

Nigeria's Military Operations in the Lake Chad Basin

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to examine Nigeria's military operations in the Lake Chad Basin of Africa. This area has witnessed hybrid threats over the years which Nigeria most times conducts military operations. However, with the advent of the Boko Haram insurgents, the threats have increased, exerting much pressure on the Nigerian forces. It is against this background that this research attempts to examine Nigeria's operations in the Chad Basin with particular reference to Operation Restore Order I, II, and III, Operation BOYONA, and Operation Zaman Lafiya. The research also examines the role played by the Civilian Joint Task Force against insurgent forces in the area as well as civil-military relations perceptions in these operations over time.

Keywords: Nigeria; Lake Chad Basin; Nigerian military; Boko Haram; Military Operations; Insurgency

Introduction

Since the end of Second World War, conventional war gradually began to give way to unconventional warfare. These Fourth Generation Wars, also referred to as hybrid threats, wars of ambiguity or Asymmetric wars are more complex in the sense that the environment within which these war are executed have continued to remain fluid, with continually changing coalitions, alliances and actors. More so, it is difficult to predict the nature, location and duration of this 'new warfare'. Even more disturbing is the fact that the enemy here often follows no rules against conventional militaries of States, while the military forces on the other hand are expected to stick to the rules of war by applying international conventions of Law of Armed conflict and International Humanitarian Laws as well as rules of engagement.

The conventional forces, Multinational Task Force comprising Nigeria, Cameroon, Mali and Chad have been engaging the Boko Haram sect in the Lake Chad Basin for over six years without showing the desired successes. The forces, especially the Nigerian military have been accused by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International at various times of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity; crimes the Nigerian Army has denied.

This chapter is an attempt to bring to fore the salient issues in the fight against terror in the Lake Chad Basin in Northeast Nigeria by examining the military operations by Joint Task Force. However, attention is focused on the Nigerian military. This is basically so because the accusations for far are directed at the Nigerian forces. In doing so, the chapter also examines the role of the Civilian Joint Task Force who collaborates and assists the Nigerian military in identifying and capturing members of the terror group, Boko Haram.

The researchers in the course of field work in some parts of the North East region of Nigeria and Lake Chad basin relied on primary and secondary sources for data collection. For primary sources, oral interviews were conducted in the research area with military officers and soldiers as well as residents of the area even though on condition of anonymity. In the case of secondary sources, the writers consulted books, journals, newspapers and other written materials relevant to the subject matter. The findings of the study were then presented using descriptive and analytical approaches.

Conceptual Clarification

Complex military operations within the context of this chapter

could be explained as military operations carried out by conventional military units against non-conventional armed groups. They are variously referred to as Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW), guerrilla warfare, war of ambiguity, hybrid warfare, stability operations, irregular warfare or counter insurgency/counter terrorism involving military, paramilitary and civil personnel against armed groups. Examples of such operations are the USA war in Afghanistan against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, Kenyan and Somalian governments' militaries against Al Shabaab, USA, Iraq and Syria against ISIS, Nigeria government against Boko Haram etc. These military operations differ from Symmetrical wars which are usually between States. Symmetrical wars such as the war between Argentina and Great Britain over the Falkland/Malvinas Islands, the war between Iraq and Iran in the eighties or the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia just before the turn of the 21st Century, have since become rare, giving way to wars of ambiguity. The war is referred to as complex because of its "complex nature" and the constantly changing combination of actors involved, the frequent changes in the strategic and operational environments as well as the challenges and constraints in operations against insurgents, terrorists and other armed groups.

For instance, the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the USA defines Asymmetric warfare, which is complex in nature, as "unanticipated or non-traditional approaches to circumvent or undermine an adversary's strength while exploiting his vulnerabilities through unexpected technologies or innovative means" [1]. Complex military operations can also be described as conflict in which the resources of the two belligerents differ significantly in essence and in the struggle, interact and attempt to exploit each other's characteristics weaknesses. Such struggle often involves strategies and tactics of unconventional warfare, the weaker combatants attempting to use strategy to offset deficiencies in quantity or quality. The term frequently appears in government and civil publications, often replacing other terms like insurgency,

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terrorism, guerrilla warfare, low intensity conflict, counter insurgency, counter terrorism, essentially violent conflict between a formal military and informal, less equipped but supported, undermanned but resilient opponent, and most recently, war of ambiguity [1]. These types of warfare have taken on a new form and grown to new dimensions. Even though it is not new, few of the tactics employed are new. The new enemy has made warfare, as stated earlier, more complex as the enemy often follows no rules, while the conventional forces apply national laws and international conventions as well as rules of engagement in their military operations. These armed groups also make it difficult for regular militaries like the Nigerian military to accurately predict the nature, location, or duration of these conflicts. This is because the operational environment under this context is extremely fluid, with continually changing coalitions, alliances, partnerships, and actors. It is only a highly professional military that can therefore, adequately wad off this hybrid threat.

Geographical Location of the Lake Chad Basin

The Lake Chad Basin is the largest endorheic drainage basin in Africa, centered on Lake Chad. It has no outlet to the sea and contains large areas of desert or semi-arid savanna. The drainage basin is roughly coterminous with the sedimentary basin of the same name, but extends further to the northeast and east. The basin spans seven countries, including most of Chad and a large part of Niger. It has an ethnically diverse population of about 30 million people as of 2011, growing rapidly [2]. However, the geographical area that is of concern to this chapter is the four countries bordering Lake Chad: Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria.

By its geographic situation, the Lake Chad basin is the buffer zone between the Sahel, and Sub-equatorial Africa; between Central and West Africa. Indeed, the former great lake is shared by Nigeria, Cameroon, Chad and Niger. It is because of this strategic position in the trade routes that the British colonial power made Maiduguri as the capital of Borno state in Nigeria, in 1900 [3]. The place nowadays makes the headlines for being the original base of the Islamist sect Boko Haram, and the theatre of a severe fight against the organisation by the Nigerian army. More importantly for the purpose of this study, Maiduguri is part of an insecurity triangle composed of Maroua (Northern Cameroon) and Ndjamena, the capital city of Chad, (approximately 30,000 sq km) [4].

Ambush, human trafficking, kidnapping and robbery are old phenomena on the roads of the Lake Chad basin and specifically near the borders. But several factors are progressively transforming activities that used to ensure the vital minimum to the population and a fragile social peace, into a danger zone. The economy is mainly based on some non-industrial agriculture activities and micro-tourism. Describing the area, Julie Owono states that:

Economically, Cameroon's "Grand North" region is largely similar to Northern Nigeria with an ever growing disenfranchised and economically-deprived youth population. Like their counterparts in Nigeria, many of these youths are steadily retreating from the secular state and becoming easy prey to groups dangling the carrot of fundamentalist Islam as the way out of their misery and alienation [4].

A field study led by French researcher Cyril Musila explains that it is an area where the circulation and the traffic of weapons from various conflicts in neighbouring Chad, North Africa and Central Africa Republic takes place, as well as the migration of thousands of former fighters [4].

The environment factor should also be mentioned: for years now,

experts and international organisations have been warning of the risks of the drying out of Lake Chad, pointing out increasing malnutrition, rising tensions between communities. This is the situation that prevails as Boko Haram finds in Northern Cameroon a haven where fighters can seek refuge when repressed by the Nigerian army in neighbouring Borno state. According to the Lake Chad Basin Commission, if the Lake Chad dries up, it will displace over 30 million people. But before then the Boko Haram insurgency is already displacing people in large numbers [5].

The Lake Chad covers the Sambisa Forest; a forest in Borno State, northeast Nigeria, which is presumably the headquarters of the Boko Haram sect. The Sambisa forest is located at the northeastern tip of the west Sudanian Savanna and the southern boundary of the Sahel Acacia Savanna about 60 km. south east of Maiduguri the capital of the state of Borno. It occupies about 60,000 square kilometers in the states of Borno, Yobe, Gombe, Bauchi along the corridor Darazo, Jigawa, and some parts of Kano state farther north. It is administered by the Local government areas of Nigeria of Askira/Uba in the south, by Damboa in the southwest, and by Konduga and Jere in the west. The name of the forest comes from the village of Sambisa which is on the border with Gwoza in the East. The Gwoza hills in the East have peaks of 1,300 meters above sea level and form part of the Mandara Mountains range along the Cameroon-Nigeria border. The forest is drained by seasonal streams into the Yedseram and the Ngadda Rivers [6].

The palpable insecurity in the Lake Chad region occasioned by armed banditry, arms trafficking and border intrusion along Nigeria's border with Chad, Cameroon and Niger Republic necessitated the establishment of a Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) in 1998.

Military Operations in the Lake Chad Basin

Operation restore order I, II, and III

The first Joint Task Force operation aimed at the Boko Haram insurgents was code named Operation Restore Order I. It was established on June 12, 2011 [7]. Later in the year, Operation Restore Order II and III were launched to provide security against Boko Haram in Bauchi and Yobe states respectively [8]. The mandate of the task force was to restore law and order to the northeastern part of Nigeria and Borno State in particular. The task force was composed of a force of 3,872 personnel drawn from the Nigerian Armed Forces, Nigerian Police Force, Department of State Security, Nigerian Customs Service, Nigeria Immigration Service and Defence Intelligence Agency [7]. In the composition and mandate of the task force lie the endemic problems of command and control, logistics, welfare and the inherent danger of fighting in built-up areas, or what is often referred to in the military as urban warfare or operations [9].

It is more than likely that the Nigerian Army's first major encounter with urban warfare at home was in the Niger Delta, South East kidnapping saga and then Maiduguri and some states of northeastern Nigeria. This is because, initially, it was obvious that the military and security agencies were unprepared to tackle contemporary security challenges, particularly terrorism [9]. However, the military improved on their previous strategy and tactics, partly because training in the Nigerian Army in particular is fashioned to combating current and emerging challenges. They were efforts aimed at training and re-training in the Nigerian Army on anti- and counter- terrorism, special reconnaissance, information operation, management and training of personnel and associated equipment in close quarter combat, urban warfare, intelligence operation, amphibious operation, demolition

and explosive breaching, tactical communication and civil-military relations were on the increase [9]. Moreover, the act of restoring law and order in trouble spots in itself is part of a training period for the participating troops.

The spokesperson of the JTF, Operation restore order explained further challenges encountered by the operation when he said that:

Fighting in built-up areas is tasking, cumbersome and hazardous. There is limited view of space and fire, visibility and maneuverability is limited and ambush attrition losses are high. I was on patrol with JTF troops in Maiduguri aimed to fish out suspected members of Boko Haram and to recover arms, ammunition and explosives. It was then I had a clear perception of how difficult and dangerous it is for troops to fight in built-up areas [9].

The case of Borno was particularly difficult and compounded by so many factors, including religious and cultural. Some of the terrorists hid in mosques, planted Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) by the sides of the mosques or inside churches, hid on rooftops, planted IEDs on routes they knew were used by the military, and shot through loopholes. They clearly seemed to be conscious of the military vehicle columns and exhibited dexterity at flame throwing. They also had Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPGs), General Purpose Machine Guns and Alexander Kalashnikov (AK 47) rifles in their inventory [9].

Boko Haram insurgents also made use of buildings as they provided them with good sniping posts, while alleys, refuse dumps and sand filled streets were ideal for booby-traps. The nature of Maiduguri houses built close to each other with strong gates, tall walls serves as a parapet for the terrorists and a fort onto itself [9]. There are also religious and cultural taboos where most of the houses were locked with Ba Shiga (No Entry) inscription and a terrorist could easily mask himself with Abaya, a long flowing gown that covers the entire body. As the military tactically moved round the city, they could not see the men hiding inside the houses, behind the walls or rooftops. Efforts to insert the hard skin fighting vehicles could not hit the terrorists; moreover, collateral damage could not be eliminated when used, and so the idea was jettisoned [10]. But not after collateral damage had been incurred.

However, this challenge was overcome when the JTF began to approach the targeted areas from all flanks. The JTF then understood that it needed to "mouse hole" through each or most of the houses suspected of harbouring Boko Haram terrorists and rooted them out in close combat [10]. This yielded results. Many obvious (because they were caught with weapons) and suspected terrorists were arrested and thousands of assorted ammunition and some arms and quantities of IEDs were recovered. According to a military personnel in the north-east, "Our saving grace lies on the organization, quality and discipline of our troops. Despite obvious danger, troops remain solid, organised and nationalistic" [10].

Operation Restore Order I, II and III achieved relative progress. The JTF made attempts at restoring normalcy and building confidence in the populace and checked, monitored and controlled the influx of illegal immigrants. To an extent, the operation made Maiduguri and its environs untenable for the Boko Haram terrorists who then sort refuge in the Sambisa forest where they coordinated attacks. The JTF also were able to destroy some identified Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) production factories and recovered arms. Large cache of arms and ammunitions were also recovered from the Boko Haram terrorists [7]. In spite of these efforts, security continued to deteriorate as Boko Haram terrorists continued their reign of terror in the north-eastern part of Nigeria. This gave birth to Operation BOYONA.

Operation BOYONA: Following the continued escalation of violence and wanton destruction of lives and property in the north eastern part of the country by the Boko Haram insurgents, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states on May 14, 2013. Consequently, the Chief of Defence Staff, Admiral Ola Sa'ad Ibrahim, was directed to restore law and order in the affected states. In line with the directives, troops made up of men of the Armed Forces, the Police and other security agencies were deployed under operation BOYONA to secure the nation's borders and assert the territorial integrity of the nation [11].

The acronym BOYONA stands for Borno, Yobe, Nasarawa and Adamawa Operation. BOYONA was initially conceived to deal with the deteriorating security situation in these states but was retained for the operation in the 3 states affected by the emergency rule.

One of the operational mandates of the president to Defence Headquarters under operation BOYONA was to destroy terrorist camps/bases, fish out perpetrators and bring them to justice [11]. The mandate was substantially achieved with the destruction of terrorists' strongholds and bases mostly located in the desert borders of Chad and Niger Republics. Some of the destroyed/secured camps included: Krenoa, Hausari, Marte, Chikun and Gudu in Northern Borno [11]. The biggest camp of the Boko Haram located in the dreaded Sambisa forest in Southern part of Borno State was cordoned by Special Forces. A man who was held hostage in the forest for one year was freed by troops as his captors fled in disarray [11].

With regards to arrests and detention, a number of terrorists were apprehended and detained by the Special Forces, some of whom died in the process. For instances, trained military dogs facilitated the arrest of over 50 insurgents who were trying to infiltrate Maiduguri at the onset of the operation [11]. 49 others were apprehended in Yobe during Cordon and Search Operation with the help of locals. Furthermore, 9 terrorists including 5 Nigeriens and 2 Chadians were tracked down while attempting to flee through Tumbu Gini, a border town with Chad Republic [11]. Similarly, a key terrorist who specialized in recruiting minors into the fold was arrested in Maiduguri following a tip off as another terrorist believed to be close associate of the group's leader, Abubakar Shekau was found dead as he ran errand for the leadership [11]. Another terrorist simply identified as Abba who was among the list of wanted persons died when troops rounded up about 25 insurgents during one of the Cordon and Search Operations. Special Forces also arrested about 120 insurgents in Maiduguri as they organized burial of one of their commanders who died in one of the encounters with own troops. 56 other insurgents were arrested at different locations with the help of military and police dogs [11].

The military also made recoveries from the insurgents which included: Rocket propelled grenade launchers, assorted quantity of AK 47 rifles, dane guns, bow and arrows, machine guns, double barrel guns, single and double barrel shotguns, and various calibers of ammunition. Others were: walkie-talkies, custom pickup van with machine guns mounted on it, Golf cars, Honda 2003 models, Volkswagen Monte Carlo models, number plates, camouflage uniforms, charms, machetes, bomb detonators, tricycles and handsets [11]. The JTF in keeping with Presidential directives released a total of 58 detainees with links with Boko Haram insurgents in Borno and Yobe states. This comprised 23 women and 35 children. Some of the teenagers confessed that they were conscripted to run errands for the terrorists who paid them a paltry N5, 000 to monitor troops and set public buildings ablaze. 6 women and 14 children were handed over to Borno state Governor Kashim Shetima

while 17 women and 21 children were released to Governor Ibrahim Geidam of Yobe state on behalf of the Chief of Defence Staff for onward rehabilitation and reintegration [11].

Apart from attempts at ensuring that peace returns to the affected states, efforts were made at confidence building mechanism as well. This was aimed at consolidating the modest achievements that were recorded by the Special Forces. A case in point was a tip off in early 2013 by locals which led to arrest of over 56 terrorists who were moving from village to village in search of food with a Toyota Sub Urban Vehicle. The revelatory information from the populace regarding the terrorists was of enormous importance as the JTF's search and cordon yielded efforts in returning normalcy to the area. Defence Headquarters Assessment teams who visited the states observed increased commercial activities as banks, markets and other public places were opened after operation BOYONA was launched [11].

Operation Zaman Lafiya: Operation BOYONA was later renamed Operation Zaman Lafiya with the establishment of the 7 Division in August 2013. The JTF operation Zaman Lafiya was organized and structured in the form of close support Command. Although this does not provide for unity of Command, it however provided for control of the mission area by mutual cooperation and coordination between the services [8]. The Logistic Support situations in operation Zaman Lafiya was far from ideal. The Army component of the JTF, which had been in the mission area since 2011, lacked almost all logistic items [8]. These operations have recorded some successes in terms of arrest of Boko Haram leaders, seizure and retrieval of weapons and general destruction of bases as stated earlier. These successes however, were limited compared to what should have been achieved through joint or combined operations. Upon his appointment as Chief of Army Staff in July, 2015, Major General Tukur Buratai, at the 103 Battalion Nigerian Army based in Konduga, Borno State announced that operation Zaman Lafiya has been changed to Lafiya Dole, meaning 'Peace by Force'.

Civilian Joint Task Force and the Fight against Boko Haram

The Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged in June 2013 as a response to the security challenges posed by the activities of insurgents in Borno State since 2009. One of the factors that led to the formation of the Civilian Joint Task Force was the apparent loss of control over the insurgency by the government security forces, and the brazen style adopted by the insurgents in the destruction to lives and property. It would appear the community had no other option since they were increasingly becoming the major victims of the atrocities committed by the Boko Haram on the one hand and the Joint Task Force's excessive use of force response on the other. The killing and maiming of individuals, bomb attacks and the burning of churches, schools, and mosques by Boko Haram occurred almost on daily basis. Security agents, Christians, traditional rulers and religious leaders in particular bore the brunt of the violence. The insurgents silenced the courageous personalities who reported their activities to the security personnel through the targeted assassination of the informants and security operatives where ever they might be found. This was followed by the killing of 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 [12].

Boko Haram also attacked public facilities such as schools, hospitals, communication masts and markets as well as petty traders, farmers and even livestock breeders in the bush. People from different walks of life were traumatized through threatening text messages asking

for the compulsory payment of certain amounts of money by public servants, traders, artisans, livestock breeders, fishermen and farmers among others, or risk being killed. The Boko Haram was so daring that it was able to erect road blocks, imposed and collected taxation from motorists along the highway as well as going into commercial areas to collect such levies or risk bodily harm. The response from the military JTF 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. Every member of the society was seen as a member of Boko Haram. Once JTF's formation, convoys or check points came under Boko Haram attack, the security agents would open fire and burn indiscriminately anything that was in their way with less concern for the effects on lives and property [12].

The military and various security personnel could not identify the insurgents nor contend with their ubiquitous guerilla warfare tactics. Instead of using intelligence network to unravel the mystery behind the hit-and-run modus operandi of the insurgents, the military unleashed their anger on the civilian population. The military and the insurgents resorted to play a game of hide-and-seek and communities were attacked by the insurgents in broad daylight, yet the military could not apprehend them [12].

The insurgents show no mercy even to their mothers, fathers, brothers or a community leader. Once Boko Haram perceived an individual as 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. These vicious acts forced parents to desert their homes as their children become members of the Boko Haram sect. Parents who refused to desert were forced to hide or conceal the weapons kept by their children for fear of discovery by the JTF. The insurgents also coerced women to give them information on the movement of the security agents; in some cases women were used as couriers for the insurgents' weapons. Apart from the use of women to conceal their weapons, the insurgents also stored their weapons in markets, schools, under bridges, in gutters, refuse dumps and other places beyond imagination; whereas the soldiers concentrated their search for weapons in the houses of the suspected members of the sect [12].

It was under such deteriorating security situation and frustration that the youth saw the need to defend themselves, their property and communities from these mindless attacks from the insurgents. Community members, especially the youth felt they had no option but to assist the JTF by openly and boldly confronting the insurgency, by identifying, arresting and handing over Boko Haram members to the JTF. These youth had a distinct advantage in identifying Boko Haram members, as they were relatively the same age grade and living in the same community with the insurgents, their tactics, weapons and their system of recruitment were well known to them.

The CJTF alongside the military was able to dislodge the strongest Boko Haram Camp in Bulabulin Ngarannam amidst heavy attacks from the insurgents, an operation that lasted for three consecutive days. One of the military officers that oversaw this operation, disclosed that, "I saw God and his wonders in Maiduguri, young men with machetes are in direct combat with well-armed militia" and he went further to say that "if Nigerians are as patriotic and zealous over common enemy as the CJTF, our country could have been greater than this. These boys deserve support from all" [12]. Similarly, during an attack on the Nigerian Air Force Base in Maiduguri, the activities of CJTF were praised by the Air Force officers. A statement by an Air Force officer

who cautioned his soldiers, when they attempted to disperse the crowds of their sympathizers, said:

You run away leaving us behind in the base with your arms into hiding but these armless courageous young boys faced up with the enemies and prevented them from infiltrating into the base." He added in strong voice "nothing should happen to them (CJTF) [12].

The CJTF started as an informal vigilante group to protect the neighbourhoods in which they lived from the continual brutal harassment of the Boko Haram insurgents. Through their courageous counter attacks, they succeeded in curtailing the criminal activities of Boko Haram out of their neighbourhoods, especially in Maiduguri Metropolis. As a result, their operations were formalized as a complement to the military JTF operations.

Civil-Military Relations Perceptions in Military Operations

In military operations like the one in the Lake Chad Basin, the military and civilian populations usually have justified and erroneous perceptions that often times have the propensity to stymie an operation. The civilian populations often times, perceive the military as those that kill, wound and maim non-combatant, destroy homes, crops and livestock as well as essential civil infrastructure. They see the military also as displacing massive numbers of non-combatants and threatening or perpetrating rape, torture, genocide and other gross violations of human rights. Apart from this, the military leave behind quantities of unexploded ordnances (UXOs), mines and depleted substances that continue to kill and maim non-combatants long after the conflict has ended.

The military too has certain perceptions that could be justified or erroneous but could thwart operations if not addressed. The military perceive civil populations as not taking advice from them even if their personal security is at risk for reasons of maintaining neutrality and impartiality; and are resistant to changes that military arrival brings.

The military also see civilians as unwilling to collaborate with the them and constantly ask for help when they (military) cannot cope with security, logistics, transport and communication needs. The military also do not like it that the civilians populations, especially those co-opted in one way or the other reveal military intentions to unauthorized persons and divulge critical information that could impinge on military operations. However, to ensure effective coordination between the military and civil actors, there should be a conduct of pre mission reconnaissance, establishment of civil- military centres as currently been established in the northeast Nigeria and routine contacts. The military also has a duty to establish trust and credibility by operating according to international laws and regulations.

Conclusion

Extrapolating from the above is an analysis that examines the Nigerian military role in the fight against Boko Haram insurgents in the Lake Chad Basin. It shows how Nigeria's military was stretched beyond limits in their counter insurgency operations in the area. The paper gives a historical background of the Military Operations in the area and conclude that one of the biggest challenges of the Nigerian military was to fight in built up areas with an unconventional force. Nigeria, alongside Conventional forces under the auspices of the Multinational Task Force comprising like Cameroon, Mali and Chad engaged the Boko Haram sect in the Lake Chad Basin for over six years without much success until the Middle of 2015. The Nigerian military's professionalism came under scrutiny when they were accused by the Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International at various times of committing war crimes and crimes against humanity; crimes which the Nigerian Army denied.

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