ward, the originating ward must confirm his identity. Subsequently, the applicant takes allegiance to the cause of CJTF, a cause for which he must be prepared to lay his life should the need arise, by swearing with the Holy Quran. It is also pointed out to the potential recruit that he would not receive any kind of payment and his reward is from Allah, the Almighty God. However, some respondents to the interviews claim some members were forced to join against their will. According to medical personnel in one of the primary health care departments in Jere LGA, communities were ordered to form CJTF by the JTF and threaten to kill them if they refuse.

The CJTF is a self-organized group and its specific structure consists of the state chairman, the ward/sector commanders and the unit chairman. Ward leaders otherwise known as sector commanders are selected within the wards and are representatives of the wards at the state level. The day to day affairs of the group in the ward/community is controlled by the unit chairman while the sector commander reports to the state chairman who is the overall head of the group. The different sectors meet once in a month with the state chairman while unit meetings are held every two weeks. In event of a crisis, emergency meetings are held. All office holders can be formally removed due to corruption and disobedience [12].

Members of the CJTF are mostly of the Kanuri tribe, the major ethnic group in the state. They are also some Hausa and Babur/Bura youths within the group. They seem to be almost all Muslims.

Who is the CJTF responsible to; who do they report to; who controls them?

At the initial stage, the CJTF did not appear to be well organized because it was more or less a spontaneous response and as a result, its mode of operations and activities were not well articulated. Members were operating without guidelines and rules

on how to handle suspected Boko Haram members. There was no age limit and every young individual in the community could pick up a knife or a dagger and patrol the neighborhoods and thus claim to be a CJTF member. The army unit of the JTF has however now fully taken over control of CJTF while CJTF officials regulate the activities of members in terms of enforcement of rules and regulations and assigning responsibilities. They make sure that respect for rules is monitored and enforced, and sanctions apply to those who break rules.

Some of the rules imposed by the army on the activities of the CJTF as put forward by Campbell [12]. Include:

- They must not be seen shouting and screaming
- They must not go to another ward/district to arrest suspected Boko Haram members
- No child below the age of 15 be allowed to join the CJTF
- Should not go out on patrols/engagements without army support
- Be disciplined at all times; respect their elders; be law abiding.

Although traditional institutions have exercised and continue to exercise considerable powers within the realm of conflict management particularly in northern Nigeria, the CJTF appear to have little interactions with traditional authorities which provide minimal advisory functions to the group. A typical example is where the Shehu advised CJTF officials to recognize the rule of law and operates within specified norms when they made a courtesy visit to his palace. The chief imam of a Mosque located in what is considered a "hot zone" of the insurgency also confirmed that CJTF contact him to seek for support and prayers. There are no contacts between the local government authorities and CJTF. In most cases, they are mostly illiterates who are unaware of the role of the media.

Impact of the CJTF in minimizing Boko-Haram Insurgency in Borno State

The activities of the CJTF completely changed the course of the insurgency that gripped Borno State especially Maiduguri metropolis for four years. The JTF has been unable to defeat Boko Haram despite four years of a bloody counterinsurgency campaign. The CJTF tipped the balance of the insurgency in such a way that the haunted became the hunter and as a result, there are now few (if any) Boko Haram members left in Maiduguri or Jere.

Various studies on the activities of CJTF also point to the effectiveness of this group, and there are well-documented cases where civilian JTF success led to a dramatic decrease in Boko Haram terrorism activities in the north-east region of Nigeria [13].

Civilian JTF groups often emerge when there is the perception of increased criminality or social deviance which threatens social order” in the north-east region of Nigeria [14]. This group flourishes not only in places where the government lacks capacity to protect local people from Boko Haram terrorism, but also where the government is believed to be untrustworthy [15]. Deep mistrust of the part of the former administration of President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan’s government in combating terrorism, driven by the inability of the government military JTF to provide basic security and protect human rights, further strengthens the need for a civilian JTF. Okereke [16], for example, has argued that “civilian JTF arises from the perception that the government is doing nothing to guarantee the safety of north-east region”. Accordingly, when communities’ demands on the government are considered to have been ignored, the people resort to helping themselves through the activities of the civilian JTF. The present administration of President Mohammed Buhari’s government is thereby seen as a player with unlimited capacity with regard to Boko Haram terrorism prevention and guaranteeing citizens’ security in the north-east region. Although at the early stage of the war against Boko Haram group when the former President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan government shows lackadaisical attitude towards the people and activities of Boko Haram group in the region, civilian JTF often claim to be based within an ineffective state, they are involved in state-like performances including security enforcement to such an extent that it causes a renegotiation of the boundaries between the Nigerian state and society. It thereby becomes difficult to distinguish between what is the state and what is not. Civilian JTF operate at the frontier of the Nigerian state, blurring the boundaries between the state and what normally falls outside of it.

This propels Hassan [14] to refer to CJTF as “real game changers”. For one, the CJTF has succeeded in driving Boko Haram out of Maiduguri. Boko Haram has been largely defeated for now and this has been a remarkable turnaround that brought thousands of people back to the streets. After four years of fear, the town is now bustling with activities. For months now, there have been no shootings or bombings in Maiduguri and indeed Khaddamari, the headquarters of Jere LGA. Large-scale roundups and killings by the army in what they claim to be reprisal attacks on Boko Haram have also tailed off. Schools particularly those located in what became known as the hot zones of the insurgency are now fully back in operation.

Discussions with participants in one of such schools revealed that prior to the counterinsurgency by CJTF the school was twice set on fire by Boko Haram members [11]. Six classes, two offices were burnt down and all the items in the school were looted. Teachers are followed home and threatened not to report to work or risk being killed. As a result, the school operated on

skeletal basis with few teachers and pupils reporting on weekly basis. The school was even transformed into a meeting point of Boko Haram where its members were initially conducting nocturnal meetings that was later extended to daytime. Indeed, Boko Haram at a point completely took over the school and used it as a base for its operations. Thus, the CJTF when it came on board considered the school as one of the first areas that need to be cleared of terrorist activities. In a search operation, the CJTF discovered two guns and an undisclosed huge sum of money in one of the classes which it claimed was handed over to the JTF. The CJTF then instructed the school authority to resume classes and to conduct the January-February 2013 Junior WAEC examinations while it provided security and protection to teachers and pupils. To appreciate its far reaching role in ensuring that schools are fully operational, the CJTF extended similar security to most schools in Maiduguri and Jere LGAs [17].

In the health sector, the constant attacks on health facilities especially immunization clinics led to the closure of many health centers. FGD participants at Dalaram Clinic revealed that pregnant women were stopped from coming to seek medical attention and women resorted to the services of traditional birth attendants (TBA). In addition the area also suffered from reprisal attacks by army personnel once there is an attack by Boko Haram. At the peak of the crises, the clinic was completely closed down for a month. However, with the emergence of the CJTF, events took a dramatic turn with CJTF providing security not only to the clinic but to the neighborhood as a whole. To complement the activities of the CJTF, individuals in the community decided to task themselves and give each member 300 Naira per month. According to the director, the clinic also gives 50,000 to the CJTF.

Other impacts of the CJTF as put forward by Okereke [18] include, Contributing in installing peace and also normalcy has now returned in the Metropolitan. A business activity has equally fully resumed. People can now sleep with two eyes closed. They can also go anywhere they wish and they can equally move anywhere they feel unlike before. With the emergence of Civilian JTF roads blocks and other check points have been reduced. In addition, some schools within the Maiduguri Metropolitan have resumed. The issue of curfew has also been extended from 6:00pm to 10:00pm.

Secondly, an army of youths has been identified to be useful to the government in fighting insurgency to face.

Negative Impression of the CJTF in Borno State

As earlier mentioned, in the introduction of this paper, that the Civilian JTF is very useful to the government in their fighting against the Boko Haram insurgents. Unfortunately, they have now become a

nuisance to the society as they engaged in evil acts such as harassment, kidnapping some of them have engaged in the looting of properties being to people in the name of Civilian Joint Task Force. They also extort the community in many ways.

Another negative effect of the Civilian JTF can be seen in their bad and unscrupulous attitude or behavior of these youths as they demand to have affairs with young girls. They often ask the young's to meet them in secret places where they intend to have affairs with them. There is likelihood that this attitude may also led to the spread of HIV/AIDS in the state and beyond [11].

More so, the Civilian Joint Task Force has constituted them in authority. Maintenance of law and order in the society is a function of authority and cases are taking to the authority for either settlement or punish the guilt's person. These go well in the Maiduguri Metropolitan before the emergence of Civilian JTF. With their emergence this creed has changed drastically, as cases of stealing, two fighting, minor crimes are not taking to police or army rather it is now taking to the Civilian JTF, they constituted themselves into authority. That is to say, the Civilian JTF is now performing the duties and deliberate functions of the authority. The citizens here made them more reliable and trusted than the authority in place. In return, the Civilian JTF behaves authority wise.

Fifthly, the military Joint Task Force have started misusing the Civilian Joint Task Force phenomenon to recruit young civilians who assist them in extorting money from civilians.

Prior and post emergence of Civilian JTF, the military were banned from collecting bribe in form of cash or material from the Civilians. Though, some of them do collect the bribe, others stick to the principles of their service. But, with the emergence of the Civilian Joint Task Force phenomenon, the military resorted the recruitment of some young civilians to assist them in collecting money from the civilians.

The sixth effect of the Civilian Joint Task Force on the people of Maiduguri Metropolitan is that the use of CJTF in the Metropolitan has created a new target of attack by the insurgents. The vigilante of the Civilian Joint Task Force has now become the targeted groups of the insurgents and are always hunted and killed by the members of Boko Haram. However, the emergence of Civilian Joint Task Force has equally led to the emergence of series of road blocks not only on the major streets in the state, but in various wards in Maiduguri Metropolitan.

CONCLUSION/ RECOMMENDATIONS

The study has focused seriously on the rise of civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) and its activities on the menace of Boko-Haram sect in Borno State. The study revealed that CJTF was a child of practical necessity it emerged as response to the failure of the security forces to contain the activities of members of Boko Haram who attacked, kidnapped and killed innocent's civilians and security personnel's operating in Yobe, Borno and Adamawa states. Since the emergence of CJTF, it has been able to limit the activities of the insurgents operating in Jere and Maid(uguri Metropolitan council. The planning the CJTF was able to push members of the Boko Haram away from Maiduguri city. This assisted in bringing back relative peace in Maiduguri. People now go about doing their own business in the town without any fear. The schools, churches, mosques, etc have resumed their normal activities in the ancient city. The CJTF, in its operations recovered explosives, guns chemical and other raw materials for making bombs. The CJTF have been mounting surveillance in Jere and Maiduguri Metropolitan council with success. However, in carrying out their duties the CJTF has constituted itself into an authority. They approached and carry out instant jungle justice on members of the dreaded Boko Haram Members. They rarely handover and print to the government constituted authority. Some of the members of CJTF have started behaving like soldiers who always harass civilians at the slightest provocation.

It is recommended in this work that government should undertake to explore civilian JTF which is community security option as a means to address terrorism and crime in general. The various security agencies and institutions tasked with addressing terrorism in Nigeria remain predominantly reactive. It is against this backdrop that a civilian JTF which is a form of community security option would be a great asset. The civilian JTF centre would need to be a legally constituted body, similar to the government special military JTF Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Centre, where information related to terrorism is collected from different security agencies, then processed, analyzed and interpreted. Staffed with intelligence analysts and supported by sophisticated IT software, the centre could provide intelligence on terrorism to various investigative and enforcement agencies to assist in the identification and prosecution of profiteers, infiltrators perpetrators, and in so doing hopefully reduce terrorism in Nigeria. More so, CJTF should avoid been authoritative and focus on ensuring a better peace for the citizens in violent prom areas.

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